
THEA 4368 01

EXPERIMENTAL THEATRE

PRODUCTION

CRN: 81956 Fall 2017
MWF 9:30 AM – 10:50 AM / PAC 184

Instructor: Dr. Victoria (Vicky) P. Lantz
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Office Hours: Sign up on my office door

*The process of devising is about the fragmentary experience of understanding
ourselves, our culture, and the world we inhabit.*

— Alison Oddey, *Devising Theatre*

Ever tried. Ever failed. No matter. Try Again. Fail again. Fail better.

—Samuel Beckett

Catalogue Description

Analysis of plays that depart from the realistic genre and examination of new production possibilities arising out of developments in theatre technology that will complement the experiments of the playwrights. Application of theory in laboratory productions. **Writing Enhanced.** Credit 3.

Course Description

The course explores the international aspect of theatrical experimentation by studying techniques connected with the Swiss and German Dadaists and the French Surrealists, Latino Theatre of Social Change, The Poor Theatre in Poland, American Environmental and Formalist Experiments, Happenings and Performance Art.

Throughout the semester, we will delve in-depth into the practice of devising and Theatre for Social Change techniques, including the work of Augusto Boal and the Theatre of the Oppressed, Frantic Assembly physical theatre, and Anne Bogart's Viewpoints in order to create different types of performance. In the development of their own original work, students begin a process of understanding their role as artists in contemporary society.

Course Goals:

- You will learn devising techniques that are used internationally in contemporary theatre companies.
- You will work as a group to develop a performance on a topic of social concern.
- You will create original solo and group performances based on non-realist techniques.
- You will actively reflect on your own work and offer input on your peers' work.



Classroom Attire

You'll need to wear comfortable clothing that you can move easily in. Loose fitting, workout clothes.

Classroom Etiquette

You must come prepared to be on your feet, engage physically and mentally with the work we develop. This is your opportunity to explore devised theatre fully in an open, respectful environment. In this course, we aim to foster an atmosphere of mutual respect. I encourage you all to exercise your voices, bodies, and minds in a safe and considerate way.

We are working to develop a class dynamic built on respect and communication. Laptops need to stay off, meaning you will need to print out all or part of the PDF readings for class. If you bring a snack, well, you better have enough to share. Cell phones stay off (not vibrate, OFF). No texting, IM-ing, or reading texts or IMs. **We'll also be physically interacting, so we have to be respectful of the way we interact.**

Texts

On most Mondays and Wednesdays, we will spend the first half of each class period exploring past experimental theatre theory and practice including excerpts from scripts and video. All material will be posted on Blackboard.

Grade Breakdown**Points**

Participation	300
Sound & Movement Sequence	100
1. Found Text/Text Comes Last	150
2. KCACTF Devised Prompt Piece	150
3. "Self-Portrait" Performance Piece	150
TMLMTBGB!!!	150
1000 TOTAL	

GRADING SCALE

900-1000 pts — A

800-899 pts — B

700-799 pts — C

600-699 pts — D

599 and below — F

Participation (300 pts / 30% of Final Grade): Participation is often essential to your success in the college classroom, but in this class it will be imperative. I expect you to leave any negativity or low energy you might be feeling at the door. Even a single day with a bad attitude or a reticence to participate in class could be catastrophic to your learning process, and to that of the others in the class. Participation also includes bringing material to class, like songs, videos of flash mobs, props, a rubber chicken, etc., and prompts or information I ask for.

You will receive THREE participation grades, worth 100 points each, throughout the semester as progress reports on how you are doing in class. You will be assessed on the following scale: 100 for exceptional class work, 95 for good work, 85 for mediocre work, 75 for low energy or bad attitude, 50 or less for sleeping, negativity, hostility, etc.

Sound & Movement Sequences (100 pts / 10% of Final Grade): You will create a movement sequence to a soundscape or music. You will teach this sequence to the class and perform it all together. More details to follow through the semester.

3 Performance Projects (150 points each // 450 pts total / 45% of Final Grade):

4 performance projects, each worth 15% of your final course grade. For each project, you will work with a team, except the solo performance piece. More details to follow through the semester.

For each project, 100 points of your grade comes from the producing and performing of the project; 50 points an individually written response (appr. 1000 words) explaining your research, rehearsal process and personal contribution to the project.

