

Cristiana Giordano and Greg Pierotti
First-Year Seminar – Winter 2017
WELLMN 5
Monday 10-10:50

Ethnographic performances: A collaboration between theater and anthropology (1 unit)

This seminar has two components: 1) we will examine issues of migration, and 2) we will explore the cross pollination between narrative practices in anthropology and theater. By creating a dialogue between these disciplines in a laboratory format, we pose questions and engage techniques in ways that will enrich our engagement with anthropological questions and performative productions. We will explore how anthropologists can learn from theater and the arts a more performative understanding of narrative, and how theater makers, performers, and artists can learn from social sciences' methods a more nuanced understanding of political and cultural contexts. We will use theatrical devising techniques to engage ethnographic questions and material. In particular, we will focus on material that the instructor has been collecting on issues of foreign migration to Italy, and the current "refugee crisis" in the Mediterranean and Europe. The ethnographic material and its theatrical rendition investigates the narratives, spaces, and experiences that discussions on the "crisis" and national borders tend to erase and marginalize. We will draw from archival, ethnographic and visual material, focusing especially on interview transcripts with foreigners and their families; asylum seekers; and with Italian doctors, bureaucrats, and activists engaged in providing care, documents, and shelter to migrants. Theatrical devices will provide us with tools to analyze our findings through the body and the embodiment of narratives in space. By exploring the ethnographic material through the elements of the stage (lights, sets, objects, sound, bodies etc.), theater can teach us to engage with it in a more embodied way. On the other hand, anthropology can teach us to listen to the intricacies of stories in a way that can broaden and deepen the ways in which theater makers render narratives for the stage.

Learning Objectives: This seminar aims at bridging the social sciences and the arts in a practice-oriented way. Students will learn an interdisciplinary approach to anthropological questions of migration and movement, and they will experiment with producing theatrical moments based on ethnographic material. They will also learn to appreciate the performativity of social life, and the anthropological depth of theater events, thus bringing together performative and ethnographic practices. Students will also learn to translate what they read and learn through texts (academic articles and interview transcripts) into performance, thus engaging in a more embodied way of learning and relating to written material.

Format: The seminar will meet for one hour each week. The time will be divided between short lectures and workshops by the instructor and theater makers on devising techniques, discussions of theatrical and ethnographic texts, and of interview transcripts, and students' presentations. Readings will range from 10-20 pages for week. Students' presentations will consist of short theatrical events that we will build drawing from the ethnographic material that the instructor has collected during her fieldwork on foreign migration in Italy. Some classes will be devoted to

introducing students to the relations between theater and anthropology, workshops on devising techniques lead by a guest speaker, Greg Pierotti (bio below), and creating short theatrical events based on ethnographic material. Some classes focus exclusively on field work and issues of current migrations.

Grading: Students will be given a letter grade based on the following requirement: each student is expected to do the readings and participate to group discussions (25%), to actively engage in workshop activities (20%), to write four one-page reflection papers on class activities and readings, and four theatrical moments (25%), and to do presentations of theatrical events (30%).

Weekly written assignments: The one-page reflection papers and theatrical moments' descriptions should be handed in class on each Monday, should be double-spaced, and 12 fonts. Treat them as a diary entry where you reflect upon the previous week's discussion, share your insight, questions, understanding, and create a theatrical moment to present in class. You should keep your reflections focused on the topics of the seminar and its methodology, and the theatrical moment should engage the shared ethnographic material assigned for each week. Please number your papers and theatrical moments (#1-#9), write your name on top of it, and do not exceed the page limit.

Greg Pierotti is a teacher, writer, performer and director. He has used Moment Work for the last twenty years to devise his own original work as well as his work with Tectonic Theater Project. He is co-author of *The Laramie Project*, *Laramie: 10 Years Later*, and *The Peoples Temple*. He has performed in classical and new work in New York and at such regional theaters as Berkeley Rep, Denver Center, La Jolla Playhouse, and Arena Stage. As writer/director he has received residencies to develop his work at Maison Dora Maar in Provence, The Orchard Project and Berkeley Rep's Ground Floor to name a few. He is an Emmy award nominee and a 2013 nominee for the Alpert Award in the Arts in the category of theater. He is currently devising a new work at UC Davis about the death of Freddie Gray while in Baltimore City police custody.

Classes

#1 – January 9th

Introductions

[January 16th Holiday]

#2 – January 23rd

First and Second reflection papers due in class

Reading: Brown, Rich, (2005) Moisés Kaufman: The Copulation of Form and Content. In Theater Topics 15(1): 51-67

Reading: Newspaper article

Reading: Interview transcript (Antonino – retired coast guard)

#3 – January 30th

First theatrical moment due in class

Watch: Anna Deavere Smith TEDx talk:

https://www.ted.com/talks/anna_deavere_smith_s_american_character#t-711012

HBO Master Class

Reading: Smith, Anna Deavere, (1994) *Twilight in LA, 1992*. New York: Anchor Books
(Introduction)

#4 – February 6th

Third reflection paper due in class

Reading: Giordano, Cristiana, “Lying the Truth: Practices of Confession and Recognition,” in
Current Anthropology, Vol. 56(12): 211-221, December 2015.

#5 – February 13th

Second theatrical moment due in class

Reading: Interview transcripts (Donatella/lawyer and Ahmed/cultural mediator)

Prepare and present a group theatrical moment

[February 20th Holiday]

#6 – February 27th

Fourth reflection paper due in class

Reading: Fernando, Mayanthi and Giordano, Cristiana (eds.). "Refugees and the Crisis of
Europe." Hot Spots, *Cultural Anthropology* website, June 28, 2016.

<https://culanth.org/fieldsights/911-refugees-and-the-crisis-of-europe>

#7 – March 6th

Third theatrical moment due in class

Reading: Newspapers articles

Prepare and present theatrical moments

#8 – March 13th

Fourth theatrical moment due in class

Presentations of group moments using multiple texts