

USC School of Dramatic Arts

GESM 111: PERFORMING REVOLUTIONS: *THE GLOBAL HISTORY OF THEATRE AND SOCIAL CHANGE* (GE-A: The Arts, GE-G: Citizenship in a Global Era)

Class Number: 35315D
When: FA 2016, TTH 8:00 – 9:20 am
Where: MCC 102
Instructor: Brent Blair, Ph.D.
Office: MCC 101b
Office Hours: Th 12:30 – 1:30 pm
Contact Info: bblair@usc.edu, cell: 323-356-2552

Catalogue Description:

This course explores the history, theory, and current practice of public performance as a tool for global socio-political transformation. Students investigate techniques such as flash mobs, agitation propaganda, street and guerrilla theatre, as well as Theatre of the Oppressed from the postcolonial era through the present. The course will involve virtual dialogues with practitioners based in India, Mozambique, Brazil, and Afghanistan, along with live visits from local grass-roots activists. The class will create its own collective “revolutionary theatre” project, and will observe examples of community-based events for social change in the south Los Angeles area.

Course Objectives:

Students will engage in personal and collective research around the global history and theory of theatre as critical and cultural dialogue for social change. The class includes lectures, internet resources, film, video, multimedia, live performance, community engagement experiences, field trips, Skype sessions with global practitioners, and class dialogues. During this semester-long investigation of art as a tool of liberation, students will explore models created and developed by practitioners such as Augusto Boal (Theatre of the Oppressed), Luis Valdez (Teatro Campesino), and performance ensembles struggling for social change in the former Yugoslavia, Uganda, South Africa, the Philippines, as well as the instructor’s own experiences recently in Ukraine, Rwanda, India, Nigeria, and Australia. Students will emerge with a strong experience of the use of theatre as a means of social transformation leading to a more complex understanding of the communities surrounding the USC campus.

Core GE Learning Objectives (See Appendix)

Class Community-based LACE Objectives: Crossing Borders

“A boundary is not that at which something stops but, as the Greeks recognized, the boundary is that from which something begins its presencing.”

- Martin Heidegger, 'Building, dwelling, thinking'

This course operates partially on the model of collaborative, student-centered, community-based learning. The model for project engagement (final project) is a liberatory research partnership known as Liberation Arts and Community Engagement (LACE) where the engaged learning environment invites co-teaching and co-learning with students and non-students across thresholds of race, gender identity, socio-economic status and language barriers or documentation status. To this end students will be asked to explore the nature of identity and have a working understanding of the presence of privilege and power in their interpersonal interactions.

Required Texts

All texts are excerpts of material primarily found in the public domain and available free of charge on Blackboard.

Course Outline: (For detailed instructions, consult the assignment page on Blackboard)

ASSIGNMENT COLOR GUIDES: WRITTEN RESPONSE READ ONLY READ & DISCUSS WRITTEN WORK ACTIVITY

1

Week One Cultural literacy: What is oppression? What constitutes a “revolution”?

Ruptures, disruptions, interruptions of humanized experience – exploration of power, the power of culture and the cultures that support and oppress humanity. Who are we? How do we know who we are? Through whose eyes do we view the world? What is “liberation”? What is oppression? Is a revolution simply an upheaval or undoing of oppression? What constitutes real transformation? Class dialogues about rupture, collective ruptures, and cultural challenges to the human experience.

Pedagogy of the Oppressed – Ch 1, pp. 1–20 (Freire) – RESPONSE

Due Thu, 8/25/16, by 8:00 a.m.

Title your submission: 01.surname.freire.docx

Institutional Oppression Definitions (Cheney et al) – READ

Due Tue, 8/23/16, by 8:00 a.m.

Quiz – White Privilege (McIntosh) – FILL OUT, BRING TO CLASS

Due Thu, 8/25/16, by 8:00 a.m.

Structural Analysis – Oppression (Hinson & Bradley) – READ

Due Tue, 8/23/16 by 8:00 a.m.

2

Week Two Culture and Imperialism: Intrusions and Intersections

Look at culture and cultural narratives, especially imperialist narratives and emerging resistance to these within subaltern culture. What is the *culture* of oppression and empire? What role does memory play in how this oppression is fueled by dominant power, and how does “culture” supplement, even co-author, this narrative?

Culture & Imperialism –pp. xi – xxviii, & pp. 1-14 (Said) – RESPONSE

Due Tue, 8/30/16, by 8:00 a.m.

Title your submission: 02.surname.said.docx

NOTE: Professor will be absent September 1, 2016. No class that day.

