

**ANTH 3321 / 5321 Topics in Anthropology  
Theatre Anthropology and Performance Studies  
Fall 2024**

Mondays

Lecture: 6:30 PM – 8:15 PM,

Tutorial: 8:30 - 9:15pm (MA students) 5:30 - 6:15pm (UG students )

Teacher: Alberto Gerosa, NAH 411,

Office Hours: by appointment

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**Course Description:**

This course introduces students to Theatre Anthropology and Performance Studies. Participants will study pre-expressive scenic behavior and how it constitutes the basis of people's performed roles, personal and collective traditions. Our interdisciplinary journey draws from the social sciences, the humanities, and the arts. We focus on the pervasiveness of performance as a core element of social and cultural life, including theater, performance art and dance, rituals and practices of everyday life, storytelling, entertainment, constructions of ethnicity, race, class, sex, and gender, fairs and heritage festivals, play and sports, various instance of expressive behavior or cultural enactment.

Offering a deepening of the early focus on ritual by Van Gennep and Artaud's re-interpretation of ancient Greek theatre, continuing with Erving Goffman's research on performance and its further articulation by Victor Turner and Richard Schechner, to theater anthropology practitioners Jerzy Grotowski and Eugenio Barba, the course will eventually dwell on contemporaries Wu Wengguang, Anne Bogart and Punchdrunk. We will experiment with performative methods that achieve a shared vocabulary of ethnographic output beyond the written word. To explore and represent human experience, how could we use performance to collect evidence, and how as theater makers can we experiment with voice, style, form, genre, process, et cetera in response to debates over issues of representation? The study of theater anthropology and performance studies is essentially an exploration into the nature of reality and the problem of 'presence' within an agreed context of liminality. Each student's fieldwork project will be the starting point to choose the most appropriate dramaturgy method to render ethnographic research performatively.

Through the merging of research and narrative practices in both performing arts and anthropology, the laboratory practical sessions will explore techniques enriching our engagement with our respective ethnographic fieldworks and embodied knowledge production. Through practical exercises and theoretical lectures, students will learn about the craft and academic requirements of devised theater, with a primary focus on the voice and body training skills gathered by Jerzy Grotowski and Eugenio Barba, as well as on the subtraction dramaturgies theorized by Deleuze and Bene, and several world performance techniques. Can anthropologists learn from theater a holistic approach to fieldwork, resulting in the innovative scholarship forms of fiction, theater, performance? Performative devices provide ethnography with tools to analyze findings through the body and embodiment in space, engaging fieldwork and scholarship more viscerally.

**Learning Outcomes:**

Describe and explain in an informed and broad-based manner the history of theater anthropology and performance studies, and their practices relevant to anthropology.

Develop and conduct ethnographic research, using performance as a research tool and research output, from initial premise to final rendition.

Utilise a range of performing methods and collaborative devise practices to engage informants participatorily, sharing a new vocabulary of expression with them and rendering ethnographic fieldwork data creatively.

Analyse the premise and dramaturgy of collective rituals and theatre performances and their cultural responsibility, through ethnographic research terms.

Acquire basic performance training techniques of voice and physical expression.

**Language Of Instruction:**

English

**Required Texts:**

All readings will be posted on Blackboard.

**Assessment:**

Guidelines for how to write response papers and for the independent project will be provided in class. All assignments (response papers and independent project) must be submitted to VeriGuide. Assignments without a signed declaration from VeriGuide will not be graded. Please visit:

[https://academic.veriguide.org/academic/login\\_CUHK.jspx](https://academic.veriguide.org/academic/login_CUHK.jspx)

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<i>Grade Item</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Due Date</i>
Independent Project, Dramaturgy Stage	15%	October 25th
Written Reflection, Approaching Performative Ethnography	15%	November 10th
Independent Project, Rehearsals and Devising Stage	20%	November 22nd
Independent Project, Final Performance	30%	December 23
Participation and Teamwork	20%	--

### **Course Schedule:**

#### **Week 1 (September): Introduction to Performance Studies**

Introduction to Course Content and the performative ethnographic method. Starting from the Van Gennep studies on rituals of passage, to their re-interpretations by Victor Turner and Richard Schechner, students will be familiarized with the discipline of Performance Studies and the benefit it brings to ethnographic inquiry.

