

Latinx Voices in Performance Activism
Fall 2020

CHIC 3343 – CRN 18860
DANC 4340 – CRN 19310 (Selected Topics in Dance)
WS 3330 – CRN 19310 (Women in Fine Art)

MW 3:00 – 4:20 PM (synchronous meetings via Zoom)

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Office Hours: Held on Zoom by appointment.

*This syllabus 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 a complex and emergent phenomenon that draws from the humanities and social science, including fields such as anthropology, performance studies and performative psychology. What is performance? What is activism? The answers to these questions are in constant flux, continuously reshaping and redesigning what this field is and what kind of work is labeled as such. In this course, we will question what we think we know about these two terms (and the combination of the two) while focusing on Latinx womxn's presence in the movement.

Course Format:

This course is fully synchronous online. We will use a series of readings, interactive discussions, workshops and creative projects that will investigate performance as a creative response to local and global social problems and will work to integrate theory with embodied experience. The semester will be divided in three (3) units: the body on display, performance and development, and the body as a vehicle to reconnection.

PLEASE NOTE: Because it is an experiential course, your presence in our synchronous meetings is of utmost importance. Please read the absence policy in this syllabus carefully.

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 Latinx voices in this movement and their impact
- √ Gain an understanding of the developmental power of performance and the body's political nature through movement and performance-based exercises

- √ 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 you must let me know (if at all possible) **BEFORE the due date** to request an extension.

Absence Policy: To succeed in any course, but especially a dance or performance course where students can often only learn by experiential participation, a student must first and above all be present. Therefore, our policy at the Department of Theater and Dance prioritizes class attendance and participation at the top of the grading process.

However, due to the unforeseen circumstances dictated by the COVID-19 pandemic, we, as faculty, want to recognize and honor the challenges of online learning (both synchronous and asynchronous), and the difficulties in accessing an appropriate space to move and work with your body.

Because every student's circumstance is unique, we encourage students to be as open and honest as possible when encountering unexpected challenges, as well as to communicate in advance potential issues that could affect their commitment to class (childcare, elder care, shifting work schedule, etc.).

E-mail your instructor as soon as an issue comes up: this is the only way you can get help and possible accommodations while minimizing the impact on your academic progress. While every situation will be assessed by the instructor, the more a student communicates in a clear and effective way, the easier it will be to find a positive solution. Make up classes might be an option to discuss with your instructor.

The following guideline is intended for ONLINE SYNCHRONOUS CLASSES that meet twice a week:

In a course that meets twice a week, a student is allowed a maximum of **6** absences in an entire semester, **4** of which require no justification and result in no penalty. A student may use these absences based on personal necessity. The 5th and 6th absences will result in a drop of $\frac{1}{2}$ letter **each** in the student's overall grade. At the 7th absence, regardless of the student's current course standing or grade, **the student automatically fails the course.**

Technology Requirements: Course content is delivered via the Internet through the Blackboard learning management system (LMS). Ensure your UTEP e-mail account is working and that you have access to the Web. You may use any of the primary Web browsers—Explorer, Google Chrome, Firefox, Safari, etc. When having technical difficulties, try switching to another browser.

We will use the platform ZOOM (www.zoom.us) for our synchronous class meetings. Please follow the former link and download the application to your computer or smart phone. Instructions on how to join the call can be found on our blackboard course home page.

You will need to have or have access to a computer/laptop, webcam or built in camera, headphones and a microphone. You will need to download or update the following software: Microsoft Office, Adobe, Flashplayer, Windows Media Player, QuickTime, Java and the Zoom app as stated above. Check that your computer hardware and software are up-to-date and able to access all parts of the course. If you encounter technical difficulties of any kind, contact the Help Desk at <https://www.utep.edu/technologysupport/>

Camera Use: Please plan to use the video camera when joining the zoom call **every class**. We will be doing experiential workshops that will be impossible without us being able to see each other. If this is an issue for you, **PLEASE EMAIL ME ASAP** for us to discuss options.

Netiquette:

- Always consider audience. Remember that members of the class and the instructor will be reading all postings.
- Respect and courtesy must be provided to classmates and to instructor at all times. No harassment or inappropriate postings will be tolerated.
- When reacting to someone else's message, address the ideas, not the person. Post only what anyone would comfortably state in a face to face situation.
- Blackboard is not a public internet venue; all postings to it should be considered private and confidential. Whatever is posted on in these online spaces is intended for classmates and professor only. Please do not copy documents and paste them to a publicly accessible website, blog, or other space. If students wish to do so, they have the ethical obligation to first request the permission of the writer(s).

