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THTR 491.01: ST: Social Justice Drama/Theatre

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College of Visual and Performing Arts
School of Theatre & Dance
THTR 491
SOCIAL JUSTICE, DRAMA AND THEATRE
3 credits M/W/F 1:20-2:00, McGill 125
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Office Hours: TUESDAYS 9-11 & FRIDAYS 11-12
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Purpose:

This course will explore ways in which drama and theatre can be used as a tool to examine social issues and to cultivate equality and justice in communities and systems.

Outcomes:

As a result of this course the students will:

- Have an increased interest in the use of drama and theatre to address social issues;
- Identify and appreciate specific ways in which drama and theatre can be used as effective tools for issue exploration and consider ethical issues that might arise in this type of work;
- Learn, then explore, facts and key theories of specific social issues including sexual assault, gun control, and incarceration.
- Acquire the skills and strategies necessary to create an applied theatre project that deals with a specific social issue of the student's interest.

Content:

The class will commence with an orientation to the field of Applied Theatre and an orientation to the field of performance for non-Theatre majors. We will look at some specific techniques such as Documentary and Verbatim Theatre, Playback Theatre, Forum, and Butoh. Students will be exposed to key aspects of specific social issues. Once the class has gained sufficient background regarding social issues and applied theatre techniques, we will explore some specific techniques practically. We will, for example create an interactive performance for high school students, write a new play about gun control, and design individual projects that have the potential to be implemented.

The course will focus on the following areas:

- *The Efficacy of Drama and Theatre*: What specific skills in this artistic discipline connect to everyday life, social and emotional wellness, and communication abilities.
- *Applied Theatre*: What the field of Applied Theatre encompasses, examples from across the globe, theories of practice, and the history of the field.

- *Theatre of the Oppressed*: Ways in which Augusto Boal's arsenal of techniques can be used as potential ways of working with issue based subjects.
- *Documentary and Verbatim Theatre*: How material is researched, gathered, analyzed and used to privilege multiple perspectives and real voices and feelings.
- *Ethical Thinking and Doing*: Giving participants a voice in the process, following ethical practices and responding to the needs of vulnerable populations.

Evaluation:

Participation and attendance 20%

The work in this class happens during class time. There is no way students can engage in the practice of the work if they are not present. Each class will explore applied theatre techniques through active engagement. Students are expected to participate in all exercises. For the most part we will not be meeting as a full class during the listed Friday times, though there will be a few Fridays when we will meet. Instead, the Friday time will be used by students to complete assignments, to research subjects, and to interview, write and rehearse.

Forum play (February/March) 15%

We will be writing our own Forum Theatre plays individually and then collectively we will write a Forum Theatre play dealing with the subject of sexual assault. We will be performing this for a class at Hellgate High School in early March.

Literature Review paper (due February 29) 15%

Each student will identify a social issue of interest to them and they will explore that area in depth by locating and reading (or re-reading) 5 foundational and critical readings on the subject. These are to be presented in a one page annotated bibliography that lists the reading and briefly summarizes, via one paragraph, the content of each article, book, or chapter. Students will then seek out a 6th reading that connects their chosen subject matter to theatre: perhaps it details an applied theatre project that deals with the specific issue. This will also be presented in the annotated bibliography via a paragraph that summarizes the literature and analyses the contribution of the reading and/or the project described.

Verbatim Play (due March 29) 20%

The class will collaboratively write an original verbatim or documentary play that will in some way be presented publically.

Designing a project (due April 28) 20%

Each student will create an Applied Theatre project for a specific organization, group, or community. This is theoretical in that the implementation will not be undertaken as part of this class, but rather the project focuses on the design of a project as a way to imagine future possibilities, deal with ethical issues, and connect the theories studied to the practical nature of the work. Students will submit a faux IRB application in consult

with this project and include an informational and consent form. In March examples of Applied Theatre projects as well as a format to follow will be shared.

