

WGS 340 (47789): PERFORMING THE AFROFUTURISTIC

AFR 372E (30379), T D 357T (26659)

Fall 2013 | PAR 303

Tuesday and Thursday, 3:30-5:00pm

Wura-Natasha Ogunji wogunji@austin.utexas.edu

Office hours: Thursday 1:00-3:00pm, PAR 126

Course Description

Through Afrofuturism—a fusion of science fiction, African cosmologies, history, fantasy, and technology—artists of Africa and the African Diaspora envision, create and perform visionary futures while actively engaging with the past. In this course, we will look to the Afrofuturists in our examination of aliens and hybridity, race and gender, technology and new media, inner and outer space. Students will gain an understanding of the history of Afrofuturism and the diverse ways in which artists express these principles in music, film, literature, visual arts, and performance. They will create solo and collaborative performance works that incorporate Afrofuturist aesthetics and practices.

Methods of Evaluation

50% Performances

15% Archive

10% Reflection Journal

25% Attendance and Participation (measured by Reflection Journal to be used for exercise reflections and reading responses)

+/- grades will be assigned according to the system in effect since the fall of 2009

Assignments

Performances

1 Riff: Create a collaborative performance that riffs off of an Afrofuturist work. You may draw from film, literature, music, performance or the visual arts in the creation of your performance piece.

2 This Historical Moment

“An artist's duty, as far as I'm concerned, is to reflect the times.” --Nina Simone

Choose a current event or set of circumstances. Create a performance using the aesthetics of Afrofuturism to reference, speak about, reflect upon, question, understand, interrogate, envision, riff off of this particular event. Be attentive to how place or site affects the meaning of the work. While the assignment is called 'This Historical Moment', your performance will (of course!) speak about the future as well. This may be a solo or collaborative performance.

Archive

Create an archive of your performance work in the form of your choice: journal, zine, handmade book, blog, website, etc. This archive is intended to: (1) describe the Afrofuturist context,

history, ideas from which you are working (2) provide a chronicle of your personal artistic process, interests, methods and philosophies and (3) document specific performance work/s created in this class. Include information about the development and production of the work. This assignment is not only intended to serve as an important archive of your performance art, it offers the opportunity to place your work into larger artistic, cultural, political, historical conversations.

Reflection Journal

Attendance and participation in class discussions and performance exercises is critical. You are required to keep a journal in which you write reflections, responses, questions related to in-class performance exercises, readings, films, etc.

Required Readings

Readings serve to provide grounding in the history and aesthetics of both Afrofuturism and Performance Art in order to support the development of your creative ideas and performance technique.

Afrofuturism, Afrikadaa online magazine, www.afrikadaa.com, June 2013

Ellionore Bellio, *The Anti-Art of Kongofuturism*, Chimurenga Chronic, South Africa, 2013

Anne Bogart, *Resistance*, A Director Prepares: Seven Essays on Art and Theatre, London: Routledge, 2001, pp. 137-155

Tisa Bryant, *Autodidact*, Encyclopedia Project, Volume 1: A-E, Encyclomedia, 2006

Mark Dery, *Black to the Future: Afro-Futurism 1.0*, Flame Wars: The Discourse of Cyberculture, Duke University Press, 1994

Mark Dery, *Black to the Future: Interviews with Samuel R. Delany, Greg Tate and Tricia Rose*, Flame Wars: The Discourse of Cyberculture, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1994, pp. 179-222

Kodwo Eshun, *Further Considerations on Afro-Futurism*, CR: The New Centennial Review, Volume 3, Number 2, Summer 2003, pp. 287-302

Anna Everett, *The Revolution Will be Digitized: Afrocentricity and the Digital Public Sphere*, Social Text, 71 (Volume 20, Number 2), Summer 2002, pp. 125-146

Francesca T. Royster, *Feeling Like a Woman, Looking Like a Man, Sounding Like a No-No: Grace Jones and the Performance of Strange in a Post-Soul Moment*, Women & Performance: a journal of feminist theory, DePaul University, Chicago, USA Published online: 13 Mar 2009

Ericka Dayla Muhammad, *Electroculture: Vanguard Documentary, Cut-and-Mix, and Futurist Diasporic Media*, New York University, Graduate School of Arts and Science, 2004, pp. 85-97

Alondra Nelson, *Afrofuturism: A Special Issue of Social Text*, 71 (Volume 20, Number 2), Summer 2002

Mark A. Rockey Moore, *What is Afrofuturism?*, rahkyt.wordpress.com/2011/04/24/what-is-afrofuturism, (Orig. published February, 2000)

Ytasha L. Womack, *What is Afro-Futurism?: An Interview with artist/educator Akpem, D. Denenge*, 22 Mar. 2010 <<http://postblackthebook.blogspot.com/2010/03/afro-futurism-interview-with.html>>

Additional readings may be assigned.

