

Theatre for Social Change

Course Syllabus

Schedule: Varies per semester. Class sessions are 3 hours each with a 15-minute break in the middle.

Lead Instructor: Chelsea Viteri, chelsea@pachaysana.org

Co-Instructors: Daniel Bryan, Javier Cevallos Perugachi, Wilson Pico, Erika Córdova

Office Hours: Anytime outside of normal class hours. Just ask.

Course Description:

This course is designed to lead international students and their counterparts through the process of creating social change by practicing social change. Using exercises and activities that pull from the areas of Theatre of the Oppressed, Theatre for Development and Performance Activism, we engage challenging concepts through real life situations, stretching from the theoretical areas of structural & symbolic oppression to socially charged topics like social/cultural identity, racism, privilege, power, environmental justice and gender issues. (Specific themes vary per semester and are identified through preliminary work that the Pachaysana Institute conducts with the community at large.) International students work closely with local counterparts to create small-scale projects to be presented to the community as a whole. Readings cover Applied Theatre methods, case studies and articles related to our themes, and they are discussed within the context of the community's reality and how the reality relates to universalities within our globalized society. We also discuss and rehearse the potential of turning the identified conflicts into opportunities for innovation. We work closely with community leaders to evaluate the work from our course for its potential with later community-based innovative activities. We expect students to focus on developing their skills in leadership, communication/dialogue, self & community analysis, as well as gain confidence in performing in front of groups and improvising for life.

General Objective

Students and counterparts discover theatre as a force for building dialogue, transforming conflict and inspiring social change. By the end of the course, all will have developed knowledge, skills and practical experience in: a) applying theatre to the identification & transformation of conflicts and opportunities, b) engaging with diverse methods of intercultural communication, and c) exploring, analyzing and transforming self & community

Specific Objectives

- Develop knowledge related to how theatre has been applied to social change in different settings and contexts around the world
- Develop knowledge of our host community's diverse concerns as related to the semester's established social themes
- Practice the creation of various types of theatre pieces for the purposes of exploring potential social change as related to the established social themes and the host community's concerns
- Practice the specific skills of the creative dialogue with the host community: 1) *listening* to the collective, 2) *reconstructing* the collective's expressed concerns in the structure of an applied theatre piece, 3) *expressing* the piece with the collective, and 4) *exchanging* ideas for action with the collective to enhance our understanding of the concerns.

General Content

We begin by exploring *Theatre as Dialogue* with a focus on the conflict, especially how conflicts are multi-faceted and interconnected. Then, we take a deeper dive into what we mean by *Applied Theatre* and *Participatory Theatre*. Next, we explore the key tools of *Theatre for Social Change*, applying them to the creation of theatre pieces. All theatrical creations are focused on our community's lived realities and specific needs for conflict transformation.

Evaluation

- Participation 15%
- Proyecto 1 10%
- Proyecto 2 10%
- Proyecto 3 20%
- Final Project and Presentation 25%
- Journals 20%

Journals: There are a total of 4 journal prompts. We ask that you respond to each one using a process of: A) Observations, B) Reflections, C) Contextualization/Identification, and D) Structuring/Expression. For each one, you should write approximately 750 to 1000 words. Each journal entry should inter-relate your experiences in the class with aspects of real life that you feel passionate about (your personal life, community life, politics, social situations, etc.). In other words the journal is about the content (for example, what is dialogue, education, decolonization, etc.) of the course more than it is about the methodologies (image theatre, music, etc.) of the course. Each entry is worth 5 points.

Observations are what you have seen, heard, thought and felt with regards to a given topic, without trying to interpret those reactions; *reflections* are how your observations affect your views and feelings with regards to yourself and/or the world (reflections are much more interpretive); Contextualization/Identification goes hand in hand with reflection, with *contextualization* allowing you to apply a reflection to a given topic or phenomenon and *identification* asking you to relate it to your own life/story. *Structuring* is the shaping of those comments into a structure that is meaningful for you and *expressing* is telling the world (basically the turning in of your journal). By the way, this process is not supposed to be easy, but it is one of our most human acts... it is the creation of knowledge.

Optional creative journals: For no more than two of your four journals, feel free to do something creative instead of a normal written entry. This can be a poem, story, song, monologue, artistic creation. If you choose this option, be sure to go through the same process (observation, reflection, contextualization/identification, structuring and expression). Depending on the creative means chosen, I may request that you set up a brief 10 minute meeting to talk to me about your work.

Project Reflections: For each project, students should turn in a written reflection. This is a 500 to 700 word writing to be turned in shortly after presenting your project. The focus of this reflection is not the content of your project (addressing content is reserved for journals); rather, it is an exploration of your experience as informed by the methods and readings. Be sure to integrate no less than two readings in each reflection.

Readings:

Readings are divided into Practice-focused and Theme-Focused categories. Thematic readings are assigned at the beginning of each week. They are all in Spanish and mostly newspaper, magazine and internet articles that address the selected social themes for the given semester. Required Thematic Readings are assigned at the outset of the semester and include sections of each of the following.

- Boal, Augusto. (2004). *El Arcoiris del Deseo*. Alba.
- Boal, Augusto. (2001). *Juegos para Actores y No-Actores*. Alba.
- Boal, Augusto. (1980). *Teatro del Oprimido*. Alba.
- Boal, Augusto. (2012). *La Estética del Oprimido*. Alba.
- Cohen, Cynthia, Roberto Gutierrez Varea and Polly Walker. (2011). *Acting Together: Performance and the Creative Transformation of Conflict*. New Village Press.
- Cohen-Cruz, Jan. (2010). *Engaging Performance: Theatre as Call and Response*. Routledge.
- Cohen-Cruz, Jan and Mandy Schutzman. (2006). *A Boal Companion: Dialogues on Theatre and Politics*. Routledge.
- Freire, Paulo. (1970). *Pedagogía del Oprimido*. Siglo XXI.
- Lecoq, Jaques. (1997). *El cuerpo poético*. Alba.
- Nicholson, Helen. (2015). *Applied Drama*. Springer.
- Pascale, Pablo. (2005). "¿Dónde está la creatividad? Una aproximación al modelo de sistemas de Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi?" *Arte, individuo y sociedad*, 17, 63-86.
- Walsh, Catherine. (2017). *Pedagogías Decoloniales: Prácticas insurgents de resistir, (re)existit y (re)vivir Tomo II*. Abya-Yala.