

POLITICAL ARTS: ARTISTIC ACTIVISM

LUC Political Arts Summer School 2012

25.06.12 – 29.06.12: The Hague

02.07.12 – 07.07.12: New York

COURSE SYLLABUS

The topic of artistic activism is a salient one, not least in the climate of politico-social movements since the 1950s against established public and private economic institutions on a local, national, regional, and international level. As New Social Movement theorists attested and the 1999 protests against the WTO ministerial in Seattle exemplified, the motivations and formations of recent collective action cannot be fully captured and satisfactorily understood by political scientific analyses; alternatively, paying attention to the affective and performative dimensions of collective political agency not only sheds effective light on that which political science seeks to explain, but also illuminates fundamentally aesthetic aspects of human action in concert, which Hannah Arendt aptly coins 'power'. Expression, representation, communication, participation, reception, and recognition are inextricably connected to political action, especially of the transformative kind. By engaging in Political Arts, we appreciate our selves in the world; through artistic activism, we practise our humanity.

Starting from the premise that human beings are political animals who disclose themselves to each other through speech and action, this summer school explores the ways in which people interact with and compose political ideas and actions through artistic activism. The first part of the course, run in The Hague, inspects the aesthetic and technical aspects of political expression and mobilisation through visual, theatrical, and participatory installation, towards equipping ourselves with the requisite understanding and skills to participate in the second leg of the course in New York, where we will engage in creative political action – intellectually, socially, and practically – by contributing to the planning and staging of current activist campaigns in New York.

Course information

Course convenor: Dr. Cissie Fu [c.fu@luc.leidenuniv.nl]
Course credits: 5.0 ECTS
Course level: 200
LUC tags: PA, GC

Course objectives

Thinking, making, and acting are not discreet activities, and, in aggregate, they constitute our distinctively human being through doing. As we read, reflect, discuss, and create in this course, we should expect to achieve:

- a grounding in political aesthetics, vis-à-vis participatory action;
- a grounding in the history and politics of past and current creative activism, especially in the context of New York;
- a grounding in the technical, logistical, and performative aspects of staging an activist campaign;
- an appreciation for the political potential of art;
- an appreciation for the performative elements inherent in politics; and
- an appreciation for the political and artistic dimensions of action, communication, expression, participation, and reception.

Course assessment

- 20% Seminar participation (ongoing, The Hague + New York)
- 20% Workshop participation (ongoing, The Hague + New York)
- 20% Course blog entries (ongoing, The Hague + New York)
- 40% Final report (due by Friday 20 July)

Seminar participation → 20%

It should come as no surprise that participation is essential to the groundings and appreciations anticipated for this course. In addition to completing the readings and viewings assigned before each seminar, active engagement with the various modes of texts, alongside the arguments and material introduced in class, is key. Your participation grade for seminars in The Hague and New York takes into account the comments you share, the questions you pose, and your interaction with others' questions and comments. Quantity does not substitute for quality; you will be assessed on how fruitfully you engage with the themes under discussion.

Workshop participation → 20%

Moving from the classroom to the workshop, the second participatory setting of this course focuses on practice for hands-on learning. Each workshop builds on prior seminar discussions and previous workshop outcomes, and so your participation grade for workshops in The Hague and New York is a result of both active engagement with the techniques and lessons immediately at hand, as well as the way in which you bring your cumulative experience to bear in each new practical instance. Note that the quality of your participation in each workshop bolsters the quality of the final product from each workshop, but that your grade here mainly reflects the former.

Course blog entries → 20%

To support your individual and collective learning processes through the course, your impressions and reflections will be documented on the Political Arts blog, *imag-e-nation*. Each student is in charge of blogging about two specific course events; each of these entries should contain 400 - 500 words and images/videos, and is due within 24 hours after the end of that event. All other posts can be of any length, with or without multi-media elements, and comments on each other's posts are particularly encouraged. All submissions should be sent to imagination@politicalarts.org for uploading. Entries will be graded on the basis of substance.

Final report → 40%

To consolidate your knowledge after two intensive weeks of artistic activism, you have two weeks afterwards to structure and articulate your findings and understandings in the form of a report of 2500 - 3000 words, which should:

- (a) address one of the course objectives (see Syllabus page 1);
- (b) review the literature related to this objective;
- (c) review the events related to this objective;
- (d) elaborate on your process of obtaining this objective;
- (e) evaluate your process of obtaining this objective.

This report should be sent to the Course Convenor by Friday 20 July 2012.

Course caveat

Plagiarism and academic dishonesty will not be tolerated under any circumstances. Instances of academic misconduct will be referred to the LUC Examination Committee and will entail immediate suspension from the course. All articles of the LUC Honour Code and Academic Rules and Regulations as specified in LUC Student Handbook 2011-2012 apply.

