

Introduction to Theater of the Oppressed (RSED 4036)

Semester: Fall 2010

Dates & Times: Wednesdays 7:10-9:40

Venue: Fireside room

Instructor: Jiwon Chung (jchung@sksm.edu) 510-845-4829

Course Description

Theater of the Oppressed is a collection of games, techniques, exercises for using theater as a vehicle for personal and social change. It is a method of harnessing the laboratory of the theater as a powerful tool for exploring power, transforming oppression, and finding community-building solutions to the problems of inequality, conflict and injustice. Based on the radical ideas of Paolo Freire and Augusto Boal, it is a collective artistic exploration into the fullest expression of our human dignity, potential and creativity.

This is an introductory workshop covering the theory, application and facilitation of TO, including:

- *Demechanization*
- *Dynamization*
- *Image Theater*
- *Forum Theater*
- *Rainbow of Desire*
- *Theory & Pedagogy*

The workshop will be 80% experiential and 20% reflective/didactic. No prior theater or performance experience is required. Elements of related counter-oppressive techniques will also be introduced as an adjunct to TO, and prominent practitioners of TO will be invited as guest facilitators. Opportunities to facilitate workshops and classes with a variety of populations outside of the class will be provided.

Course Outline

The course is structured to introduce action and experiential techniques from the Theater of the Oppressed, so that participants can begin to apply them as tools in a practice of personal and collective liberation. Participants will be taught how to observe, analyze, challenge and transform oppression and oppressive practices at the individual, interpersonal, institutional, and ideological levels, using a vast spectrum of techniques, exercises, and tools from Theater of the Oppressed.

The core essence of the work lies in Augusto Boal's deep and sustained formulation of Freirian principles into a social practice. As a method of transformational pedagogy, TO is one of the most radical and powerful methods of translating Paolo Freire's ideas of a Pedagogy of Liberation into social action. This course will explore ways of engaging the intelligence of the whole body, and the wisdom of groups to dialogue, learn & unlearn, self-teach, and problem-solve fundamental issues of oppression and social injustice. We will be experimenting with multi-modal techniques of representing, thinking and communicating (especially as they relate to power dynamics). There will be a strong emphasis on kinesthetic learning, total physical response & meta-learning. There will be a progression of games and exercises for structuring group dynamics. All of these activities are utilized in a structured progression that creates a core practice of liberation and empowerment for all participants.

In addition to the above, we will be bringing a deep analysis of power relations, oppression, liberation and social justice from a viewpoint strongly influenced by a critical/left worldview. The work is an embodied phenomenological exploration into praxis. Participants should come out solidly grounded in theory & practice, more deeply aware, and more courageous and passionate in their desire to challenge social injustice.

Expectations:

The course will be a balance of active experiential techniques and critical reflection/processing. **Active participation (with reasonable accommodation) is expected** both in physical/experiential exploration and in critical intellectual engagement.

In addition, the work is intensive, dialogical, and collectively generated, so good **attendance (80%)** and **punctuality** are crucial to the success of the class.

Readings in a **course reader** will be assigned for discussion, and participants are encouraged to take notes or to keep a journal for each session.

The instructor will be available for further discussion outside of class by appointment; questions and concerns can also be addressed to me by email (jchung@sksm.edu) or by phone (510-845-4829). Participants who are interested in facilitating groups are encouraged to schedule an appointment and to take advantage of opportunities to assist in facilitating workshops outside of the classroom.

Please **dress comfortably to move**.

Grading:

Participants will be graded **Pass/Fail** with a written evaluation unless a letter grade is requested.

A reflective essay on the process, a lesson plan involving TO, or a critical paper on theory may be submitted for extra credit.

The following areas of Theater of the Oppressed will be covered:

