

COURSE SYLLABUS - COM691 : QUESTIONING THE BODY

COURSE INFORMATION

Number: COM691

Name: Questioning the Body

Semester: Spring, 2017

Course ID: 24432

Meeting Day/Time: Mondays, 6:00 pm – 8:45 pm

Location: The Empty Space, ASU Performing & Media Arts Bldg. (APMA)
970 E. University

PROFESSOR & CONTACT INFORMATION

Dr. Sarah Amira de la Garza

Office: Stauffer Hall, Room A341, Tempe Campus

ASU email: delagarza@asu.edu

Course email: com691@gmail.com

Office Hours: Tuesdays, 3-4 pm and by appointment

Phone during Office Hours: 480-965-3360

Phone (texts): 602-910-9494

Special dedicated office hours will be scheduled during times of critical course assignments. Students will also have two personal one-on-one sessions scheduled with the professor over the course of the semester.

Seminar Assistant

Brandon Ferderer

Office: Stauffer Hall, A434, Tempe Campus

ASU email: brandon.ferderer@asu.edu

Additional contact information for the seminar assistant and his availability will be made provided in class. Students should take advantage of the S.A., but should be aware that his role is not to “keep secrets,” make exceptions, or influence grades. He will comment and advise on course assignments, but will not grade or record grades. All e-mail correspondence with the Seminar Assistant about the course will be shared with the professor so that each student can receive the best advising during the class.

NATURE OF THE COURSE

This graduate seminar seeks to provide a transdisciplinary experience-informed awareness of the issues raised by qualitative, performative scholarship. Specifically, the course explores the ways the human body of the performer, as well as his/her psycho-cognitive relationship to his/her own body and the experience of the bodies of others, informs, impedes, essentializes, and/or determines the choices and movements (intellectual and physical) in the course of developing and enacting a performative text or work. Students will be required to employ, create, and participate in a variety of embodied and mindful exercises and practices over the course of the semester, will read and analyze scholarly texts 'with the body', seek and formally share through writing and performance literatures which inform and question the issues of performative value to him/her, and develop a short performative piece *incorporating* the integration of class materials and processes with personal interest and issues of social and professional relevance. The course is informed by the professor's performative experience and formal education in performance ethnography, ritual, dance, yoga (hatha, shabda, mudra, pranayama), art as meditation, and qualitative/naturalistic inquiry.

Note: All students will engage in specific physical exercise and movement as part of the course content and required activity/assignments.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Boal, Augusto	<i>The Rainbow of Desire: The Boal Method of Theatre & Therapy</i>
Bogart, Ann	<i>The Viewpoints Book: A Practical Guide to Viewpoints and Composition</i>
McConachie, Bruce	<i>Theatre and Mind</i>
Olsen, Andrea	<i>BodyStories: A Guide to Experiential Anatomy</i>
Spry, Tami	<i>Body, Paper, Stage: Writing and Performing Autoethnography</i>

Supplemental Readings

There is an online "packet" of digital readings available via Dropbox. Students must provide the exact email address they use for accessing their Dropbox in order to access the readings. The folders containing the readings will be made available shortly after the first class meeting. Students may also find they wish to access additional materials as they explore options for their class assignments. . A bibliography of the supplementary readings will be e-mailed to the class and made available along with the Syllabus and Course Schedule on the Blackboard site content archive. Supplementary readings will **not** be provided on Blackboard.

GRADED COURSE ASSIGNMENTS & RESPONSIBILITIES

The following assignments are scheduled throughout the course as indicated on the Class Schedule of Assignments and Activities. Specific and additional requirements and details will be provided in class by the professor. All assignments and responsibilities for completion of assignments are required of all students.

A. Body Story Journal, Activities & Video Body Stories (300 points)

Journal—(100 points) Each student is required to keep a personal journal in which notes, exercises and reflections inspired by the readings in Olsen’s *BodyStories* book. The is organized by “days,” which have been assigned to the particular weeks of the semester during which the course is being taken. You should reflect on the content from each chapter in a journal entry that addresses the aspect or part of the body in that chapter. You can write memories or *BodyStories* of your experiences with respect to the aspects or parts of the body covered. The journal should be a monitor of your ongoing conscious engagement with your body, using Olsen’s book as the guide. This is designed to keep you engaged with your body throughout the semester, even when not in class. Writing in your journals should occur two or three times a week, to build the practice of conscious awareness and attention to the body. **Bring your journals to class.** Journals will be collected and reviewed twice during the semester for each student. While your journal is being reviewed, you should maintain entries on loose leaf paper that can be inserted in your journal when it is returned to you.

