

RTF 331R unique # 07555/07970

An **ACTLab New Media** Course

TAKING IT TO THE STREET: PERFORMANCE AND POLITICS / THE POLITICS OF PERFORMANCE

Wed 3-6 pm in the ACTLab (cmb 4.110)

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Joseph Lopez and Brandon Wiley, Teaching Assistants, phone numbers and email tba

Course description: This course is about the theory, history, and practice – mostly practice -- of technology and performance as sociopolitical intervention. This will include performance in an urban context; site-specific and street theater; puppetry; environmental theater; culture jamming, including radio, television, billboards, and recording; and digital interventions.

Over the semester we will complete four projects: three mini-projects at roughly four week intervals plus one final project at the end of the semester, which takes the place of a final exam.



Our Founder

Stuff you'll need:

Various construction materials – papier maché, construction board, paint, cloth, glue, sticks, x-acto knives, scissors, paint. We'll discuss these in more detail in class.

Stuff we'll provide:

Video and audio equipment. On reserve for you in the production checkout area. We'll discuss the whens and wheres of these later.

Readings:

Reader 1 will be available at the copy shop across from our building during the third week. You are required to purchase the reader. No other readings are required, but we will post a list of suggested additional readings which you may read at your option.

Also, remember your best resource is always your own curiosity, and Google or Dogpile or Clusty are your best tools. Experiment with keywords and see what happens. When you find something interesting, share it, either in person or via the class mailing list, street@actlab.utexas.edu.

Reader 2 we will write ourselves over the semester. Each of you contributes to this reader by keeping a paper or online journal in either text or blog form. The tenor and form of your journal is that you are writing to an imagined future class on the same topic as this one, sharing your thoughts and experiences over the semester with those hypothetical students, and offering suggestions to help them along. At the end of the semester we will cull the journals, and the most useful parts will go into an actual future reader, as well as becoming part of the class website.

Documentation requirement:

During the semester each of you will produce an individual web site documenting your work. Your site will include images (still and video), sound, and text, as appropriate. Your site will have a professional "look"– i.e., just a bare index page with your name and links to your work is not,

repeat, **not** acceptable – you will have to think about aesthetics of web design, ease of use, narrative flow, and human interface issues. We'll help you acquire this knowledge, but we can't design your site for you, since it's part of your grade.

Documenting each intervention by means of video and sound is of critical importance, and is an integral part of our classwork, since in the case of street work the conditions for legal, political, and aesthetic viability are fast, short interventions below the radar of potential counter-intervention. Don't slight this step, because a spectacular web page significantly raises your visibility in the professional world. No grade will be issued until your web site is up and working -- i.e., no broken links, all animations or Flash movies actually run, etc. To keep all of us sane, final presentations and web pages are **not** due on the same day...there is some time built into the course schedule after final presentations for you to finish your web pages.

Tutorials: During the semester, Joe and Brandon will offer a number of tutorials on the use of the software you need in order to do better projects and get your webpages working. They will announce the schedules for these at various times during the semester. It's a *really* good idea to take advantage of them. Some folks don't, and then find themselves helpless when projects are due. Because a few diehards inevitably wind up in this situation, we provide this disclaimer: *The scheduled tutorials are the only ones we are obligated to provide.* Use 'em or lose 'em.

Other ACTLabbies are your greatest resource. A number of people in this class have taken ACTLab New Media classes before, and understand the way we do things. (We call them repeat offenders.) They can be your best resource for how to approach and complete your projects and documentation.

Mailing list:

Outside of class time we keep in touch via the class mailing list, street@actlab.utexas.edu. Use it to swap ideas, ask questions, get and give alerts of schedule changes, share weird urls, and whatever else you can think of. Most of you have already been subscribed to the list, but we didn't have email addresses for a few. Be sure to give us your email address the first day of class.

Equipment:

The ACTLab equipment (in cmb 4.110) is there for you to use, play with, and experiment with. Don't waste the opportunity to stretch your creative skills in the digital domain. We have computers, DJ turntables, a mixer, a quadraphonic sound system, and other stuff. We also have some gear that we've never used yet, and we invite you to play with it and see what you can make it do.