- **Demechanization & Dynamization:** Building trust, safety, spontaneity, cohesiveness in groups; engaging & liberating sensation, movement and imagination; developing creativity & embodied intelligence and spontaneity in action.
- **Image theater:** Making the invisible visible; concretizing, engaging, embodying and transforming oppression; observing, analyzing and deconstructing received images, stories, memes/mythologies/ideologies of oppression.
- **Forum theater:** Intervening in & transforming oppressive situations through collective problem-solving; imagining, enacting, rehearsing alternative outcomes; exploring "subjunctive" modes, viewpoints, styles of relating/dialoguing; creating collective empowerment & community-oriented justice
- **Cop in the Head/Rainbow of Desire:** Techniques for transforming intrapsychic and internalized oppression.
- **TO as a Martial Art:** Exploring the dialectical syntax of power: Integrating mind, body & spirit in the transformation of oppression
- **TO & allied techniques:** TO, Simultaneous Dramaturgy, Playback and other allied techniques: sculpting, fluid sculptures, pairs, narrative techniques, empathic listening and witnessing.
- **Theory:** History and Theory of TO; development of TO techniques; application of theatrical/TO techniques in social action, education, therapy, politics, dialogue and conflict resolution; Empathy, catharsis, dynamization; "distributive affective justice"; the function of art in society (propaganda, ideology, meme theory); theater, pedagogy and social transformation.

Expected Outcomes:

At the end of the course, participants should:

- Be able to articulate the basic approaches, techniques and theories of TO.
- Be able to explain the developmental sequencing of a workshop (warm up, demechanization, dynamization, image theater, forum, rainbow); and be able to coordinate and facilitate these elements with groups.
- Have tools to build trust, safety, empathy, and facilitate dialogue in groups.
- Be able to identify and measure affiliation, difference & social dynamics; be able to apply this to clarifying, revealing and transforming issues of oppression.
- Be able to apply the skills of *demechanization* (dishabituation) of sight, sound, touch, naming, movement and its effects on liberating and freeing consciousness. Be able to apply the skills of *dynamization in* expressive and focused action for social change.
- Be able to identify their own privilege or status and how it situates them in relation to other groups or individuals; be able to identify the *multiplicity* of ways in which we oppress and are oppressed by ourselves & others.
- Be able to articulate, analyze, witness, dialogue, and transform oppression using the tools and techniques of TO.
- Have tools to be able to enhance, empower, dynamize oneself and other groups, and develop a liberated, transformational approach to being in this world.

Participants should also demonstrate an *increase* in:

- Their ability to shift [between] power dynamics; increased fluidity in *affiliation and individuation*; increased ability to *empathize or distance* as necessary; fluidity in transitioning between *action, affect and reflection* (concrete/experiential and abstract modes).
- Spontaneity, imagination & *tele*; affect, role and status flexibility.
- Their ability to notice, name and analyze power dynamics, with an increased ability to shift, transform, reverse and neutralize power dynamics.
- Their awareness of the larger institutional, historical & social contexts of oppression & marginalization
- Their desire to create a deep, informed, intelligent, sustained commitment to challenging and transforming oppressive relations of power everywhere

The application of the following exercises and techniques (this list is not exhaustive) will be introduced, taught and discussed in the classes. A schema for progression will be introduced.

Warm ups, Embodiment & Sociometrical Techniques:

Physical Warm ups: Space games, Name games, Sound/Movement exercises, Energy exercises, Imaginative endowments, Endowed offers; Breathing spirals, Feldenkrais exercises, Contact Improvisation, Tai chi push hands, sticky hands, Numerado; Group awareness/cohesion: "Zen counting", "Glass cobra"; Crossings, Cross+drop, Repetition exercises

Demechanization/power dynamics:

Demechanization: "Leading by sound", "Leading centers", "Lovers"; Lead/follow dynamics: "Walk, follow, drop, center", "Flocking", "Bolivian Mimosas" (w/sound), "Columbian hypnosis"
Power/status games: "Card status"; number games; "Great game of power", "Your place in the room", "Enemy/defender", "Bear of Poitiers", "Vampire of Strasbourg"

Image Theater:

Complete the picture, with chairs, with dialogue, concentric circles (gallery of images); Song of the siren, "agora", "freeze tag", "Image of the word", "Mirror image", "Transform the image", Dynamized images (sounds, words, monologues)

Forum Theater/ intervention

Forum warm Up: "modified repetitive listening" (distant, loud, silent); Forum sharing: Story: "holographic witnessing"

Lighting Forum; Stacking Forums; Boxing Seconds; Traditional Forum

Rainbow of desire:

Prismatic oppression, Dialogue of internalized images, Rainbow into forum.

The following outline is a tentative outline. The actual progression will evolve organically and dialogically from session to session, depending on the needs, situations and issues that are generated by the participants.

Page numbers refer to the class reader.