Body Activities—(Completion evaluated through Journal review—lack of evidence of engaging in body activities will earn a “negative grade”) Some of the suggested body exercises in the book will be recorded and provided to you as mp3 podcasts which you can use to guide you through the bodywork. It is advised that you do these *after* you have read the corresponding chapters. The exercises may be familiar or at times strange to you. For this class, we will be focusing on growing awareness of each aspect or part of the body to creative knowing and process. Use your journals to note any insights or ideas that come to you, as well as for recording your bodily responses of resistance, laziness, energy, or hubris. Try not focus on the quality of your emotions, but on the nature of the experience of the emotion and your responses.

BodyStories (200 points, 50 points each)—At four points in the reading of the chapters, you will be required to tell a part of your *BodyStory*, using similar reflection techniques as suggested in chapter 1 for your *BodyStory*, and emphasizing the insights that have emerged and arisen through the readings and exercises from the book. (Please note that while the more academic readings we will be covering in class may inspire you, your *BodyStories* should focus on the Olsen reading, and not on the theoretical materials.) These *BodyStories* will be recorded using the GoReact program.

B. Embodied Enactment: Workshops of Scholarly Ideas (100 points)

This is a collaborative assignment that will require the selection of a theory or concept that is of significance to you as a graduate student. The assignment requires that you work in pairs to develop a 15-20 minute participative and embodied “ritual” or enactment of the core concepts and issues which are seemingly intended in an essay, chapter or research article that deals with basic or fundamental theoretical/conceptual knowledge or ideas in the area you’ve selected. These are not to be representational or symbolic exercises, nor scripted or spoken word

activities. Rather, the challenge is to create a sequence of embodied activities that you use to generate the awareness of issues as seemingly intended by the authors of the pieces you select. One week prior to the workshop, each pair should hand in a hard copy of the written work inspiring the workshop, a one-page prospectus describing the intentions of the workshop, and a time-sequenced annotated schedule of the workshop activities. On the day of each workshop, the workshops will take place after the class break, and any preparation of space should occur during the break.

C. Solo/Collaborative Performance Project (300 points)

After spring break, students will be asked to consider, then propose a 10-12 minute performance piece that they will develop, workshop and rehearse for a public performance at the end of the course. The performance piece should be linked consciously to a topic, theme, or narrative which will be developed using an array of approaches to permit the mind-body to have agency. Students should keep a separate journal of these approaches and activities, noting not only how their creative process is advancing, but as a way of becoming more familiar with the ways s/he resists or favors particular forms or topics when questioning the body. The performance pieces are part of the pedagogical process in this class, and as such should be considered “works in progress,” even after they have been performed. The final performances will be performed before a public audience. Each student will submit a concept paper (50 pts) & extended script or storyboard (100 pts.) and tentative title for their piece, and may work solo, or with one or two other students in the class. Each student will submit a final review (on GoReact) of their own work after the final performance. (50 points). Successful performance will receive 100 points.

D. Class Participation and Attendance (200 points)

Students’ ability to engage in discussion that reflects preparation for each class (including assigned readings, journaling and ongoing BodyStories work) will be vital. Attendance is absolutely imperative in this class, due to the studio nature of the activities that will accompany the readings. Social obligations and personal “down time” are considered voluntary absences and are not excused. Legitimate documented emergencies, documented professional conferences at which presentations are scheduled, and university approved religious observance are excused. Students are accountable for all missed materials during an excused absence, and readings and ongoing assignments should be completed and submitted despite absences. Each scheduled class meeting is worth 15 points. Partial attendance will affect the points earned. Negotiating makeup work for an excused absence, as well as submission of scheduled due assignments should be arranged with the professor.

E. Final Examination (100 points)

The final examination for the class will involve an open-book opportunity to process and integrate the class experience in response to a set of questions designed to professionally suit each student. It is not an examination of recall or facts, but will rely on course materials.

GRADING

Students are able to earn up to 1000 total points. Grades are distributed according to the scale: A+:100%; A: 94-99%;A-:90-93%;B+: 88-89%; B:84-87%;B-:80-83%;C+:78-79%;C: 74-77%;C-:70-73%; D: 60-69%; E: 0-59%. There will be no curving of grades.

