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Program in Educational Theatre
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Course: Introduction to Theatre of the Oppressed – MPAET-GE 2965:001 [Fall 2011]
Meeting times: Fridays from 4:00 - 6:25 pm
Location: 25W4 Room C-18

Instructor: Javier Cardona
Email: jc3079@nyu.edu
Office Hours: By appointment
Teaching Assistant: Cecilia Reabe
Email: c1l333@nyu.edu

“All I ask is: Let us sing with our own voice, even if it is hoarse, let us dance with our own body, even if it is dodderly, let us speak our own speech, even if we are uncertain.”

Augusto Boal

Course Description:
Theater of the Oppressed (TO), has been used, developed, and adapted to diverse settings around the world by countless groups and practitioners interested in applying theater, drama, and other performative art forms as a medium to engage people in a common space, so as to generate a more democratic and dynamic dialogue to address relevant issues within a particular community of people. This course is an introduction to the body of work of the Brazilian thinker, educator, activist, legislator, and theater innovator Augusto Boal. In addition to introducing students to Boalian praxis through the study of the writings of Boal and other TO practitioners, this course will engage students’ minds and bodies to explore and practice the “arsenal” of aesthetic games, physical exercises, and image techniques that form the bedrock of TO. This course will also study the fluid dialogue between Paulo Freire’s Pedagogy of the Oppressed and Boal’s TO. In order to investigate not only toward reflection, but toward the rehearsal of possible actions, this TO experiential course will invite students to creatively problematize personal, social, political, pedagogical, and aesthetic issues relevant to them in order to act and reflect on them.

Course Objectives:
- Students will be able to summarize theoretical literature in the fields of the Theatre of the Oppressed
- Students will be able to develop working definitions of critical terms through the interactive practice of techniques of Theatre of the Oppressed
- Students will be able to examine the role of theater as a tool for social action with transformative possibilities within a particular community
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• Students will be able to utilize Theater of the Oppressed techniques to open an aesthetic space to reflect and act upon issues relevant to them, without relying on verbal or written communication
• Students will be able to make a connection between Freire’s Pedagogy of the Oppressed and Boal’s Theater of the Oppressed
• Students will apply their knowledge of Theater of the Oppressed praxis by designing and facilitating group projects within class

**Key Course Questions for Consideration:**
• What do I understand by Theater of the Oppressed?
• What are the components that articulate the body of work of Theater of the Oppressed?
• What do I understand are the controversies and/or benefits of Theater of the Oppressed?
• What are the connections between Boal’s Theater of the Oppressed and Freire’s Pedagogy of the Oppressed?
• What, if any, is the role of Theater of the Oppressed in my practice as an artist and/or educator?
• How can theater promote change in people and society?
• What is the relationship between personal growth and social change?
• What is oppression and how to represent it?

**Class Format:**
Each class will include the activation of Theater of the Oppressed games and exercises, in addition to the study and dinamisation of TO arsenal. Please come dressed to move, or bring comfortable clothing to change into.

**Course Outline (subject to change)**

9/9/11 1
Setting up the TO platform to play, study, and rehearse possibilities
• Introductions: students, instructor, & course
• Introduction to Boal’s “Gamexercice”
Activation

- Syllabus review & agreements

- Reflection

9/16/11 2

The Tree of Theater of the Oppressed Structure of the Actor's Work

- Muscular exercises, Sensory exercises, Memory exercises,
  Imagination exercises, Emotion exercises

Five Categories of Games & Exercises

- Feeling what we touch, Listening to what we hear, Dynamising several senses, Seeing what we look at, The memory of the senses

Activation

2
Readings: Augusto Boal:
➢ Legislative Theatre – p. 3-5 Frances Babbage:
➢ Augusto Boal – p. 1-33

9/23/11 3 Intro to Image Theater
• Mirror sequences, Modeling sequences, Puppet sequences
  o Activation o Modifications TO games & exercises
  • Activation Readings: Augusto Boal:

9/30/11 4
Image Theater (continuation)
• Image games
• Image techniques
  o Models and Dynamisations
• Image of the world (1)
  • Image of the world (2) TO games & exercises
  • Activation What is oppression? Readings: Augusto Boal:
    ➢ Games for Actors and Non-Actors – p. 139-202 ➢ Legislative Theatre – p. 71-85

Philip Taylor:
➢ The Drama Classroom – p. 1-19

10/7/11 5
Image Theater (continuation)
• Machines of rhythms
  o Variations o Modifications
• Models and Dynamisations
  o Image of transition o Multiple images of oppression TO games & exercises
  • Activation

3
Readings: Augusto Boal:
10/14/11 6
Image Theater (continuation)
• Devising and rehearsing scenes
  o Examples of Image Theater What is Image Theater? Examples
• “Foto-estáticas” (video)
TO games & exercises
  • Activation Readings: Augusto Boal:
    ➢ *Games for Actors and Non-Actors* – p. 203-215