Session 1 (Sept 8th):

Introductions

Agreements

Warm ups: sound & movement, lightning round, soundball, endowed offers, short scenes, crossings

Embodiment & Sociometry (locagrams, spectrograms, clusters, binaries)

Demechanization & Dynamization

Introduction to Image Theater

Discussion: History & Theory of Theater of the Oppressed & Pedagogy of the Oppressed

Readings:

Introduction: What is Theater of the Oppressed? (Overview): p.3-5

Augusto Boal on Democracy Now! (Interview): p.11-16

The Blessing is Next to the Wound (Interview with Hector Aristizabal) p.229

Supplemental readings (handouts):

Jacques Ranciere: The Ignorant School Master

Paolo Freire: Pedagogy of the Oppressed

Session 2 (Sept 15th):

Warmup & Demechanization: Fill the space, sound & movement, demechnizing movement, blind lead (noises), blind journey, Columbian hypnosis,

Image theater: Complete the Image, Carnival of Images

Discussion: Theory of Demechanization; History & Theory of TO

Readings:

Boal in Brazil, France, the USA (History): p.17-32

The Structure of the Actor's Work (Theory): p.73-74

Experiments with the People's Theater: p. 50-55

TO, the Body, and the Phenomenology of Oppression & Liberation (Theory) p227

The Tree of the Theatre of the Oppressed (Theory & History): p.161-162

Supplemental Readings:

Keith Johnstone: Notes on Myself p.243-244

Jerzy Grotowski: Statement of Principles p277-p230

Session 3 (Sept 22nd):

Warm up

Demechanization: Person to Person, Complete the Image (w/sculpting), "Lovers", Blind Sculpt, Affinity Groups

Image Theater: Image of Oppression & Dynamizations; Image of Happiness

Discussion & Sharing

Readings:

Experiments with the People's Theatre in Peru (History, Theory & Method): p.50-67

Techniques of the Joker System: p.69-70

Excerpts from Games for Actors and Non-actors (Handout)

Session 4 (Sept 29th):

Warm up: Demechanization/Labor Dances, Fill the Space, Spider Webs, Walk/Stop/Name, Bomb & Shield

Power & Space Analysis: Where would you like to be?, Great Game of Power, Complete the Image—take away the power

Forum Theater: Modified Meisner, Blank Forum

Discussion :Forum theory, dramaturgy & practice; Theater in the Subjunctive Mood

Readings:

What is Theatre? (Dramaturgy): p.105-110

She Made her Brother Smile (Case): p.201-202

Example of a Class with Forum (Case): p.7-8

Session 5 (Oct 5th):

Warm up: Labor dances; grounding meditation; Colors, Back to Back, Inner Rhythms, Bolivian Mimosas

Image Theater: Panopticon, Song of the Siren, Cluster Sociometry

Discussion & Closing

Readings:

Forum Theater: Doubts and Certainties (Theory): p.83-95

Games for Actors and Non-Actors: Forum rehearsal techniques (handout)

Session 6 (Oct 13th):

Warm up: Image Theater/Playback Check in, Auropticon, Fainting at Frejus, Magnets, Glass Cobra, Sonic Kaleidoscope/Holographic Listening

Eliciting & Sculpting the narrative

Image Theater or Forum Theater

Discussion on Forum theater, Playback Theater (Witnessing, Interpreting, Intervening)

Readings:

Empathy or Osmosis: p.48-49 (Dramaturgy)

Empathy or What? Emotion or Reason? (Dramaturgy): p.45-46

What do I do when I just don't know? (Playback Theory) Handout

Session 7 (Oct 20th):

Warm up: Mimosas, Conduct with Sound, Walk & Share, Image of the Word/Mirrors

Demechanization: Blind Sculpt, Swedish Blind Sculpt

Image Theater: Image of Oppression

Playback Theater: Playback Structures (Fluid Sculptures; Pairs)

Narrative Structures & Dramaturgical Forms

The Mirror and the Hammer: Forum Theater & Playback Theater Interventions

Theory/Discussion: "Homeopathy, Alchemy, and the Theater"

Readings:

Three Theatrical Encounters (History): p.97

How Aristotle's Coercive System of Tragedy Functions (Dramaturgy): p.33-34

Catharsis and Repose, or Knowledge and Action? (Dramaturgy): p.46-47

Statement of Principles -Jerzy Grotowski (Theory): p.227-230

Towards a Poor Theater (Handout)

