

Brown Paper Studio: An Applied Theater Process

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UMass Theater Course 293B, Fall 2016

Meeting Times & Location: Monday and Wednesday 4:00 – 6:00 pm, Upper Rand Studio

Office Hours: Wednesday, 12:30 – 1:30, Rand Theater Lobby, Rm. 27B

“A liberated society and person is one that can hold the truth of different ways, perspectives and mind states at once, where there is a complete acceptance of the way things are that also holds a prophetic vision of how things could be.”

framing deep change: essays on transformative social change

Course Description

Brown Paper Studio is a laboratory space exploring the creation of a year-long academic course in the theory and practice of Applied Theater. Applied theater is 1) generally performed outside of traditional theater spaces 2) presented by artists who are non-professionals and professionals working together and 3) entertaining although not performed solely for entertainment. Applied Theater is used widely in education, social services and human capital development and has been formally recognized as a theater practice and an area of scholarship in the last forty years. We will also collaborate on creating an instructional text, *The Essential Brown Paper Studio*, for future classes and facilitators.

Classes meet twice weekly and involve performance training, research methods, pedagogy and devising. Participants are expected to have some background in one or more of the following areas; theater practice, social justice or cultural activism, and facilitator experience.

Brown Paper Studio was developed in post-apartheid South Africa to express young people’s vision for their newly democratic country. The process combines original and selected text, music, movement, visual media and improvisation in a creative style that fosters individual self-expression and encourages harmony in civic life.

Course Objectives

- To introduce applied theater and to practice theater making skills
- To improve techniques for co-facilitation and collaboration, specifically using dramatic activities to build ensemble in communities and classrooms
- To facilitate Brown Paper Studio sessions as a service learning activity
- To increase self-awareness as a member of a pluralistic and diverse society

Reading and films are available on Moodle.

Readings

framing deep change: essays on transformative social change - angel Kyodo Williams, editor

Love, Race & Liberation: 'Til the White Day is Done – Calderon and Hall, editors

For the Feeling: Love & Transformation from New York to Cape Town – Judyie Al-Bilali

After Democracy: The Rise of the Post-Apartheid Generation in Democratic South Africa – Newman and De Lannoy

Selected reading, Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed

Magnet Theatre: Three Decades of Making Space – Lewis and Krueger

Let's Get Real: Exploring Race, Class and Gender Identities – Caldwell and Frame

Hey Xenophobe! Who You Calling A Foreigner? - Hattie Gossett

Black Lives (Don't Matter) Syllabus

Films

American Revolutionary: The Evolution of Grace Lee Boggs

Anne Braden: Southern Patriot

The Black Panthers: Vanguard of the Revolution

Race: the Power of an Illusion, Parts 1, 2 & 3

The Couple in the Cage

Favela Rising

Finding Fela!

Course Requirements

As appropriate to training in the theatre attendance and punctuality are mandatory. This is a studio class and as a member of the ensemble you are expected to be on time, arrive prepared to work and to remain for the duration of the class. Promptness is essential in all theatre work. Late arrival to class will disrupt the warm-up and the focus of the ensemble. Repeated lateness will affect the final grade. For each unexcused absence your grade will be lowered one half letter grade. Absences are excused at the discretion of the instructor, advanced written notification is expected. Medical absences require a note, either from a private physician or from the UMass Health Center.

- dress for movement and comfort including appropriate footwear
- water only in the studio, other food or beverages during breaks
- turn off pagers, cell phones and electronic devices for the entire class including breaks
- respect all ensemble members' time, space and contributions to class
- actors must schedule outside rehearsals and reserve practice space as necessary

Maintaining a journal or what's also called an artists' notebook, is crucial to success in this course. The journal is not for submission or grading, rather it is for you to chart your creative development. It contains notes from class, dreams, observations of human behavior, useful references for script development, photos, pictures, conversations, your own drawings, etc. An artists' notebook requires consistent writing. Please bring your journal to class.

Assignments and Percentage of Grade

Class Attendance and Participation – (20% Individual)

The building of trust in a creative community is vital to our success as artists. Class attendance and participation will form a critical aspect of the course, much of your work will require scheduling collaborative time outside of class. Please plan accordingly.

'I AM: An Autobiographical Portrait' – (15% Individual)

Students are asked to reflect on their own histories, heritages and cultural self-definitions. Feel free to include humorous anecdotes, stories about influential people, writings and quotes that had an impact on you and influenced your worldview. This assignment also serves as an initial self-assessment; outlining your questions and goals for the course. The narrative is 1,000-1,500 words in length and must be accompanied by an artistic expression such as collage, photo essay, CD of songs or short video.