#### **PRACTICE: Ecstatic Physical Movement, (Re)connecting with the self and others**

### **Required Readings:**

Goffman, E. (1956) *The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life* (pp. 175-182)

*Schechner, R. (2003), Performance Theory. Routledge, pp. 112-169.*

### ***Recommended Readings:***

*Van Gennep (1908) 1909; The Rites of Passage*

### **Week 2: Theater Anthropology**

The double-nature of Theatre Anthropology as both academic and artistic will be deepened, inspiring students on how to bring its formal findings into their respective fields of research. The work of Jerzy Grotowski, Peter Brook and Eugenio Barba will be introduced, as well as their relevance for the contemporary anthropological means of knowledge production.

### **PRACTICE: Breathing and Voice Training, (Feldenkreis and the Grotowski vocal method of Five Voice Resonators)**

#### **Required Readings:**

Bull, M., & Mitchell, J.P. (Eds.). (2015). **Ritual, Performance and the Senses** (1st ed.). Routledge.  
Read the Introduction Chapter

#### **Recommended Readings:**

Grotowski, Jerzy (2002) *Towards a Poor Theatre*, Edited by Eugenio Barba, Routledge  
Read the Preface by Peter Brook

### **Week 3: The Third Theatre**

Students will be acquainted with the milestones of the history of the third theater, with a special attention towards the theatrical masterpieces it produced, on the ridge between theatre and ritual. The story of Odin Teatret in Denmark and the Theatre Laboratory in Poland and Italy will be introduced.

### **PRACTICE: Breathing and Voice Training II: Choral Singing, Ancestors Prayer and Meditative Sounds**

#### **Films Excerpts Shown in Class:**

Draisma Janica (2020) *The Secret Room - A Journey into the Universe of Odin Teatret*

Gabriel Aniela (2023) *Radical Move: The Jerzy Grotowski Workcentre*

### **Week 4: Dramaturgy and Devising Techniques**

Students will learn how to focus on the sensorial side of collective experience, through the use of their observation and performative techniques. The dramaturgical theory of Resonance by Anne Bogart and Richard Schechner will be introduced and applied.

**PRACTICE: DRAMATURGY I: Synthesizing our fieldwork observation into a simple outline (sensorial focus, aesthetics VS academic priorities, monograph VS performance)**

**Required Readings:**

Deleuze, Gilles and Felix Guattari. 1983. "What Is Minor Literature?" In *Mississippi Review* 11(3): pp. 13-33.

Bogart, Anna (2021) *The Art of Resonance*, Bloomsbury  
Read the Introduction Chapter

**Shown Video Excerpts:**

Schechner, Richard (2013) *An Introduction to Maya Lela*

**Week 5: Research and Performance Proposal and its Rethorics**

We will discuss the epic structure of myth and its connection to ritual and theater traditions worldwide. Student groups will be required to think of a theatrical work proposal based on their interest, experience and the larger theme chosen by the Professor.

**PRACTICE: DRAMATURGY II: After introducing your world, what happens to it? (Aristotle's Three Acts Structure, Tension, Character's Arch).**

**Required Readings:**

Hsieh, Chieh-Ting, Fang-Wei Chang, (2022) *Contemporary Performance*, Taipei Fine Art Museum, Introduction chapter (pp. 24-30); Chapter *Dramaturgy on Shifting Grounds* (pp. 215-220)

**Week 6: Participatory Techniques**

Students will learn practical techniques of participatory engagement for their informants, and will be introduced to a selection of collectively authored performance works. Special focus will be given to the experience of Chinese choreographer Wen Hui and ethnographer Wu Wengguang, and their experience with the Chaochangdi Workstation

**PRACTICE: Participatory Techniques: What happens when anthropologists share their means of representation with informants?**

**Week 7 – The Via Negativa Method: sensorial images from Jerzy Grotowski to Carmelo Bene**

Students will confront their experience of devising fieldwork findings with the subtraction method of *Via Negativa* theorized by Jerzy Grotowski and Gilles Deleuze. This technique of articulating a performance content will be introduced, and its different applications tested on the students' respective projects.

