

CRIT 560: Visual Theory/Performance Theory ***Embodying Generative Structures***

Section: 33373D

4 units

Day: Thursday

Time: 10am-1:20pm

Location: HAR 112D

Instructor: Alison D'Amato

Office: KDC 206 (D'Amato)

Office Hours: By Appointment

Contact: adamato@usc.edu

Catalogue Description

Exploration of interrelated themes that examine how the time-based art of theatre intersects with other art forms and surpasses its preexisting boundaries.

Course Overview

This graduate-level seminar, a core offering in Roski's Performance Studies Graduate Certificate program, is an intensive, discussion-lead exploration of performance scores and notation, largely from the mid-20th century onward. The context of choreographic production will be examined closely, as dance constitutes a realm of live performance wherein the perceived disconnect between body/movement and text/language remains particularly acute. While notation (in musical composition and performance), and scripts/librettos (in theatrical productions) seem to indicate straightforward relationships between schematization and enactment, dance's resolute focus on corporeality renders its correlation to text-based representation more complex. Particular attention will also be paid to mid-twentieth century experimentation in music that instituted a critical shift toward notational indeterminacy. Nonetheless, course literatures and creative prompts will be drawn from highly inter- and trans-disciplinary fields of creative production, allowing students to develop specialized foci based on their primary areas of interest. Historical and theoretical trajectories will bend toward the interrelationship of practice and theory, returning regularly to close readings of scores that elaborate of how notation *works* in varied works and practices. Each session will culminate in the creation, performance, and/or witnessing of scores, as well as a discussion of those scores' mechanics and effects (intended or otherwise). This will allow us to appreciate the problematics associated with scoring as an ideal gateway into issues of agency, authorship, spectatorship, and performance's ontology(ies).

Learning Objectives

In this course, students will:

- Synthesize key points from course readings, and use the problematics of given readings to stimulate inclusive class discussion
- Engage with a chosen score, working from a consideration of its historical and disciplinary contexts to the demands of its enactments and a reflection on its effects

- Present preliminary efforts at delineating a research topic, including potential sources drawn from course materials
- Complete and present a fully developed research project that demonstrates fluency with a chosen notational practice

Course Policies

Readings and Viewings:

All readings are available as PDFs or links within weekly Blackboard modules. Required (“anchor”) readings will be identified, as will additional resources for self-directed study. Students must complete required readings and viewings before each meeting to participate in discussion. Sustained engagement with the provided materials will be assessed via weekly article presentations. Readings will serve as valuable resources, but as performance is rooted in embodied practice, watching and experiencing through in-class activities and videos will also inform our approach. Students are encouraged to engage with additional media in conjunction with their readings, which will also be provided via Blackboard.

Community Expectations:

Students should be present, prepared, and ready to engage with each other and the course material. Viewing, discussion, and class activities figure greatly. Active participation includes adhering to standard classroom etiquette: no internet browsing, no sleeping, and no private discussion. Students are expected to engage fully in group discussions and activities, to ask thoughtful questions, to come to class fully prepared, and to exercise personal responsibility and consideration of others at all times. Community agreements will be posted on Blackboard.

Names and Pronouns:

Students are entitled to be addressed by correct pronouns and preferred first names, even if these differ from those under which they are enrolled. As a class, we will do our utmost to refer to each other respectfully at all times.

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion:

This class takes place at a university committed to equity for all students, where diversity and inclusion are considered critical to the academic environment. In this classroom, free speech is respected, and civil discourse is expected, with a safe learning environment the priority. We will endeavor to use language that is respectful—sometimes being inquisitive and creative, because language changes all the time—particularly when it comes to differences in age, ethnicity, gender identity or expression, race or socioeconomic status.

Religious Holy Days Policies:

University policy grants students excused absences for observance of religious holy days. Please inform the professor at least one week in advance in order to make any necessary arrangements. You will be given an opportunity to make up missed work if necessary.

Course Recordings Policies

USC has policies that prohibit recording and distribution of any synchronous and asynchronous course content outside of the learning environment. Recording a university class without the

express permission of the instructor and announcement to the class, or unless conducted pursuant to an Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) accommodation. Recording can inhibit free discussion in the future, and thus infringe on the academic freedom of other students as well as the instructor. ([Living our Unifying Values: The USC Student Handbook](#), p. 13). Distribution/use of notes, recordings, exams, or other intellectual property, based on university classes or lectures without the express permission of the instructor for purposes other than individual or group study. This includes but is not limited to providing materials for distribution by services publishing course materials. This restriction on unauthorized use also applies to all information, which had been distributed to students or in any way had been displayed for use in relationship to the class, whether obtained in class, via email, on the internet, or via any other media. ([Living our Unifying Values: The USC Student Handbook](#), p. 13).

