

Lecture Course



Santa Reparata International School of Art
Course Syllabus

Semester Course

Course Title: Aesthetics of Performance Art

SRISA Course Number: ARTH 4203

Maryville Course Number: ART 497

Credits: 3, Contact Hours: 45

1. COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is dedicated to the history, aesthetics and practice of performance art with a special focus on the politics of the body in contemporary society. Students will study the evolution of body aesthetics in the 20th century and its latest manifestations by looking at the most important international artists, movements, critics and scholars working and writing about performance art.

Though a lecture course, there will also be two practical aspects to the course that students must complete. The first part consists of conceiving, planning and managing a performance as a means to understand the various implications of this specific piece.

The second aspect consists of what is called 'practice'. Practice consists of both collective and individual physical activity. This is aimed at experiencing the constitutive factors of performance art such as the body, time, space, sound, architecture and public place.

2. CONTENT INTRODUCTION

Performance Art is the way modernity broke into the contemporary world, as well as the oldest kind of human creative expression. It is connected to theater, dance, rituals and basic social and cultural relationships. The course aims to teach the complexity of all of this both through historical-theoretical and open discussions along with practical exercises.

The theoretical part of the course includes:

Introduction to the fundamental issues about the anthropological, social and cultural meaning of performance according to some relevant anthropologists and scholars. The disruptive role of performance in historical avant gardes and in neo avant gardes through the presence of the body interpreted as a symptom of social tensions and cultural transformations. The relationship and the difference between theater and performance will also be explored. The Golden Age of Performance Art, between the 1960's and 1970's, will be considered through its connections with technology, landscape and politics. The course concludes with a theoretical debate about the life of performance in the 1990's, and the new geographies of contemporary art in a globalized, post colonial world.

3. PREREQUISITES

The course is open to all students with a basic background knowledge in modern and contemporary art history. Additional readings and tests will be considered for students without such background. Since some practical and physical lessons are scheduled, students have to be ready to do body warm-up exercises before class begins, and to engage in exercises involving physical activity and actions with other students. No experience in either dance or theater is required to attend this course.

4. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

At the successful completion of this course the student will be able to:

- Develop personal ideas about the aesthetics of performance in artistic, political, anthropological terms.

- Understand the importance of relationships between art and social, physical and architectural space.
- Describe a performance piece analyzing its form and its meaning
- Develop writing skills, and professionalism in written work
- Develop vocabulary fitting to the expression of theoretical issues .
- Make an operative plan to stage a performance piece.
- Manage the implications of an artwork which takes place in three dimensions and to consider the 4th dimension of time.

5. REQUIRED MATERIALS AND SUPPLIES

Textbooks suggested for this course are:

- RoseLee Goldberg, "Performance Art", Thames&Hudson, 1979-2011
- Claire Bishop, "Artificial Hells", Verso Books, 2012
- Nato Thompson, "Living as form", MIT Press, 2012

Extracts from other texts will be furnished:

Victor Turner, From Ritual to Theatre. The Human Seriousness of Play, New York 1982

Richard Schechner, Between Theatre and Anthropology, Philadelphia 1985 / Performance Theory New York 1976 – 2004

Texts and statements by various artists, websites.

6. GRADING POLICY AND EVALUATION PROCEDURES

Your final grade will be based on the following percentages:

- 30% Attendance/Class participation
- 25% Home assignments
- 10% Mid-term paper
- 10% Mid-term exam
- 10% Final Paper
- 15% Final exam

The following grading system will be observed:

- A Excellent 4.0 (grade points awarded) 95% percentage of 100%
- A- 3.7 (90% to 94%)
- B+ 3.3 (87% to 89%)
- B Above Average 3.0 (83% to 86%)
- B- 2.7 (80% to 82%)
- C+ 2.3 (77% to 80%)
- C Average 2.0 (73% to 76%)
- C- 1.7 (70% to 72%)
- D Below Average 1.0 (60% to 69%)
- F Failure 0.0 (59% and below)
- W Withdrawal 0.0

7. PLAGIARISM AND COPYING

SRISA severally condemns ignorant plagiarism and copying during examinations. Any student that makes use of words or ideas taken from another person's work without properly citing credit for the specific purpose of deceiving their professor will receive an automatic "F" on that assignment or exam. Should the offense be repeated, the student will receive an automatic "F" in the class.

8. EXAMS

There are mid-term and final exams for this course. No make-ups are admitted for the exams and the dates of the exams cannot be changed for any reason. If a student is absent for the mid-term exam the final grade will be lowered by one full letter grade, if a student is absent for the final exam the final grade will be an "F".

9. ATTENDANCE AND BEHAVIOR POLICY

Students are required to attend all classes. If you miss class without an excused absence your grade will be lowered by one letter grade for each unexcused absence. If you are ill you should obtain a doctor's note in order to receive an excused absence. Missing more than four classes will result in an "F" on your transcript.

- Excused absences require a doctor's note or a written note from the Director.
- Tardiness: After 20 minutes into class time, students are considered absent.
- Students who leave 20 minutes before class time ends will be considered absent.
- Arriving in class unprepared to work is considered an unexcused absence.
- The use of cellular phones is prohibited during class time.
- The use of cell phones and iPods is prohibited in the darkroom at all times.
- Using your laptop or the computers in the lab is prohibited during class-time, unless it relates to a photography assignment.
- Students are expected to participate in class, act responsibly, and behave properly while on the school premises.
- Classrooms are to be left in order and clean.
- Students must take care of equipment and materials and promptly report any damage and/or loss.

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10. COURSE CALENDAR

Week 1

Introduction to the course.

What makes Performance Art different?

Questionnaire on past educational experiences, interests, background knowledge.

The anthropology of Performance.

From Victor Turner to Richard Schechner

1st home assignment

Week 2

The origins of Performance: Futurism, Dadaism, Constructivism, Surrealism.

Antonin Artaud and the Theatre of Cruelty.

Week 3

A total kind of artwork: from Bauhaus to the Black Mountain College.

From Oskar Schlemmer to John Cage

Introduction to the 2nd home assignment.

Week 4

Theatre, rituals and the Public Space:

The Living Theatre, Jean Jacques Lebel, the Wiener Aktionismus.

Week 5

Practical lesson: how to build a performance?

Motivations and objectives.

Week 6

Between Europe and USA: Fluxus

The Legacy of Jackson Pollock and Allan Kaprow.

Week 7

The Performing Body : Politics
Midterm Deadline.

Week 8
Break

Week 9
The Performing Body: Technology / Painting / Landscape
The crisis of Performance Art and the rise of new perspectives
A theoretical debate: Peggy Phelan vs Amelia Jones
Introduction to the 3rd home assignment.

Week 10
Practical lesson: the body, the time, the space
After 90's: new countries, new artists, old practices

Week 11
New subject matters for socially engaged artists,
Delegated performance and community based projects

Week 13
Recent landscape: Performance in the new millennium

Week 14
Italian Performance Artists

Week 14
Practical lesson

Week 15
Final

11. ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS

SRISA strives to foster an all-inclusive learning environment that best caters to its students' needs. While faculty frequently work one-on-one with students, there are some situations in which special accommodations are required. Should a student have any academic accommodations regarding test taking or otherwise, they must present an official letter from their home University to the SRISA Director within the first week of class stating the accommodations.

12. DISCLAIMER

This Syllabus may be amended as the course proceeds. You will be notified of any changes.