

School of Arts & Sciences Prospectus Instructions

Wednesdays 10:15 am – 1:15 pm

Greg Pierotti and Cristiana Giordano

Getting Caught

A collaboration on and off stage between theater and anthropology

Course Description and Level

This graduate seminar is an exploration of and a cross pollination between research and narrative practices in theater and anthropology. By creating a dialogue between these disciplines in a laboratory format, we explore techniques that will enrich our engagement with anthropological questions and embodied production. We will investigate, on the one hand, how anthropologists can learn from theater a more playful posture towards research, and a more performative understanding of narrative that can translate either into new forms of writing and production (essays, plays, short stories, installations, performance pieces etc.), or into a revitalized existing practice of academic writing. On the other hand, theater makers can learn from anthropology a more nuanced understanding of political and cultural contexts, new approaches to the different discourse formations around events and social issues, and ways to pay attention to the complexities of worlds and their grammars.

This is not a seminar on the anthropology of theater nor an acting or playwrighting class. We simultaneously engage theatrical devising practices, anthropological modes of attending to forms of life, and affect and post-dramatic theories, to practice what we call *Affect Theater*. In this context, theatrical devices will provide us with tools to analyze our findings through the body and the embodiment of narratives in space. By exploring our research through the elements of the stage (lights, sets, objects, sound, bodies etc.), theater can teach us to engage the empirical more viscerally in our writing. Anthropological listening to the intricacies of stories that are embedded and woven within specific worlds can broaden and deepen the ways in which theater makers render narratives for the stage.

Class Structure for Fall 2021

- Planned In-Person Sessions structure

We will meet for 15 weeks in person for three hours each week. During our in-person seminar times we will spend about an hour per week (sometimes less) discussing the week's

reading/viewing. The other two hours will be spent learning and practicing *Affect Theater*. We will work in small groups and present to each other short theatrical episodes based on empirical research that will be analyzed and interpreted by the cohort using our “Structural Analyses” process.

- During In-Person Sessions we will:

Learn the practice of *Affect Theater*. This theatrical devising technique is a practice for working with non-theatrical source material (interviews, archival documents, medical and legal reports, various media sources, etc.) to construct narratives for the stage. This approach to non-theatrical source material (what anthropologists would call ethnographic material) has the potential to reveal new aspects of the data collected and analyzed by anthropologists or by theater makers. What can we as anthropologists learn when we “stage” our interviews and observations, as opposed to only write about them? How will our writing be affected by a performative understanding of our material?

Through practice in *Affect Theater* and engagement with readings of ethnographies and our own ethnographic material, we will also challenge traditional approaches to creating narratives in both ethnography and theater by devising narratives *collaboratively* from shared research material. Students don’t need to be at the post-fieldwork stage to benefit from this class. This seminar is aimed at learning how to anthropologically listen to, observe, and participate in social events and the stories produced by the people involved in them. At the same time, the laboratory part of this class provides tools to engage these events and stories theatrically as a way to analyze them (and later perform them in various forms of writing or performances). Using collaborative devising techniques, we will follow our intuitive hunches to re-think and re-envision narratives from our own body, and we will help others do the same. We will work both on small ethnographic projects (ongoing or new, depending on each student’s stage in the program), and on some shared material that Greg has been collecting on issues of police violence and race in Baltimore after the death of Freddie Gray, and that Cristiana has been gathering on issues of borders and migration in the Mediterranean.

- Out of class assignments:

Readings will range from ethnographies and theater plays, to more theoretical essays on affect theory and performativity. Expect to read at least several chapters, and to read or view a play or a film each week. Occasionally, a short book may be assigned.

Students should also expect to spend substantive time outside of classroom hours collaborating in small groups in order to share research and develop theatrical compositions to be presented in class. At the end of the semester, each group will present a longer *Affect Theater* sequence during the seminar hours. Students should anticipate spending additional time on outside of class collaborations in the last four weeks of the semester to prepare for final presentations.