Criteria for Grading:

Effort Points (synchronous meetings) (280 points total*, 10 points each): Because this is an experiential course, you are expected to show up and actively participate in our live conversations and workshops. For every class you attend (with the exception of the first day of class and of Labor day - Sept 7th), you will be awarded 10 effort points. If you are unable to attend a class, you can get effort points by posting questions, comments and/or reflections on any readings, assignments or former discussions to the appropriate unit discussion board. These posts should be thoughtful and at least one full paragraph to get all 10 points.

Please note: **Effort points are separate from the absence policy.** Even though you will not be penalized for the first 4 absences you have, you **MUST** post to the discussion board to get the effort points the week when you miss a class.

**Keep in mind that the total points for these will be adjusted if any classes are canceled.*

Unit discussion boards: Each unit will have a discussion board on our blackboard page. This forum will be available for us as a class to use as much (or as little) as we want. It is another way to keep everyone connected and involved in the conversation throughout the semester. Please note that you are only expected to post when you are unable to attend our synchronous class meetings but are invited to do so as often as you would like!

Reading quizzes (45 points total*; 5 points each): Every unit will have 3-5 assigned readings and a quiz due for each. The material that I make available to you will be the starting point for our discussions, so I encourage you to take your time with each reading so that our conversations can be nurtured by your thoughts and questions about it.

**Please keep in mind that the total points for these will be adjusted according to the number of readings actually assigned.*

Unit Assignments (150 points total; 50 points each): For each unit you will have an assignment to complete outside of class and bring it to our live conversations for discussion. Please see the unit descriptions below for due dates and a brief description of each. Detailed instructions will be posted to blackboard and explained throughout the semester.

Final Reflection and Conversation (50 points): To close out the semester, you will make a creative response that reflects your overall experience in the course. You will present this during our last meeting as part of our final collective performance. This last live conversation will take place during our slotted time on finals week. If you are unable to attend, you'll be required to share a video of your response on blackboard for the class to see BEFORE the final meeting time. More detailed instructions will be provided by mid-November.

Grade Breakdown:

Total possible points: 525*

A= 100-90% (525-472)

B= 89-80% (471-420)

C= 79-70% (419-367)

D= 69-60% (366-315)

F= 59% and below (314 <)

**Even though the amount of points might change as we adjust throughout the semester, the percentage for each letter grade will remain the same. I will post an updated syllabus to our blackboard course when this changes.*

Semester Units

Unit 1: The Body on Display

August 24 - Sept 25

In this unit we will begin by defining concepts relevant to our course. Our investigation will be guided by questions such as:

- What is performance?
- Why perform?
- What is activism?
- Are there different types/kinds of activism?
- Can performance creatively engage/transform our world?

We will analyze why putting the body on display is a political act and look at how it has been used in activism in varied contexts at different moments in history. We will also share and discuss contemporary examples of Latinx womxn using performative tactics to create social change in Abya Yala, Turtle Island and beyond.

Possible Readings:

"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.

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

"Mambo's Open Shines: Causing Circles at the Palladium" by Danielle Goldman, pp. 28-54, in *I Want to Be Ready: Improvised Dance as a Practice of Freedom*. The University of Michigan Press. 2010.

"Choreographies of Protest" by Susan Leigh Foster, pp. 395-412, in *Theatre Journal*, Vol. 55, No. 3, Oct. 2003.

"The Body as Revolutionary Text: The Dance as Protest Literature in Latin America" by Lois Jaeck Marie, pp. 43-50, in *Ciencia Ergo Sum*, vol. 10, núm. 1, marzo, 2003.

Unit Assignment: Artist Presentation

In small groups, you will research an artist and create a 15 to 20-minute presentation of their work. Your groups and presentation dates will be assigned by your instructor on the second week of class.

In-class presentation dates: **September 21st and 23rd.**

Unit 2: Performance and Development

Sept 28 - Oct 30

This unit will present a specific variant of performance activism that sees performance as a developmental tool necessary for social transformation. We will be questioning:

- 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?

In addition to reading about this methodology and learning about examples in Latinx contexts, we will put it into practice through workshops during our live meetings.

Possible Readings:

“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.

“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.

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

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

“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.

Unit Assignment: “Yes, and” conversations

After being introduced to and practicing the improvisation motto of “yes, and” in class, you will stage two conversations in your daily life using that approach. After each encounter, you will chronicle the conversation in writing, post it to blackboard and prepare to share your experience in our live conversation.

Chronicles due date: Post on blackboard **by 11:59 pm on October 26th**
In-class discussion: **October 28th**

Unit 3: The body as a vehicle to re-member

Sept 28 - Oct 30

This final unit will challenge our patriarchal capitalist framework of productivity and efficiency by offering a matriarchal approach based on individual and collective healing. Drawing from traditional and indigenous world views from around the world, we will engage with the task of transforming ourselves as we approach collective transformation... since, as we will learn, they are part of the same activity. Some of our guiding questions will include:

- What does it mean to be successful activists? Successful in general?
- What are the implications of being grounded in a somatic understanding of interconnectivity?
- Can we decommodify performance and activism?
- How can we extend our sense of belonging beyond our species?