EXPECTATIONS

Students are expected to uphold the university guidelines governing academic dishonesty, to be responsible for updates and modifications to the class requirements based on instructor assessment of the class experience, and to report any events or circumstances affecting their performance and participation in the class to the professor in a timely fashion. Violations of the student code of conduct will be taken very seriously.

Blackboard & Grading

This class will not use Blackboard as the primary source of course materials, but will use the gradebook on Blackboard to log grades. Grades will be reported manually by the professor, and not electronically, at semester end.

SCHEDULE OF READINGS, ASSIGNMENTS, AND MAJOR CLASS ACTIVITIES

About This Schedule...

Students are expected to do the reading on the Class Schedule of Assignments & Activities *by the date* of the class meeting on which the readings are indicated. The activities and assignments on this schedule are subject to change by the instructor based on circumstances and class progress. It is the responsibility of the student to stay up to date when such changes are made.

Supplementary readings not found in the required textbooks will be made available to students via Dropbox, and this schedule will provide guidance for how to approach the readings

BodyStories journaling and activities are assumed as ongoing, per the description of the assignments in the course syllabus and are not listed on this schedule. Podcasts and supplementary audio/visual materials will be provided to the class

Embodied Enactment Workshops will be scheduled in class and added to the schedule.

JANUARY 9: INTRODUCTION TO THE CLASS

Overview of the class, discussion of the reading, introductions and class exercises.

Reading:

De la Garza, “Mindful Heresy, Holo-Diction, & Poesis” (PDF)

JANUARY 23:

This week, we will explore ideas of mind and body, categorizations and framing of the body and mind.

Reading & Assignments:

BodyStories- You will *read* and *do* the exercises in chapters 1-3.

BodyStories--*Read only*, chapters 4-5. The chapters in this book are very brief, but the content is very important.

Supplemental Reading :

“Bodies and Minds” Folder

Read each piece in its entirety, with the exception of the Wilson book. Read the full Introduction to the book, and the first part of ch. 1

DUE: Embodied Enactment Topics & Partnering

Preferred topics/themes for Embodied Enactment Assignment, decisions for collaboration made.

JANUARY 30: Consideration of the Body-Mind in Performative Space

This week, we will juxtapose perspectives of “embodiment” as illustrated through readings and online materials, as well as exploring the potential of human beings/bodies in aesthetic spaces.

Reading:

Boal, Intro, Preface, and Chs. 1-4

McConachie, *Theatre & Mind*

Olsen, chs. 6-7

Online Materials:

Sheldrake, links provided via e-mail and Blackboard.

FEBRUARY 6: The Implicit Orthodoxies in Our Minds & Bodies

This week, we will explore ideas and ways of deconstructing unconscious framing, experience and bodily presence and movement through the use of readings and introductory exercises.

Reading

Bogart & Landau, *The Viewpoints Book*, chs. 1-4

Olsen, 8-9

Supplemental Reading:

“Thinking, Things & Representation” Folder

Read all readings in their entirety, except for Heidegger’s *What is Called Thinking*.

Suggested Sequence: Robbins, Heidegger (lectures 1 & 2), Gendlin, Campbell

FEBRUARY 10 (FRIDAY): MAKE-UP SEMINAR**12:00 – 2:00 pm, The Empty Space****Guest Lecturers: Dustin Goltz and Kimberlee Pérez**

On the topics of vulnerability, collaboration, friendship, and performance. This seminar experience offers the class an opportunity to consider and discuss ideas, experiences, and perspectives on the topic of collaboration in performance. Attendance is required.

FEBRUARY 13: Inherited & Imposed Structures

This week's class will consider the paradoxical nature(s) of structure and its relationship to experience, holding and releasing, and certain disciplines of attachment.

Reading

Boal, Chapter 5, pp. 58-74

Olsen, 11-13

Supplementary Reading:

"Disciplines" Folder

All readings in their entirety

DUE: Scheduling of Journal Review #1 and One-on-One with Dr. de la Garza

(scheduling will take place in class)

FEBRUARY 20: Western States Communication Association Conference

CLASS WILL NOT MEET ON THIS DATE

DUE: BodyStory # 1, Recorded on GoReact, by midnight, February 23

This week will also include journal reviews and one-on-ones.

FEBRUARY 27: Sourcing from Within

This week, we will go further with practice techniques and through the work of Julia Kristeva, explore and inform our relationship with those things in our body-selves that are asking to be told.

