Stockholm University
Department of Culture and Aesthetics
Theatre Studies
TVPASM, Fall 2018, MA-level, 7.5 ECTS

Performance, Activism and Social Movements

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Emails will normally be answered within 48 hours, except on weekends and holidays. Office hours by appointment in room 258.

Course description: The course places a particular and consistent emphasis on theatre, performance and activism dealing with issues around HIV and AIDS from the 1980s to the present, paying attention to power structures, bodies, spaces and emotions. It explores the creative and intellectual tensions and overlaps between Theatre Studies and Performance Studies by focusing on spoken drama, performance art, workshops and improvisation, community-based theatre as well as demonstrations, activist rallies and social movements such as ACT UP that occupy public spaces. The course analyses not only how performance, in the broadest sense, provides a vital public forum to debate issues of HIV and AIDS, health and welfare, democracy, human rights and capitalism, but also how theories and methodologies from Theatre and Performance Studies can be applied to the study of such activist interventions. It applies historical and contemporary perspectives and offers examples from various dramaturgical traditions from around the world.

ACT UP Oral History Project
Learning objectives and outcomes

Having completed this course, students will be able to:

- discuss, problematize and apply key theoretical concepts and methodological tools of Theatre and Performance Studies to critically debate and understand both historical and contemporary social movements and activist events in the public sphere;
- analyze and articulate the relationship between performance and social activism;
- provide and illustrate concrete case studies of theatrical and performative examples of social activism as well as demonstrate the ability to critically analyze these;
- reflect on the importance and influence of their own social and theoretical positioning for the analysis of theatrical and performative events that have a social commitment and political message.

Attendance

Attendance is mandatory. Each student may miss one seminar, but an additional absence needs to be compensated with a 3-page written essay that critically discusses the literature assigned for that session. This assignment needs to be handed in no later than the day the final paper is due. If a student has missed three or more classes, a final grade cannot be assigned. Surfing the Internet at leisure or texting during class time as well as excessive lateness or leaving early repeatedly will affect your participation grade.

Course requirements: Evaluation consists of two components:

- active and qualitative participation in the seminars, including oral presentations (30%);
- a final essay (70%).

Active and qualitative participation in the seminars (worth 30% of the final grade): Students will be assessed more on the quality than on the quantity of their engagement in the seminar discussions. They are expected to take notes while preparing the readings and bring at least one considered thought or relevant example for possible discussion in each seminar. Students will be asked to prepare some of the selected readings in class, in pairs or in groups.

Final essay (worth 70% of the final grade): The final assignment consists of a research paper. Guidelines:

- Select a relevant example of a 21st-century activist performance/performer or activist social movement and analyse it from the perspective of a theatre and performance scholar, actively using selected theories and methodologies discussed in the course literature. Devote attention not only to the political message and agenda, but also how these are conveyed, including the use of bodies, spaces, costumes, props, visuals, music, communication with audiences (on site or imagined), relation to the media as well as the importance of affects and emotions.
• Explain and motivate your theoretical framework, based on the course readings, and reflect on your method of study (for example participant observation, interviews, visual analysis, literature study, discourse analysis, media study etc.). Remember to position yourself and explain your relationship to the object of study.

• The essay needs to be firmly grounded in the course content and literature, but students are welcome to incorporate further sources.

• Format: 5-6 pages not counting images and a compulsory list of works cited; Times New Roman or equivalent; size 12; spacing 1.5. Students are free to choose any reference system, as long as they are consistent

• Essays are due on 14 January at 10AM, in paper or as an email attachment (only .doc, .docx or .pdf. will be accepted). Name the file TVPASM_YOUR LAST NAME_2018.

**Evaluation criteria**

**A (Excellent):** All written essays (worth 70% of the final grade) have been fulfilled in a timely manner, reveal an excellent understanding of the field of social movements and social activism in relationship to Theatre and Performance Studies, offer proof of highly advanced critical thinking skills and display an impressive degree of intellectual independence and creativity. The student demonstrates an excellent ability to articulate and critically reflect upon key theoretical and methodological concerns in Performance Studies. Language and style are at an appropriate academic level. In addition, the student has continuously contributed to seminar discussions in a qualitative, innovative and consistent manner (worth 30% of the final grade).

