

Border Crossings : Creativity in the Mix and the Margins
First Year Seminar / Fall 2005
Tues/Thurs, 12 – 1:15 pm, The Ring Theater, Scales Fine Arts Center

Taught by Professor Lynn Book, Department of Theatre and Dance
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COURSE CONTENT:

This course is for adventurers, interlopers, thieves and the just plain curious. Venture into unknown and sometimes unruly territories on the frontiers of creativity. Here we will chart the incredible cross-fertilizations that have occurred over the last several years between and betwixt fields, ideas and cultures. We will stake out our research from the perspective of the 'Big Four' of the Arts: Theatre, Dance, Visual Arts and Music learning how they have dramatically metamorphosed, yielding new forms in the mix of disciplines and in the margins between them. We will consider new hybrids such as performance art and new media forms that blur boundaries between the arts and also take a look at how other disciplines such as science, business and politics have infiltrated or influenced the arts and vice versa. The course will examine what the defining characteristics of disciplines and their distinct (or fuzzy) borders are and how our ideas about them are shaped, limited or encouraged by social and cultural contexts. Through lectures, discussions, and interactive means, you will be expected to not only traverse the sometimes imposing boundaries that separate disciplines and domains, but also to explore the actual borderlands themselves in search of the creative potential that gives birth to exciting maverick forms and cross-over innovations.

It is here, at the border crossings, that we will seek out and critically examine the creative spark and learn what it means to challenge, risk and fearlessly bring ideas to life. To this end, you will be expected to read and respond to writings and media samples about interdisciplinary arts practice and introduce a reading or examples from your own field of interest where interdisciplinary interchanges occur or are evolving into some future melange. You will also be exploring, in a physically creative way, interdisciplinary performance practices through collaborative investigations, group projects and also by creating a performance or presentation work yourself at semester's end. Hybrid forms might include a performance lecture, performance installation, interactive internet piece or other combinatorial format that brings together 3 or more distinct disciplinary practices. One of the goals of this course is to introduce the notion that imagination is encompassing and alive, ready to infuse all that you engage in. So don't be surprised by encouragement to reinvent how you think - and act.

Throughout the course of the seminar, you will develop critical research (including performative and exploratory), reading and discussion skills, writing and creative composing approaches, and gain new insight into creative options for future application both inside and outside the arts. Be prepared to challenge yourself on what creativity is, how it happens and who has the 'authority' to engage in it. To this end, the keeping and maintaining of a journal and some sort of transformative practice - which you create yourself! - will be an integral part of the course work. More formal writing projects will also be developed and enable you to critically understand the scope of creativity in contemporary society. Thus, the subjective explorations will extend and balance the objective investigations, giving you a real, experiential perspective on how you can become an innovator in whatever you do, making a unique imprint on your communities and the infinitely shifting boundaries of the world.

REQUIREMENTS:

- Fully engage in class activities and discussions, this includes being physically responsive and actively listening
- 4 quizzes on reading assignments
- 5-6 page research paper for mid-term on interdisciplinary activities in a selected field of interest
- Web Research Report and Paper
- 2 written responses to media materials
- Journal and Project on “Transformative Practice”
- Final Project [Exam]

ATTENDANCE:

More than 2 absences excused or unexcused will result in a lowered participation grade. More than 4 absences will result in an automatic letter grade reduction in the final grade for the course. Arriving late or leaving before the end of the class period will be counted as a partial absence, 4 of these result in a half a letter grade drop. Quizzes may not be made up.

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA:

- Participation in class through discussion and creative involvement in group exercises and projects: 35%
- Papers: 25%
- Development of Transformative Practice, Journal Keeping, Research Methods: 10%
- Presentations: 30%

The grading scale is departmentally determined and is as follows: A=930-1000 points; A-= 915-929; B+= 900-914; B=845-899; B-=830-844; C+=815-829; C=760-814; C-=745-759; D+=730-744; D=665-729; D-=650-664; 649 or less = F.

Every Wake Forest student is expected to know and to abide by the University’s honor code.

Do not hesitate to approach me if you are having difficulties in keeping up with the class or need extra support in responding to the requirements. The Learning Assistance Center is also a great place to go for assistance of any kind in helping bring out the best in you.

Enjoy the process of discovery that this course offers!

COURSE CALENDAR :

First Day : Sensing Beginnings

August 25 – Introduction to Course and Project Assignment of “Transformative Practice”.

Reading Assignment: “The Variety Theater” (handout).

Week 1 : Explorations in Creativity and Interdisciplinarity

August 30 – Lecture and Discussion.

September 1 – Interaction and Discussion.

Reading Assignment: Forward from Performance Art: From Futurism to the Present and “Approaches to Performance Theory” (handout).

Week 2 : Investigations in Theatre and Performance

September 6 – Lecture and Interactive Discussion.

September 8 – Library Day – Meet in Room 476 of the Reference Area of the Z. Reynolds Library. Bring your ThinkPads and an idea for a topic of research on interdisciplinary practice.

Reading Assignment: Chapter Six from Performance Art: From Futurism to the Present.

Writing Project: Take a featured interdisciplinary approach and practitioner(s) of that approach and write about your observations and evaluations (see writing project descriptions page). Due as a presentation and paper on Oct 4 (mid-term).

Week 3 : Investigations in Theatre and Performance

September 13 – Lecture and Discussion.