Reading

Viewpoints, ch. 5

Spry, ch. 1

Olsen, chs. 15-17

Supplementary Reading

"Kristeva" Folder, *Julia Kristeva* by McAfee

We will focus on the discussion of her basic concepts, as they connect with our project of creative and intentional performance

DUE: Before Spring Break

Prepare a brief 2-page prospectus of an idea for your performance

MARCH 6: SPRING BREAK

MARCH 13: The Body Imaginative(s) and Imaginar(y/ies)

This week, we will discuss the nature of trauma, framed through the work of Cathy Caruth, and through deep work and serious-playful practice.

Reading

Viewpoints, ch. 6-7

Boal, "The Practice," Part II, Section 1, pp. 75-86

Olsen, chs. 18-19

Supplementary Reading

"Caruth" folder, Essay: "Unclaimed Experience"

DUE: Body Story #2, on "The Past in the Present"
by March 12, 11:59 pm on GoReact

It is especially important that you do not come to this class "starving," nor "stuffed."

MARCH 20: This is Making Me Sick?...Resistance & Flexibility

In this class we will explore the sense and non-sense of ideas such as free will, power, and the capacities of intention, intentionality and surrender as epistemological bases for performance.

Embodied Enactment #1

Reading

Viewpoints, ch. 7

BodyStories, 20-21

Supplemental Reading

"Sartre" folder, including a quick & easy overview of Existentialism from the internet, and his book, *Nausea*.

DUE: In-class scheduling of "one/two-on-two" meetings with Dr. de la Garza and Brandon to discuss your performance ideas and plans.

MARCH 27: Writing the Body

This class will combine class exercises with writing work that utilizes prompts inspired from the readings and body work/movement in class. We will begin going further with Boal's method, through integration with our process.

Embodied Enactment #2

Reading

Spry, ch. 2

Boal, pp. 87-94

BodyStories, 22-23-24

DUE: Body Story #3, On Rigidity and Flexibility

Due by March 29, 11:59 pm

(The due date is adjusted to allow for the experience in the class to inform your work)

APRIL 3: Sincerity, Authenticity, and Performative Imperatives

In this class, we will explore the idea of sensations and "gut" responses and its relationship to ways we navigate within the tensions of expectations, rules, and performative imperatives.

Embodied Enactment #3

Reading

Spry, ch. 3

BodyStories, 25-26

DUE: Précis of Performance, with either "script," or annotated storyboard.

Bring **two** HARD COPIES.

APRIL 10: Release, Projection and Expansion

The work and discussion in class will center around improvisation and projection of subjectively held images and narratives.

Embodied Enactment #4

Reading

Boal, pp. 96-116

BodyStories, 26-27

Viewpoints, chs. 8-12 (Read as in reading a handbook, and highlight and note

Ideas that “call to you”—use the ideas as you workshop, adapt and rehearse your performance piece.

APRIL 17: Guided Introspective Work, Trusting the Gut Beyond Impulses and Compulsions

Our class will be intensive work, with discussion, with exercises inspired by the readings. We’ll revisit the ideas of “disciplining” and “revolt” from earlier weeks.

Embodied Enactment #5

Reading

Boal, pp. 118-173

Spry, chs. 4-5

BodyStories, 28-29

Students are encouraged to journal around the questions and themes in the readings resonate deeply with them, and to consider areas where guidance in the introspective process could help in “questioning the body.”

DUE: Body Story #4 –On Emotions

APRIL 24: On Staging the Personal Project—Reality Setting In

This class will be focused on identifying and discussing the idea of “reality” and “images.” Students should come to class ready and willing to discuss and explore real issues encountered

in their personal and collaborative work, with practice during this class, designed to help process the dialogue.

Reading

Boal, pp. 174-188

Spry, ch. 6

BodyStories, 30-31

DUE: Journals are DUE the night of the final Performance* and will be returned to students at the Final Examination Meeting.

***FINAL PERFORMANCE DATE: TBA**

FINAL EXAMINATION: TBA

A NOTE on ADDITIONAL DATES on the SCHEDULE:

There are only 14 meeting dates on the calendar, which do not meet the requirements of 45 contact hours for a 3-hour class, so we are “making up” the missing class through attendance of a guest scholar seminar on performance collaboration. Additionally, the hours for the February 20 date will be rescheduled as rehearsal hours.