



Meeting Times: Tuesday and Thursday 2:20-3:35

Meeting location: HECC 207

Instructor: James R Ball III

Email address: jimball@tamu.edu

Office hours: Tuesday and Thursday 12:00-1:00, by appointment

Office location: LAAH 257

Course Description and Prerequisites

CATALOG DESCRIPTION:

The use of performance in activist contexts to achieve social and political change; examination of activism, including struggles for social justice, economic equality, and civil rights, as performance; examination of the arts, including performance, theatre, music, dress, and design, as tools for activism.

DETAILED COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Activism is an essential part of a healthy and functioning society, and it is an essentially artful practice. In particular, activism lends itself to analysis via the lens and rubric of performance studies: activists act and enact their positions on varied stages in view of the eyes and ears of audiences they hope will heed their performance and realize social change in turn.

This course investigates the performative and theatrical dimensions in which activism operates. This will include the study of artists who embrace subversive practices (The Living Theatre) and those who have subversion thrust upon them (Paul Robeson). We will examine activists who take advantage of the tools made available by the performing arts (The Yes Men), artists who work to change the world (Boal), and performers who serve as lightning rods for political debate (The NEA 4). We will also investigate the performative terms by which activism and dissidence prove effective, finding in the language of performance a crucial rubric with which to understand the operations of major social movements, from Martin Luther King, Jr., to ACT UP, to Anonymous and Wikileaks, to Occupy Wall Street, to Black Lives Matter, and beyond.

This course fulfills University Core Objectives in Creative Arts and Cultural Discourse. To those ends, it will include weekly discussions of issues facing our communities and regular opportunities to reflect, in writing, on our own views and biases as they relate to those issues. These will include discussions of power and privilege, violence and oppression, tolerance and debate, and ways our multicultural and plural society can thrive through informed and gracious dialogue and debate. We will also be engaging in activism as a creative and communal practice requiring critical thinking, teamwork, and social responsibility, by embarking on a semester-long Action Project.

PREREQUISITES: None

Learning Outcomes or Course Objectives

Course Objectives: By the end of this course, students will:

- identify and describe the role arts activism has played in the history of the 20th and 21st centuries;
- explain the aesthetic strategies employed by activists in varied contexts;
- apply performance studies theories and methods to the study of social and political movements;
- evaluate various uses of art to achieve social and political change, arguing for their positions in written and oral products;
- justify their stance on these issues in live discussions with small and large groups of their colleagues;
- design and execute an activist performance action, working in groups.

KCRA Learning Outcomes: This course meets the core curriculum Creative Arts (KCRA) foundational component area. The core curriculum objectives for this course are:

1. **Critical Thinking:** creative thinking; innovation; inquiry; and analysis, evaluation, and synthesis of information
2. **Communication:** effective development, interpretation and expression of ideas through written, oral, and visual communication
3. **Teamwork:** ability to consider different points of view and to work effectively with others to support a shared purpose or goal
4. **Social Responsibility:** intercultural competence; knowledge of civic responsibility; and the ability to engage effectively in regional, national, and global communities

Cultural Discourse Learning Outcomes: This course meets the TAMU Cultural Discourse (KUCD) graduation requirement. The Cultural Discourse objectives for this course are:

- Hold respectful discussions and discourse on difficult topics
- Understand self, including personal bias and prejudices
- Understand how power or authority is distributed within organizational systems, including recognizing potential forms of privilege, oppression, and discrimination
- Understand how to use and promote informed dialogue to overcome issues dividing, not uniting, individuals and humankind
- Understand tolerance and intolerance and have knowledge of when it is appropriate to be intolerant of specific behaviors/activities that violate our core values as people and Aggies
- Understand how to function effectively in a multicultural and global society
- Understand conflict from multiple viewpoints

TAMU Student Learning Outcomes: Texas A&M University has identified student learning outcomes that describe our institutional commitment to your educational goals. These include the ability to demonstrate critical thinking, effective communication, and social, cultural, and global competence. Please see:

http://provost.tamu.edu/essentials/pdfs/copy_of_UndergraduateLearningOutcomesFinal.pdf.

Textbook and/or Resource Material

Two texts are required for this course:

Andrew Boyd and Dave Oswald Mitchell, eds. *Beautiful Trouble: A Toolbox for Revolution*. New York: O/R Books, 2012.

adrienne maree brown. *Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Shaping Worlds*. Chico, Calif.: AK Press, 2017.