Quiz on Chapter Six (assigned reading from Sep 8).

September 15 – Interaction and Discussion.

Reading Assignment: Chapter Seven from Performance Art: From Futurism to the Present.

Week 4 : Border Crossings and Fertile Mixes

September 20 – Video Screening and Discussion.

Writing Assignment on featured video due Sep 27.

September 22 – Interaction and Discussion.

Quiz on Chapter Seven (assigned reading from Sep 15).

Week 5 : Challenging the Form of the Norm

September 27 – Lecture and Discussion.

Writing Assignment on featured video due today.

Reading Assignment: “Lecture on Nothing” (handout).

September 29 – Interaction and Discussion.

Week 6 : *Mid-Term*

October 4 – Presentation and Paper Due on Interdisciplinary Interests.

October 6 – Presentations Continued.

Week 7 : Creative Process: Discovery to Development

October 11 – Discussion and Reflection on Presentations and previous Reading Assignment

October 13 – Interaction and Report on “Transformative Practice” (assignment from first day).

[Fall Break Friday, October 14]

Week 8 : Methods and Modes of Invention

October 18 – Video Screening and Discussion.

Writing Assignment on featured video due October 25.

Reading Assignment: “From the Rhode Island Trilogy to Hula: Simple Demonstrations of the Laws of Physics” (handout).

October 20 – Interaction and Discussion.

Quiz on methods and modes of invention.

Week 9 : Cross-Fertilizations: Unexpected Outcomes

October 25 – Lecture and Discussion.

Writing Assignment on featured video due today.

Project Assignment: Read “Uncovering Fluxus – Recovering Fluxus” and create your own Fluxresponse to your Transformative Practice due Nov 8.

October 27 – Interaction and Discussion.

Week 10 : Collaboration: From Idea to Ensemble to Community

November 1 – Video Screening and Discussion.

Web Research Project: Visit interactive sites that support or promote interdisciplinary and new media production. Prepare report for Nov 10.

November 3 – Interaction and Discussion.

Week 11 : Creativity in “Non-creative” Fields

November 8 – Fluxresponse to your Transformative Practice.

Reading Assignment: Excerpts from Creativity, Flow and the Psychology of Discovery and Invention, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, Harper.

November 10 – Reports on Web Research Project. Hand in for review. Write an exposition paper that springs from this research and report due December 1.

Week 12 : Issues and Ethics in Interdisciplinary Practice

November 15 – Lecture and Discussion.
Reading Assignment: “Borderstasis” (handout).

November 17 – Video Screening and Discussion.

Week 13 : Final Project Proposal

November 22 – Presentation of Proposal and Discussion of Ideas and Strategies.
Quiz on issues and ethics in interdisciplinary practice.
Reading Assignment: “Refiguring Linearity” (handout).

[November 24 – Thanksgiving]

Week 14 : Final Projects Preparation

November 29 – Work Day to Prepare for Final Projects.

December 1 – Work Day to Prepare for Final Projects.
Writing Assignment evolved from Web Research Project due today.

Week 15 : Final Projects Presentation and Paper/Support Materials Hand-In

December 6 – Final Projects Presentation.

December 8 – Final Projects Presentation.

READINGS:

*This first book is required for the course. All other readings will be photocopies handed out by the professor. Readings are subject to change in accordance with class needs as per time and relevance (this includes additions).

Readings from Performance Art: From Futurism to the Present *, RoseLee Goldberg, Thames and Hudson

Historical and descriptive overview of Performance Art with a focus on the last 50 years.

> Forward, Pgs. 6 – 9

> Chapter Six, Pgs. 121 – 151

> Chapter Seven, Pgs. 152 – 226

“Approaches to Performance Theory”, Richard Schechner, revised essay from The Routledge Reader in Politics and Performance, Ed. Lizbeth Goodman with Jane deGay, Routledge

Discussion of play, games sports, theatre, and ritual in relation to time, rules, non-productivity and performance spaces.

“Refiguring Linearity”, Susan Kozel, essay from same as above

Exploration of linearity, post-linearity, bodies, territories and time.

“The Variety Theatre”, F. T. Marinetti. from Theatre/ Theory/ Theatre, Ed. Daniel Gerould, Applause Books

Manifesto by the premier proponent of Futurism, written in 1913.

“Lecture on Nothing”, John Cage, from Silence, MIT Press

An actual lecture delivered in 1959 that is structured in a way that reflects Cage’s conceptual responses to music, sound, composition and being.

“Uncovering Fluxus – Recovering Fluxus”, Jon Hendricks from Fluxus, Thomas Kellein, Thames and Hudson

Narrative of the beginnings of the term Fluxus and its assignation to projects, publications and objects and then to an entire art movement.

“From the Rhode Island Trilogy to Hula: Simple Demonstrations of the Laws of Physics”, David Savran with members of the Wooster Group from Breaking the Rules: The Wooster Group, TCG

Explication and demonstration of approaches and techniques of the Wooster Group, one of the most influential contemporary theater ensembles of the past 25 years.

Excerpts from “Borderstasis”, Guillermo Gomez-Pena from Extreme Exposures: An Anthology of Solo Performance Texts from the 20th Century, Ed. Jo Bonney, TCG

Performance text that challenges notions of border culture, identity and power relations.