**PRACTICE: Montage in Devising Dramatic Performance, the Bottom-Up directing Technique of Odin Teatret and Jerzy Grotowski**

### **Required Readings:**

Schneider, Arnd (2017) *Alternative Art and Anthropology, Global Encounters*, Routledge pp. 89-92  
*Theories in images: Tadashi Yanai in conversation with Arnd Schneider* Tadashi Yanai and Arnd Schneider

Deleuze, Gilles and Bene, C., (1979) *Superpositions*, Paris: Minuit pp. 1-11 *One Less Manifesto*

### **Week 8: In-Class analysis of Ethnographic Fieldwork: Rhythm and Flow**

In this topic students will present a key scene from their works in progress, and will be shown each other's material. They will be given feedback to work on, and suggestions on how to identify, expand and articulate the strongest elements within the flow of their storytelling.

**PRACTICE: The Magic triangle: “You, Audience, Subject of Research” How to keep your direction within a long-term ethnographic fieldwork forest**

### **Required Readings:**

Machon, Josephine (2009). *(Syn)aesthetics Redefining Visceral Performance*, Palgrave Macmillan  
Read the first part of the Introduction Pp. 34-54

### **Week 9 Developing the Scene Outline**

In this topic, students will start editing their existing performative scenes towards the creation of a first Scene Outline: Their final Ethnographic performances will start to take shape.

**PRACTICE: Refining Gesture and Voice Tone**

### **Week 10: Set Design: Environmental Theatre, Street Performance and Activating the Spectator**

Students will be inspired to think out of the box for their set design and location choices: they will be learning exceptional examples from the history of theatre and performance, including environmental theatre, performance art, street performance, immersive theatre. They will work in groups to evoke and highlight their own interpretations of their initial research focus.

### **Required Readings:**

Machon, Josephine (2009). *(Syn)aesthetics Redefining Visceral Performance*, Palgrave Macmillan  
Read the Punchdrunk chapter: pp. 89-99

**PRACTICE: How and where do we set our piece (being pro-active, leverage on a community of interest, Psycho-geography)**

### **Week 11: Contemporary Theatre Anthropology and Performance**

In this lesson students will be acquainted with the work of contemporary practitioners Milo Rau and Joshua Oppenheimer, their performative approaches and techniques to address conflict zones and collective trauma through participatory theater.

**PRACTICE:** Students will be given time to work in groups towards the creation of a micro-scene based on each group's shared tension.

**Required Readings:**

Catherine Russell, (1999) "Ecstatic Ethnography: Possession Rituals" (pp. 193-237)

**Week 12: Directing & Acting Laboratory**

Students work in groups to refine their performances, according to their scene outline and set design choices. They are given feedback in the form of concrete rhythm guidelines towards the completion of their piece.

**PRACTICE:** Class presentations of independent works-in-progress, indications on each project's direction

**Week 13 Dress Rehearsal**

Students present to the class their final performances, explaining how their project has evolved throughout the semester.

**PRACTICE:** Class presentations of independent projects

**Week 14 Public Performances**

Students perform their final performances for the larger audience, explaining how their project has evolved throughout the semester in a post-performance Q&A.

**POLICIES**

**Participation**

Student participation is critical to the success of each class. Please come to class prepared to discuss and listen to your classmates thoughtfully, and ask questions. You certainly don't have to speak up during every class period, but you will be evaluated on the general pattern of your class involvement over the course of the semester. Keep in mind that there is no such thing as a stupid question or comment. As long as it is respectful to others, your question or comment will likely help to stimulate conversation.

## Late Submissions

Late response papers will suffer a full grade deduction – e.g. an A- will become a B-. Late submissions will not be accepted past Monday 5:00 p.m. Late take-home exams will not be accepted more than 48 hours past the original due date, and will suffer a full grade deduction for every day late.