Course overview

Monday 25 June

10:00 - 12:00 Opening seminar @ Manor 1.4, LUC

Welcome to Artistic Activism! After working through the course proceedings and logistics for The Hague and New York, we will think through the expressive elements of being human - from speech and action to communicability and perfectibility - and consider how political philosophical notions of individual and collective power relate to recent trends in social movement theory.

All course literature for The Hague will be distributed in this session, with the expectation that you will already have acquired *Beautiful Trouble: A Toolbox for Revolution* in hard or e-copy in preparation for the New York leg of the course. You will also be assigned to specific course events for posting on the course blog, designated to report on one part of an eight-part documentary on Wednesday 27 June, and divided into two groups for the presentation workshops on Friday 29 June.

14:00 - 17:00 Manifesto workshop @ College Lounge, LUC

This workshop will be run jointly with Movers'n'Shakers, the Political Arts reading group, and revolve around Dogme 95, a cinematic movement against the opulence and excess of mainstream Hollywood film-making. We will discuss the Dogme 95 Manifesto and its accompanying Vow of Chastity, as well as the sociological, political, and aesthetic impact of the Dogme 95 movement, and screen Thomas Vinterberg's "Festen" (Dogme 1, 1998).

→ Read "Aspects of Dogma", *p.o.v.: A Danish Journal of Film Studies*, 10 (2000), §§ 1, 3, 4.
[http://pov.imv.au.dk/Issue_10/POV_10cnt.html]

Tuesday 26 June

10:00 - 12:00 Theory seminar @ Manor 1.4, LUC

What is political aesthetics, and how is it distinctive from art employed for political purposes or politics with artistic elements? How does visibility and physicality affect the way we relate to each other in space and time? Whence movement? Whence community? Whence communal sense?

→ Read Jacques Rancière, "Contemporary Art and the Politics of Aesthetics", in B. Hinderliter et al (eds.), *Communities of Sense: Rethinking Aesthetics and Politics* (London: Duke University Press, 2009).

→ Read Jacques Rancière, "The Distribution of the Sensible: Politics and Aesthetics", in his *The Politics of Aesthetics*, trans. G. Rockhill (London: Continuum, 2005).

14:00 - 17:00 Field workshop I @ Manor 1.4, LUC

Miguel Peres dos Santos, David Pocknee, and Ana Smaragda Lemnaru, a team of artistic researchers from the Royal Academy of Art, The Hague, will offer a series of three field workshops on strategising and mobilising action in public space. From the virtual to the physical, we will acquire various technical skills (visual communication, web publication, networking and security, platform building, content analysis, graphic design, and group action), as well as consider the ethico-political concerns underlying the implementation of these skills for purposes of protest.

The first workshop will cover web publishing, networking, security, and infrastructure, all as relevant to conveying and executing the message and meaning of protest.

- Bring your laptop/tablet.
- Expect assignments for the next field workshop.

Wednesday 27 June

10:00 - 12:00 Theory seminar @ Manor 1.4, LUC

How does art help us take democracy - with all its ironies, contradictions, impossibilities, and promise - seriously? Does art help us come to terms with our human condition?

- Read Jacques Rancière, "Democracy, Republic, Representation", in his *Hatred of Democracy*, trans. S. Corcoran (London: Verso, 2006).
- http://www.ressler.at/what_is_democracy_film/
Screen Oliver Ressler's "What Is Democracy" (2009), reporting briefly (5 minutes) on one part of the film:
 1. Rethinking representation
 2. Politics of exclusion
 3. Secrecy instead of democratic transparency
 4. New democracies?
 5. Is representative democracy a democracy?
 6. Direct democracy
 7. Reclaiming indigenous politics
 8. Should we consign the Western democracy model to the ash heap of history?

14:00 - 17:00 Field workshop II @ Manor 1.4, LUC + The Hague

The second field workshop will focus on the logistics of crowd and resource mobilisation, collection and deployment of group imagery and analysis, and relevance of context to content- and function-based action.

- Expect assignments for the next field workshop.

Thursday 28 June

10:00 - 12:00 Theory seminar @ Manor 1.4, LUC

How is art effective, and how does it convey meaning – aesthetically, socially, politically, or at all?

→ Read Dorothea van Hantelmann, "The Societal Efficacy of Art", in her *How to Do Things with Art: The Meaning of Art's Performativity* (Zurich: JRP|Ringier, 2010).

→ <http://africasacountry.com/2010/07/16/poverty-for-sale/>
Read the interview article on Renzo Martens's 'Enjoy Poverty' Project and view the trailer to the project.

→ Read the script of Andrea Fraser's "May I Help You?" (1991).

14:00 - 17:00 Field workshop III @ Manor 1.4, LUC + The Hague

The final field workshop in The Hague will weave together the lessons learnt from the first and second workshops, thus concentrating on information dissemination, message processing, crowd control, group behaviour, and collective action, ending with an analysis of the workshop series and the social dynamics therein.