1. Found Text/Text Comes Last (150 pts): Learning to let go of text is a challenge. This project is based around text as foundation, but also not the necessary structure or linear narrative of performance.

2. KCACTF Devised Prompt Piece (150 pts): “Each ensemble will create a unique performance vocabulary informed by their source materials. This vocabulary should include movement, voice, visual image, sonic landscape, text and scenic environment and communicate the piece's style and aesthetic.” For this assignment, you will work as an entire class, and working only with asking Vicky for help or questions. It mostly has to be created by you all.

3. “Self-Portrait” Performance Piece (150 pts): A piece based on skills that you find most useful/appealing/challenging from the semester. You may have other bodies/actors in the piece.

Too Much Light Makes the Baby Go Blind (TMLMTBGB) / (150 pts): We will entertain our peers with a end-of-semester performance based on the Neo-Futurists *Too Much Light Makes the Baby Go Blind*. You will write original neo-futurist pieces for the event. This performance will be outside of class in the Showcase. Performance date TBD.

BONUS POINTS: 4 points for attending each of the UTC fall productions = 20 points max

- Easy; just show ticket stubs to me.



CLASSROOM POLICIES

Attendance Policy: Much of our work will occur in class. For that reason, your attendance is required at all class meetings. There are at times valid reasons that may compel you to miss class, and I trust you to make those decisions. I do not make distinctions between “excused” or “unexcused” absences, and you never need to give me a note or explain to me why you missed class. To allow for emergencies and unavoidable conflicts, **you may miss 3 classes without penalty to your grade, UNLESS YOU MISS ONE OF YOUR PERFORMANCE DAYS. Further absences will lower your grade significantly**, one-third grade increment (e.g., A- to B+, or B to B-) per additional absence, unless there is written communication (email with specific dates, times, and reason) from the chair or Dean of Students Office. For example, six absences will result in a full grade deduction (e.g., B to C).

However, more than 8 absences, for any reason, and you will not pass course.

Some additional guidelines:

- Timely arrival is also part of attendance. **Repeated late arrivals or leaving early will incur additional grade penalties at my discretion.**
- Please inform me if you must miss class for religious holidays, KCACTF participation, sports events, etc., at any time during the semester. This information needs to be shared with me during the first few weeks of class.

Talking with me: Great idea! Seriously, we are dealing with heavy topics and difficult work over the semester and checking in outside of class is always a good idea.

Weekly Schedule (including Readings, Topics, and Assignments)

Week 1

R 8/24 Introduction to the Course: What is devising? What is experimental performance?

Week 2

T 8/29 Abandoning Texts, Embracing Bodies / Poor Theatre

R 8/31 Using Text for Body Work / Finding Text, Inspiration

Week 3

T 9/5 Viewpoint Techniques

R 9/7 Frantic Assembly Techniques

Week 4

T 9/12 Viewpoint Compositions

R 9/16 Developing Text/Text Project

Week 5

T 9/19 Work Text/Text Project

R 9/21 **1. Found Text/Text Comes Last Performances**

Week 6

T 9/26 Ensemble/Theatre of the Oppressed Work

R 9/28 Subject Matter: Theatre of the Oppressed with bodies

Week 7

T 10/3 Pina Bausch / Jacques Lecoq

R 10/5 Begin the brain-storm for KCACTF Prompt

Week 8

T 10/11 **Sound & Movement Sequences / KCACTF Prompt**

R 10/13 KCACTF Prompt

Week 9

T 10/18 KCACTF Prompt

R 10/20 KCACTF Prompt

Week 10

T 10/25 KCACTF Prompt

R 10/27 **2. KCACTF Devised Prompt Piece**

Week 11

T 11/1 Puppetry / Object Theatre Techniques

R 11/3 Solo/Ensemble // Solo performance art ideas

Week 12

T 11/8 Solo performance art ideas

R 11/10 TMLMTBGB: Neo-Futurist plays

Week 13

T 11/15 TMLMTBGB! // **DUE: PLAYS!**

R 11/17 TMLMTBGB! Rehearsal!