## Academic Honesty

The Chinese University of Hong Kong places very high importance on academic honesty, and adopts a policy of *zero tolerance* on cheating in examinations and plagiarism. Any such offence will lead to disciplinary action including possibly termination of studies at the University. Students should know how to properly use source material and how to avoid plagiarism. Students should read the detailed guidelines and examples for the acknowledgement of sources in the University's website at <http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty>. Students are required to submit all papers through VeriGuide, which is also explained at the above website.

## TEXTBOOKS

Bogart, Anna (2021) *The Art of Resonance*, Bloomsbury

Bull, M., & Mitchell, J.P. (Eds.). (2015). **Ritual, Performance and the Senses** (1st ed.). Routledge.  
Introduction

Deleuze, Gilles and Felix Guattari. 1983. "What Is a Minor Literature?" In *Mississippi Review* 11(3): pp. 13-33.

Deleuze, Gilles and Bene, C., (1979) *Superpositions*, Paris: Minuit pp. 1-11 *One Less Manifesto*

Goffman, E. (1956) *The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life*

Grotowski, Jerzy (2002) *Towards a Poor Theatre*, Edited by Eugenio Barba, Read the Preface by Peter Brook, Routledge

Hsieh, Chieh-Ting, Fang-Wei Chang, (2022) *Contemporary Performance*, Taipei Fine Art Museum, Introduction chapter (pp. 24-30); Chapter *Dramaturgy on Shifting Grounds* (pp. 215-220)

*Littlewood, R., 1998, Mental Illness as Ritual Theatre, Performance Research, 3:3, 41-52.*



- Lehman, Hans-Thies. (2004). *Postdramatic Theater*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Machon, Josephine (2009). *(Syn)aesthetics Redefining Visceral Performance*, Palgrave Macmillan  
Introduction Pp. 34-54 Punchdrunk pp. 89-99 Akram Khan pp. 112-123
- Martin, Carol. (2013). *Theater of the Real*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Schechner, R. (2003), Performance Theory. Routledge, pp. 112-169.*
- Schneider, Arnd (2017) *Alternative Art and Anthropology, Global Encounters*, Routledge pp. 89-92  
*Theories in images: Tadashi Yanai in conversation with Arnd Schneider* Tadashi Yanai and Arnd Schneider
- Turner, V. (1982) "*From Ritual to Theater: The Human seriousness of Play*", *Performing Arts Journal*.
- Veena Das (1996). *Language and Body: Transactions in the Construction of Pain*. *Daedalus* 125(1): 67-91

## **RECOMMENDED READINGS**

- Artaud Antonin, (1938) *Theatre and its Double*
- BRUNER, E. & TURNER, V. 1986, (ed) *The Anthropology of Experience*.
- BUTLER, Judith, 1998- "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution", *Theatre Journal*, Vol. 40, No. 4. pp. 519-531.
- Conquergood, D., 2002, "Performance Studies: Interventions and Radical Research", *The Drama Review* 46, 2.
- HUGHES-FREELAND, F. 1996, *RITUAL, PERFORMANCE, MEDIA*, Routledge: London
- KERTZER, 1998 - *Ritual, Politics and Power*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Van Gennep (1908) 1909; *The Rites of Passage*

## **Filmography**

- Draisma Janica (2020) *The Secret Room - A Journey into the Universe of Odin Teatret*
- Gabriel Aniela (2023) *Radical Move: The Jerzy Grotowski Workcentre*
- Rau Milo (2017) *The Congo Tribunal*

Oppenheimer Joshua (2013) The Act of Killing

**Grade descriptors are as follows for the assessment of this course:**

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Overall course</b>
A	Outstanding performance on all learning outcomes.
A-	Generally outstanding performance on all (or almost all) learning outcomes.
B	Substantial performance on all learning outcomes, OR high performance on some learning outcomes which compensates for less satisfactory performance on others, resulting in overall substantial performance.
C	Satisfactory performance on the majority of learning outcomes, possibly with a few weaknesses.
D	Barely satisfactory performance on a number of learning outcomes.
F	Unsatisfactory performance on a number of learning outcomes, OR failure to meet specified assessment requirements.