Building a Performance
Course Expectations ‘21

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CLASS DESCRIPTION:

“Building a Performance” gives students the opportunity to create theater through playwriting, directing, devising, and production design. Students will collaborate with their peers and engage in creative risk-taking as they explore performance for stage and screen around major themes in our anchor texts, as well as inventing material to support other members of the OES community. Students will work their way up to creating short form original live dance, theater, and digital video by studying technique in professional works, participating in creative investigations, and engaging in a series of dramatic devising assignments. The culminating product is a polished performance within a chosen medium (live performance, audio/video, or production design), improved through multiple drafts and brought to life through the support of classmates.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

Students will...

- devise and manage collaborative projects from concept to final draft
- reflect on their risk-taking and their aesthetic choices
- speak confidently before a group (scripted, improv or pitching ideas)
- identify and reflect on collaborative practices
- direct and revise time-based performance, sound, and video
- use both historical and contemporary materials to inspire creative process
- communicate feedback to peers using close observation and empathy
- appreciate how performance expresses big ideas and questions

HOW STUDENTS WILL LEARN:

Building a Performance is structured in three main sections:

1. In the first 6 weeks during “Bootcamp” and Project 1, students complete multi-disciplinary challenges that are designed to soften inhibitions and provide a safe space to explore their creativity and perform in a low stakes environment.

2. In the following 6 weeks during Projects 2 and 3, students refine their experiments based on collaborative feedback and exchange, as well as connect with their peers' inspiration and research questions.

3. In the last 6 weeks, students build off of their previous sucesses to design high quality culminating projects (individual Project 4 and group Project 5) that delivers a meaningful message and expresses artistic intent with clarity and purpose.

CLASS NORMS:

- Come to class on time and be ready to fully engage in that day's work.
- Strive to be open to experimenting in unfamiliar and challenging territory.
- Be respectful while working collaboratively with other students.
  We all contribute to an environment of mutual support and trust.
- Commit to using effective documentation/reflection to investigate "passion projects".

ASSESSMENT AND FEEDBACK:

Assessment will be based on students' progress towards self-defined goals within the following four Indicators listed below: Research, Risk, Reflection and Result. Students will use their evolving understanding of these criteria to assess their progress during critique with one another and myself. Students take an active role in gathering evidence of their learning on their digital slideshow or "Portfolio" and/or hardcopy Director's Notebook. I post informal coaching/questions related to their progress as comments on their slideshow and in discussion while conferencing with their Director's Notebook, as well as provide formal written feedback and grade each assignment in Google classroom.

RESEARCH skills
1. Work through multiple drafts to refine
2. Explore and document lines of inquiry
3. Dig deep into materials, modes and stories that delight you

RISK skills:
1. Make a creative pivot with confidence (ie: turning a surprise into a "happy accident")
2. Be bold, acting with courage and compassion for self and others, say "yes and…"
3. Build resilience, respond constructively to challenges, and push your "comfort zone"

REFLECTION skills
1. Awareness of self within group dynamics, toggle between being leader and follower
2. Give feedback to others based on keen observation and empathy
3. Hear feedback from others and apply it to your next experiment

RESULT skills

1. Prepare what's needed for the audience to give feedback on final product, ie: artist statement, full concept, all elements of prototype and reflection completed
2. Consistently set goals and manage time effectively to create high quality product
3. Present your final product confidently in small and large groups

A note on content *(thanks to Rick Rees)*

Our course materials and class discussions will sometimes focus on mature and difficult subjects, such as racism, sexism, homophobia, and other forms of oppression. The material we read may express views or use language that is offensive; all of us will avoid using slurs (particularly the n-word) in discussion & writing — even when the word appears in the text we're reading — because of their violative power.

We will strive to use such moments as opportunities for critical reflection and thinking. At such times it is important to respect the range of emotions we might feel in response: anger, fear, discomfort, anxiety, confusion, sadness, shame.

If any of our course materials or discussions are especially difficult for you, you have the right to leave the classroom, no questions asked and without academic penalty, and to approach your teacher or another adult in our community privately with your concerns. It is our responsibility as a classroom community to uphold each other's dignity and to bring sensitivity and awareness every day about how our identities position us in the classroom.

A note on being human *(thanks to Julie Sikkink)*

Take care of yourself, advocate and tell me what you need: we all are likely to experience times when learning is unusually hard and/or when work becomes WAY less important than something else we're anxious about and need to be doing.

Here are few key suggestions for such moments:

- When you can't be in class, or can't bring your normal level of participation, please figure out an honest way to let me know. I don't need to know your personal details, but I'd really appreciate knowing, "I'm having a hard week" rather than an evasion.
- If you need a different approach to make a project or prompt to motivate you, please ask—I'm rarely attached to the specifics of a project, and I have a lot of practice adapting assignments to meet particular students where they are.
- Practice being your own self-advocate in readiness for college and life.
- Trust that I care more about your well being as a human than about any academic product for this course.