Week 14

T 11/22 TMLMTBGB! Rehearsal!
 R 11/24 **THANKSGIVING **No Class!**

Week 15

T 11/29 1-Min Physical Final Reflection // TMLMTBGB! Rehearsal!
 R 12/1 1-on-1: Project 4 Prep // **TMLMTBGB???**

3. “Self-Portrait” Performance Piece

Thursday, December 7, 2017

09:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

PAC 184

SHSU Production *Silent Sky*, Sept 27 -Sept 30

SHSU Production *The Government Inspector*, Oct 11 - Oct 14

SHSU Production Directors’ Debut/*Raisin* Reading, Oct 24 - Oct 28

SHSU Production *Oklahoma*, Nov 15 - Nov 18

IT IS THE STUDENT’S RESPONSIBILITY TO KEEP TRACK OF PERSONAL DUE DATES, PRESENTATIONS AND MEETINGS WITH THE INSTRUCTOR

The instructor reserves the right to change or alter the calendar to meet the individual and unique needs of the course. You are responsible for noting any and all changes to the syllabus.



UNIVERSITY POLICIES

Academic Honesty

All students are expected to engage in all academic pursuits in a manner that is above reproach. Students are expected to maintain complete honesty and integrity in the academic experiences both in and out of the classroom. Any student found guilty of dishonesty in any phase of academic work will be subject to disciplinary action. The University and its official representatives may initiate disciplinary proceedings against a student accused of any form of academic dishonesty including, but not limited to, cheating on an examination or other academic work which is to be submitted, plagiarism, collusion and the abuse of resource materials. Any students found cheating on exams, or plagiarizing papers will FAIL the course.

Classroom Environment

Students are expected to assist in maintaining a classroom environment that is conducive to learning. Students are to treat faculty and peers with respect and dignity. Section 5.2.22 in the Code of Student Conduct and Discipline defines classroom disturbances as any activity which proves distracting to the learning environment including but not limited to the use of cell phones or text messaging; the reading of materials (newspapers, magazines, texts) not assigned to the class; the use of profanity or abusive behavior toward the instructor or other students; having off-topic conversations which disturb or disrupt the learning environment; the use of computers and/or other electronic devices (Ipods, MP3 players, etc.) during classroom instruction, therefore, as a result, under no circumstances are cell phones or any other electronic devices to be used or seen during classroom instruction or examination. Even the visible presence of such a device during an examination will result in a zero on that examination. All such devices should be turned off or put in a silent mode and not be taken out during class. **Violations of the code of conduct will not be tolerated. Failure to comply with this policy will result in expulsion from the classroom and may at the instructor's discretion result in the student(s) being referred for disciplinary action to the Dean of Students.** Any assignments missed because of disciplinary action cannot be submitted for a grade.

Americans with Disabilities Act

It is the policy of Sam Houston State University that individuals otherwise qualified shall not be excluded, solely by reason of their disability, from participation in any academic program of the university. Further, they shall not be denied the benefits of these programs nor shall they be subjected to discrimination.

Students with disabilities that might affect their academic performance are expected to visit with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities located in the Counseling Center, Lee Drain Annex (tel. 936.294.1720). They should then make arrangements with their individual instructors so that appropriate strategies can be considered and helpful procedures can be developed to ensure that participation and achievement opportunities are not impaired. All disclosures of disabilities will be kept strictly confidential. NOTE: no accommodation can be made until the student registers with the Counseling Center.

Religious Holy Days

Section 51.911(b) of the Texas Education Code requires that an institution of higher education excuse a student from attending classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day, including travel for that purpose. A student whose absence is excused under this subsection may not be penalized for that absence and shall be allowed to take an examination or complete an assignment from which the student is excused within a reasonable time after the absence. "Religious holy day" means a holy day observed by a religion whose places of worship are exempt from property taxation under Section 11.20, Tax Code.

Visitors in the Classroom

Unannounced visitors to class must present a current, official SHSU identification card to be permitted into the classroom. They must not present a disruption to the class by their attendance. If the visitor is not a registered student, it is at the instructor's discretion whether or not the visitor will be allowed to remain in the classroom. This policy is not intended to discourage the occasional visiting of classes by responsible persons. Obviously, however, the visiting of a particular class should be occasional and not regular, and it should in no way constitute interference with registered members of the class or the educational process.