Schedule and Due Dates

week 1

Thursday, August 29

course overview

week 2 | introduction to afrofuturism and performance art

Tuesday, September 3

histories, performance exercises

Thursday, September 5

Mark Dery, *Black to the Future: Afro-Futurism 1.0*, *Flame Wars: The Discourse of Cyberculture*, Duke University Press, 1995

Alondra Nelson, *Afrofuturism: A Special Issue of Social Text*, 71 (Volume 20, Number 2), Summer 2002

Mark A. Rockey Moore, *What is Afrofuturism?*, rahkyt.wordpress.com/2011/04/24/what-is-afrofuturism, (Orig. published February, 2000)

week 3 | aliens & hybridity

Tuesday, September 10

Mark Dery, *Black to the Future: Interviews with Samuel R. Delany, Greg Tate and Tricia Rose*, *Flame Wars: The Discourse of Cyberculture*, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1994, pp. 179-222

Ytasha L. Womack, *What is Afro-Futurism?: An Interview with artist/educator Akpem, D. Denenge*, 22 Mar. 2010 <<http://postblackthebook.blogspot.com/2010/03/afro-futurism-interview-with.html>>

Thursday, September 12

performance exercises

week 4 | the cosmic archive

Tuesday, September 17

creating an archive: tools, techniques, catalogues, indices.

Tisa Bryant, *Autodidact*, Encyclopedia Project, Volume 1: A-E, Encyclomedia, 2006

Thursday, September 19

***Meet at PCL 1.339* Please be on time.**

Find the PCL at the southwest corner of 21st Street and Speedway

(<http://www.utexas.edu/maps/main/buildings/pcl.html>). Once you enter, you'll see the Research Help and Check Out desk on your left (stop here if you have any questions or want directions).

Take your first left after the Desk and go down the stairs or elevators to the first floor. Off of the stairs take a right; off of the elevators, head towards the stairs and take a left into the study

area. Follow the signs past the map room to PCL 1.339. You'll find a map of the first floor here: http://www.lib.utexas.edu/sites/default/files/imagecache/librarymap-1000/about/librarymap/pcl-01-1000_0.jpg.

week 5 | sound

Tuesday, September 24

Kodwo Eshun, *More Brilliant Than the Sun: Adventures in Sonic Fiction*, London: Quartet, 1998

Thursday, September 26

performance exercises

week 6 | race is the place

Tuesday, October 1

performance exercises

Thursday, October 3

DUE Performance Proposal (10 minute conferences)

week 7 | performing gender

Tuesday, October 8

Robin James, *Robo-Diva R&B: Aesthetics, Politics, and Black Female Robots in Contemporary Popular Music*, *Journal of Popular Music Studies*, Volume 20, Issue 4, Charlotte: University of North Carolina, 2008 pp. 402–423

Francesca T. Royster, *Feeling Like a Woman, Looking Like a Man, Sounding Like a No-No: Grace Jones and the Performance of Strange in a Post-Soul Moment*, *Women & Performance: a journal of feminist theory*, DePaul University, Chicago, USA Published online: 13 Mar 2009

Thursday, October 10

performance exercises

week 8 | DUE First Performance Assignment

Tuesday, October 15

Performances

Thursday, October 17

Performances

week 9 | technology and new media

Tuesday, October 22

Ericka Dayla Muhammad, *Electroculture: Vanguard Documentary, Cut-and-Mix, and Futurist Diasporic Media*, New York University, Graduate School of Arts and Science, 2004, pp. 85-97

Anna Everett, *The Revolution Will be Digitized: Afrocentricity and the Digital Public Sphere*, *Social Text*, 71 (Volume 20, Number 2), Summer 2002, pp. 125-146

Thursday, October 24

Jennifer Parker-Starbuck, *Shifting Strengths: The Cyborg Theater of Cathy Weis in Bodies in Commotion: Disability and Performance*

Lysa Rivera, *Los Atravesados: Guillermo Gómez-Peña's Ethno-cyborgs*

performance exercises

week 10 | inner and outer space

Tuesday, October 29

DUE Performance Proposal (10 minute conferences)

Thursday, October 31

performance exercises

week 11 | afrofuturists in the motherland

Tuesday, November 5

Kodwo Eshun, *Further Considerations on Afro-Futurism*, *CR: The New Centennial Review*, Volume 3, Number 2, Summer 2003, pp. 287-302