3

Week Three Resistance literacy: What is resistance?

Understanding cultural difference can lead to new models of resistance, or liberation art. We will identify what constitutes “cultural difference” and how to navigate the progressive, liberatory *change* within these circumstances, including an introduction to the arts of culture jamming, cultural interruption or cultural re-appropriation and re-imagining. We will invite a brief overview of liberation theatre movements in 20th century.

Staging the Politics of Difference, pp. 361-390 (Olson and Worsham)

Due Tue, 9/6/16, by 8:00 a.m.

Title your submission: 03.surname.bhabha.docx

4

Week Four What is a dominant message? What is hegemony? What is fragility?

Investigation of images in contemporary culture – look at Media Literacy, artistic representations, commercial identity, commodification of self. Class takes a look at colonized or co-opted cultural identity by how events in the US history of human rights have, or have not, been represented through the lens of contemporary social media, with a specific focus on the history of the **#blacklivesmatter** movement. Students read opposing narratives from recent social media on race, privilege, cultural identity, and “white fragility,” and look at presumptions of oppression from different perspectives. Whose interests are being represented in these narratives? Whose are being co-opted or framed/blamed? What is “truth” in these narratives?

A Review of the U.S. Civil Rights Timeline: Black Lives Matter – REVIEW

Tue, 9/13/16

“Why I’ll Never Apologize ...Privilege” (Fortgang) – RESPONSE

Due Thu, 9/15/16, by 8:00 a.m.

“Why White People Freak Out...” (Adler-Bell & DiAngelo) – RESPONSE

Due Thu, 9/15/16, by 8:00 a.m.

“White Fragility is Racial Violence” (Shroyer) – RESPONSE

Due Thu, 9/15/16, by 8:00 a.m.

Title your submission: 04.surname.fragility.docx

SUBMIT
TOGETHER

5 Week Five Story-telling for social change: methods and styles

Students engage in class exercise to gather and arrange images without jumping to conclusions. First experience conducting a workshop using verbal, visual and physical images of persuasion and story-telling for social change. Class engages in a dialogue about commercial culture, art as an instrument of coercion or manipulation. Students create mini-commercials in small groups and perform them in class. Exploration of disparate methodologies and styles, including *agit-prop*, *witness theatre*, *guerrilla theatre*, *documentary theatre*, *street theatre*, etc.

Yesmen Video: "YesMen Fix the World" – WATCH

Due Tue, 9/20/16, by 8:00 a.m.

Creative Outline / Presentation of Yesmen-esque Projects – PREPARE

Due Thu, 9/22/16 by 8:00 a.m.

Title your submission: **05.surname.yesmen.docx**

CRITICAL PAPER I: 5 page paper – "Culture, Oppression, & Cultural Change" DUE: Tue, 9/27/16, by 8:00 a.m.

WRITE A FIVE PAGE CRITICAL PAPER with footnotes or endnotes in APA or MLA format on the theme "culture, oppression, & cultural change". Look back at the material covered so far in class, and pick a personal experience with which you have a particularly strong connection. How might you imagine this experience of yours to be shared collectively by others, beyond just your personal world? How is it an event of cultural oppression, and how might you imagine avenues towards cultural change?

Title your submission: **05.surname.paper1.docx**

6 Week Six Theatre of the Oppressed – Performing Revolutions in Latin America

Students learn basics of Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed (TO), focus on analytical image. Class talk about *epistemology* – "how do we know what we know?" Class workshop on Image Theatre, followed by exploration of the history of Latin American movements such as TO and Teatro Campesino (California).

3 Videos: Teatro Campesino; Pl. del Mayo; Zapatistas – WATCH, RESPONSE

Due Tue, 9/27/16 by 8:00 a.m.

Title your submission: **06.surname.3videos.docx**

"My Three Theatrical Encounters" (Boal) – RESPONSE

Due Thu, 9/29/16, by 8:00 a.m.

Title your submission: **06.surname.boal.docx**

7 Week Seven Performing Revolutions in Asia

Students engage in an exploration of Asian examples of theatre and social change, from South Asia (India – Jana Sanskriti, for example), Southeast Asia (Thailand, Philippines, etc.), Central Asia (current work in Pakistan and Afghanistan), and contemporary performative art and social justice works elsewhere in Asia.

"Spoiled Sons" (DaCosta) – RESPONSE

Due Thu, 10/04/16, by 8:00 a.m.