*First part of the Journal Due*
10/21/11 7
Pedagogy of the Oppressed & Theater of the Oppressed: a dialogic & critical encounter
• Problem posing, problem solving & rehearsing possibilities The image of the object
• Hot Objects
  o Exploration, manipulation, & transformation o Examples TO games & exercises
  • Activation Readings: Augusto Boal:
    ➢ *Theater of the Oppressed* – p. 1-156 ➢ *The Aesthetics of the Oppressed* –p. 95-129

*Paulo Freire*:
➢ *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* – p. 43-86, 87-124, 179-183 ➢ *Pedagogy of Freedom* – p. 21-54 Joe L. Kincheloe:
➢ *Critical Pedagogy* – p. 1-59
10/28/11 8
Intro to Forum Theater
• Vocabulary
• Structure
• The role of the Joker
• Devising forum scenes
• Rehearsing forum scenes
  o Exercises for preparation TO games & exercises
• Activation

4
Examples of Forum Theater

• “Mikey” (video)
• “La Plancha” (video)
  • “Family” (text) Readings: Augusto Boal:
    ➢ Legislative Theater – p. 195-207 Frances Babbage:
    ➢ Augusto Boal – p. 107-139

Freire/Boal reflection Paper Due
11/4/11 9

Forum Theater (continuation)

• Devising forum scenes
• Rehearsing and activating forum scenes
  o Exercises for preparation of a Forum Theater model TO games & exercises
• Activation Readings: Augusto Boal:
  ➢ Games for Actors and Non-Actors – p. 226-252 ➢ Legislative Theatre – p. 213-246
11/11/11 10

Divided into smaller groups, students devise their own TO projects

• Forum scenes, or Image theater piece, or Newspaper theater piece TO games & exercises
• Activation
11/18/11 11

In smaller groups students continue devising and/or rehearsing their own TO projects
TO games & exercises
• Activation

Second part of the Journal Due
12/2/11 12

Rehearsing Possibilities:

• Students’ Forum scenes, Image Theater, or Newspaper Theater
  work-in-progress group presentations Sharing possibilities:
• Class reflection and possible modifications based on group presentations
12/9/11 13
Rehearsing Possibilities:
• Students’ Forum scenes, Image Theater, or Newspaper Theater
work-in-progress group presentations Sharing possibilities:
• Class reflection and possible modifications based on group
presentations
5
Rehearsing Possibilities: 12/16/11 14

• Students' Forum scenes, Image Theater, or Newspaper Theater work-in-progress group presentations Sharing possibilities:
• Class reflection and possible modifications based on group presentations
Closing reflections Course evaluation
12/23/11 15

No class

Third part of the Journal Due


Weblinks through the Blackboard External Links Section: Democracy Now:
http://www.democracynow.org/2005/6/3/famed_brazilian_artist_augusto_boal_on
The Freire Project: The Paulo and Nita Freire International Project for Critical Pedagogy: http://www.freireproject.org/content/critical-pedagogy-tv

Throughout the course, the instructor will provide supplemental readings, either in hard copy or through the course Blackboard.


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TDR: The drama review, Volume 34, Number 3, Fall 1990.

**Course Requirements and Grading:**

- Attendance, teamwork (peer collaboration) and active participation: 25% of final grade
- Blackboard discussion contributions based on readings, group reflection, and in-class activities: 10% of final grade
- Freire & Boal reflection paper: 15% of final grade
- Students' group presentations (Work-in-progress): 25% of final grade
- Journal: 25% of final grade

**Assessment: Attendance, teamwork (peer collaboration) and active participation: 25% of final grade**

- Class attendance, collaborative skills and active participation will form a critical aspect of this course. The building of trust within a classroom community, to prepare to discuss issues of oppression experienced by members of the collective, is crucial. We will rely on our own life experiences to explore and create original material based on TO techniques.
- Unexcused absences will result in a lower grade for the course. Excused absences must be cleared with the instructor prior to a class meeting, and emergency absences must be reported to the instructor as soon as possible.
- Repeated late arrivals to class will be noted and will influence your final grade.
• The capacity of working in collaboration with peers will be observed and evaluated. Assessed on a quantitative basis as well as on critically reflexive practice and contributions.

**Blackboard discussion contributions based on readings and in-class activities: 10% of final grade**

• In a course like this, we will be dependent on continuing the critical dialogue beyond the classroom. Students’ and instructor’s postings and responses in the Blackboard Discussion Forum will give us the opportunity to reflect, through dialogue, on what we are reading, and how we are putting it all into practice, within and outside of the classroom.