Guillermo Gomez-Pena in *Temple of Secrets*

Form of the class:

In general, each class starts with setup exercises. These include seated work, floor work, and improv to music. Techniques are heuristic and aleatory (i.e., for the most part we invent them), and I invite and expect you to contribute your own. Occasionally I'll ask you to lead the exercises. Exercises are meant to loosen us up physically and creatively, and are important for the rest of class time. Following setups, we'll talk about ideas we've gotten from the readings, our own experiences on the street, in class, at home, on the web, from dreams, and so forth, and how they might connect with classwork. During this time we may sketch, paint, make physical models such as masks,

puppets, scenery, props, costumes, miniature sites of potential interventions (to plan entrance and exit strategies), and so forth.

We may take field trips to check out potential sites. We'll stage performance exercises, helping each other to become loose and quick-witted and to think on our feet. During the last part of class, we'll do journal and web site work. On actual designated performance days, we'll go do it.

Grading:

Attendance at class and participation in classwork 20%

Three mini-projects during the semester (excluding final one), 8.33% each, total 25%

Final project 30%

Documentation and web pages 25%

Total 100%

Course schedule:

August 31: Meet 'n greet. Administrative-fu. Introduction to the course and to each other.

Reading assignment for September 7 discussion: George Ulrich, "Masks"; Antonin Artaud, "Manifesto in a Clear Language" (which is not so clear after all; available on the ACTLab Street resources pages <http://home.actlab.utexas.edu/street>)

PART ONE: MASKS AND MASKMAKING: Dancing with the gods

September 7: Histories and theories of masks and masquerade. Histories of mediumship. Oracles. Clothing, gods, and humans. Theories of subjectivity and persona.

Film: Jan Svankmajer's *Alice*, and possibly one or two other Svankmajer films.

September 14: Anthropological inflections of displacing agency. Laws as societal masking. Carnival and the carnivalesque.

Equipment needs: If you need special equipment such as video cameras, lights or mics to help prepare your first presentation on September 28, be sure to talk to Joe or Brandon today and familiarize yourself with the Equipment Checkout online scheduling procedures.

Materials for September 21 studio time: This is a heads-up for next week. Bring whatever you think you'll need: foam board, plaster, cloth strips, papier maché, etc.

September 21: Theories of the grotesque and constructions of otherness. Marginalization, romanticizing and/or demonizing otherness. Orientalism. Inflections on otherness and everyday life in theories of gender and sexuality.

Discussion: What we expect from your first presentation. Actlabbies who

have run through this drill before will offer encouragement.

Studio time: Using the materials you brought.

September 28: FIRST PRESENTATION.

PART TWO: PUPPETS AND POLITICS: Displacement and agency

October 5: Puppets and masks. Histories of puppetry. Puppetry and politics. Review of theories of displacement.

Materials for October 12 studio time: Bring whatever you think you'll need for the design and construction studio session.

Equipment needs: If you need special equipment such as video cameras, lights or mics to help prepare your first presentation on October 19, be sure to talk to Joe or Brandon today and familiarize yourself with the Equipment Checkout online scheduling procedures.

October 12: Types of puppets. Form and purpose. Puppet design. Puppets and technology. Use of prerecorded sound. Scripting.

Studio time: Using the materials you brought.

October 19: SECOND PRESENTATION.

PART THREE: SITE-SPECIFICS: Medium and Location

October 26: Understanding a site. Casing the site. Preparing plans. Escape techniques 1.

Technology and politics. How technology is changing the nature of politics: ACTLab TV, podcasting, and future possibilities for using communication technologies as interventions in global information hegemonies. Culture jamming.

November 2: Escape techniques 2. Using technical aids. Reviewing practicalities. The importance of advance planning. Understanding the specifics of rehearsing for site-specific events. Documentation. Understanding the special requirements for documenting public interventions. Preparing and protecting equipment. Special purpose staging and vehicles.

Equipment needs: If you need special equipment such as video cameras, lights or mics to help prepare your first presentation on November 16, be sure to talk to Joe or Brandon today and familiarize yourself with the Equipment Checkout online scheduling procedures. If you sign out equipment this week please be sure you understand, and have been signed off on, special procedures for equipment care during site-specific events.

November 9: Studio time: Preparing for site-specific work. Review, review, review.