Assignments/Expectations/Policies

Components

Discussion Reports	10 points
Cultural Discourse Journal	20 points
Quizzes (4)	60 points (15 points each)
Action Project	
Manifesto	10 points
Case Study Presentation	20 points
Action Plan	20 points
Post Mortem	10 points
<u>Final Exam</u>	<u>50 points</u>
TOTAL	200 points

Grading Scale

- A = 180-200 points
- B = 160-179 points
- C = 140-159 points
- D = 120-139 points
- F = <120 points

Discussion Reports (10 Points)

You are expected to arrive to class well prepared for the week's topics, and to participate actively in *Group Discussions* with your colleagues. Your participation in these discussions will be evaluated regularly in *Discussion Reports* each group will prepare summarizing key elements of their conversations. Though we will hold small group discussions every week, Discussion Reports will not be required every week. Thus regular attendance is essential.

Cultural Discourse Journal (20 Points)

You are also expected to reflect each week by posting to your *Cultural Discourse Journal* in response to the prompts below. These reflections should be at least 200 words long, and each entry is worth 2 points. Each prompt reflects an important question investigated and debated by performance studies scholars, on topics including aesthetics, diversity, religious tolerance, intercultural dialogue, citizenship, social justice, and arts politics. Each question is an opportunity to think critically about your relationship to activism and social change, and to communicate your thoughts clearly in writing. These journals will feed into your regular *Group Discussions*.

Cultural Discourse Journal Prompts:

1. What role should activism play in a democratic nation?
2. Under what circumstances would it be reasonable for a citizen or activist to disobey the law? Why?
3. Is violence ever permissible to oppose oppression and promote social change?
4. What role can the human voice, whether speaking or singing, play in overcoming divisions between individuals and communities? When and how can the voice be used to divide?
5. What is the civic responsibility of artists and their works of art? What are our civic responsibilities as spectators to performance?
6. How and why do state authorities regulate performance and/or the body? How do performers resist this administration?
7. How can we promote micropolitical social change through our everyday decisions?
8. Why and how might the body be a privileged location for activist performance?
9. What new affordances does a digitally networked world provide for pursuing activist projects? How might technologies like the internet require new forms of activism?
10. Why should we change the world? How can we change the world?

Quizzes (60 Points)

Throughout the semester we will hold four quizzes worth 15 points each. Each quiz will follow one of our four units, and will only cover material from that unit. These quizzes may include short answer, fill in the blank, or multiple choice questions. Any student who keeps up with our reading assignments and attends class regularly should excel at these quizzes.

Action Project (60 points)

At the start of the semester you will be randomly assigned to a group with which you will work on assignments throughout the semester, both within and outside of class. Together you will complete three assignments:

- Manifesto (2 pages; 10 points)
- Case Study Presentation and Annotated Bibliography (10 Minutes; 4 pages; 20 points)
- Action Plan (6 pages; 20 points)

Individually, you will also complete one assignment:

- Post Mortem (1 page; 10 points)

As a group you will decide on a particular issue, principle, or event around which to organize an activist performance. Your topic may be aesthetic, social, or political, but should be significant enough to sustain your work and interest across the semester.

Once you have selected a topic, your group will collectively write a 500-word **manifesto** detailing your position on or intervention in your topic. Be sure to make clear why your group has come together, how they are proposing to act, and the particular urgency of the work at hand.

Each group will also conduct independent research on arts activism related to their topic, and will present that research to the class as a whole throughout the semester. **Case Study Presentations** should focus on either existing activist approaches to a group's issue, unrelated activist projects that might serve as a model for organizing on the group's issue, or some combination of the two.

EXAMPLE: A group organized in opposition to the US government's use of unmanned aerial vehicles (drones) might focus on the work of activist group CODEPINK; on artistic productions like the play *Grounded*, the film *Eye in the Sky*, or the web-game "Unmanned"; on the appearance of the issue in popular culture (such as in M.I.A.'s music video for the song "Double Bubble Trouble"); on activist formations on related issues like nuclear disarmament, landmines, or small arms; or on some combination of these.

