

CHIC 3343 * DANC 4340 * WS 3330
Latino/Latina Voices in Performance Activism
Fall 2018

MW 3:00 – 4:20 PM

FOX D 180

Instructor: Sandra Paola López Ramírez

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This syllabus is not linear, and it is subject to change. Think of it as a map or a constellation of the work we will engage with this semester. It is not an exact timeline or representation of what we will do.

Course Description:

Performance activism is an emergent phenomenon that draws from the humanities and social science, including anthropology, performance studies and performative psychology. We will learn about the precursors to performance activism (experimental, political and educational theatre), the influence of performative psychology and philosophy, and Latino and Latina voices in the movement. We will explore relationships between performance art and activism and integrate theory with embodied experience.

Performance activism embodies a fundamental shift in the way (some) people are working to bring about social change. In the modern era, the dominant modality of social change was confrontation, demonstration and protest. The assumption behind this modality is that conflicting interests can only be overcome by antagonistic struggle. Performance activism embodies a new modality that draws upon the human capacity to play, create and perform. The premise is that people—even if and when their economic, social and/or political interests are in conflict—are capable of creating new relationships, new activities and new ways of moving forward together.

Course Format:

This class uses a series of readings, lectures, discussions, interviews and workshops to investigate performance as a creative response to local and global social problems. Throughout the semester, we will be in dialogue with Latinxs or Latin American performance activists with a wide range of approaches to this modality. We will hear examples from artists in or from Perú, Argentina, Brazil, México, Puerto Rico, Colombia, Costa Rica and the U.S.

The class will be divided in 4 units, each tackling a different aspect of performance activism. Each unit will be comprised of several readings, discussions, activities, interviews and an individual or group performative project.

Textbook:

This course doesn't have a textbook. Readings will be made available to you via blackboard.

Course Objectives:

- √ Address key topics and terminology for learning about performance
- √ Investigate the use of performance in and as activism
- √ Learn about influences and extensions of this movement to other disciplines
- √ Learn about Latino/Latina/Latinx voices in this movement and their impact
- √ Gain an understanding of the developmental power of performance through movement and performance-based exercises
- √ Engage in community activities that are performance-based and be able to discuss and reflect on those experiences in relationship to our class.
- √ Create our own performance-based responses to class material and current issues/events.

Late-work Policy: I do NOT accept late work. Please plan ahead and give yourself plenty of time to turn in assignments on time. If something extraordinary comes up that will prevent you from turning in an assignment (accident, death in the family, severe illness, etc.) you must let me know (if at all possible) **BEFORE the due date** to request an extension.

Attendance Policy: You have three (3) absences permitted during the course of the semester without penalty. After that, **your grade will be lowered 1/2 a letter grade for each day missed.** Keep in mind that coming to class late or leaving early will be considered as 1/2 an absence. ***Students missing more than six classes should drop the course.*** **Please make sure you are aware of the course drop deadline, dropping the class is YOUR RESPONSIBILITY!**

NOTE: In certain circumstances I will allow you to make up absences. If you want to do this, please schedule an appointment with me to discuss it further.

Criteria for Grading:

Participation and Effort (200 points): You **HAVE** to be engaged and actively participate to pass this class! Ask questions, make comments, engage in discussions and conversations, play games, perform and be *mindfully* present. I will occasionally call on students to answer questions based on our readings. Your preparation for our classes will highly influence your effort grade.

Interview responses (60 points total, 15 points each): You'll turn in a short, written response to four (4) of the interviews we will have during class throughout the semester. Please see guidelines at the end of this syllabus.

Group Play! workshop (50 points): You will participate in one of the *Group Play!* workshops— these are improvisation and performance-based community events— led by the *Institute for Improvisation and Social Action* and respond in a creative or unconventional way (please see guidelines at the end of this syllabus). Workshop dates are first Wednesdays of every month. **Response DUE December 10th**

Performative Projects (150 points, 50 each): For the first three units, individually or in small groups you will develop and perform a project. See unit breakdown below for guidelines. Performances are due at the end each unit: **Sept 17th, Oct 15th and Nov 7th** .

Final Performative Project (100 points): In small groups you will generate performance activist projects/interventions within UTEP or the greater El Paso/Ciudad Juarez communities **before** December 9th. A report to the class is due during our final time on **December 10th**.

Total possible points: 560

A= 100-90% (560-504)

B= 89-80% (503-448)

C= 79-70% (447-392)

D= 69-60% (391-336)

F= 59% and below (335 <)

Remember that the number of absences you have can lower your final grade!!!

Semester Units

Unit 1

Can performance change the world?

August 27 - Sept 17 (3.5 weeks)

An introduction to the concept, methodologies, and practices of performance activism around the world. We will also introduce some of the questions we will be wrestling with this semester. These include but are not limited to: What is performance? Why perform? What is activism? Can performance creatively engage/transform work, war, religion and ideology? Is performance a viable approach to creating new social/cultural possibilities and generating positive social change? How do we get antagonists to play and perform together? Can we do what we don't know how to do? What is the advantage of not knowing? How is performance an alternative to ideology? What is the difference between power and authority and what does the distinction have to do with performance?

