



DEPARTMENT OF
Theatre



THTR 395: The Artist as Activist – Spring 2007
Also listed as: Music 389, FNAR 393

Meeting Time: Tuesday, 6pm – 9pm
Classroom: Damen Hall 440
Instructor: Tom Tresser

The Course

The course is based on the premise that creativity is an essential component of a vital democracy. Students will be introduced to the concept of the Creative Economy, which generates over \$960 billion in annual revenues in the U.S. We will explore the idea of creativity as a national value capable of driving public policy and civic engagement. The class will explore several ways to be an organizer around issues of culture and creativity. During this course students are given an introduction to community organizing strategies and tactics and will be exposed to a number of cultural policy controversies and the key players who are working to make a difference in those areas. We will also examine the work of social change leaders who use the arts as their primary role of intervention. These practitioners are collectively known as Interventionists. This class combines readings, class exploration and an out-of-class research project where students will pick a social change cause that is meaningful to them, research that issue and do a performance/artistic-based presentation on that issue. No prerequisite is required for this course.

The Instructor

Tom Tresser is a consultant, producer, educator and trainer who can help individuals, companies and communities leverage and amplify their creative assets in order to solve problems, create economic value and trigger civic engagement. Tom has been a long-time advocate for an increased appreciation for the role of creativity in the life of the community. In 1991 he started an organization that organized artists and cultural workers for political activism and taught "Arts and Public Policy" at Roosevelt University, where he organized a center for the study of cultural policy. Tom was Director Cultural Development at Peoples Housing, a nonprofit community development corporation operating in northeast Chicago, where he organized a community arts program that combined culture and economic development. Tom served as lead organizer for the Chicago Park District for two years in a pilot project that transformed a major regional park into a community cultural center. In April 2004, Tom was elected to a two-year term for the Local School Council for the Abraham Lincoln Elementary School in Chicago's Lincoln Park neighborhood. He lectures on "The Politics of Creativity" and conducts leadership training sessions for artists and creative professionals. He teaches classes on arts and civic engagement at DePaul University and Loyola University.



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Course Objective

The purpose of this course is to introduce students to several key concepts and constructs:

- (1) The basic outline and dimensions of the Creative Economy,
- (2) How creativity can serve as the basis of public policy and civic engagement,
- (3) The basics of Direct Action Organizing,
- (4) An introduction to non-traditional social change activists who use a range of theatrical tactics for their work,
- (5) How to translate the tactical goals of a student social service/social change organization into a public, street-theater type of event.

The Learning Experience

The course will employ a blend of lecture, student dialogue, guest experts, case studies, performance and hands-on student investigation and original work.

We will use two main texts for class work, a third text will be used by the student teams:

- o “Organizing for Social Change” by Bobo, Kendall & Max (third edition), Seven Locks Press, 2001.
- o “The Interventionists – User’s Manual for the Creative Disruption of Everyday Life,” by Thompson & Sholette, MASS MoCA Publications, 2004.
- o “Mobilizer’s Guidebook,” Kalin Illse McKenna, mobilize.org, 2005.

The most important thing students will need to know about this course is that we will be entertaining proposals for donated campaign work to campus student organizations who are working for social change. We will invite representatives of all student groups who have a service, charity or social change agenda to come to the class to give brief presentations on their work. Students from this class will choose some of these groups to work with. The purpose of this match-making will be for students in this class to become immersed in the goals of the adopted organization and to create a theatrical or artistic public intervention or action that will help the student organization achieve some short-term goal. We will keep the size of the intervention teams to four students and their job will be to meet with representatives of the student organization outside of class and to mutually agree on some creative action, performance or communication that our students will produce and deliver that will help the organization’s cause in some material and immediate way. Each team will have a budget of \$50.00 for materials. Students will use the “Mobilizer’s Guidebook” to help them prepare for their interventions.

Evaluation

Class participation	20%
Mini-Quizzes	15%
Final Exam	15%
Final Project	50%
100% attendance	05%

Grading:

100%-91%	A
90%-82%	B
81%-73%	C
72%-67%	D
66%- 0%	F

*Upon missing two class periods you will be graded one letter grade down.

**I will not review class notes for the absent. If you miss class, you are responsible for getting the class notes from one of your classmates.

**Alert me to your absence at least 15 hours before class. (That means before 9 PM the day before the class.)

**Assignments turned in late will be graded one letter grade down. This includes taking an exam late without prior permission.

Note: In the interests of the most effective learning environment, this course plan may be modified as the need arises.

Class Schedule – Tuesdays, 6:00-9:00 pm

	Topic/Content	Reading/Assignments:
<u>Class 1</u> Jan 16	- Statement of the instructor’s limitations and biases - Pretest - What is creativity and why is it so important? - What are some ways to look at culture as a basis for civic engagement? - Introductions where students discuss their own activism interests and history	Read Chapter 1, “The Role of the Arts in Transforming Consciousness” from <i>The Arts and the Creation of Mind</i> by Elliot Eisner. This article will be posted on the course web site.

