

T D 387D
Public Intellectuals and the Arts

Prof. Jill Dolan
jdolan@uts.cc.utexas.edu
471-3721

Course Description:

This course will consider the place of the "public intellectual" in relationship to arts production and practices in 20th and 21st century United States. The public intellectual has recently been invoked as a crossover figure, as the critically engaged academic or artist who participates in the widest possible conversation about the pressing issues of the day. Our goal will be to investigate and interrogate the usefulness of this position to chronicle and comment on the arts in America and, conversely, to argue that more academics and artists need to hone their critical skills so that they, too, can consider themselves effective in this bridging position. Our operative assumption will be that the arts in America suffer from a lack of serious regard in the most mainstream public forums (newspapers, serious magazines and large-publication journals, and other visible sites of political and cultural discourse). To ameliorate this problem, we will practice assuming the role of public intellectuals whose area of expertise lies in arts practices such as theatre, performance, and dance.

The intellectual and creative project of the course will be several fold. First, we will read potential models for this work; consider various perspectives on the relationship of the arts to civic practice; research newspapers, magazines, and non-academic journals to analyze their typical level and style of engagement with the arts; and seek out current debates, performances, and/or texts in the contemporary American arts scene worthy of extended commentary in a large-circulation forum. We'll also discuss the role of the university in these debates, and will study and discuss how "academics" have often been positioned against a more enlightened view of the public intellectual.

The second part of our project will be to practice implementing the possibilities of public intellectual discourse in the arts. We'll read and consider plays and performances together,

with an eye toward how they reflect or refract, influence or effect contemporary American culture. Finally, we'll address the different ways public intellectual discourse might circulate in American culture, for example, through the work of dramaturgs to contextualize productions and extend their local (and sometimes national) effects; through creating web sites dedicated to particular themes; through establishing salons or other regular public gatherings at which variously constituted local communities might establish ongoing discourses about performance; through conference organizing and networking in community and professional locations; through creating performances that extend public intellectual discourse in various ways and in various settings; and other ways we'll brainstorm together in class.

Course Texts: The plays and the Jacoby (Last Intellectual) and Hofstadter book are available at the University Coop Bookstore on the Drag and on reserve at FAL. A packet of supplementary reading is available at Abel's Copy Shop, in the University Towers, 715-D W. 23 rd St.; the packet is also on reserve. Do call Abel's before you go buy your packet: 472-5353 www.abelscopies.com .

The University of Texas at Austin provides upon request appropriate academic accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. For more information, contact the Office of the Dean of Students at 471-6259, 471-4641 TTY.

Course Outline:

Unit One: The Jeremiads for and Against the Public Intellectual and Samples of "Public Intellectual" Theatre Criticism

Week One: Our Goals

Tuesday, January 20th

Introduction to the course; discussion of your goals and interests, and the things that you regularly read.

Thursday, January 22nd

Preliminary discussion of "public intellectual" writing venues and the ways in which we might each ply our own areas of expertise in inserting discussions of the arts into public dialogue.

Read Cherwitz, "Learning to be a Citizen-Scholar," Marx, "The Hunting of the Snark: Part One," and Rockwell, "Conversing On the Arts by Clicking a Mouse."

Week Two: The Anti-Academic Screeed and its Professional Theatre Equivalent

Tuesday, January 27th

Russell Jacoby, *The Last Intellectuals*: "Preface," ix-xxii; "Missing Intellectuals?" 3-26; "The Decline of Bohemia," 27-53; Jacoby, *The End of Utopia*: "Intellectuals: From Utopia to Myopia," and "Thick Aestheticism and Thin Nativism," 101-154. (156)

Thursday, January 29th

Jonathan Kalb, "The Death (and Life) of American Theatre Criticism: Advice to the Young Critic." *Theater* 33.1 (2003), 44-57 (13); Robert Brustein, "The Crisis of the University," 87-113; "A Dean's Goodbye: A Speech to the Graduates of the School of Drama," 138-142; "Theatre and the University," 166-173. (50)

Week Three: A History of American Anti-Intellectualism and Models for Reinvigorating a Public Intellectual Stance in Theatre

Tuesday, February 3rd

Richard Hofstadter, "Chapter One: Anti-Intellectualism in Our Time," 3-23; "Chapter Two: On the Unpopularity of Intellect," 24-51 (48); "Chapter Eight: The Rise of the Expert," 197-229 (32); "Chapter Fifteen: The Intellectual: Alienation and Conformity," 393-432 (39). (119)

Sign up for journal investigation.