**B (Very good):** All written essays (worth 70% of the final grade) have been fulfilled in a timely manner, reveal a very good understanding of the field of social movements and social activism in relationship to Theatre and Performance Studies, offer proof of advanced critical thinking skills and display a high degree of intellectual independence and creativity. The student demonstrates a very good ability to articulate and critically reflect upon key theoretical and methodological concerns in Performance Studies. Language and style are very good. In addition, the student has continuously contributed to seminar discussions in a qualitative and consistent manner (worth 30%).

**C (Good):** All written essays (worth 70% of the final grade) reveal a good understanding of the field of social movements and social activism in relationship to Theatre and Performance Studies, offer proof of critical thinking skills and display signs of intellectual independence and creativity. The student demonstrates a good ability to articulate and reflect upon key theoretical and methodological concerns in Performance Studies. Most of the assignments were fulfilled in a timely manner. In addition, the student has contributed to seminar discussions in a qualitative manner (worth 30%).
**D (Satisfactory):** All written essays (worth 70% of the final grade) reveal a satisfactory understanding of the field of social movements and social activism in relationship to Theatre and Performance Studies. The student demonstrates an adequate ability to articulate key theoretical and methodological concerns in Performance Studies. In addition, the student has occasionally contributed to seminar discussions (worth 30%).

**E (Sufficient):** All written essays (worth 70% of the final grade) reveal a very basic understanding of the field of social movements and social activism in relationship to Theatre and Performance Studies. The student demonstrates an elementary ability to articulate some theoretical and methodological concerns in Performance Studies. Participation in seminar discussions has been poor (worth 30%).

**Fx (Insufficient):** The criteria under E were not fully met and some additional work is required to reach a passing grade.

**F (Fail):** The student failed to meet the criteria under E.

NB: In order to receive a passing grade, the student needs to have participated in a compulsory oral presentation.

**Course literature**

Selected chapters are made available as reference copies outside of room 258. Some articles can be accessed on the Mondo course site (www.mondo.su.se). Journal articles can be accessed and retrieved electronically via the Stockholm University Library. Alyson Campbell and Dirk Gindt’s book *Viral Dramaturgies: HIV and AIDS in Performance in the Twenty First-Century* is available at the university library and electronically with an SU account: [https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007%2F978-3-319-70317-6](https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007%2F978-3-319-70317-6)

**E-journals**

- Go to the website of the university library (www. [http://su.se/english/library/](http://su.se/english/library/))
- Click on ‘E-journals A-Z’;
- In the search engine, enter the title of the publication that you are looking for (for example *Theatre Journal*) and press ‘enter’;
- The displayed list of results offers you a number of options or databases to choose from (e.g. JSTOR, Project Muse Standard Collection, EBSCO, Literature Resource Centre, Cambridge Journals Online etc.). Check which timeframes the different databases cover to pick the most relevant for your search and click on it;
- The next page will ask you to sign in with your username and password. Once you have signed in, you will be able to access back issues by year, volume and number to locate and retrieve the article you are looking for.
Schedule and readings

Session 1: Course introduction

Friday, 9 November, 13:00-16:00, room 119

Please observe: Registered students are expected to have prepared the readings for the first seminar.

Session 2: Contemporary feminist activist performance on HIV and AIDS

Monday, 12 November, 13:00-16:00, room 101

Session 3: Community-based theatre and Indigenous dramaturgies

Monday, 19 November, 13:00-16:00, room 101
Session 4: Beyond The Normal Heart: ‘AIDS nostalgia’ and commodification
Monday, 26 November, 13:00-16:00, room 101


Session 5: Activist performances and alliances in public spaces
Monday, 3 December, 13:00-16:00, room 101


Session 6: ACT UP - Bodies and spaces
Monday, 10 December, 13:00-16:00, room 101
Session 7: Affects and emotions in AIDS activism

Monday, 17 December, 13:00-16:00, room 101


Monday, 14 January 2018, 10 AM: deadline for final paper (to be submitted in paper or via email)