The historical and geographical scope of presentations is left to the discretion of each group. Groups will be randomly assigned presentation days. Presentations should be no longer than 10 minutes, and should end by engaging the class with discussion questions. Presentations should incorporate audio-visual supports or handouts as appropriate. At the conclusion of each presentation, the presenting group will also turn in a 4 page annotated bibliography cataloging the research done for the presentation. Our course textbooks, *Beautiful Trouble* and *Emergent Strategy*, may NOT be used as one of the required entries. **EACH GROUP MEMBER IS RESPONSIBLE FOR AT LEAST 2 ENTRIES ON THE ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY.** Each entry should include the following:

- The work consulted cited following the rules laid out in the Chicago Manual of Style;
- 1-2 sentences summarizing the content of the work;
- 1-2 sentences indicating the relevance of the work to your own Action Project.

Finally, each group will also write an **Action Plan** for an event or intervention related to their topic. This 6 page written document will detail the what, where, when, why, and how of an event designed to advance your cause and undermine or oppose a dominant structure. Subversive Action Plans might detail the plan for a protest, a boycott, a strike, a sit-in, a teach-in, a love-in, a happening, invisible theatre, a play, a book, a painting, a conversation, a daily practice, an occupation, a dance, a meal, a revolution, an insurrection, a movie, a concert, a song, a performance, etc.

Action Plans must:

- combine a Tactic, a Principle, and a Theory from our *Beautiful Trouble* textbook;
- clearly articulate how the proposed action will contribute to the goals outlined in your manifesto;
- detail the specific logistics of carrying out the action;
- identify precedents found in our readings, class sessions, and case study research;
- and assess the possible positive and negative consequences of the action.

You and your colleagues are expected to execute your action during week 13. You will each, individually, reflect on your efforts in a 1-page **Post Mortem**. This document should include:

- A brief description of the action event;
- An assessment of the quality of your collaboration with other group members;
- An evaluation of the efficacy of your action;
- and an indication of what insights you have gained into the aesthetics of activism by performing the action.

Final Exam (50 points)

At the end of the semester, you will complete a comprehensive final exam, worth 50 points. The exam will cover all concepts, activists, performances, and artists studied this semester. Questions regarding our two required performances/aggie enhancement events will measure your attendance and engagement with those experiences.

Required Performances/Aggie Enhancement Events

Attending and analyzing live performance events is a critical component of performance studies scholarship. To that end, you are required to attend two activist performances this semester.

Questions regarding the contents of these performances will be included on your final exam to verify your attendance at these events. A list of potential activist performances will be available through eCampus and will be regularly updated. Eligible performances may include:

- politically conscious theatre, dance, or music;
- protests or demonstrations;
- charitable concerts;
- sit-ins, strikes, or walk outs;
- meetings of the College Station or Bryan city councils;
- or any other public event through which our democracy proceeds.

Attendance

The University views class attendance as the responsibility of an individual student. Attendance is essential to complete the course successfully. Expected absences should be communicated to Dr. Ball in writing (via email) as soon as you are aware of an engagement that will conflict with our class schedule. Unexpected absences (e.g. illness) should be communicated to Dr. Ball in writing (via email) as soon as you are able. Students are responsible for content from all class sessions, even those they miss; in case of absence, keep up with readings and refer to your colleagues for notes from class discussions. There are no make-ups for in-class work without documentation of a University excused absence. University rules related to excused and unexcused absences are located on-line at <http://student-rules.tamu.edu/rule07>.

RUBRICS:

All written work must be typed in 12-point font and be double-spaced. Unexcused late assignments will lose one letter grade (10% of possible points) for each day they are late.

Written Communication Rubric:

A: Exceptional and illuminating work. Writing is engaging, confident, clear, and free of errors. The argument is easily identifiable and well supported by a variety of evidence. Demonstrates original thought, deep engagement with course themes, and unique applications of major concepts or methods. Shows potential to be developed for publication or public presentation.

B: Demonstrates above average work. Writing is mostly interesting and readable, with few issues of clarity and few surface errors. The argument is mostly clear and well supported. Demonstrates active engagement with course themes and efforts to think in new and compelling directions. Application of course concepts and methods may be pedestrian or require further development.

C: Average work. Writing has issues with clarity, readability, and maintaining the reader's attention. The argument may be unclear and lack sufficient evidence. Demonstrates familiarity with course themes, but does not extend investigations beyond our readings or classroom conversations. Course concepts may be illustrated, but not applied to new objects or inquiries.

D: Demonstrates unacceptable level of work. Writing may have significant issues with clarity and may contain many errors. Arguments are unoriginal, difficult to follow, and not compelling. Indicates a facile engagement with course themes and a lack of graduate level thinking.

F: Does not satisfy the minimal requirements of the assignment.