Afrofuturism, Afrikadaa online magazine, www.afrikadaa.com, June 2013

Ellionore Bellio, *The Anti-Art of Kongofuturism*, *Chimurenga Chronic*, South Africa, 2013

Thursday, November 7

performance exercises

week 12 | performance intensive

Tuesday, November 12

Bogart, Anne. *Resistance, A Director Prepares: Seven Essays on Art and Theatre*, London: Routledge, 2001, pp. 137-155

Thursday, November 14

performance exercises

week 13 | DUE Second Performance Assignment
Tuesday, November 19
Performances

Thursday, November 21
Performances

week 14 | DUE Second Performance Assignment
Tuesday, November 26
Performances

Thursday, November 28
Holiday

week 15 | DUE Archive and Reflection Journal
Tuesday, December 3
Share Archive

Thursday, December 5
Final Class Day

University Policies and Resources

Attendance

Class attendance is a requirement and use of the full class period is expected. You will be allowed three sick, personal, physical or mental health days without grading consequences. It is up to your discretion how you use these three days. Being late to class three times or leaving class early three times will count as an absence. 15 minutes late to the start of class will constitute a tardy. Leaving class before being dismissed by your Professor will constitute an early departure. A 4th absence will result in the lowering of your final grade by one letter grade. Absences, tardiness and/or early departures beyond this could result in course failure. If a serious medical or personal situation occurs affecting attendance, please discuss it with your professor. A student who misses classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day should inform the instructor as far in advance of the absence as possible, so that arrangements can be made to complete an assignment within a reasonable time after the absence.

Academic Integrity

According to the General Information catalog, “the value of a university degree depends on the absolute integrity of the work done by each student for that degree, a student should maintain a high standard of individual honor in his or her scholastic work”.

University of Texas Honor Code

The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the university is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community. Students who violate University rules on scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and/or dismissal from the University. Since such dishonesty harms the individual, all students, and the integrity of the University, policies on scholastic dishonesty will be strictly enforced.

Documented Disability Statement

The University of Texas at Austin provides upon request appropriate academic accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. For more information, contact Services for Students with Disabilities at 471-6259 (voice) or 232-2937 (video phone).

Use of E-Mail for Official Correspondence to Students

Email is recognized as an official mode of university correspondence; therefore, you are responsible for reading your email for university and course-related information and announcements. You are responsible to keep the university informed about changes to your e-mail address. You should check your e-mail regularly and frequently—I recommend daily, but at minimum twice a week—to stay current with university-related communications, some of which may be time-critical. You can find UT Austin’s policies and instructions for updating your e-mail address at <http://www.utexas.edu/its/policies/emailnotify.php>.

Religious Holy Days

By UT Austin policy, you must notify me of your pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, I will give you an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

Behavior Concerns Advice Line (BCAL)

If you are worried about someone who is acting differently, you may use the Behavior Concerns Advice Line to discuss by phone your concerns about another individual's behavior. This service is provided through a partnership among the Office of the Dean of Students, the Counseling and Mental Health Center (CMHC), the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), and The University of Texas Police Department (UTPD). Call 512-232-5050 or visit <http://www.utexas.edu/safety/bcal>.

Emergency Evacuation Policy

Occupants of buildings on the UT Austin campus are required to evacuate and assemble outside when a fire alarm is activated or an announcement is made. Please be aware of the following policies regarding evacuation:

- Familiarize yourself with all exit doors of the classroom and the building. Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when you entered the building.
- If you require assistance to evacuate, inform me in writing during the first week of class.
- In the event of an evacuation, follow my instructions or those of class instructors.

Do not re-enter a building unless you're given instructions by the Austin Fire Department, the UT Austin Police Department, or the Fire Prevention Services office

Course Drop Policy

The State of Texas has enacted a law that limits the number of course drops for academic reasons to six (6). As stated in Senate Bill 1231:

“Beginning with the fall 2007 academic term, an institution of higher education may not permit an undergraduate student a total of more than six dropped courses, including any course a transfer student has dropped at another

Resources for Learning & Life at UT Austin

The University of Texas has numerous resources for students to provide assistance and support for your learning.

The UT Learning Center: <http://www.utexas.edu/student/utlc/>

Undergraduate Writing Center: <http://uwc.utexas.edu/>

Counseling & Mental Health Center: <http://cmhc.utexas.edu/>

Career Exploration Center: <http://www.utexas.edu/student/careercenter/>

Student Emergency Services: <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/emergency/>