Love, Race & Liberation Presentations – (20% Group) Small groups will be assigned various exercises from our primary text and facilitate a workshop for the entire class.

Service Learning Sessions at Amherst Regional Middle School (ARMS) - (20% Group)

We will visit ARMS during November and facilitate Brown Paper Studio sessions for middle school students. Teams will submit written lesson plan for each session.

Final Open Studio Presentation & Portfolios – (25% Individual & Group)

We will schedule a public performance (date TBA) of material from *Hey Xenophobe!* As a class and a company of artists we are moving from the individual portraits of our first assignment to an understanding and articulation of who we are as a collective. To allow time and space for our process to evolve. The form of the final assignment will be outlined by mid-semester.

Written Assignments

All written assignments are double spaced in 12 point font, and are due at the beginning of the class. Assignments turned in late will be discounted one half grade for each class they are late and will not be accepted if they are late more than one class period.

Email Policy

Email sent during the week will answered within twenty-four hours, email sent over the weekend will be answered on Monday.

Student Conduct and Academic Honesty

Students are responsible for complying with University of Massachusetts' standards of student conduct and academic honesty. The prescribed penalty for academic dishonesty consists of an automatic 'F' for the course and notification of campus authorities.

Individual Needs

This course must be as inclusive as possible and your communication is appreciated. Please notify the instructor if there is anything to be aware of regarding your particular needs or characteristics, such as a medical condition, a hidden disability, etc. that may influence your participation or your personal well-being. This disclosure is optional, or if you wish, only for selected individuals. UMass Amherst is committed to providing an equal educational opportunity for all students. If you have a documented physical, psychological or learning disability on file with Disability Services (DS), Learning Disabilities Support Services (LDSS), or Psychological Disabilities Services (PDS) you may be eligible for reasonable academic accommodations to help you succeed in this course.

Open Door Policy

If the requirements for the course are unclear please consult with the instructor during office hours, appointments can be made by contacting the instructor via e-mail or either before or after class times. Every effort is made to create a safe environment and a comfortable learning community for everyone. If at any time you feel it necessary, please feel free to address these issues with the instructor.

Course Schedule (subject to change)

Mondays are research and discussion, Wednesdays are studio sessions.

Act I – Company

Wed, Sept 7 – Introductions, warm-up, games and exercises

Mon, Sept 12– Brown Paper Studio, 'Basics and Beginnings'

Discuss *American Revolutionary: The Evolution of Grace Lee Boggs*

Wed, Sept 14 – studio session

Mon, Sept 19 – 'Be On Time'

Discuss *Anne Braden: Southern Patriot and framing deep change: essays on transformative social change*

Wed, Sept 21 – studio session

Mon, Sept 26 – 'Gratitude'

Discuss *The Black Panthers: Vanguard of the Revolution* and *After Freedom: The Rise of the Post-Apartheid Generation in Democratic South Africa*, Preface, The People of the Book and Apartheid Legacies, pages ix – 39

Wed, Sept 28- studio session

Act II – Concept -

Mon, Oct 3 – ‘Safety’

Discuss Part I the Differences between Us, *Race: The Power of an Illusion* and *The Essential Brown Paper Studio*, pages 1- 42

‘I AM: An Autobiographical Portrait’ assignment due

Wed, Oct 5 – studio session with Guest Lecturer, Finn Lefevre on Augusto Boal’s Theatre of the Oppressed, selected reading will be posted for this class

Tues, Oct 11 (Monday schedule) – ‘Circle’

Discuss Part II, The Story We Tell *Race: the Power of an Illusion* and *The Essential Brown Paper Studio*, pages 43 - 99

Wed, Oct 12 – Group 1 *Love, Race & Liberation* facilitation

Mon, Oct 17 – ‘Breath’

Discuss Part III The House We Live In, *Race: the Power of an Illusion*,

Wed, Oct 19 – Group 2 *Love, Race & Liberation* facilitation

Mon, Oct 24 – ‘Eye Contact’

Discuss *Couple in the Cage* and *Magnet Theatre: Three Decades of Making Space*

Wed, Oct 26 - Group 3 *Love, Race & Liberation* facilitation

Mon, Oct 31 – ‘Trust’

Discuss *Favela Rising* and *Let’s Get Real: Exploring Race, Class and Gender Identities*

Wed, Nov 2 – studio session

Mon, Nov 7– Discuss ‘Black Lives (Don’t) Matter Syllabus’ and *Finding Fela!*

Act III – Community

Wed, Nov 9 – Wed, Dec 14: ARMS Workshops and Open Studio dates TBA

Please note; Thanksgiving Recess is a full week, Sun, Nov 20 – Sun, Nov 27