Performance Rubric

A: Exceptional and illuminating work. Performance is well rehearsed, visually and sonically compelling, and takes advantage of the live and embodied performance medium. Demonstrates original thought, deep engagement with course themes, and unique applications of major concepts or methods. Shows potential to be developed for professional presentation.

B: Demonstrates above average work. Performance shows evidence of rehearsal, is visually and sonically interesting, and indicates attention paid to the live and embodied performance medium. Demonstrates active engagement with course themes and efforts to think in new and compelling directions. Application of course concepts and methods may require further development.

C: Average work. Performance may be under-rehearsed, visual and sonic components may be lacking, and the importance of liveness and embodiment may not be apparent. Demonstrates familiarity with course themes, but does not extend investigations beyond our readings or classroom conversations.

D: Demonstrates unacceptable level of work. Performance may appear unrehearsed, may lack visual or sonic elements, and may not attend to questions of liveness and embodiment. Indicates a facile engagement with course themes.

F: Does not satisfy the minimal requirements of the assignment.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact Disability Services, currently located in the Disability Services building at the Student Services at White Creek complex on west campus or call 979-845-1637. For additional information, visit <http://disability.tamu.edu>.

Academic Integrity

For additional information please visit: <http://aggiehonor.tamu.edu>

“An Aggie does not lie, cheat, or steal, or tolerate those who do.”

Title IX and Statement on Limits to Confidentiality

Texas A&M University and the College of Liberal Arts are committed to fostering a learning environment that is safe and productive for all. University policies and federal and state laws provide guidance for achieving such an environment. Although class materials are generally considered confidential pursuant to student record policies and laws, University employees — including instructors — cannot maintain confidentiality when it conflicts with their responsibility to report certain issues that jeopardize the health and safety of our community. As the instructor, I must report (per Texas A&M System Regulation 08.01.01) the following information to other University offices if you share it with me, even if you do not want the disclosed information to be shared:

- Allegations of sexual assault, sexual discrimination, or sexual harassment when they involve TAMU students, faculty, or staff, or third parties visiting campus.

These reports may trigger contact from a campus official who will want to talk with you about the incident that you have shared. In many cases, it will be your decision whether or not you wish to speak with that individual. If you would like to talk about these events in a more confidential setting, you are encouraged to make an appointment with the Student Counseling Service (<https://scs.tamu.edu/>).

Students and faculty can report non-emergency behavior that causes them to be concerned at <http://tellsomebody.tamu.edu>.

COPYRIGHT NOTICE:

Class lectures and other materials are copyrighted and they may not be reproduced for anything other than personal use without written permission from the instructor.

Syllabus subject to change throughout the semester!

Course Topics, Calendar of Activities, Major Assignment Dates

Date	Class Topic	Assignment Due
Week 1	Course Introduction: The Aesthetics of Activism 1	READ in BT: “Action Logic” (208-209) “Make your actions both concrete and communicative” (154-155) “Balance art and message” (100-101) “Bidder 70” (290-293)
	Course Introduction: The Aesthetics of Activism 2	READ in ES: “introduction,” “principles...”, and “elements...” (1-50) CD Journal 1 Due
<i>Repertoires of Protest</i>		
Week 2	Civil Disobedience	READ: Henry David Thoreau. <i>Civil Disobedience</i> , 1849. http://thoreau.eserver.org/civil.html READ in BT: “General Strike” (50-51) “Use the law, don’t be afraid of it” (196-197)
	The Early 20 th Century: Temperance and Suffrage; Organized Labor; and Anti-Colonial Struggles.	READ in BT: “Mass Street Action” (68-71) “Challenge patriarchy as you organize” (108-111) “The Salt March” (354-357) CD Journal 2 Due
Week 3	Civil Rights 1	READ: Martin Luther King, Jr., “Letter from Birmingham Jail” READ in BT: “Strategic Non-Violence” (88-89) “Choose Tactics that Support your strategy” (112-113) “Maintain non-violent discipline” (148-149) “Pillars of Support” (248-249) “Revolutionary nonviolence” (260-261)