	- Students will create original work based on a selection from a Founding Document	
Class 2 Jan 23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Watch video on the life and work of Saul Alinsky - Guest lecturer on direct action organizing - Distinctions about direct action vs. other kinds of social change interventions - Discuss readings - Class discussion on cultural issues facing America 	<p>Read Chapter 2, "The Fundamentals of Direct Action Organizing" from textbook, <i>Organizing for Social Change</i></p> <p>Due this class: Mini-Quiz #1</p>
Class 3 Jan 30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How can creativity be applied to the tasks of organizing for social change? - Framework for applying creative strategies to the organizing process - Case study: The Yes Men - Prepare for organizational pitches 	<p>Read Chapters 3, 4 from textbook, <i>Organizing for Social Change</i>.</p>
Class 4 Feb 6	In class pitches for assistance from representatives from campus organizations. Depending on how many presentations there are, we may start to evaluate the presentations in order to pick the groups our students wish to work with.	
Feb 13	No class because of blizzard	
Class 5 Feb 20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teams formed for Final Projects - Instructions reviewed for collaboration with the student organizations and expected outcomes and schedule - Review of question - "What does winning look like?" - Case study: Billionaires for Bush 	<p>Read Chapters 11, 12 from textbook, <i>Organizing for Social Change</i>.</p>
Class 6 Feb 27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Artists and Social Change - Discussion of reading – how best (if at all) should artists and other creative people participate in social change and challenges to power? - Case study: The Guerilla Girls 	<p>Read "Artists in Times of War" by Howard Zinn (posted on Blackboard course site).</p> <p>In class - Students complete "My Learning Progress" self assessment.</p> <p>Due this class: Mini-Quiz #2</p>
March 6	Spring Break – no class	
Class 7 March 13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Updates from Teams: overview of the cause their organization is working on and what is the tactical goal of their collaboration? 	<p>Each team will do a PowerPoint presentation covering the work or cause their organization is dedicated to plus a brief history of the campus group.</p>
Class 8 March 20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The art of democracy – what is the connection between creativity and civic engagement? <p>Case study: The Animating Democracy Project</p>	<p>Read description of the Animating Democracy project (posted on Blackboard site).</p> <p>Due this class: Mini-Quiz #3</p>
Class 9 March 27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Politics of Hip Hop - Introduction to the players and positions of hip hop activists 	<p>Read articles: "Hip Hop as a Political Tool," Principles of 2006 National Hip Hop Political Convention, "Where Politics and Hip Hop Collide," "Hip-Hop, Ghetto-centricity and the Commodity Fetish" (all posted on Blackboard site).</p>
Class 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Special guest presenter: Jennifer Verson, co-founder of the Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown 	<p>Read "The Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army Goes to Scotland Via a Few</p>

April 3	Army, will conduct a hands-on workshop on radical clown performance.	Other Places,” from <i>Shut Them Down!</i>
Class 11 April 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In-class review of all proposed interventions. Student teams will walk the class through their proposed actions. - Creativity and Community Change - How do the arts build communities? Discussion of readings - Case story of instructor’s experience as Director of Cultural Development at Peoples Housing in Rogers Park. 	<p>Read: “Packing for the Trip” and section on the Village of Arts and Humanities from <i>Beginner’s Guide to Community-Based Arts</i> (posted on Blackboard course site)</p> <p>Due this class: Mini-Quiz #4</p>
April 17	No class – teams free to rehearse, prepare for their interventions.	Schedule for Final Projects due. Teams should have an intervention planned with their student organization. The instructor must witness or experience the planned experience.
Class 12 April 24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Summary by instructor - Guest artist 	It’s hard to predict how and when our student teams will deliver their interventions on behalf of the student organizations, but we’ll aim to have them during this week.
FINAL EXAM	Tuesday, May1 @ 4:15pm	

Department of Fine Arts Policy on Plagiarism

As defined by the dictionary: “Plagiarism is copying or imitating the language, ideas and thoughts of another and passing off the same as one’s original work.” In composition this means the writings of others are quoted as one’s own without acknowledgement of the source in footnotes. In the visual arts this means deliberate duplication of the compositions of others over one’s own signature. In music, this means taking another composer’s work or portion of that work and claiming it as one’s own.

It is important that art students study and know the work of artists, past and present, but deliberate reproduction or imitation of their ideas as one’s own is not creativity. It is lying. Note that assignments submitted in satisfaction of requirements in one course cannot be submitted for any other course. Plagiarism is particularly dangerous for the artist because it robs one of the opportunity to develop one’s own creative potential.

The department has adopted a policy with regard to plagiarism which will result in an automatic “F” in the course involved. If it is indicated in the Senior Exhibit the student will be refused permission to graduate.

Department of Fine Arts Policy on Participation

Regular class participation and continuous faculty evaluation are crucial elements of the learning process in the arts. One cannot participate or receive feedback on one’s work if one is absent. Therefore, the Department of Fine Arts has adopted the following policy: class participation will be a factor in determining final course grades. This component will lower one’s grade in the case of insufficient participation; consistent and meaningful participation will be rewarded. Individual instructors determine the specific weight participation will have in the course grade. Refer to your syllabus for this information.

Department of Fine Arts Policy on the Return of Artwork

Students enrolled in Department of Fine Arts studio courses may store class materials in box lockers and open shelves at their own risk on a first-come, first-served basis for the duration of the semester they are enrolled in a course. All artwork or supplies left in a studio after the last examination day of each semester will be disposed of as the department sees fit.

Student artwork collected by faculty for grading purposes will be held in the instructor's office for six weeks following the issuance of semester grades, after which the instructor may dispose of it.

Student artwork solicited and collected by the department for an exhibition will be held until the end of the following semester, after which the department may dispose of it as it sees fit. This work can be picked up at Lake Shore Campus during the hours and times posted or as available from the department secretary at (773) 508-2820.

Department of Fine Arts Policy on Additional Working Time

All courses in the Department of Fine Arts require additional working time outside of regularly-scheduled class meetings. For courses in studio art, art history, music study or performance, students should expect to have up to two times the number of contact hours as outside, additional working time to complete course requirements.

Department of Fine Arts Policy on E-mail Correspondence

Students are advised that the instructor will exclusively use the Loyola University Chicago system (@luc.edu) for all e-mail correspondence with students. It is the student's responsibility to be aware of and act upon the content delivered through the university's e-mail service. Students using another service provider should have Loyola e-mail forwarded or access it through the web.



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