Course Texts:

All reading will be posted on Moodle

Applied Theatre: International Case Studies and Challenges for Practice. By Monica Prendergast, Juliana Saxton. UK: Intellect, 2009

Acting Successful: using performance skills in everyday life. By Jillian Campana. San Diego: Cognella, 2015.

“Why ‘Social Theatre’?” By James Thompson, Richard Schechner. In *TDR* (1988-), Vol. 48, No. 3 (Autumn, 2004), pp. 11-

16. <http://eds.b.ebscohost.com.weblib.lib.umt.edu:8080/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=4&sid=099b845e-69cc-4d70-ab2c-2fb08733c27c%40sessionmgr115&hid=117>

“Teaching Sexual Assault Prevention Through Comedy” By Emmitt Resnin. In *Atlantic Monthly*. June 17,

2014. <http://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2014/06/teaching-sexual-assault-prevention-through-comedy/371433/>

“Making Bodies Talk in Forum Theatre”. By Paul Dwyer. *RIDE: Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance*. 9 (2),

2004. <http://www.tandfonline.com.weblib.lib.umt.edu:8080/doi/pdf/10.1080/1356978042000255076>

“Engaging Theatre for Social Change to Address Sexual Violence on a College Campus: A Qualitative Investigation” In the *British Journal of Social Work*. By M. Candace Christensen. Volume 44, Issue 6 1454-1471.

2013 <http://bjsw.oxfordjournals.org.weblib.lib.umt.edu:8080/content/44/6/1454.full>

Discussing and Defining Sexual Assault: A Classroom Activity Author(s): Renae Franiuk. In *College Teaching*, Vol. 55, No. 3 (Summer, 2007), pp. 104-107
Published by:

Taylor&Francis,Ltd. <http://www.jstor.org.weblib.lib.umt.edu:8080/stable/pdf/27559325.pdf?acceptTC=true>

“Popular Theatre: a useful process for adult educators.” In *Adult Education Quarterly*. By Bates, R. A. 46(4) 224-236, 1996. (ERIC)

"Introduction" and "Chapter 1" from *Games for Actors and Non Actors*. By Augusto Boal. Routledge, 1992.

Pedagogy of the Oppressed. By Paulo Freire. Bloomsbury Press, 1971.

"Playback Theatre: Effects on students' views of aggression and empathy within a forensic context" In *The Arts in Psychotherapy*. By Barbara A. Bornmann, M.A., M.A.,LCAT-RDT, Angela M. Crossman, Ph.D. 38(3) 164-168 July 2011 <http://www.sciencedirect.com.weblib.lib.umn.edu:8080/science/article/pii/S0197455611000414>

<http://everytownresearch.org>

Tentative schedule:

Week 1 Jan 25/27

Efficacy of Drama and Theatre? Brain studies and acting: memorization/empathy/performing for oneself (physiology and acting)

Week 2 Feb 1/3

Overview of applied theatre techniques: TIE, T.O. Playback, Psychodrama, Documentary/Verbatim Theatre

Week 3 Feb 8/10

*Guests: Kelly McGuire
Theatre of the oppressed
Theatre as a tool for bystander intervention/sexual assault training*

Weeks 4-5 Feb 15/17/22/24

FORUM THEATRE: Create plays on sexual assault education and prevention

Week 6 Feb 29 and Mar 2

*Travel to Hellgate High School for interactive performance
March 2 or 4 at 7:50 am!!!!?*

Week 7 Mar 7/9

Butoh – Dani

Weeks 8-9 Mar 14/16

*Monday: Heidi Kendall comes to talk about gun legislation and control
Wednesday: VERBATIM THEATRE*

Week 9 Mar 22/24

Gun control and interviewing

Week 10 Mar 28/20

Putting the interviews together: VERBATIM THEATRE AND GUN CONTROL

SPRING BREAK

Week 11 April 11/13

PLAYBACK THEATRE/Prison Theatre

Week 12 April 18/20

Prison Theatre- Dani

Guest visitor- Leah Joki, California Prison Systems theatre artist

Week 13 April 25/27

Developing your own project

Week 14 May 2/4

Presentation of projects