“Performing the World: The Performance Turn in Social Activism,” by Dan Friedman and Lois Holzman, pp. 276-287, in *Performance Studies in Motion: International Perspectives and Practices in the Twenty-First Century*, edited by Atay Citron, Sharon Aronson-Lehavi and David Zerbib. Bloomsbury Methuen Drama. 2014.

“What is Performance?” by Richard Schechner, pp. 28-51, in *Performance Studies: An Introduction, 3rd edition*. Routledge. 2013.

“Framing [Performance]” by Diana Taylor, pp. 1-41, in *Performance*. Duke University Press. 2016.

“Can We Be the (New) Third World?” by Richard Schechner, pp. 42-57, in
*Performance Studies in Motion: International Perspectives and Practices in the
 Twenty-First Century*, edited by Atay Citron, Sharon Aronson-Lehavi and
 David Zerbib. Bloomsbury Methuen Drama. 2014.

Performative Project:

Students individually or in small groups locate and interview a performance activist,
 or activist theatre or organization in the El Paso/Ciudad Juarez area. **Oral
 performance to the class on the individual or organization interviewed DUE
 September 17th.**

Unit 2

A brief introduction to performance activism’s roots.

Sept 19 – Oct 15 (4 weeks)

A tracing of the historical roots of performance activism. We will look at precursors
 to performance activism and examine how these roots are manifest in current
 practice. This exploration will include, but not be limited to: agit-prop; happenings;
 guerrilla theatre; environmental theatre; street demonstrations, educational
 theatre, psychodrama, performative psychology and social therapeutics.

“Blue Blouse” by Deak, Frantisek. *The Drama Review*, Vol. 17, No. 9 (March 1973),
 pp.35-46.

Confessions of the Guerrilla Girls by Guerrilla Girls, Perennial, 1995. (excerpts)
Causing a Scene: Extraordinary Pranks in Ordinary Places with Improv for Everywhere by
 Charlie Todd and Alex Scordelis, William Morrow, 2009. (excerpts)

“Flash Mob Dance and the Territorialisation of Urban Movement” by Georgiana Gore,
Anthropological Notebooks, Vol. 16, No.3, pp. 125-131, 2010.

Improvising Real Life: Personal Story in Playback Theatre by Jo Salas. Tusitala, 1999.
 (excerpts)

“Poetics of the Oppressed,” in *Theatre of the Oppressed* by Augusto Boal, trans.
 Charles and Maria-Odilia Leal McBrinde. Urizen Books, 1979.

“Activity and Performance (and their Discourses) in Social Therapeutic Method” by
 Lois Holzman and Fred Newman, in *Discursive Perspectives in Therapeutic
 Practice*. Oxford University Press. 2011

More readings TBD

Performative Project:

Individually or in small groups create poems, collages and/or paintings reflecting a
 historical theatre movement or trend in psychology. Presentation to the class will be
 performative. **DUE October 15th.**

Unit 3

Performance activism by Latinxs and in Latin America

Oct 17 – Nov 7 (3.5 weeks)

Arrizón, Alicia. "In Quest of Latinidad: Identity, Disguise, and Politics." *Latina Performance: Traversing the Stage*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999. 1-28. Print.

Broyles-González, Yolanda. "El Teatro Campesino and the Mexican Popular Performance Tradition." *El Teatro Campesino: Theater in the Chicano Movement*. 1st ed. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994. 3-77. Print.

"Movements of Hope: Performance and Activism," by Ramón H. Rivera-Servera in *Performing Queer Latinidad: Dance, Sexuality, Politics*, pp. 94-133. University of Michigan. 2012

"Fire in the Memory: Theater, Truth and Justice in Argentina and Peru," by Roberto Gutiérrez Varea in *Acting Together: Performance and the Creative Transformation of Conflict*, Volume I, pp. 153-177. New Village Press, 2011.

More readings TBD

Performative Assignment:

Students individually or in small groups will create a short (2-5 minutes) skit, spoken word poem, performance action or dance reflecting the work of one of the performance activists studied. Performances will be done as part of the event: *Commitment to Service: Artivism* by the Student Engagement & Leadership Center **on November 7th from 10 PM to 1 PM.**

Unit 4

Performance activism in practice

Nov 12 – Dec 5 (4 weeks)

"Good-bye Ideology, Hello Performance" by Dan Friedman, *Topoi: An International Review of Philosophy*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (2011), pp. 125-35.

"Improvising New Realities: Movement, Sound and Social Therapeutics," by Sandra Paola López Ramírez and Chris Reyman in *Critical Studies in Improvisation / Études critiques en improvisation*, Vol. 12, No. 1.