As our shared class time for presentation and analysis is limited students can also expect for some of our discussions of readings and viewings to take place in weekly posts in an online discussion format.

- Other Assignments and expectations will include:

- Keeping a journal about the process, which will be shared in small groups and with the rest of the class.

- As noted above, forming a small group to do a collaborative project (groups of 3 to 6) where you will use the technique we are learning in class to devise theatrical moments based on ethnographic material.

- Meet once a week for at least 3 hours with you group outside of class to work on theatrical episodes, and give each other feedback.

- As students work with their group, they should also gather and accrue materials: costumes, props, music (and other elements of the stage) for their theatrical episodes, and to be shared with the rest of the class (the more material we have in the classroom the better).

- A 15-page paper, describing how the process is working for you. Think of it as a reflection on the whole semester, and how this approach is changing your engagement with your research material.

Outline of Assignments & Assessment percentages

- Each student will be assessed weekly on their preparedness to discuss course readings and viewings (10%).
- After the initial training period, each student will be expected to present brief individual *Affect Theater* compositions in every class session (10%).
- Each student will be expected to participate fully in the analysis of other class members' compositions (15%).
- Each student will write a 15-page paper discussing their experience and understanding of *Affect Theater* as it pertains to their own work/research, and as it relates to the seminar readings (20%).
- Small groups will present longer *Affect Theater* episodes each class, and short sequences of episodes in some classes (20%).
- Small groups shall present one longer series of sequences at the end of the seminar (25%).

Essential Course Policies

- We do not anticipate the need to purchase any books for the seminar. Most reading material will be provided through the learning website or will be available in a digital library database.
- From the beginning of the course, we will encourage students to begin stockpiling a variety of materials that they find theatrically compelling and/or germane to the bodies of research that they are investigating. At times students may wish to make a small purchase of an item that they feel they “must have” in order to fulfill their vision of a particular theatrical exploration that they hope to devise. No student is expected to make such purchases. All sorts of interesting materials are at hand at home and in nature. All students are, however, asked to share their materials with other group members as often as possible. Ideally, all the materials brought in are for collective use.

Class Schedule and Readings

Week 1: Wednesday, September 1

- Lerman, Liz and John Borstel. 2003. *Critical Response Process: A method for getting useful feedback on anything you make, from dance to dessert*. Liz Lerman Dance Exchange.
- Ursula K. Le Guin, What Makes a Story
<http://www.ursulakleguinarchive.com/WhatMakesAStory.html>
- Ursula K. Le Guin, A Message about Messages
<http://www.ursulakleguinarchive.com/MessageAboutMessages.html>

Week 2: Wednesday, September 8

- Favret-Saada, J. 1990. “On Participation.” In *Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry* 14:189-199, 1990.
- Smith, Anna Deveare, (1994) *Twilight in LA, 1992*. New York: Anchor Books (Introduction)
- Interviews transcripts from Giordano’s and Pierotti’s fieldwork as examples

Week 3: Wednesday, September 15

- Giordano, C. and Pierotti, G. 2020. “Getting Caught: A Collaboration On and Off Stage Between Theater and Anthropology.” in *The Drama Review* 64(1): 88-106.

Week 4: Wednesday, September 22

- Giordano, C. and Pierotti, “How to Read This Text.” in *Unstories* (excerpt from forthcoming book)
- Giordano, C. and Pierotti, G. Chapter 2: Unstories – A Performative Text. In *Unstories* (excerpts from forthcoming book)

- Roitman, Janet. 2012. "Crisis", in *Political Concepts: A Critical Lexicon* (Tel Aviv, New York): <http://www.politicalconcepts.org/2011/crisis>

Week 5: Wednesday, September 29

- Stewart, K. 2015. "New England Red." In Phillip Vannini (ed.) *Non-Representational Methodologies: Re-envisioning Research*. Routledge.

