

SOC 491  
Department of Sociology  
Boğaziçi University  
Spring 2020  
Thursdays: 14:00-17:00  
JF 101

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Office: Thu 13:00-14:00  
Sociology, Room 203

“You do not realize how the headlines that make daily history  
affect the muscles of the human body.”  
—Martha Graham

## **The Body, Aesthetics, and Performative Cultures of Resistance: An Introduction\***

This specialization seminar takes up the challenge to rethink corporeality and underscore the intertwinement of aesthetics, politics, and contemporary cultures of resistance. While practices based on expanded notions of choreography, performance, and movement constitute the springboard of our collective journey, the course gathers voices from various fields to reflect on the following questions: How can we understand the body as the source, site, and target of emotions, pain, and desire? How can we account for the body as a sociopolitical construct and/or mediation, and still move beyond disembodied theories of agency? What does it mean to document and bear witness to atrocity and violence? Given the centrality of the body in current “crises”— as in migratory movements, the re-entrenchment of bordering processes, and state violence — we probe whether corporeality can be envisaged as a site of recuperation where vulnerability can become a source of resistance. Throughout the course, we study some key texts regarding the relation between aesthetics and politics, performance and performativity. We also study literature, history, art and cultural documents and focus on some case studies regarding how the body figures in contemporary political culture, in particular, in “performances of resistance” and social protest. We will view selected cases of artistic as well as everyday performances.

### **Course Requirements**

**Participation.** Your fundamental requirement in the course is to engage in it, which means to read the assigned material carefully before each meeting and to participate actively in discussions. No more than two unexcused absences are permitted. Please contact me by e-mail if you are unable to attend a class for any reason. Class participation counts as 25% of your final grade.

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\* The professor reserves the right to make changes to the syllabus.

**Group Presentations.** In groups of 2-3, you will be making presentations. These presentations should reflect on the readings of the day, either by examining a singular passage or an argument, or by drawing connections across the readings and cases (artistic performances/everyday life performances/protest acts). Presentations count as 25% of your final grade.

**Final Paper.** Your paper (2500-5000 words) should treat a well-articulated question or problematic in an essay that is well structured, clearly written and properly supported with evidence. Your topic needs to be discussed with me at least 3 weeks before the due date of the final paper. I can supply paper topics, though you are welcome to examine questions or cases of your own. Your final paper will constitute 50% of your grade.

**Academic Honesty.** Plagiarism or any other form of academic dishonesty will result in serious academic penalties, from a failing grade in the class to expulsion from the university. Students are expected to do their own work and to cite or reference all outside sources of information and ideas. The Chicago Manual of style is an excellent online guide to proper citation format and research standards.

**Students with Disabilities.** Please let me know if you will need any academic accommodation or if you have other concerns. All conversations will be kept confidential.

**Texts.** I will provide a Dropbox link for the required and recommended readings.

## Schedule

### I. Introduction & Conceptual Clarifications

#### Session 1 | Feb. 6

See the exhibit:

Marina Abramović – *In Flux*, Sakip Sabanci Museum

#### Session 2 | Feb. 13 | Performance

Required readings:

Schechner, Richard. 2006. "What is Performance?" *Performance Studies: An Introduction*. London, New York: Routledge, pp. 28-51.

Peggy Phelan. 1993. "The Ontology of Performance," in *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*. New York: Routledge, pp. 146-166.

Recommended readings:

Carlson, Marvin. 2004. "What is Performance?" In *Performance Studies Reader*, edited by Henri Bial. London and New York: Routledge. pp. 68-73.