We will practice some of these approaches through workshops, discuss complex concepts in our conversations, and engage in performative scores to investigate our environments.

TBD Possible Readings by:

Ngugi wa’ Thiongo, Jeremy Hayward, Ana Halprin, Andrea Olsen, Sandra Paola López Ramírez

Unit Assignment: Scores

You will perform a series of outdoor scores aimed to shift and enhance our perception of different natural and constructed environments. You will document your experience in a video, image, poem, or drawing and post them to blackboard to share with the class.

Documentation due date: Post on blackboard **by 11:59 pm on November 30th**

In-class discussion: **December 2nd**

IMPORTANT Statements Regarding UTEP COVID-19 Precautions:

- 1) You must STAY AT HOME and REPORT if you (1) have been diagnosed with COVID-19, (2) are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, or (3) have had recent contact with a person who has received a positive coronavirus test. Reports should be made at screening.utep.edu. If you know anyone who should report any of these three criteria, encourage them to report. If the individual cannot report, you can report on their behalf by sending an email to COVIDaction@utep.edu.
- 2) For each day that you attend campus—for any reason—you must complete the questions on the UTEP screening website (screening.utep.edu) prior to arriving on campus. The website will verify if you are permitted to come to campus. Under no circumstances should anyone come to class when feeling ill or exhibiting any of the known COVID-19 symptoms. If you are feeling unwell, please let me know as soon as possible, and alternative instruction will be provided. Students are advised to minimize the number of encounters with others to avoid infection.
- 3) Students are not permitted on campus when they have a positive COVID-19 test, exposure or symptoms. If you are not permitted on campus, you should contact me as soon as possible so we can arrange necessary and appropriate accommodations.

Student Responsibilities during the COVID-19 Pandemic:

- Complete self-screening (screening.utep.edu) prior to every campus visit.
- Complete COVID-19 student training at [this site](#).
- Contact instructor if temporary accommodations due to COVID-19 are needed (i.e., due to positive COVID-19 test, symptoms, or exposure).
- If unable to wear a face covering (e.g., medical reasons), the best course of action is to enroll in courses that are entirely online or to work with academic advisors, if necessary, to identify alternative courses. If this is not possible, request an accommodation from [Center for Accommodations and Support Services](#) (CASS)

prior to coming to campus for in-person activities. Students who receive an accommodation to not wear a face covering must share this with the professor and work to minimize contact with others in the class.

Accommodations Policy:

The University is committed to providing reasonable accommodations and auxiliary services to students, staff, faculty, job applicants, applicants for admissions, and other beneficiaries of University programs, services and activities with documented disabilities in order to provide them with equal opportunities to participate in programs, services, and activities in compliance with sections 503 and 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 and the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA) of 2008. Reasonable accommodations will be made unless it is determined that doing so would cause undue hardship on the University. Students requesting an accommodation based on a disability must register with the [UTEP Center for Accommodations and Support Services](#).

Scholastic Integrity:

Academic dishonesty is prohibited and is considered a violation of the UTEP Handbook of Operating Procedures. It includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, and collusion. Cheating may involve copying from or providing information to another student, possessing unauthorized materials during a test, or falsifying research data on laboratory reports. Plagiarism occurs when someone intentionally or knowingly represents the words or ideas of another as ones' own. Collusion involves collaborating with another person to commit any academically dishonest act. Any act of academic dishonesty attempted by a UTEP student is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. All suspected violations of academic integrity at The University of Texas at El Paso must be reported to the [Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution \(OSCCR\)](#) for possible disciplinary action. To learn more [HOOP: Student Conduct and Discipline](#).

Student Resources:

- [UTEP Library](#): Access a wide range of resources including online, full-text access to thousands of journals and eBooks plus reference service and librarian assistance for enrolled students.
- [Help Desk](#): Students experiencing technological challenges (email, Blackboard, software, etc.) can submit a ticket to the UTEP Helpdesk for assistance. Contact the Helpdesk via phone, email, chat, website, or in person if on campus.
- [University Writing Center \(UWC\)](#): Submit papers here for assistance with writing style and formatting, ask a tutor for help and explore other writing resources.
- [Math Tutoring Center \(MaRCS\)](#): Ask a tutor for help and explore other available math resources.
- [History Tutoring Center \(HTC\)](#): Receive assistance with writing history papers, get help from a tutor and explore other history resources.
- [Military Student Success Center](#): UTEP welcomes military-affiliated students to its degree programs, and the Military Student Success Center and its dedicated staff (many of whom are veterans and students themselves) are here to help personnel in any branch of service to reach their educational goals.

- [RefWorks](#): A bibliographic citation tool; check out the RefWorks tutorial and Fact Sheet and Quick-Start Guide.