Week 6: Wednesday, October 6

- Ahmed, S. 2010. "Happy Objects." in Gregg, Melissa and Gregory J. Seigworth. (Editors). *The Affect Theory Reader*. Durham and London: Duke University Press. Pp. 29-51.
- Bollas, C. 2009. *The Evocative Object World*. London and New York: Routledge. (Selections TBA)

Week 7: Wednesday, October 13

- W.G. Sebald. 1996. *The Emigrants*. New York: The Harwill Press. (selections)

Week 8: Wednesday, October 20

- Berger, J. 1995. *Another Way of Telling*. Vintage.

Week 9: Wednesday, October 27

- Brecht, Bertolt. 1950. "The Street Scene: A Basic Model for an Epic Theatre." *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*. Ed. and trans. John Willett. London: Methuen, 1964. pp. 121–129.
- Pierotti, Greg (Head writer) and Leigh Fondakowski, *The People's Temple*

Week 10: Wednesday, November 3

- Kane, Sarah, *Psychosis for: 48*
- Overlie, Mary. "The Six Viewpoints." *The Training of the American Actor*. Ed. Bartow, Arthur. New York: Theater Communications Group. 2006.

Week 11: Wednesday, November 10

- Hartman, Saidiya. June 2008. Venus in Two Acts. In *Small Axe* 26 (12), Number 2, pp. 1-14.

Week 12: Wednesday, November 17

- McLean, Stuart. 2017. *Fictionalizing Anthropology. Encounters and Fabulations at the Edges of the Human*. Minneapolis and London: Minnesota University Press. (selections)

Week 13: Wednesday, November 24 – day before Thanksgiving

- Reading TBA

Week 14: Wednesday, December 1

- Reading TBA

Week 15: Wednesday, December 8

- Presentation of work by participants

Recommended Readings:

- Berger, John. 2005. Drawn to that Moment. In *Berger on Drawing*. Cork: Occasional Press. Pp. 41-44.
- Cole, Teju. 2017. *Blind Spot*. New York: Random House.
- de Certeau, Michel. 1996. *The Possession at Loudun*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Deleuze, Gilles and Felix Guattari. 1983. "What Is a Minor Literature?" In *Mississippi Review* 11(3): pp. 13-33.
- Demos, T. J. 2009. The Right to Opacity: On the Otolith Group's Nervus Rerum. *OCTOBER Magazine* 129: 113–28.
- Fondakowski, Leigh, 2018. "Writing into Form: Creating *The People's Temple*." Kaufman, Moisés and Barbara Pitts et al. 2018. *Moment Work: Tectonic Theater Project's Process of Devising Theater*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Giordano, Cristiana and Greg Pierotti, 2018. "Dramaturgy." *Cultural Anthropology*. Theorizing the Contemporary web platform, special issue on "Ethnography and Design." <https://culanth.org/fieldsights/1361-dramaturgy>
- Lehman, Hans-Thies. 2004. *Postdramatic Theater*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Manning, Erin. 2016. Introduction. In *The Minor Gesture*. Durham and London: Duke University Press. Pp. 1-25.
- Martin, Carol. 2013. *Theater of the Real*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Overlie, Mary. 2016. *Standing in Space: The Six Viewpoints Theory and Practice*. Bozeman (selections)
- The Wooster Group's *Hamlet*. Streaming on Kanopy. <https://arizona.kanopy.com/category/35012>
- Roitman, Janet. 2014. *Anti-Crisis*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.
- Stewart, Kathleen. 1996. *A space on the side of the road*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press (Chapters 1,2,3)
- Heartscape, Porpentine Charity. Hypertext game. "With Those we Love Alive." <http://slimedaughter.com/games/twine/wtwla/>

Student Questionnaire:

1. Name, email
2. Degree program, year in program
3. Why are you interested in this course?
4. Do you have any background in film/video making, photography, fine arts, creative writing (fiction/non-fiction), etc.?
5. Do you have a background in the Social Sciences? If so, say something about it (2-3 sentences). None is required to take this class.
6. What movement/performance experience do you have? If so, say something about it (2-3 sentences). None is required to take this class.
7. Are you working on a dissertation, play, journal article or other writing project? If so, say something about it (2-3 sentences).