

MFA Y2 - THTR 542 The Artist in Social Change
Fall 2020 - Thursdays 3 - 5:50 pm
Office Hours: Tuesdays & Thursdays: 1 - 3 pm

Course Description and Overview

Given that Artists are the historians of our times, this Zoom forum explores the role of the artist during today's turbulent time of change in our country; our industry; and, in our lives. Focusing on the ongoing uprising for racial equality and justice; the pandemic and the upcoming national election; we'll unpack past events, decisions and practices that led to our "American Spring," hereby providing offering a "safe place" for much needed conversation.

Learning Objectives

To investigate and articulate your place as an Artist during this time of upheaval. To discover the litmus test that ignites the imagination; your voice; your purpose; and, your degree of risk. Through the exploration of required reading, supplementary materials, and given today's climate: How can you contribute to the artistic canon? What's the elbow grease, the rigors of standing in your own truth as an artist?

Required Reading and Supplementary Materials.

Caste: The Origins of Our Discontent, by Isabel Wilkerson;
The Laramie Project, by Moises Kaufman and the Tectonic Theatre;
Latin History for Morons, by John Leguizamo; Fires In The Mirror, by Anna Deveare Smith.

Selections from The New York Times 1619 Project.

Essays by John Lewis, Bryan Stevenson, Viola Davis, Caroline Randall Williams and the work anti-racist, Jane Elliott.

Assessment of Assignments

The course is divided into two parts.

Part 1: Discussion of current events; required reading; and, supplementary materials. Students shall journal throughout and share written insights with the class. At mid-term students shall submit a proposal for the creation of an original work, bearing

witness to the change at hand; (i.e., multi-disciplinary media, etc., etc.)

Part 2: Students shall develop ten minutes of a performative work based on at least one aspect of their proposal, employing what they consider their artistic strengths. This project shall serve as the final. Students then have the rest of their tenure at SDA to create this work to accompany their entrance into the Industry.

Description of Grading

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| In class participation and writing assignments | 50% |
| Mid-Term Proposal | 20% |
| Final Presentation | 30% |

By participation, I mean, in every class, you shall share insights from your journal. Your insights shall be both oral (it's all about the conversation) as well as written.

No unexcused absences.

If a student must miss a class for whatever reason, they can view the recorded class and schedule office hours with me to catch up. This must be done within 24 hours.

Final Exam: November 19th 2-4 pm

Weekly Breakdown of Class

Week #1. Meet & Greet

Students share their story: Theatrical experience. The who, where, what, and why of yourself before you saw the George Floyd tape?

Journal exercise: What were your feelings watching the George Floyd tape? What change/changes, if any, occurred after seeing the tape? Begin to read CASTE, by Isabel Wilkerson.

Week #2.

Discuss New York Times Op Ed. John Lewis; "Together, You Can Redeem the Soul of Our Nation"

Journal exercise: Did any of you participate in the protests here in Los Angeles or elsewhere? Did this movement wake you up to anything?

View John Lewis Link: "Morgan Freeman Reads Rep. John Lewis' Last Words"

Begin reading The 1619 PROJECT and Nikole Hannah-Jones/ White historians' counter to 1619.

Week #3

YOU WANT A CONFEDERATE MONUMENT? MY BODY IS A CONFEDERATE MONUMENT, by Caroline Randall Williams/Interview transcript

MY ENTIRE LIFE HAS BEEN A PROTEST, by Viola Davis

Journal exercise: Have you ever been afraid to speak up on behalf of a person you know that has experienced police brutality or racial discrimination?

Week #4

Begin discussion of CASTE, by Isabel Wilkerson

Journal exercise: Prior to this international movement, how often did you think about race discrimination?

Week #5

Continue CASTE discussion.

Journal exercise: Prior to George Floyd's death, have you ever volunteered your personal time in the black or Latinx neighborhoods of Los Angeles or elsewhere?

Week #6

Prepare to discuss three of your favorite essays from THE 1619 PROJECT

Week #7

Continue to discuss three of your favorite essays from THE 1619 PROJECT

Week #8

DEAR WHITE AMERICAN THEATRE: WE SEE YOU.

I HAVE TO GO IN THERE AND DECOLONIZE: Europe's Black Theatre Makers discuss the scene. New York Times

View Griffin Matthews Link: "Broadway is Racist"

Week #9

FACING RACISM (ASIAN - AMERICANS SHARE STORIES) by Anna Purna Kamhampaty. Time Magazine, America must Change
UNDER PRESSURE by Alex Ross from the New Yorker (Musical events)

Journal exercise: This is not just a black versus white issue. There are other ethnic groups of people who discriminate against black people. What are your ideas for eliminating or reducing racism, inequality and social justice in the world?

Week# 10

LATIN HISTORY FOR MORONS by John Leguizamo

Week #11 & 12

FIRES IN THE MIRROR by Anna Deveare Smith

Week #13

THE LARAMIE PROJECT, by Moises Kaufman and the Tectonic Theatre Project

Week #14

Proposal rehearsals

Week #15

Proposal rehearsals

Pool of Video Clips for Discussion:

LL Cool J

<https://youtu.be/QGIOzqHqz-Y>

Leona Lewis

<https://www.facebook.com/524005309/posts/10158095520775310/?>

Octavia Spencer

https://youtu.be/Qq_wUBOtCXQ

Hollywood Shuffle - Can You Be More Black?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kjmLDNpyoLo>

White Female Cop Crying at McDonald's

https://youtu.be/BD_3Wv7LI9Y

We Wish We Were Black

<https://www.facebook.com/312607088844913/posts/2665147946924137/?>

<https://youtu.be/7wv3gndWUqY>

FYI - Documentary is available on Netflix

George Floyd

<https://youtu.be/Ve8SOrGd9-c>

Amy Cooper

<https://youtu.be/iUQWd4q3tjA>

Griffin Matthews

<https://www.facebook.com/508781482/videos/10157424406921483/>