	Civil Rights 2	<p>READ in BT: “Direct Action” (32-35) “Points of intervention” (250-253) “Escalate strategically” (134-135)</p> <p>CD Journal 3 Due</p>
Week 4	The Living Theatre, Bread and Puppet Theatre, Teatro Campesino	<p>READ in BT: “Prefigurative Intervention” (82-85) “Political identity paradox” (254-255) “Consider your audience” (118-119) “Don’t just brainstorm, artstorm!” (128-129) “Use the power of ritual” (198-199) “Alienation effect” (210-211)</p>
	Chicago 1968	<p>READ in BT: “Creative Disruption” (18-21) “Media Jacking” (72-75) “Use the Jedi mind trick” (194-195) “Ethical Spectacle” (230-231)</p> <p>MANIFESTO Due</p> <p>QUIZ 1 in Class</p>
<i>Global Struggles</i>		
Week 5	The Activist Song Book: Woody Guthrie, Pete Seeger, and others	<p>READ in BT: “Think narratively” (186-187) “Lead with sympathetic characters” (146-147)</p>
	The Subversive Voices: Paul Robeson at HUAC	<p>READ in BT: “Anger works best when you have the moral high ground” (96-97) “Play to the Audience that isn’t there” (160-161) “Make the invisible visible” (152-153)</p> <p>CD Journal 4 Due</p>
Week 6	Theatre of the Oppressed 1	<p>READ in BT: “Forum Theater” (48-49) “Image Theater” (62-63) “Invisible Theater” (66-67) “Anyone can act” (98-99) “Pedagogy of the Oppressed” (246-247) “Theater of the Oppressed” (272-273)</p>

	Theatre of the Oppressed 2	<p>READ in BT: “Take leadership from the most impacted” (180-181) “We are all leaders” (202-203) “Consensus is a means, not an ends” (116-117)</p> <p>CD Journal 5 Due</p>
Week 7	Border Performances	<p>READ in BT: “Trek” (90-91) “Bring the issue home” (106-107)</p>
	Regina José Galindo	<p>QUIZ 2 in Class</p> <p>CD Journal 6 Due</p>
Week 8	Case Study Presentations	<p>READ in ES: “fractals: the relationship between small and large” (51-66)</p>
	Case Study Presentations	<p>READ in ES: “intentional adaptation: how we change” (67-82)</p>
	<i>Spring Break</i>	
	<i>Spring Break</i>	
<i>Subversive Bodies</i>		
Week 9	Dressing to Disrupt 1	<p>READ in BT: “If protest is made illegal, make daily life a protest” (138-139) “Don’t dress like a protestor” (126-127)</p>
	Dressing to Disrupt 2	<p>READ in BT: “Cultural Hegemony” (222-223) “The tactics of everyday life” (268-269)</p> <p>CD Journal 7 Due</p>
Week 10	Body Art	<p>READ in ES: “interdependence and decentralization: who we are and how we share” and “nonlinear and iterative: the pace and pathways of change” (83-122)</p>

	The NEA 4 and the Culture Wars	READ in ES: “resilience: how we recover and transform” (123-150) Action Plan Due
Week 11	ACT UP and Gran Fury	READ in BT: “Brand or be branded” (104-105) “Put your target in a decision dilemma” (166-167) “Shift the spectrum of allies” (172-173) “Show, don’t tell” (174-175)
	Subversive Bodily Acts	READ in BT: “Turn the tables” (190-191) “Environmental Justice” (228-229) “The Couple in the Cage” (312-315) CD Journal 8 Due Quiz 3 in Class
<i>Activist Futures</i>		
Week 12	Electronic Civil Disobedience	READ in BT: “Distributed Action” (36-39)
	Hactivism, Anonymous, Wikileaks	READ in BT: “Nonviolent Search and Seizure” (76-77) “Memes” (242-243) CD Journal 9 Due
Week 13	Electoral Guerrilla Theatre	READ in BT: “Electoral Guerrilla Theatre” (40-43)
	Culture Jamming with the Yes Men	READ in BT: “Detournement/Culture Jamming” (28-31) “Hoax” (54-55) “Do the media’s work for them” (124-126) “Dow Chemical apologizes for Bhopal” (318-321) “Know your cultural terrain” (142-145) Quiz 4 in class Execute Action Plans

Week 14	Occupy	<p>READ in BT: “Debt Strike” (24-27) “Occupation” (78-81) “Simple Rules can have Grand results” (176-177) “The Commons” (220-221) “Temporary Autonomous Zone (TAZ)” (270-271)</p> <p>Post Mortem Due</p>
	Black Lives Matter	<p>READ in BT: “Anti-oppression” (212-215) “hashtag politics” (238-239)</p> <p>READ in ES: “creating more possibilities: how we move towards life” (151-166)</p> <p>CD Journal 10 Due</p>
Final Exam Date		Final Exam