"Performance as revolutionary activity: liminality and social change," by Dan Friedman in *Body, Space & Technology Journal* (on line), November 2000 (Vol. 1, No. 1)

"Designing and Documenting Peacebuilding Performance Initiatives," by Cynthia E. Cohen and Polly O. Walker, pp. 219 – 227, in *Acting Together: Performance and the Creative Transformation of Conflict*, Volume II. New Village Press, 2011.

More readings TBD

Final Performative Project

Throughout the span of this unit, groups of students, working closely with the instructor, will generate performance activist projects/interventions within UTEP or the greater El Paso/Ciudad Juarez communities. Our final time will be a report and conversation on how these projects went and the impact they had on those involved, including the students. **DUE December 10th**

Academic Dishonesty:

Any form of academic dishonesty: cheating, plagiarizing or taking a test for another student is considered a very serious matter at UTEP. Our library webpage provides good information on what UTEP considers Academic Dishonesty and what steps the university takes in such cases. Please review this information at:

http://libraryweb.utep.edu/research/copy_plag.php

Copyright and Fair Use:

The University requires all members of its community to follow copyright and fair use requirements. You are individually and solely responsible for violations of copyright and fair use laws. The University will neither protect nor defend you nor assume any responsibility for student violations of fair use laws. Violations of copyright laws could subject you to federal and state civil penalties and criminal liability, as well as disciplinary action under University policies.

ADA:

The Americans with Disabilities Act requires that reasonable accommodations be provided for students with physical, sensory, cognitive, systemic, learning, and psychiatric disabilities. If you have a disability and need classroom accommodations, please contact The Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS) at 747-5148, by email to cass@utep.edu, or visit their office located in UTEP Union East room 106. For additional information, please visit the CASS website at www.sa.utep.edu/cass.

Technology Problems:

Technology problems are NOT an excuse for work that is late or missing. Students need to complete assignments for this course well before the due date to allow time for dealing with technology problems. Contact IT for technological problems and remember that Atlas lab in the UGLC or LACIT in the Liberal Arts building provide assistance with using Blackboard.

University Writing Center:

Located in the library room 227, UTEP's University Writing Center (UWC) offers free tutoring assistance in writing for all UTEP students. The tutors are undergraduate and graduate students who can help with all parts of a writing assignment, including prewriting, organizing, revising, and editing. They can also help you understand any writing assignment and will work with you to aid you in comprehending difficult material.

Group Play! Response Guidelines

Due date: December 10th

Workshop Dates ,Times and Location:

September 5th

7:00 – 9:00 pm

October 3rd

November 7th

December 5th

6:00 – 8:00pm

All workshops are free and open to the public. They are offered at the Trinity-First United Methodist church, 801 N Mesa St, El Paso, TX 79902

Guidelines:

It is very important for me that you take the time to respond **thoughtfully** to what you experience. If you don't know where to start, asking yourself the questions below AFTER the workshop might be helpful.

1. What stayed with you after the workshop ended?
2. How did the experience make you feel?
3. What did you notice?
4. What kind of impact did the environment have on your experience?

For the assignment, I want to you respond in an unconventional and/or artistic way. Here are some ideas:

- A poem or script
- A drawing, collage, etc.
- A short dance/movement piece
- A song
- A short video
- A short story
- A website
- A cake or recipe

*NOTE: **DO NOT** take pictures and/or videotape during the workshop for your response. If you do so, this will result in a 0 for the assignment.*

This assignment is worth **50 points** and it will be divided as follows:

Effort and thoughtfulness in your work (15 points): I don't grade you on how "good" the artistic quality of your response is, but I will grade the time and effort you put into it. For

example: smudged stick figures drawn in pencil in a ripped notebook page does not show as much effort as a neat drawing or sketch done on a paper board.

Clear connections and thorough exposition (25 points): You will share your work with the rest of the class and will be expected to draw clear connections from your object/response to the workshop. How do the medium, colors, texture, flavors, images you chose, reflect your experience?

Proof of Attendance (10 points): Sign in the class attendance sheet at the event.

Interview Response Guidelines

We will be interviewing and dialoguing with performance activists throughout the semester. You will select 4 interviews and write a 2-page reflection for each one responding to the questions below. My suggestion is for you to respond to those interviews that you find yourself really engaged with, rather than doing the first 4 or the last 4.

Respond the following questions **thoughtfully and thoroughly**.

1. **What** did you find interesting or surprising about this person and **why** did that particular fact or piece of information grab your attention?
2. **What** connections can you make between their work and what we have been learning about performance activism?
3. **How** does learning about this person's life and work impact, change or enhance your understanding of performance and its role in society?

Format:

Your responses need to be:

- Typed
- Double spaced
- 12 pt. font
- Have one-inch margins all around,
- Printed

Due dates:

Your responses are due **at the beginning of class a week after the interview**. For example, if you are responding to an interview that was conducted during class on Wednesday, September 5th, your response is due at the beginning of class on Wednesday, September 12th.