• Blackboard Discussion Forum will serve as the dialogue interface, as well as several in-class meetings for groups, to clarify the virtual dialogue.
Postings and/or responses must be personal critical reflections, grounded and responsive to the ongoing posts.

Each critical posting and/or response Blackboard Discussion Forum must have a connection with the readings assigned as part of the course or other reading and experiences you are being engaged with.

Each student will be responsible for at least three official talking point posts.

Students will be graded on the critical content of their posts and/or responses to the overall discussions posted by their classmates. Assessed with respect to originality, creativity, and critical reflection on the discussion forum.

**Freire & Boal reflection paper: 15% of final grade**

Students will submit a 5 to 7 page (12 font, double-spaced) critically reflexive paper analyzing, comparing, and contrasting Boal’s Theater of the Oppressed and Freire’s Pedagogy of the Oppressed. What are the intersections of Freire’s and Boal’s theories and practices? Can Theater of the Oppressed be understood as a critical pedagogy practice? Why? How?

- Depth of content is essential.

- In their papers, students must make reference to readings and other materials being used to sustain their arguments.

- Bibliography (no less than three) cannot be exclusively from Internet sources.

- Others topics can be researched, if presented and accepted by the instructor. For example:

> o An analysis of Boal’s quote: “Anyone can do theatre, even actors.” Critically reflexive essay will be assessed with respect to clarity and comprehension of the praxis of Freire and Boal. DUE OCTOBER 28

**Students’ group presentations (Work-in-progress): 25% of final grade**

These student work-in-progress presentations, based on Forum Theater scenes, Image Theater pieces, or Newspaper Theater pieces, will be developed and critiqued within the community of our classroom. All students' TO presentation projects should address issues that are relevant to the group.

- Through their group presentations, students will develop narratives of oppression or relevant social issues to them.

- These TO-based “aesthetic stories” (Forum scenes, Image Theater, or Newspaper Theater) will be devised and rehearsed in and outside of classroom sessions. Final course sessions will be dedicated to present, activate, and reflect on each group’s presentation.
• Each group presentation should be around fifteen minutes long and include, for instance, Forum Theater scenes with the characters of the Joker, Protagonist, Antagonist, and a potential Ally.

• In their journals, students will critically reflect on the group process of devising their projects and evaluate their final product. In addition, students are required to reflect on their individual contributions to the group and to the performance. Students’ group performances will be assessed with regards to critically and creatively problem-posing a particular issue through TO games, exercises, and techniques.

**Journals: 25% of final grade**

• Each student is required to maintain a journal throughout the course. The journal will be collected at three intervals during the semester. Please check the course outline.
• The journal will serve to collect and describe games, exercises, techniques and enacted oppressions worked on in the class; however, it should also critically reflect the learning experience and how students are grasping the class materials.

• The journal is also about collecting, for further investigation, impressions, and questions stimulated by each course session.

• The journal is not a regurgitation of class notes; each entry should center on students’ personal and critical perspectives, responding to class activities, issues explored, class discussions and readings.

• Students are encouraged to place in the journal reflections from both within and outside of the course: What are the connections between what you are reading, studying and experiencing in the class and everyday life, history, current events, any other subject you are studying, or your own life? What are you learning about yourself from what you are reading, studying, and experiencing in the Theater of the Oppressed course?

• Journal entries should also respond to the Key Course Questions (page 2 on course syllabus)

• The journal should reflect on what students are experiencing through the class, and what still needs to be understood.

• Bibliographic sources in journal entries are required if students are using readings and other materials to sustain their reflections and/or arguments.

• Through their journals, students will demonstrate their self-responsibility and their growth in self-knowledge by documenting their learning progress in relation to the theory and practice of TO.

• Students will reflect on and evaluate, in their journals, their and others’ “Work-in-progress student group presentations.” What was the group process of devising my group performance like? How do I see my and others' final performances? In addition, students are required to reflect on their individual contributions to the group and to the performance.

• Journals will be submitted in a 12-font, double-spaced document. Assessed as to the critical content of entries; presentation, clarity of ideas, and organization; ability to summarize thoughts; evidence of creative and critical thinking; clarity of observations and evidence. Journals also will be assessed with respect to the clarity of students’ reflection on evaluating their individual contribution and the work-in-progress group presentations. 1st part of Journal Due: OCTOBER 14 2nd part of Journal Due: NOVEMBER 18 3rd part of Journal Due: DECEMBER 23
**Students must bring a notebook with them for every class session. This notebook will allow students to document class activities and discussions. The notebook will generate the primary material for students' journals and Blackboard discussion postings.**

Course Polices: Confidentiality and Respect There must be a strict sense of confidentiality adhered to in this course: it is unacceptable for anyone from this course to discuss the sensitive issues that might come up in class with people from outside.

Due to the controversial nature of some of the material examined and explored through this