Session 8 (Nov 3rd):

Warm up: Zen Counting, Feldenkrais, Contact Improv, Puppies, Touch the person's head,

Push Hands, Slow motion Samurai

Forum Theater & Legislative Theater

Forum presentation (2) or Blank Fora

Theory/Discussion

Readings:

Monologue & Dialogue (Legislative Theatre): p.123-124

History of Legislative Theater (Legislative Theatre): p.125-147

The Image of the Stage (Legislative Theatre): p.143-147

Supplemental Readings:

The Prometheus Project (Theory): p.180-182

Session 9 (Nov 10th):

Warm up: Who started the motion, Mirrors & variations, Flocking, West Side Story, Duelling
Rhythms/Carnaval of Rio

Columbian Forum or Forum Presentation

Lightning Forum

Invisible Theater

Theory/Discussion

Reading:

The Ultimate Aim of Tragedy (Dramaturgy): p.28-31

Imprisonment and Jail: The Freedom of Prometheus (Biography): p151-158

Memory and the Torture Chamber (Biography): p148-158

Session 10 (Nov 17th):

Warm up: Not in Kansas, Objects in groups, Vampire of Strasbourg

TO as a Martial Art: Sticky Hands, Push Hands (fixed pattern & free form), Kiss or Kill,
Awareness, Energy, Intention and Transformative Action

Forum Presentation: Rainbow into Forum

Readings:

I and Thou-Excerpts (Philosophy): p.255-261

The Unfettered Mind (Handout)

Notes on Jokering (Handout)

Session 11 (Nov 24th):

Image Theater warm up

Toning, Image of myself, Two by three by Bradford, Flocking, Follow the body part, Power &
Status: Status sociometry, Numbers Racket

Introduction to Cop-in-the Head

Theory/Dramaturgy

Reading:

Human Beings: a Passion & a Platform (Theory): p.104-115

Three Hypotheses of the Cop-in-the-Head (Theory): p.116-119

Session 12 (Dec 1st):

Warm up: demechanization, noises/songs, complete the dynamic image, dynamizations

Image Theater: Image of the Word

Rainbow of Desire

Reading:

Postscript: Experiment in India (Essay): p.120-121

Session 13 (Dec 8th):

Warm up

Forum Theater/Rainbow of Desire

Jokering/Facilitation

Application: Pedagogy & Activism

Ideology & Meme Theory

Reading:

Notes on Jokering (facilitation): p.9-10

Structures of Power: Toward a Theatre of Liberation: p.211-218

Theatre as Politics and Transitive Democracy as Theatre: p.131-133

Session 14 (Dec 15th):

Warm ups: demechanization, character work, rehearsal techniques

Facilitation & Intervention techniques (stacking forum, boxing seconds, lightning forum)

Applications/Activism/Pedagogy

Forum Theater Presentation
Forum Theater discussion
Facilitation/Joking
Evaluations
Closing Ritual

Reading:

Aesthetics of the Oppressed: a Theoretical Foundation (Theory): p.163-183
Theater in Prisons (Theory): p.186-199
Feminist Acts: Women, Pedagogy and Theatre of the Oppressed: p.219-225
TO rehearsal techniques (handout)

Texts:

A TO reader, Introduction to the Theater of the Oppressed, containing readings from all of Boal's texts is **required**. All readings other than class handouts will be assigned from this reader.

Individual copies will be available for purchase at ICLP (Instant Copying & Laser Printing) at 2138 University Ave., Berkeley (between Shattuck & Oxford) for \$20.00

A few classroom copies will be available for those who have difficulty purchasing the reader.

The following books are highly recommended:

Theatre of the Oppressed (1979, 1993), Augusto Boal, trans C.A. and M.L. McBride. New Theatre Communications Group Books (ISBN-10: 0930452496 ISBN-13: 978-0930452490; \$15.95): Theory, development, philosophy and practice.