Title your submission: **07.surname.dacosta.docx**

8 Week Eight Performing Revolutions in Africa

Overview, African theatre/social change, including: Nigeria; Rwanda; South Africa; Mozambique; and Senegal.

"My Husband's Denial" (Video) – WATCH

Due Tue, 10/11/16, by 8:00 a.m.

Title your submission: **08.surname.mozambique.docx**

"Art Talk with Thoko Ntshinga" – READ

Due Thu, 10/13/16, by 8:00 a.m.

Title your submission: **08.surname.mozambique.docx**

Midterm Exam (Available after 10/13/16 by 9:30 a.m.)

Due Thu, 10/20/16, by 8:00 a.m.

Title your submission: **08.surname.midterm.docx**

9 Week Nine Performing Revolutions in Europe & Australia

Exploration of history of German workers' movements (1800's) leading to popular theatre in: Germany; France; UK; Belgium; and a Skype session with contemporary practitioners in Ukraine.

"Fascism, Russia, and Ukraine" (Snyder) – RESPONSE

Due Tue, 10/18/16, by 8:00 a.m.

Title your submission: **09.surname.ukraine.docx**

10	Week Ten	Performing Revolutions in the United States
	Students engage in an extensive review of existing theatre for social change movements in the U.S., and look for example at the use of puppets and pageantry for parade, protest, and festival theatre.	
	"Speaking a Mutual Language" (Barton) – RESPONSE	Due Tue, 10/25/16, by 8:00 a.m.
	Title your submission: 10.surname.NPT.docx	
	Satirical Video of Social Rupture (i.e. Daily Show) – RESPONSE	Due Tue, 10/25/16, by 8:00 a.m.
	Title your submission: 10.surname.satirical.docx	
	PAPER TWO: 5 page paper – "Performing Global Revolutions"	Due Tue, 11/1/16, by 8:00 a.m.
	WRITE A FIVE PAGE CRITICAL PAPER with footnotes or endnotes in APA or MLA format on the theme "performing global revolutions". Look back at material covered so far, and pick a geographic location <i>outside</i> of the U.S. with which you have a strong connection. How might you imagine this to be a site for a creative, cultural, or artistic "revolution" of sorts? How has it been a product of global empire or oppression, and how might art intervene?	
	Title your submission: 10.surname.paper2.docx	
11	Week Eleven	Performing Revolutions in Los Angeles
	Students explore the intersection of art and social change in LA, focus on the ethics the project. Who is invited to our project? Who's left out? How will we evaluate our work after this is over? What are the ethics of REV art?	
	"Devil in Hand" (Blair) – RESPONSE	Due Thu, 11/3/16, by 8:00 a.m.
	Title your submission: 11.surname.blair.docx	
	Day Laborers (Video) – RESPONSE	Due Thu, 11/3/16, by 8:00 a.m.
	Title your submission: 11.surname.laborers.docx	
12	Week Twelve	Imagining and Designing the Revolutionary Performance
	Students began planning and imagining their "revolutionary" performances for on or around the USC campus area. What ruptures speak most urgently to the class? Build teams, work together in groups, prepare and problematize.	
	"Imago Logos Rep Action Eval" (Blair) – READ/REVIEW	Due Tue, 11/8/16, by 8:00 a.m.
	"What is Representation?" (Blair) – READ/REVIEW	Due Tue, 11/8/16, by 8:00 a.m.
	First draft, Class Rev Project – PREPARE	Due Thu, 11/10/16, by 8:00 a.m.
	Title your submission: 12.surname.REVoutline.docx	
13	Week Thirteen	Problematizing and Preparing the Revolutionary Performance
	Class prepare to assemble group "LACE" projects on or near campus.	
	REV Project Performative Treatment	Due Thu, 11/17/16, by 8:00 a.m.
	Title your submission: 13.surname.REVtreatment.docx	
	REV Projects Prepared, Groups I & II (In Class Work – details worked out)	Due Thu, 11/17/16, by 8:00 a.m.
14	Weeks Fourteen & Fifteen	Implementing and Evaluating the REV Projects (I & II)
15	Class present their prepared public theatre "Revolutionary projects" and evaluate their colleagues' projects.	
	Rev. Projects Performed, Group I	During class on Tue, 11/22/16, from 8:00 – 9:20 a.m.
	THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 24 IS THANKSGIVING. NO CLASS!	
	Rev. Evaluation Reflections, Day I (EVERYBODY)	Due Tue, 11/29/16, by 8:00 a.m.
	Title your submission: 14.surname.REVeval1.docx	
	Rev. Self-Evaluation Reflection ("Group I" ONLY)	Due Tue, 11/29/16 by 8:00 a.m.
	Title your submission: 14.surname.SELFeval1.docx	
	Rev. Projects Performed, Group II	During class on Tuesday, 11/29/16, from 8:00 – 9:20 a.m.
	Rev. Evaluation Reflections, Day II (EVERYBODY)	Due Thu, 12/1/16, by 8:00 a.m.
	Title your submission: 15.surname.REVeval2.docx	
	Rev. Self-Evaluation Reflection ("Group II" ONLY)	Due Thu, 12/1/16 by 8:00 a.m.
	Title your submission: 15.surname.SELFeval2.docx	
	FINAL EXAM MEETING (Mandatory, all: share papers & evaluate course)	On Tue, 12/13/16, 4:30 – 6:30 p.m.