Thursday, February 5th

Eric Bentley (34); David Román, "Theatre Journals: Dance Liberation," (18 pages, n.p.); Marvin Carlson, Theatre Journal Auto/Archive, 207–211; Jorge Huerta, Theatre Journal Auto/Archive, 757–762; Janelle Reinelt, Theatre Journal Auto/Archive, 385–392. (68)

Sign up for "model" intellectual presentation.

February 6 th , 2:00–3:15, WIN. 2.112, Performance as a Public Practice Second Annual Distinguished Lecture Series: Maria–Rosario Jackson, "The Artist in Urban USA: Genius? Citizen? Community–Builder?" (required)

Unit Two: Thinking as a Public Intellectual

Week Four: Kushner and Benjamin: Contemporary and Historical Models

Tuesday, February 10th

Discuss Maria–Rosario Jackson lecture.

Tony Kushner, Angels in America, Parts One and Two.

Thursday, February 12th

Mark Lilla on Benjamin, 79–112; Benjamin, "What is Epic Theatre," 147–154; "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," 217–251; "Theses on the Philosophy of History," 253–264. (76)

Week Five: Contemporary Models: An Intellectual/Director and Current Publications (internet and print)

Tuesday, February 17th

Herbert Blau, The Impossible Theatre. (81)

Thursday, February 19th

Discussion of public intellectual publishing and other venues (internet and print).

Journal investigation assignment due.

PPP Conference this weekend, attendance required. Details to follow.

Week Six: The Performance as Public Practice Rubric

Tuesday, February 24th

Discuss conference and Jan Cohen-Cruz keynote address.

Optional Assignment due: Write about the conference for a venue of your choice.

Thursday, February 26th:

Discussion of "model" public intellectuals.

"Model" intellectuals assignment due.

Week Seven: Theatre as Barometer of Culture and Democracy

Tuesday, March 2nd

Richard Greenberg, Take Me Out.

Sign up for presentation on last three plays.

Thursday, March 4th

Robert Brustein, "Introduction: The Culture Watch," ix-xv; "American Patrol," 1-46; Brustein, Simon, et.al., Democracy in the Arts, 1-41; Alisa Solomon, "The Big Chill." (99)

March 6 th , 2:00, WIN. 2.112, Performance as a Public Practice
Second Annual Distinguished Lecture Series: Roberta Uno, "The Mainstream and Other Rivers: The Arts in a Changing America" (required)

March 5 th to 12 th , see Matt Huff's production of José Rivera's Sueno . Discuss March 11 th .

Week Eight: Answering the Anti-Academic Screeds, Translating Urgency

Tuesday, March 9th

Discuss Roberta Uno lecture.

Michael Berubé, "Bite Size Theory: Popularizing Academic Criticism," 161–178 (17); Edward Said, "Introduction," ix–xix; "Representations of the Intellectual," 3–23 (30); Bruce Robbins, "The Sweatshop Sublime," 84–97. (60)

Thursday, March 11th

Discuss production of Sueno.

Elinor Fuchs, "When Bad Girls Play Good Theatres," 108–127; "Theater as Shopping," 128–143; "Reviews and Articles," 161–197. (70)

"Situating" Projects Due.