AI Technologies

Tools such as ChatGPT, DALL-E, Bard, and others are now part of the academic landscape. There will be times when using these tools is appropriate and times when using them is not to your benefit. We will work together to determine the opportunities and responsibilities of using these tools. All work should be original and created specifically for the given assignment; you should be the author of all text submitted, meaning—you are responsible for the accuracy and originality of any material submitted. Academic integrity policies regarding the use of generative AI tools will apply to every assignment. Any generative AI text should be treated as source material and should be appropriately cited. In other words, if someone else (or something else) wrote the text, a citation is necessary. You will be asked to further cite not just the source, but how you used these tools. This extra step is reflective of future professional standards and responsibilities. Please Note: I will not be using any AI tools in writing the feedback I provide you. All comments will be mine and I will take full responsibility for their content.

Description and Assessment of Assignments

Participation (10% of total grade):

This is a graduate-level seminar that meets once per week, and all students are expected to engage deeply in class discussion. Missing even one session will translate to a significant gap in our shared vocabularies. Please email Professor D'Amato regarding any health or caregiving issues that might get in the way of your participation. Please also let me know if any personal factors limit your readiness to contribute vocally over the course of a typical session. Absences must be discussed with the instructor, and will require make-up work to avoid penalties for low participation. This class cannot be passed without a full commitment, and students must complete the viewings of films/art and required readings before each seminar meeting to participate in discussion.

Article Presentations (15% of total grade):

Each student will address at least one “anchor reading” throughout the quarter. Presentations should be 8-10 minutes; they will lead us collectively into the week’s topics/themes and facilitate inclusive group dialogue. A schedule of presentations will be developed at the first seminar meeting. Presentations should consist of a brief discussion of the disciplinary context of the text (in relation to the fields of the performing, screen-based, and visual arts, and to the author’s particular background as this is relevant to the study of these intersecting creative

fields) and a summation of its main points. Presentations should not consist of lengthy textual analyses. The idea is to summarize, to note inconsistencies and insights in the text, and thus to spark discussion. Students should prepare a hand-out for all seminar members with an outline to guide their presentation; it is a good idea to end the outline with a list of questions to spark class discussion. Students should post the handout to Blackboard by 9am the day of class.

Enactments (10% of total grade):

Two times during the semester, students will choose at least one score from the provided resource lists to either perform, direct, or facilitate. If the student is directing or facilitating, they may choose performers, or solicit consenting performers from the class community. Time will be set aside at the end of class discussion to watch performances, or students may request that the enactments be performed simultaneously with class discussion. At the conclusion of a given group of enactments, scores will be considered from the perspective of their historical and disciplinary contexts, textual dynamics, practical considerations, demands on performers, and their effects on witnesses/spectators. A schedule of these enactments will be developed between week 2-3.

Midterm Dialogue (15% of total grade):

Each student will present a tentative summary (10-15 minutes, including time for questions) of research direction for their final project. This may include the delineation of a clearly defined topic, or a broader area of interest. Students should articulate their own investment in the research, what they hope to understand and/or to complicate. Research projects are understood to be in the early stages; nonetheless, students should be able to identify a clear sense of direction and some exploratory possibilities. In-class presentations will be paired with a written statement of intent and three annotated sources. Students are encouraged to schedule a consultation with Prof. D'Amato prior to the presentation.

Final Project: (50% of total grade)

Students will establish a topic for the final project in consultation with Prof. D'Amato and are required to schedule at least one meeting outside class time after the midterm dialogue, and before the paper drafts deadline. The project is assessed in two parts, the written submission (70 points) and the in-class presentation (30 points). The project should represent original research and argumentation that speaks to key themes/materials raised in the course. Papers should be approximately 3000-4000 words for MA students and upper-division undergraduates and approximately 4000-5000 words for PhD students (including notes). They should be research-based and written in clear academic prose. Performance components may be integrated into the research and presentation phases and should be discussed in advance with the professor.

Mandatory: typed, double-spaced, 12-point font, with proper and consistent footnotes or endnotes and bibliography. If you choose to use complete footnotes/endnotes with full citations, you do not need to include a bibliography. It is highly recommended that you use the current Chicago Manual of Style (available via USC Libraries) for guidelines on formatting. The Writing Center and USC Libraries are highly recommended resources.