Grading:

Presence and Participation	10%
Reading Reflection Papers (1 page)	20%
Midterm Exam:	15%
First Critical Paper	10%
Second Critical Paper	10%
LACE Project (Planning & Implementation)	15%
Final Research Paper:	20%
Total:	100%

A	= 94 – 100
A-	= 90 - 93
B+	= 87 – 89
B	= 84 – 86
B-	= 80 - 83
C+	= 77 – 79
C	= 74 – 76
C-	= 70 – 73
D	= 60 – 69
F	< 59

Weekly readings

Each reading comes with a specific prompt for a few paragraphs of reflection.

REFLECTION PAPERS MUST BE IN THE FOLLOWING FORMAT:

1. MS Word (or equivalent) attached with this title:
2digitweek#.surname.assignment.docx – so for me, week 1 assignment is: **"01.blair.freire.docx"**
2. Header clearly identifies the reading assignment: i.e. **"Pedagogy of the Oppressed, Paulo Freire"**
3. Body of response includes DIRECT QUOTE from the reading to which reader is responding
4. Submit via **Blackboard** ONLY (This is a PAPERLESS CLASS. No hard copies of your assignments, please.)

Critical Papers

1. Critical papers will be periodically assigned and designed to be research-oriented papers on a particular theme or thesis (established problem), relating directly to the course material (including lecture notes).
2. Critical papers must be submitted in either MLA or APA format (please review online or contact the Writing Center at USC for stylistic information)
3. Every statement made in a critical paper that is not directly the author's original idea MUST BE CITED and REFERENCED in the bibliography or reference section. Typically, there will be a minimum of 4 or 5 outside materials cited throughout the document.
4. Critical papers must be submitted in MS Word (or equivalent) attached with this title:
2digitweek#.surname.paper1.docx – so for me, week 6 critical paper assignment is: **06.blair.paper1.docx**

FINAL RESEARCH PAPER: DUE Tuesday, 12/13/16, 4:30 p.m. during "Final Exam" Scheduled Meeting*

This paper is a 20 page *research paper* that may be completed any time between the mid-term and the end of the semester. It should be assembled around a particular thesis related to Performing Revolutions, should contain a critical investigative question and should posit some theories. It may take any of the following forms:

1. Current problem / socio-political rupture affecting a specific community for which the writer (you) posits a hypothetical social change performance project and evaluates the rationale for this project, its proposed benefits and possible detriments, and potential efficacy.
2. Current problem / socio-political rupture for which there is *already* a theatrical or community arts solution in place. Investigate the depth and breadth of this project, its history, and evaluate its efficacy, looking at pro's and con's from current critical perspectives. Cite articles, books, etc. that support and critique this project, with a conclusive evaluation from your perspective on what *should be done in the future* with this prospect.
3. Past (historical) problem / socio-political rupture that was given a community arts treatment. Evaluate its history, type of art that was used for social change, whether it was *agit-prop*, *witness theatre*, *guerrilla theatre*, *public art*, etc. How did it serve this particular liberatory movement? Was it effective? If so, why? If not, why?

* *The paper is the final. Class meets during exam time to present papers. 1 hour total, 5 min. each student.*

Presence in class:

This work is co-participatory. As much of the work this semester is done in group collaboration, attendance is necessary for the class' success. Make every effort to make every class. Only medical conditions excuse absences.

Assignment Due Dates & Grades

- No late assignments, projects, exams, papers, or exercises shall be accepted unless advance extensions have been arranged between the student and the teacher or unless exceptional circumstances occur.
- Assignments are due on the date listed in the course outline. Late assignments up to one week will be accepted at 50% of the credit, and will not be accepted after that except in cases where the instructor has been notified and agreed to late submission in advance.