Games for Actors and Non-actors(1992, 2002), Augusto Boal, trans. A. Jackson. London, Routledge (ISBN-10: 0415267080 ISBN-13: 978-0415267083; \$45.95):

How-to handbook of games for all practitioners. Outlines developmental sequences and theory, categorizes approaches. Great sourcebook. **Students who are serious about facilitation should purchase this text.**

Pedagogy of the Oppressed (1970, 1993, 2000), Paulo Freire: NY, Continuum. (ISBN-10: 0826412769 ISBN-13: 978-0826412768; \$21.95): Pedagogical, philosophical and theoretical roots of Theater of the Oppressed. Essential. The full text can also be found online at <http://www.marxists.org/subject/education/freire/pedagogy/ch01.htm>

Supplementary Texts:

Rainbow of desire (1995) Augusto Boal, trans. A. Jackson. London, Routledge (ISBN-10: 0415103495 ISBN-13: 978-0415103497; \$50.95)

Theory, philosophy, "case studies" and essays on internalized oppression. Presupposes familiarity with his approach and theories.

Legislative theater (1999) Augusto Boal, trans. A. Jackson. London, Routledge:

Outlines the theory, development and practice of Legislative Theater; Also, Taylor & Francis (2007) (ASIN: B000OI19SA; \$45.95)

Hamlet and the Baker's Son. (2001) Augusto Boal, London, Routledge (ISBN-10: 041522988X ISBN-13: 978-0415229883; \$125.00): Autobiography and development of the work

Aesthetics of the Oppressed (2006), Augusto Boal, London, Routledge (ISBN-10: 0415371767 ISBN-13: 978-0415371766; \$120.00): A global approach to using Art as a way to transform oppression.

Playing Boal: Theatre, Therapy, Activism (1993) ed. Mady Schutzman & Jan Cohen-Cruz. London, Routledge. (ISBN-10: 0415086086 ISBN-13: 978-0415086080; \$41.95): Essays on theory and practice of TO.

Jana Sanskriti: Forum Theatre and Democracy in India (2010) Sanjoy Ganguly, London, Routledge (ISBN-10: 0415577527 ISBN-13: 978-0415577526; \$100.00): The practice of TO in India, by one of the largest, most successful groups in the world.

Theatre for Living (2007) David Diamond, Trafford Publishing (ISBN-10: 1425124585 ISBN-13: 978-1425124588; \$29.95): TO as practiced from a systems theoretic viewpoint.

Theatre for Community Conflict and Dialogue: The Hope Is Vital Training Manual (1998) Michael Rohd, Heinemann Drama (ISBN-10: 0325000026 ISBN-13: 978-0325000022; \$16.95): Community-oriented theater strongly influenced by Theater of the Oppressed

Acts of Service: Spontaneity, Commitment, Tradition in the Non-scripted Theatre (1994, 2003) Jonathan Fox: New Paltz, NY, Tulsitala Publishing. (ISBN-10: 0964235005 ISBN-13: 978-0964235007; \$27.00): Theory and Application of Playback and other non-scripted theatrical forms.

Augusto Boal (2004) Frances Babbage, London, Routledge (ISBN-10: 0415273269 ISBN-13: 978-0415273268; \$110.00): Biography of Augusto Boal and his work.

Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic (1977), Bertolt Brecht, Hill and Wang; (ISBN-10: 0809005425 ISBN-13: 978-0809005420; \$16.00): Key Essays by Brecht

Web resources:

www.theatreoftheoppressed.org: International TO network website

<http://www.ptoweb.org/>: Pedagogy and Theatre of the Oppressed: National organization for the promotion and dissemination of Augusto Boal and Paulo Freire's work in the US.

www.ctorio.com.br: Boal's center in Rio

CTO-Rio, Avenida Rio Branco 179-6 Andar, Centro, Rio de Janeiro, RJ, Brazil

www.smartmeme.com: image, story and meme analysis

Threshold Areas:

This course falls under the rubric of ***Educating for Wholeness and Liberation (Threshold 7)***. Boal's Theater of the Oppressed is an embodied, phenomenological extension of Freire's ideas on education as a liberatory practice.

The work of the TO cultivates a deep, spontaneous authenticity, informed by a deep and unblinkered ability to discern and name social injustice. There is also the cultivation of a deep transpersonal intuition, integrity, compassion and courage to challenge and transform injustice, based on the belief that a life lived in accordance with and struggling for one's ideals is one of the deepest forms of spirituality. This places it under ***Prophetic Witness and Work (Threshold 2)***.

Finally, this course also engages deeply with ***Embodied Wisdom and Beauty (Threshold 8)***: It believes in holding complexity, contradiction, and suffering within the transformative crucible of artistic creation, summoning the healing power of beauty to uncover the blessing within the wound.