November 16: THIRD PRESENTATION.

PART FOUR: INTERVENTIONS: Mixing it up and putting it all together.

Four weeks to go until final presentations! We shift into studio mode full-time. From here on out we expect you to concentrate on your final presentation, absolutely

spectacular documentation of it, and a killer website to show it off.

November 23: Review of documenting site-specific interventions and the special needs of street theatre. Review of requirements for your web pages and techniques for producing them.

Equipment needs: If you need special equipment such as video cameras, lights or mics, or additional stuff we don't usually provide for the mini-projects but do try to help you scrounge up for the final projects, such as projectors or additional sound equipment for your presentation on December 8, be sure to talk to Joe or Brandon today.

November 30: Studio time. Two weeks to go! Are you suffering enough yet? Project updates. Check timelines. Joe, Brandon and I will be meeting with you individually during class, checking on how you're coming along and making suggestions now and then. We'll also be on the alert for places where you might get stuck, but we're not psychic--so even though you know you're shy, please try to ask for help when you need it.

December 1: Studio time. Joe, Brandon and I will be walking around discussing your projects with you individually. Plenty of time to complete your project if you bear down and concentrate now. At this point the whole key to success is your ability to recognize where you are on your project timeline, adjust your academic and personal priorities accordingly, and to trust yourself (and us) enough to ask for help. No matter whether you think your project is going well or badly, the important thing is that it's yours, that it comes from inside you and monstrates with your voice.

December 8: FINAL PRESENTATION. Crit, review. Wrapup and farewells. Have a great holiday break!

December 18: Drop Dead Date for Web Pages. My grades are due in the RTF office on the 19th. You know what that means.

The Fine Print:

This syllabus is V.1.1, dated 18 August 2005. It may be updated as necessary.

Regarding Scholastic Dishonesty: The University defines academic dishonesty as cheating, plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, falsifying academic records, and any act designed to avoid participating honestly in the learning process. Scholastic dishonesty also includes, but is not limited to, providing false or misleading information to receive a postponement or an extension on a test, quiz, or other assignment, and submission of essentially the same written assignment for two courses without the prior permission of the instructor. By accepting this syllabus, you have agreed to these guidelines and must adhere to them. Scholastic dishonesty damages both the student's learning experience and readiness for the future demands of a work-career. Students who violate University rules on scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and/or dismissal from the University. For more information on scholastic dishonesty, please visit the Student Judicial services Web site at <http://www.utexas.edu/depts/dos/sjs/>.

About services for students with disabilities: The University of Texas at Austin provides upon request appropriate academic accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. For more information, contact the Office of the Dean of Students at 471-6259, 471-4641 TTY.

About the Undergraduate Writing Center: The Undergraduate Writing Center, located in the FAC 211, phone 471-6222, offers individualized assistance to students who want to improve their writing skills. There is no charge, and students may come in on a drop-in or appointment basis.

Advisory: This class may contain explicit descriptions of, or may advocate simulations of, one or more of the following: Nudity, satanism, suicide, sodomy, incest, bestiality, sadomasochism, adultery, murder, morbid violence, paedophilia, bad grammar, deviate sexual conduct in a violent context, the use of illegal drugs or alcohol, or offensive behavior. But then again, it may not. Should your sensibilities be offended at any time, you are free to leave the classroom without penalty provided that you notify either the instructor or teaching assistant when you do so. Fragile: Do not bend, fold, spindle or mutilate. May be hazardous to your health. Not recommended for children. Do not purchase if seal has been tampered with. Not responsible for direct, indirect, incidental or consequential damages resulting from any defect, error or failure to perform. May be too intense for some viewers. Batteries not included. For recreational use. An equal opportunity employer. Some settling of contents may occur during shipping. Use only as directed. No other warranty expressed or implied. No postage necessary if mailed in the United States. Substantial penalty for early withdrawal. Slightly higher in California. Keep away from fire or flame. Any rebroadcast, reproduction, or other use of this game without the express written consent of Major League Baseball is prohibited. Please keep your hands and arms inside the car while ride is in motion. Any resemblance to real persons, living or dead, is purely coincidental. Contestants have been briefed before the show. Do not write below this line.



Sandy Stone in *Next Sex*