Week Nine:

Spring Break, March 12 th to the 21 st

Week Ten: Turning the Wheel Again

Tuesday, March 23rd

Richard Posner, "Introduction"; "Setting the Stage"; "The Market for Public Intellectuals," 1–82. (82)

Thursday, March 25th

Michael Warner, "Styles of Intellectual Publics," 125–158 (33); Gramsci, "The Intellectuals," 3–25 (22); Guillermo Gomez-Pena and Lisa Wolford, "Navigating the Minefields of Utopia: A Conversation," 66–96. (85)

March 26 th , 2:00, WIN. 2.112, Performance as a Public Practice
Second Annual Distinguished Lecture Series: Liz Lerman, "Concert
Hall and Town Hall: Making Art Matter" (required)

Unit Three: Charting Our Own Path through these Debates, Using
Theatre as Our Locale

Week Eleven: The Example of Suzan-Lori Parks

Tuesday, March 30th

Discuss Lerman lecture.

Discuss Suzan-Lori Parks, Top Dog/Underdog.

Thursday, April 1st

Presentations on the play.

April 2 nd , 5:30 p.m., reception, 6:00 lecture, LBJ Library and
Museum Atrium, Performance as a Public Practice Second Annual
Distinguished Lecture Series: Carol Becker, "Pilgrimage to My Lai:
Social Memory and the Making of Art"

Week Twelve: The Historical Relationship of Arts and Intellectuals

Tuesday, April 6th

Workshop final projects.

Thursday, April 8th

Discuss Carol Becker's lecture.

Christine Stansell, "Chapter One: Bohemian Beginnings in the
1890s," 11-39 (28); "Chapter Three: Intellectuals, Conversational
Politics, and Free Speech," 73-119 (46); "Chapter Four: Emma
Goldman and the Modern Public," 120-144 (24). (98)

Sign up for final presentations.

Week Thirteen: The Example of Nilo Cruz

Tuesday, April 13th

Discuss Nilo Cruz, *Anna in the Tropics*.

Thursday, April 15th

Presentations on the play.

Week Fourteen: *The Example of Wallace Shawn*

Tuesday, April 20th

Discuss Wallace Shawn, *Aunt Dan and Lemon*

Thursday, April 22nd

Presentations on the play.

Week Fifteen: *Pulling it Together and . . .*

Tuesday, April 27th

Presentations.

Thursday, April 29th

Presentations.

Week Sixteen: *. . .Taking it On the Road*

Tuesday, May 4th

Presentations.

Thursday, May 6th : Last class day

Presentations, final discussion, course evaluations.

Final projects due Thursday, May 6 th by 5:00 p.m. in my box or office.

Bibliography

Benjamin, Walter. *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*. Ed. Hannah Arendt. New York: Schocken Books, 1968. "Introduction: Walter Benjamin: 1928–1940," Hannah Arendt, 1–55 (rec); "What is Epic Theatre," 147–154; "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," 217–251; "Theses on the Philosophy of History," 253–264.

Bentley, Eric. *What is Theatre? 1944–1967*. New York: Atheneum Publishers, 1968; rev. ed. New York: Hill and Wang, 2000. Preface; intro; 3–8; 31–34; 49–58; 120–123; 155–159; 190–193; 272–276; 283–286.

Bérubé, Michael. "Bite Size Theory: Popularizing Academic Criticism." *Public Access: Literary Theory and American Cultural Politics*. London: Verso, 1994. 161–178.

Blau, Herbert. *The Impossible Theatre: A Manifesto*. New York: Macmillan Co, 1964. 3–84.

Brustein, Robert. "The Crisis of the University." *Revolution as Theatre: Notes on the New Radical Style*. New York: Liveright, 1971. 87–113.

---. *The Culture Watch: Essays on Theatre and Society, 1969–1974*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1975. "Introduction: The Culture Watch," ix–xv; "American Patrol," 1–46; "A Dean's Goodbye: A Speech to the Graduates of the School of Drama," 138–142; "Theatre and the University," 166–173.

Carlson, Marvin. *The Theatre Journal Auto/Archive*. *Theatre Journal* 55.1 (March 2003), 207–211.

Cherwitz, Richard, Thomas Darwin, and Laura Grund. "Learning to Be a Citizen–Scholar." *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. <http://chronicle.com/jobs/2001/2001120302c.htm>.

Cruz, Nilo. *Anna in the Tropics*. New York: Theatre Communications Group, 2003.

Fuchs, Elinor. "When Bad Girls Play Good Theatres," 108–127; "Theater as Shopping," 128–143; "Reviews and Articles," 161–197. *The Death of Character: Perspectives on Theater after Modernism*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996.