The best way to approach the paper is to focus in on a topic that relates to: a specific interrelationship between practice and theory as evidenced in a particular score or practice; a problematic that impacts your own practice as scholar or performer; a case study of a particular performance, artist, score, or practice; a topic in which you feel you need more depth or breadth of understanding for your thesis or dissertation or future work. To begin: complete at least some of the extra readings or research sources beyond the syllabus to further develop your own bibliography. Pull out a central idea or theme that you find particularly compelling in terms of performance studies, performance theory, performance histories in general or, even better, in terms of your own area of interest.

Grading Scale

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|---|--------|----|-------|----|--------------|
| A | 95-100 | A- | 90-94 | B+ | 87-89 |
| B | 83-86 | B- | 80-82 | C+ | 77-79 |
| C | 73-76 | C- | 70-72 | D+ | 67-69 |
| D | 63-66 | D- | 60-62 | F | 59 and below |

Weekly Schedule

| | Topic | Required Readings, Resources, Deliverables |
|---|---|--|
| Week 1: January 11 | Theoretical and Practical Grounding, Disciplinary Foundations, Why “Generativity?” | No pre-reading; recommended readings on Blackboard. |
| Week 2: January 18 | The Indeterminate Break | Anchor Reading: Kotz, “Post-Cagean Aesthetics.” |
| Week 3: January 25 | <i>Blood Baby @ONE</i> | No new readings due |
| Week 4: February 1 | Fluxus and Concept(ual) Art | Anchor Reading: Harren, <i>Fluxus Forms</i> Enactments I |
| Week 5-6 February 8 & 15 | Text and Practice | Anchor Readings: 2/8: Manolescu, <i>Cartographies of NY</i> 2/15 Nicely, <i>Experimental Dance and the Somatics of Language</i> 2/8: Enactments I |
| Week 7 February 22 | Midterm Dialogue | Research Statements Due No new reading due |

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| Week 8-9 February 29 & March 7 | Manuals, Templates, and “Paratexts” | Anchor Readings: 2/29: Lepecki, “Masculinity, Solipsism, Choreography.” 3/7: “Ralph Lemon Portfolio” |
| Week 10-11 March 21 & 28 | Re-Enactment and Re-Performance | Anchor Readings: TBA 3/21: Enactments II 3/29: Paper Drafts Due |
| Week 12-13 April 4 & 11 | Scores as Communal Infrastructure, Technologies of Exchange | Anchor Readings: TBA 3/4: Enactments II |
| Week 14-15 April 18 & 25 | Dialogue and Course Wrap-Up | Presentations Final Papers Due April 26 |

University Resources

USC Technology Support Links

[Zoom information for students](#)

[Blackboard help for students](#)

[Software available to USC Campus](#)

USC Technology Rental Program

We realize that attending classes online and completing coursework remotely requires access to technology that not all students possess. If you need resources to successfully participate in your classes, such as a laptop or internet hotspot, you may be eligible for the university’s equipment rental program. To apply, please [submit an application](#). The Student Basic Needs team will contact all applicants in early August and distribute equipment to eligible applicants prior to the start of the fall semester.

USC’s Nine International Offices

Support for international students is also available through USC’s offices in Beijing, Shanghai, Hong Kong and South China, Taiwan, South Korea, India, UK and Europe, Brazil, and Mexico. Additional details and contact information can be found at <https://global.usc.edu/global-presence/international-offices/>.

Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Academic Conduct:

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 Part B, Section 11](#), “Behavior Violating University

Standards.” Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in [SCampus and university policies](#) on scientific misconduct.

Support Systems:

[Counseling and Mental Health](#)

phone number (213) 740-9355 (WELL)

On call 24/7 - Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

[National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#)

Phone number 1 (800) 273-8255

On call 24/7 - Free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

[Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services \(RSVP\)](#)

Phone Number (213) 740-9355(WELL), press “0” after hours

On call 24/7 - Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.

[USC Office of Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title IX](#)

Phone number (213) 740-5086

Title IX Office (213) 821-8298

Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants.

[Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment](#)

Phone number (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office of Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title IX for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

[The Office of Disability Services and Programs](#)

Phone number (213) 740-0776

Support and accommodations for students with disabilities. Services include assistance in providing readers/notetakers/interpreters, special accommodations for test taking needs, assistance with architectural barriers, assistive technology, and support for individual needs.

[USC Campus Support and Intervention](#)

Phone number (213) 821-4710

Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

[Diversity at USC](#)

Phone number (213) 740-2101

USC Roski

School of Art and Design

Information on events, programs and training, the Provost's Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

[USC Emergency](#)

UPC phone number (213) 740-4321

HSC phone number (323) 442-1000

On call 24/7

Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

[USC Department of Public Safety](#)

UPC phone number (213) 740-6000

HSC phone number (323) 442-120

On call 24/7

Non-emergency assistance or information.