Honors College Sophomore Seminar: Aesthetics of Live Performance
HCOL 185
3 Credits
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Summer Session, 2019
June 17 – July 12 – 4 week session
Format: 5 days face to face at International Festival of Arts and Ideas (June 18 – 24). Asynchronous online June 25– July 12

Course Description

What makes Live Performance such an important part of the human experience? Throughout history, live performance has played a central role in the way we understand our world. This class focuses on contemporary work in music, theater, and dance from both a historical and modern perspective. How are the performing arts different from other forms of entertainment? In an age in which more and more of our entertainment can be found on a screen, we will ask the question: why is the viewing of live arts still relevant, and how do we view, interpret, talk and write about live performance? The class will also examine the question of venue and will look at site specific work, traditional theaters and halls, festival/multi-stage events, flash mobs/pop up events and how alternate venues affect performance.

Learning objectives:

- To gain a historical perspective and understanding of the timeline of live performance and how the Greeks, Romans, the Medieval Church, Elizabethans influenced our contemporary theatrical/musical/dance format and how/what we watch today.
- To examine the innovators: those who broke the mold and challenged their own contemporary performance practice paradigms and how each generation of artistic innovation is driven by the past and hurled into the future.
- To understand how venue affects performance. Do we need a stage? Why do we elevate the players? Why is chamber music called chamber music? Is the future of classical music going to be outside of the concert hall? Were people always quiet and well-behaved during performances? What might it have been like to sit for 8 hours under the hot sun on hard stone and watch 3 Greek Dramas unfold in one day.
- To enhance students abilities to critically interpret a performance through writing and discussion. Students should be able to write a lively, interesting, and descriptive arts review by the end of the class. Additionally, students should be able to argue, discuss, and debate the merits and disappointments of a performance in context and with cogency.
Part 1: The course begins with a 6 day field trip to the International Festival of Arts and Ideas in New Haven, Connecticut. At the Festival, we will attend multiple performances from all parts of the world, speak with artists, curators, and critics about their work, and immerse ourselves in global music, dance, theater and more. We will be housed in Yale Dorms and use classroom space at Yale.

Prior to the Festival students will prepare by

Pre-reading from the following required texts:

- Alex Ross: Listen to this (article, supplied on Bb)
- Byrne, David: How Music Works (please order – you will need by June 23 for online portion of the class)

Other readings as assigned: I will know more about what to assign once Festival Events are announced.

Daily Schedule at the Festival

Total class contact hours at Festival: 11.5 hours (classroom); approx. 20 (shows/concerts/ideas sessions);

Note: Students need to arrive by Sunday, June 16 by late afternoon: Arrive and meet at dorms at Yale. I will send you information about what dorm we are meeting at and the address as soon as I know. There will be attendance at an event that evening.

Monday, June 17, 2019

8:30: Breakfast in dorm cafeteria

10:00 – 12:30 pm: Class

Review of expectations of class and what we will experience at the Festival. Discussion of history of festival, review of mission statement of festival. We will have a visit by one of the festival’s curators and a board member who will give us personal insight into the vision of this event, its scope, and what it is trying to accomplish.

Discussion of readings with specific emphasis on the three reviews of work we will see. How do we prepare to see a work of performance with unfamiliar artists? What are our expectations of the experience? What does our prior experience bring to the table? Do we view an art form differently if we are deeply involved in at as performer ourselves.

Time for lunch on your own
1:00 pm: Meet at dorms to walk to Yale University Rare Instrument Collection

3:30 pm: visit to Yale Museum of Art

5:00 – 6:30 pm: Time to read, relax, explore, eat

6:30 Dinner as a group

**Tuesday, June 18 to Saturday, June 22**

9:30 – noon: class: How venue influences performance. We will watch David Byrne’s TedTalk. Also, discussion of mask and puppetry theater.

12:00 – 1:45: lunch on your own

2:00 – 10 pm: We will attend events at the Festival. There will be time for short breaks and dinner.

Once Festival events/schedule is set, a more detailed itinerary/syllabus will be provided.

Monday, June 24 to Friday, July 12: Course is online. Daily activities will include reading, discussion board posting, writing, video, audio. Students should count on approximately 2 hours per day of work with weekends off (unless student chooses to catch up on work during that time.)