- Derrida, Jacques. 2000. "Signature, Event, Context." In *Limited Inc.* Chicago: Northwestern University Press, pp. 1- 23.
- Goffman, Erving. "Performances: Belief in the Part One is Playing." In *Performance Studies Reader*, edited by Henri Bial. London and New York: Routledge, pp. 59-63.
- Goffman, Erving. 1959. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. New York: Double Day.
- Jackson, Shannon. 2004. "Discipline and Performance: Genealogy and Discontinuity." In *Professing Performance*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 1-39.
- Jones, Amelia. 2011. "The Artist is Present: artistic re-enactments and the impossibility of presence." *TDR*. 16-45.
- Kaprow, Allan. 2003. *Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life*. Berkeley, California: University of California Press, pp. 1-26.
- Kirschenblatt-Gimblett, Barbara. 1999. "Performance Studies." <http://www.nyu.edu/classes/bkg/issues/rock2.htm>
- Mauss, Marcel. 1973 (1935). "Techniques of the Body." *Economy and Society*, 2:1, 70-88.

### Session 3 | Feb. 20 | Performativity

#### Required readings:

- Schechner, Richard. 2006. "Performativity." *Performance Studies: An Introduction*. London, New York: Routledge. pp. 123-169.
- Jackson, Shannon; Marincola, Paula (eds). *In Terms of Performance*. The Pew Center for Arts and Heritage, Philadelphia Arts Research Center, University of California, Berkeley.  
Read the entry: "Performativity" <http://intermsofperformance.site/>

#### Recommended readings:

- Austin, J.L. 1975. Lectures I and II. In *How to Do Things with Words*. Harvard University Press, pp. 1-24.
- Barthes, Roland. 1977 (1967). "The Death of the Author" in *Image-Music-Text*, Hill and Wang, pp:142-148.
- Barthes, Roland. 1997 (1969). "From Work to Text" in *Aesthetics*, ed. Susan Feagin, Patrick Maynard. Oxford University Press. pp: 270-274.
- Butler, Judith. 1988. "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," *Theatre Journal* 40:4 (December 1988), 519-531.
- Felman, Shoshana. 2002. *The Scandal of the Speaking Body*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press).
- Foucault, Michel. 1999 (1969). "What is an Author?" in *Aesthetics, Method and Epistemology. Essential Works of Foucault 1954 – 1984 Vol. 2* ed. James D. Faubion et al. The New Press, pp. 205-222.
- Jones, Amelia. 2008. "Naming Power and the Power of the Name: Janez Janša Performs the Political in/for the Art World," in *Name Readymade*. Ljubljana: Moderna galleria. [http://www.aksioma.org/name\\_book/name\\_readymade.pdf](http://www.aksioma.org/name_book/name_readymade.pdf)
- Turner, Victor. 1966. Ch. 3 "Liminality and Communitas." In *The Ritual Process*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, pp. 94-130.

## II. Rethinking Aesthetics and Politics

### Session 4 | Feb. 27 | Agonistic Encounters

#### Required readings:

Rancière, Jacques. 2006. "The Distribution of the Sensible: Politics and Aesthetics." In *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*. London and New York: Continuum, pp. 12-19.

Mouffe, Chantal. 2013. "Agonistic Politics and Artistic Practices." In *Agonistics: Thinking the World Politically*. London: Verso, pp. 85-106.

#### In-class viewing and discussion of the artistic performances:

- Marcelo Evelin, *A Invenção da Maldade* (2019)
- Sello Pesa and Vaughn Sadie, *Inhabitant* (2011)

#### Recommended readings:

Adorno, Theodor W., Walter Benjamin, Ernst Bloch, Bertolt Brecht, and Georg Lukács. 2010. *Aesthetics and Politics*. London: Verso.

Mouffe, Chantal. 2013. "What Is Agonistic Politics?" In *Agonistics: Thinking the World Politically*. London: Verso, pp. 1-18.

Mouffe, Chantal. 2015. "Marcelo Evelin. Dance as an Agonistic Encounter." In *Time We Share: Reflection on and through Performing Arts*, edited by Dani Blanga-Gubbay and Lars Kwakkenbos. Brussels: Kunstenfestivaldesarts & Mercatorfonds, pp. 246-254.

Thompson, Nato. 2016. *Seeing Power: Art and Activism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. Brooklyn, N.Y.: Melville House.

### Session 5 | TBD | Political Action as Performance

#### Required reading:

Arendt, Hannah. 2006. (1961). "What is Freedom?" In *Between Past and Future*. New York: Penguin Books, pp. 142-169.