Gomez–Pena, Guillermo and Lisa Wolford. "Navigating the Minefields of Utopia: A Conversation." *TDR* 46.2 (Summer 2002). 66–96.

Greenberg, Richard. *Take Me Out*. New York: Faber and Faber, 2003.

Hoare, Quintin, and Geoffrey Nowell Smith, eds. and trans. "The Intellectuals." *Selections From the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*. New York: International Publishers, 1971. 3–25.

Hofstadter, Richard. *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life*. New York: Knopf, 1963.

Huerta, Jorge. *The Theatre Journal Auto/Archive*. *Theatre Journal* 55.4 (December 2003), 757–762.

Jacoby, Russell. "Preface," ix–xxii; "Missing Intellectuals?" 3–26; "The Decline of Bohemia," 27–53. *The Last Intellectuals: American Culture in the Age of Academe*. New York: Basic Books, 1987.

---. "Intellectuals: From Utopia to Myopia," 101–124; "Thick Aestheticism and Thin Nativism," 125–154. *The End of Utopia: Politics and Culture in an Age of Apathy*. New York: Basic Books, 1999.

Kalb, Jonathan. "The Death (and Life) of American Theatre Criticism: Advice to the Young Critic." *Theater*. 33.1 (2003). 44–57.

Kushner, Tony. *Angels in America, Parts One and Two*. New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1993/1994.

Lilla, Mark. "Walter Benjamin." *The Reckless Mind: Intellectuals in Politics*. New York: New York Review Books, 2001. 79–112.

Marx, Bill. "The Hunting of the Snark: Part I." 4 December 2003, WBUR Public Arts
<http://www.publicbroadcasting.net/wbur/arts.artsmain?action=printArticle&id=575033> .

Melzer, Arthur M., Jerry Weinberger, and M. Richard Zinman, eds. *Democracy and the Arts* . Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999.

Parks, Suzan-Lori. *Top Dog/Underdog*. New York: Theatre Communications Group, 2001.

Posner, Richard. *Public Intellectuals: A Study of Decline*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001. "Introduction"; "Setting the Stage"; "The Market for Public Intellectuals," 1–82.

Reinelt, Janelle. "The Theatre Journal Auto/Archive." *Theatre Journal* 55:1 (May 2003): 385–392.

Robbins, Bruce. "The Sweatshop Sublime." *PMLA*. 2002. 84–97.

Rockwell, John. "Conversing On the Arts By Clicking a Mouse." *New York Times* 9 July 2003.

Román, David. "Theatre Journals: Dance Liberation." *Theatre Journal* 55.3 (October 2003). n.p.

Said, Edward W. *Representations of the Intellectual*. New York: Vintage, 1996. "Introduction," ix–xix; "Representations of the Intellectual," 3–23.

Shawn, Wallace. *Aunt Dan and Lemon*. London: Methuen, 1985.

Solomon, Alisa. "The Big Chill." *The Nation*. 2 June 2003.
<http://www.campus-watch.org/article/id/706> .

Stansell, Christine. *American Moderns: Bohemian New York and the Creation of a New Century*. New York: Metropolitan Books, 2000 . "Chapter One: Bohemian Beginnings in the 1890s," 11–39; "Chapter Three: Intellectuals, Conversational Politics, and Free Speech," 73–119; "Chapter Four: Emma Goldman and the Modern Public," 120–144.

Warner, Michael. "Styles of Intellectual Publics." *Publics and Counterpublics*. New York: Zone Books, 2002. 125–158.

Course requirements:

1. For each class meeting, write a one paragraph (no longer than half [better still a third] of a page single-spaced typed) response to the reading that does the following:

Poses several questions raised for you by the author(s) that you'd like to consider in your own work as a public intellectual.

Cites a particular place in one or two of the texts that you'd like us to discuss together.

Poses several questions that you'd like us to discuss in class as a group.