Friday 29 June

10:00 - 12:00 Theory seminar @ Manor 1.4, LUC

From aesthetico-political disruptions to politico-aesthetic countermovements: what enables artistic activism?

→ Read Hakim Bey, "The Occult Assault on Institutions"
[<http://hermetic.com/bey/occultassault.html>]

→ Skim Hakim Bey, "T.A.Z.: The Temporary Autonomous Zone, Ontological Anarchy, Poetic Terrorism", Part I (Chaos: The Broadsheets of Ontological Anarchism)
[http://hermetic.com/bey/taz_cont.html]

14:00 - 15:00 Presentation workshop A @ Manor 1.4, LUC

30-minute presentation followed by 30-minute group-led discussion

New York campaign: F the banks

→ <http://fthebanks.org>

→ http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jUzMLu4K_2o

→ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tum057byp5Y>

→ <http://news.firedoglake.com/2012/05/08/bofa-begins-pay-settlement-with-other-peoples-money-scheme/>

15:00 - 16:00 Presentation workshop B @ Manor 1.4, LUC
30-minute presentation followed by 30-minute group-led discussion

New York campaign: Organising for Occupation

→ <http://www.o4onyc.org>

→ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u3X89iViAlw&feature=plcp>

→ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uLlbtm5oUmo&feature=plcp>

→ <http://harpers.org/archive/2012/01/0083752>

16:00 - 17:00 Preparations for New York @ Manor 1.4, LUC

We will video-conference with our Summer Course Coordinator on the New York end, Mark Read of NYU, who will give us a sense of the week to come, the state of occupy movements in New York, and answer any questions about the readings and events already encountered.

Sunday 1 July

19:00 Orientation meeting with Mark @ your New York flat

Monday 2 July

10:00 - 12:00 Seminar presentation @ Hemispheric Institute, NYU
By Andrew Boyd
Beautiful Trouble [www.beautifultrouble.org]

14:00 - 16:00 Seminar presentation @ Hemispheric Institute, NYU
By Rachel Falcone and Michael Premo
Housing is a Human Right [<http://media.gfem.org/node/10211>]

17:00 - 19:00 Seminar presentation @ Hemispheric Institute, NYU
By Beka Economopoulos and Jason Jones
Not an Alternative [<http://notanalternative.com/>]

→ Read Max Rameau, "Take Back the Land"
[<http://www.social-ecology.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/Take-Back-The-Land-by-Rameau.pdf>]

→ Read Mark Taibbi, "Too Crooked to Fail"
[<http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/news/bank-of-america-too-crooked-to-fail-20120314>]

→ Read, from *Beautiful Trouble*,
TACTIC: Direct Action
THEORY: Action Logic
THEORY: Points of intervention
PRINCIPLE: Choose tactics that support your strategy
PRINCIPLE: Force your target into a decision dilemma
TACTIC: Eviction Blockade
CASE STUDY: Daycare center sit-in
CASE STUDY: Citizens Posse
CASE STUDY: Salt march

Tuesday 3 July

12:00 - 15:00 Building workshop @ Not an Alternative

17:00 - 19:00 Street theatre workshop @ Hemispheric Institute, NYU
Led by Monica Hunken

→ Read, from *Beautiful Trouble*,
TACTIC: Invisible Theater
TACTIC: Forum Theater
THEORY: Theater of the Oppressed
PRINCIPLE: Make the Invisible Visible
PRINCIPLE: Use the Power of Ritual
CASE STUDY: Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army

Thursday 5 July

12:00 - 15:00 Building workshop @ Not an Alternative

17:00 - 19:00 Seminar presentation @ Hemispheric Institute, NYU
By The Yes Men
Yes Lab [<http://www.yeslab.org/>]

→ Read, from *Beautiful Trouble*,
TACTIC: Hoax
TACTIC: Identity Correction
TACTIC: Infiltration
PRINCIPLE: Play to the Audience that Isn't There
PRINCIPLE: Everyone has Balls/Ovaries of Steel
CASE STUDY: Dow Chemical Apologizes for Bhopal

Friday 6 July

11:00 - 15:00 Staging workshop @ The Puppet Guild, DUMBO
Led by Gan Golan and Athena Skiles

17:00 - 19:00 Seminar presentation @ Hemispheric Institute, NYU
By Reverend Billy
The Church of Stop Shopping [<http://www.revbilly.com/>]

→ Read, from *Beautiful Trouble*,
TACTIC: Media Jacking
PRINCIPLE: Know Your Cultural Terrain
THEORY: Points of Intervention
CASE STUDY: Billionaires for Bush

→ Jane Hindley, "Breaking the Consumerist Trance"
[<http://revbilly.com/press/academic/2010/11/breaking-the-consumerist-trance>]

Saturday 7 July

Daytime, TBD ACTION!

17:00 - 19:00 Closing seminar @ Hemispheric Institute, NYC