#### In-class viewing and discussion:

- Sarah Vanhee, *Lecture for Every One* (2013 –)

#### Recommended readings:

Arendt, Hannah. 1998. (1958). Chapter: "Action." In *The Human Condition*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

## Session 6 | TBD | Aesthetics and Protest

### Required readings:

- Taussig, Michael. 2013. "I'm So Angry I Made a Sign." In *Occupy: Three Inquiries in Disobedience*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, pp. 3-44.
- Öztürkmen, Arzu. 2014. "The Park, the Penguin, and the Gas: Performance in Progress in Gezi Park." *TDR/The Drama Review*. 58 (3): 39-68.

### Recommended readings:

- Fuentes, Marcela A. 2015. "Performance, Politics, Protest." In *What is Performance Studies?* Duke University Press.  
<http://scalar.usc.edu/nehvectors/wips/performance-politics-and-protest>
- Reed, TV. 2016. Ch: 5 "Protest as Artistic Expression." In *Protest Cultures: A Companion*, edited by Fahlenbrach, Kathrin, Martin Klimke, and Joachim Scharloth. New York: Berghahn Books, pp. 77-93.
- White, Micah. 2016. *The End of Protest: A New Playbook for Revolution*. Toronto: Knopf.

## III. The Body as Weapon, The Body as Protest

### Session 7 | Mar. 19 | Bodies in Assembly

#### Required readings:

- Butler, Judith. 2015. "Bodies in Alliance and Politics of the Streets." In *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, pp. 66-98.
- Gambetti Zeynep. 2014. Occupy Gezi as Politics of the Body. In: Özkırmı U. (eds) *The Making of a Protest Movement in Turkey: #occupygezi*. Palgrave Pivot, London.

#### Recommended readings:

- Ertem, Gurur. 2018. "Gezi Uprising: Performative Democracy and Politics of the Body in an Extended Space of Appearance." In *Media Practices, Social Movements, and Performativity: Transdisciplinary Approaches*, edited by M. Lünenborg, S. Foellmer, C. Raetzsch. London: Routledge, pp.81-99.
- Dabashi, Hamid. 2012. "La vita nuda: Baring Bodies, Bearing Witness." *Al Jazeera*, January 23, 2017.  
<http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2012/01/201212111238688792.html>.
- Pabst, Andrea. 2016. Ch: 16 "The Body." In *Protest Cultures: A Companion*, edited by Fahlenbrach, Kathrin, Martin Klimke, and Joachim Scharloth. New York: Berghahn

### Session 8 | Mar. 26 | Vulnerability, Corporeality and Resistance - 1

#### Required readings:

- Butler, Judith. 2015. "Bodily Vulnerability and Coalitional Politics." *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, pp. 123-153.

Tzelepis, Elena. 2016. "Vulnerable Corporealities and Precarious Belongings in Mona Hatoum's Art". In *Vulnerability in Resistance*, edited by Judith Butler, Zeynep Gambetti and Leticia Sabsay. Durham: Duke University Press, 146-166.

Recommended reading:

Sirman, Nükhet. 2016. "When Antigone Is a Man Feminist "Trouble" in the Late Colony". In *Vulnerability in Resistance*, edited by Judith Butler, Zeynep Gambetti and Leticia Sabsay, 191-210.

**Session 9 | Apr. 2 | Vulnerability, Corporeality and Resistance - 2**

Required readings:

Ahiska, Meltem. 2016. "Violence against Women in Turkey: Vulnerability, Sexuality, and Eros", In *Vulnerability in Resistance*, edited by Judith Butler, Zeynep Gambetti and Leticia Sabsay, pp. 211-235

Akıncı, Eylül Fidan. 2017. "Sacred Children, Accursed Mothers: Performativities of Necropolitics and Mourning in Neoliberal Turkey." Brady, S. (Ed.), Mantoan, L. (Ed.). *Performance in a Militarized Culture*. London: Routledge, pp. 47-65.