This response will form the basis of your class participation each session; you should turned one in for review each week. (10% of grade)

2. Journal investigations : What are the most visible "public intellectual" journals in American public culture? Who reads which journals? What kind of political orientation do they have? How do they tend to cover the arts? If you were to pitch an article to publish, what slant would it need to have to be accepted? What kind of style and argument?

Look through several of the journals, magazines, and newspapers we've discussed in class, and chose one on which to report.

Read through the back issues of the journal to get a sense of what it's about and what its commitments are.

Pay particular attention to their arts coverage. What's lacking? How might an article by you be appealing to their readership?

For your report, write a cover letter pitching an article. Share this with the class on BlackBoard. Embed in this cover letter a clear

sense of the venue's readership; its implicit inadequacies in terms of arts coverage.

I've set aside a day for us to discuss these reports, rather than having everyone present one at the beginning of each class. We'll make our findings and our article pitches into a discussion, rather than individual presentations.

Turn in for this assignment:

- i. A one or two page single-spaced cover letter that does the work described above. Use the actual address of the editor to whom you would be writing; make the letter as professional as possible. You might use something like it some day.

- ii. Your notes, in outline or whatever form (as long as it's typed), on your journal research. (10% of grade)

3. Discussion of a "model" public intellectual, preferably in the arts. Who are the most prominent "public intellectuals" writing in American culture on the arts today? Which are sound models for the kind of writing that you'd like to do (or the kind of arguments you can imagine yourself making, whether or not you decide your expertise is writing)? How does he or she belie the kinds of attacks against public intellectuals (or academics) that we've been reading?

Choose someone as a model. Read a chunk of their writing, so that you get a sense of their tone and style; who they perceive as their reader and how they address that reader; their preoccupations; and the relative effect you think they have on public culture.

Write an assessment of their work. What appeals to you about it? In what ways might you adopt their style? Their preoccupations? Their address to their reader?

Some people we should cover include: Margo Jefferson; Frank Rich; Cornel West; Patricia Williams; bell hooks; Anna Deveare Smith; Jane Alexander; Ben Brantley; Alisa Solomon; Erika Munk. You're free to do research and find other people on whom to report; this list is partial. You might also write about historical public intellectuals writing about the arts, such as Eric Bentley, Mary

McCarthy, Kenneth Tynan, Walter Benjamin, Theodore Adorno, Hannah Arendt, and any others.

Again, our discussion of these people will be as a group, rather than individual presentations. Although you might choose one as a model for your own work, you might research several people, about whom you could contribute your observations in our discussion.

Turn in for this assignment:

- i. A one or two page single-spaced assessment.
- ii. The notes you made to create your assessment and compile your research, in whatever (typed) form. (10% of grade)

4. Situate, publicly of course, the work of someone you consider a public intellectual in the arts. This assignment has four options. You can:

Review a book by someone you consider a public intellectual in the arts . Think of your review in terms of one of the publications we've discussed, or in terms of a scholarly journal. Decide who your readership is and the argument you want to make about the work you've read. The review should be between 500–1500 words . Some books you might consider writing about include: Anna Deavere Smith, *Talk to Me* ; Frank Rich, *Ghost Light* ; Leah Hager Cohen, *The Stuff of Dreams: Behind the Scenes of an American Community Theatre* ; Jane Alexander, *Command Performance* ; Robert Brustein, *Dumbocracy in America* ; Robert Brustein, *Cultural Calisthenics: Writings on Race, Politics, and Theatre* ; Robert Brustein, *Making Scenes* (his history of being at Yale); Alisa Solomon, *Redressing the Canon* ; anything by anyone you consider a public intellectual in the arts.

Create a web site describing this person's work, for a particular constituency . That is, you might position yourself as someone teaching an undergraduate class, who's trying to get models of intellectuals accessible to students. What would the web site include? The person's biography? Vitae? Blurbs of their work written by others? A précis of some of their work written by you? Pictures? Links?

Invite this person to speak in the location you're imagining working . Write an introduction to their talk, one that frames elegantly the intellectual work about the arts that you feel they do. Assume this is an intimate presentation, and write up a list of questions that would be useful for the audience to engage afterward; imagine that you would facilitate and moderate the discussion. The intro should be no more than one page single-spaced; your questions can run also one page single-spaced (more if necessary but no less).