Contacts:

Students need to enroll in e-mail services at the university if they have not already done so. Much of the course communication takes place through e-mail, particularly relative to the performance of group events. It is vital that students check their e-mails every morning for course updates.

Disability Services:

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open from 8:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Phone: (213) 740-0776.

Statement on Academic Integrity

Plagiarism – presenting someone else's ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in *SCampus* in Section 11, Behavior Violating University

Standards <https://scampus.usc.edu/1100-behavior-violating-university-standards-and-appropriate-sanctions/>. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct, <http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct/>.

Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university. You are encouraged to report any incidents to the *Office of Equity and Diversity* <http://equity.usc.edu/> or to the *Department of Public Safety* <http://capsnet.usc.edu/departments/departments-public-safety/online-forms/contact-us>. This is important for the safety whole USC community. Another member of the university community – such as a friend, classmate, advisor, or faculty member – can help initiate the report, or can initiate the report on behalf of another person. *The Center for Women and Men* <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/cwm/> provides 24/7 confidential support, and the sexual assault resource center webpage sarc@usc.edu describes reporting options and other resources.

Emergency Preparedness/Course Continuity in a Crisis

In case of a declared emergency if travel to campus is not feasible, USC executive leadership will announce an electronic way for instructors to teach students in their residence halls or homes using a combination of Blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technologies.

Appendix: Core GE Learning Objectives

GE-A: The Arts – Core Learning Objectives

Analysis: Increase the student's ability to analyze creative endeavors, including describing them with appropriate vocabulary, examining their formal elements, and engaging in research to understand their contexts.

Students learn the language of theatre for social change, discerning agit-prop from guerrilla theatre, street performance from festival and carnival events, etc. How were these various technologies and practices used to respond to disparate social ruptures?

Making: Expand the student's knowledge about the creative process, as exemplified by specific works studied and, in many cases, by the student's making creative work.

Students gain experience through activities exploring games and image-theatre techniques for social change.

Connectivity: Deepen the student's appreciation of the connections between creative endeavors and the concurrent political, religious, and social conditions; show how these endeavors fulfill cultural functions or fill cultural needs.

The use of theatre as a tool for social transformation teaches students how to directly position the creative instinct within the socio-political and cultural setting.

Context: Enrich the student's discernment of creative production by increasing knowledge of its theoretical, historical, and aesthetic bases across history and cultures.

The production of art and theatre for social change has a rich and multi-centric history. Students learn the subtle distinctions between the German workers' movement in the 19th century, for example, with Brecht's use of epic theatre in the 20th century. How does a masked ritual of southeastern Nigeria (Okunkpo) compare with Italian commedia dell'arte, where servants mocked masters to expose fraudulent ethics and the corruption of power?

Engagement: Increase the student's understanding of becoming a lifelong supporter or participant in the arts by exposure to creative production in the contemporary environment

Student exposure to videos of community-based theatre and Skype sessions with CBT practitioners give them a broader perspective of how art can be an instrument of direct political engagement and transformation.

GE-G: Citizenship in a Global Era – Core Learning Objectives

Identify social, political, economic, and/or cultural forces that bear on human experience in the U.S. and around the world

The class looks at the circumstances of several principle countries at specific times in these countries' histories, and how theatre art was used as a cultural counter-force to improve human experiences in each instance.

Identify and critically analyze the causes and/or consequences of the forces listed above

Through analysis of each situation above, the students will evaluate historical narratives from multiple perspectives that inevitably became useful in the cultural and theatrical movements towards social transformation – i.e. the Ukraine Maidan movement, and how the "Theatre for Dialogue" event in 2014 was used in five cities to combat both fascism and totalitarianism.

Articulate a definition of globalization/globalism and offer a critical analysis of its impacts on human life in the U.S. and around the world

Looking at a variety of readings, the students will critically analyze the effects of globalism and globalization on both the challenges that led to arts interventions, and the global impact of these artistic movements themselves.

Articulate a definition of citizenship and offer a critical analysis of its accessibility and importance in both U.S. and Global senses

Focusing on the articulation of "global citizen" as promoted by Augusto Boal (Theatre of the Oppressed), students explore how art and artists contribute to the culture of "good citizenry" by bridging personal and political realms through art making.

Offer informed contributions to debates about how to improve the quality of life in the U.S. and around the world

Exploring global theatre for social change, students now investigate Los Angeles and the community surrounding USC. Guest visits by local community-based grass-roots activists help the students understand how art might be employed as a means of debate and dialogue around issues affecting the quality of life of Angelenos.