

## **Site Specific Performance and the Politics of Place**

### **Course Description**

Over the last several decades, the notion of site-specific art and performance has emerged as an interdisciplinary genre that engages place, performers, and viewers in new ways. Site-specific performance challenges viewers' expectations about the suitability of any given location and at the same time enlivens their awareness of geography and architecture. This seminar examines the interactions of bodies performing dance and art in various kinds of geographical and architectural sites. We will investigate the meanings of various places and how performance intervenes in, enhances, or alters space, looking specifically at the politics engendered in each location and performance. We will look closely at theories and examples of site-specific art and performance from the past four decades, primarily in the United States. While our primary focus will be choreography, we will also consider examples of artists whose site specific work depends on the active participation of audiences.

Throughout the seminar, students will learn and employ methodologies of reading texts and performances, and will be challenged to articulate their own critical analysis through discussion and written assignments.

### **Course Requirements**

1. Active participation in discussions is essential, and will be reflected in your grade.
2. Because this course is designed as a seminar, it is essential that students come to class prepared to discuss the readings, which they have read closely. For every class meeting, students will type and turn in one substantial, critical question (about one paragraph) on the readings for that day. The question may compare the readings, or may focus in on one particular issue. The process of writing the question will help students process the material, and will ensure that they are well-prepared for discussion.
3. While excerpts of videos may be shown in class, students are expected to view assigned videos in their entirety before class. Videos will be made available through the online video furnace.
4. Every week one or two students will facilitate class discussion. Sign up will be available the first day of class. Successful discussion leaders will give a brief overview of the readings, indicate what the author is writing for or against, connect the readings to the theme of the seminar, and pose questions to the group designed to spark discussion.
5. Students will complete a major research paper over the course of the quarter, which will analyze a site-specific performance of their choosing in terms of the theories and authors discussed in class. Students are required to meet with the instructor during weeks 3 and 4 to identify project topics. (Students may not choose a performance discussed in class.) Parameters for the projects will be discussed in class during week

2. A written project overview of 1 to 2 paragraphs will be turned in week 5, followed by a preliminary bibliography of 5-10 items in week 6. A first draft of the paper (8-10 pages minimum) will be due 8th week. Students will receive their drafts back with comments week 9, to give them ample time to prepare a 10-minute oral presentation on their project for week 10, and the final 12-15 page paper for finals week.

6. Attendance at performances directly related to the course topic may be required. Instructor will provide a schedule and transportation information, if applicable.

### **Grading Breakdown**

Active participation	10%
Critical Questions	15%
Discussion facilitation	10%

### **Research project**

- Meet with instructor to discuss project (week 3 or 4) 5%
- Project overview (due week 5) 5%
- Preliminary bibliography (due week 6) 5%
- Draft of paper (due week 8) 15%
- Oral presentation (due week 10) 10%
- Final paper (due finals week) 25%

Please note: late assignments will not be accepted without a doctor's note.

### **Grading Scale**

97-100 A+  
94-96 A  
90-93 A-  
84-86 B  
87-89 B+  
80-83 B-  
77-79 C+  
74-76 C  
70-73 C-  
67-69 D+  
64-66 D  
60-63 D-  
59-below F

### **Required Texts**

*Course Reader*

Kwon, Miwon. 2002. *One Place After Another*. Cambridge (MA): MIT Press.

## Weekly Overview

### Week 1: Bodies Circulating Through Places

In class viewing: Christo and Jean Claude The Gates

#### Readings:

De Certeau, Michel. 1988. The Practice of Everyday Life. Berkeley: University of California Press, [1984].

- “General Introduction” (pp. xi-xxiv)
- Chapter III “‘Making Do’: Uses and Tactics” (pp. 29-42)
- Chapter VII “Walking in the City” (pp. 91-110)

### Week 2: Bodies Intervening in Places

In class viewing: Sankai Juku Hanging Event

#### Readings:

De Certeau, Michel. 1988. The Practice of Everyday Life. Berkeley: University of California Press, [1984].

- Chapter IX “Spatial Stories” (pp.115-130)
- Chapter XII “Reading as Poaching” (pp. 165-176)

Kwon, Miwon. 2002. One Place After Another. Cambridge (MA): MIT Press.

- Introduction and Chapter 1 (pp. 1-32)

### Week 3: Bodies Spectacularizing Places

In class viewing: Stephan Koplowitz “Fenestrations” and “Babel Index”

#### Readings:

Kwon, Miwon. 2002. One Place After Another. Cambridge (MA): MIT Press.

- Chapters 2 and 3 (pp. 33-99)

### Week 4: Bodies Forming Community with Places

In class viewing: Liz Lerman Dance Exchange Hallelujah project

#### Readings:

Kwon, Miwon. 2002. One Place After Another. Cambridge (MA): MIT Press. Chapters 4-6 (pp. 100-167)

### Week 5: Bodies Mapping Places

Guest Speaker: Sara Wookey Walking LA

Experiential Workshop Exploring UCLA as Site, led by instructor

**Readings:**

Thrift, Nigel. 2004. Performance and Performativity: A Geography of Unknown Lands. A Companion to Cultural Geography. James Duncan, et al. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell. (pp. 121-35).

Wookey, Sara and Kaitlin Drisko. Forthcoming. "Walking Los Angeles: From Documentation to Performance." Special Issue, Journal of Art & Technology.

## **Week 6: Bodies Resuscitating Places**

In class viewing: Heidi Duckler "Cover Story" and "Laundromatinee"

**Readings:**

Cheng, Meiling. 2002. In Other Los Angeleses: Multicentric Performance Art. Berkeley: University of California Press.

- "Inscribing Multicentricity" (pp. 1-65)

## **Week 7: Bodies Transforming into Places**

In class viewing: Oguri Height of Sky

**Readings:**

Cheng, Meiling. 2002. In Other Los Angeleses: Multicentric Performance Art. Berkeley: University of California Press.

- "Kinesthetic Transmutation of Theatricality" (pp. 273-349)

## **Week 8: Bodies Merging with Places**

In class viewing: Eiko & Koma River and Breath

**Readings:**

Banerji, Anurima. Forthcoming 2009. Paratopias of Performance: The Choreographic Practices of Chandralekha. Planes of Composition: Dance and the Global. Eds. Andre Lepecki and Jenn Joy. Kolkata: Seagull Press.

Haraway, Donna. 1992. "The Promises of Monsters: A Regenerative Politics for Inappropriate/d Others." Cultural Studies. Eds. Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson, Paula A. Treichler. New York: Routledge.

## **Week 9: Bodies Protesting Places**

In class viewing: ActUp

**Readings:**

Cohen-Cruz, Jan, ed. 1998. *Radical Street Performance: An International Anthology*. New York: Routledge.

- Chapter 9: Diana Taylor "Making a Spectacle: The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo" (pp. 74-85)
- Chapter 11: Jan Cohen-Cruz "At Cross-Purposes: The Church Ladies for Choice" (pp. 90-99)

Gere, David. 2004. *How to Make Dances in an Epidemic: Tracking Choreography in the Age of AIDS*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

- "Seize Control of the FDA" (pp. 63-76)

Crimp, Douglas and Adam Rolston. 1990. *AIDS Demographics*. Seattle: Bay Press.

- "Seize Control of the FDA" (pp. 76-83)
- "Stop the Church" (pp.131-141)

## **Week 10**

Final Presentations

Evaluations

## **Finals Week**

Final papers due one week after the last class meeting