Create a performance inspired by this person's work . The parameters are up to you, but do be sure you have a clear audience in mind, and that your performance is clearly structured with a sound and legible intent. The performance should be no longer than seven minutes. Shorter performances will be knit into our class meetings; longer ones require more preparation and will take too much time away from our discussions. Performances will be scheduled throughout the semester. (20% of grade)

5. Make a public intellectual presentation about one of the three plays we're reading in the last few weeks of the semester. Several people will present the same day, but working together is not required (although it's fine if you decide you want to). You can do several things:

Write a program note about the play that's geared toward people who are staying for a talkback (or coming for a talk-before). Decide the theatre you're working at; who the audience is; and what the thrust of the session will be, and then write your notes accordingly.

Write an article about the play as a pre-opening feature for a venue like the New York Times, Time Magazine, The Nation, The New Republic , etc. Such an article would tend to be about 2000-3000 words long (do your research to see for sure).

Write a review of the play for a similar publishing venue, one that's at least 1500 words long.

Create a web site for the play, one that's useful to student or university or community groups who'd like to present it.

Create a symposium around the play, replete with a keynote address; panel discussions; break out sessions; and a wrap up. Decide the *raison d'etre* of the symposium and plan accordingly. Do the symposium for a widely drawn community audience.

Position the play as the centerpiece of a conference about a different theme, such as violence, immigration, nationalism, the effects of race and sexuality on democracy, etc. Put together panels, keynotes, working groups, and other meetings whose themes the play usefully illustrates. Be specific about who your speakers are and what they're talking about. The conference should have a large community component--decide what that is and include the specifics of your planned outreach. (20%)

6. For your final presentation, make a public intellectual presentation about a play we haven't read in class, choosing two or three of the options described above. Tell me in advance what play you'll be working on, so that I can read it if I don't know it. Be very specific in your approach; choosing other "public intellectual" options for engagement are fine, as long as you run them by me ahead of time. Know who you are in relation to this assignment: i.e., the local culture writer for a paper; a freelancer; a dramaturg; a college professor interested in engaging the community in theatre; an arts administrator; an arts advocate; a student; etc. You might even decide to begin a salon for this project, which could extend over part of the semester and beyond. (30%)

Tips for Succeeding in this Class and with the Professor:

1. I don't give incompletes and I don't accept late assignments. Be on time for class and be on time for your work.
2. After three absences, your final course grade drops one grade, and continues to drop incrementally for each absence after. Three late arrivals or early departures count as one absence.
3. Participation is everything. Come prepared to speak in class, with specific reference to the reading and to your response questions and quotations. The seminar runs on your input; I'm there for guidance. Everyone will be expected to speak regularly, and to be sensitive to how much they're speaking, as well as the

quality of their speech. That is, choose and use your words judiciously and well. Although your written daily responses are 10% of your grade, your participation in class weights heavily for or against the quantitative determination of your grade.

4. The beginning of the semester is more reading-heavy than the end, which should give you time to prepare your presentations on the plays and your final projects. Space out the journal investigations and the model public intellectual research and reports, so that those deadlines don't creep up on you. Begin both of those projects right away; the research should be more extensive than what you eventually report.

5. Tailor this class to your own needs, especially with the "situated" project and the final project. I'm quite open to how you'd like to use those experiences.

6. You should do everything fully and with care: your writing should be excellent grammatically and structurally, as well as in the ideas it imparts; your attendance should be perfect; your presentations should be carefully timed, based on impeccable research; your participation should be productive; and your projects should be useful and well devised and executed. If you're concerned about your progress in the course, don't hesitate to ask me. In general, it'd be good for everyone to check in with me about his or her progress two or three times during the semester. I leave this to your initiative; emailing me for feedback can only help you succeed.

7. Don't hesitate to come see me in office hours, which are posted on my door weekly in increments of 15 minutes. I respond quickly on email, generally; I'm not very good on the phone.

8. Always bring your syllabus to class for reference.

9. ENJOY THIS COURSE and make it work for you!