Screening and discussion of performative and artistic research:

- Ayesha Hameed, *The Black Atlantis* (2019)

- Hakan Topal, *Still Life* (2012-2016)

**Session 10 | TBD | Movement, Gesture and Choreographies of Resistance - 1**

Required readings:

Foster, Susan Leigh. 2003. "Choreographies of Protest." *Theatre Journal*. 55 (3): 395-412.

Goldman, Danielle. 2007. "Bodies on the Line: Contact Improvisation and Techniques of Nonviolent Protest." *Dance Research Journal* 39(01): 60-74.

Recommended readings:

Graff, Ellen. 1999. *Stepping Left: Dance and Politics in New York City, 1928-1942*. Durham, NC: Duke Univ. Press.

Martin, Randy. 2006. "Toward a Kinesthetics of Protest." *Social Identities* 12, no. 6 (2006): 791-801.

Renee, Aymami E. 2016. Ch: 17 "Dance as Protest." In *Protest Cultures: A Companion*, edited by Fahlenbrach, Kathrin, Martin Klimke, and Joachim Scharloth. New York: Berghahn Books.

## Session 11 | Apr. 16 | Movement, Gesture and Choreographies of Resistance – 2

### Required Readings:

- Solomon, Noémie. 2018. “dancing a people to come: Variations on Sovereignty in Québécois Choreography.” In *Bodies of Evidence: Ethics, Aesthetics, and Politics of Movement*. Vienna: Passagen Verlag, pp. 81-99
- Lepecki, Andre. 2013. “Choreopolice and Choreopolitics: Or, the task of the dancer.” *TDR/The Drama Review* 57(4): 13-27.
- Schneider, Rebecca. 2018. “That the Past May Yet Have Another Future: Gesture in the Times of Hands Up.” *Theatre Journal* 70, no. 3 (2018): 285-306.

### In-class viewing and discussion of the artistic performance:

- Dana Michel, *Mercurial George* (2016)

## Session 12 | Apr. 30 | Radical Acts | \*\*\* PAPER TOPICS DUE \*\*\*

### Required readings:

- Bargu, Banu. 2018. “The Corporeal Avant-Garde: Petr Pavlensky.” In *Bodies of Evidence: Ethics, Aesthetics, and Politics of Movement*, ed. Gurur Ertem and Sandra Noeth. Vienna: Passagen Verlag, pp. 101-21.
- Hameed, Ayesha. “A Rough History (on the destruction of fingerprints.” In *Bodies of Evidence: Ethics, Aesthetics, and Politics of Movement*, ed. Gurur Ertem and Sandra Noeth. Vienna: Passagen Verlag, pp. 35-51.

### In-class viewing and discussion of:

- Petr Pavlensky

### Recommended readings:

- Anderson, Patrick. 2010. Chapter 2: “Enduring Performance” and Chapter 3: “How to Stage Self-Consumption.” In *So Much Wasted: Hunger, Performance, and the Morbidity Resistance*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Bargu, Banu. 2016. “Why Did Bouazizi Burn Himself? The Politics of Fate and Fatal Politics.” *Constellations* 23(1): 27-36.
- Dabashi, Hamid. 2012. *Corpus Anarchicum: Political Protest, Suicidal Violence, and the Making of the Posthuman Body*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Kafka, Franz. 2012 (1922). “A Hunger Artist and Other Stories.” In *A Hunger Artist and Other Stories*. Oxford, New York. Oxford University Press, pp. 56-64.  
<https://www.kafka-online.info/a-hunger-artist.html>
- Siméant, Johanna, Christophe Traïni, Johanna Siméant, and Christophe Traïni. 2016. *Bodies in Protest: Hunger Strikes and Angry Music*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

## Session 13 | **TBD** | Constructions of Normalcy and Refiguring the Body

### Required readings:

- Belser, Watts J. 2016. "Vital Wheels: Disability, Relationality, and the Queer Animacy of Vibrant Things." *Hyppatia* 31 (1): 5-21.
- Deleuze, Gilles. 2005. "Ethology: Spinoza and Us." In *The Body: A Reader*, pp. 58-61.
- Freund, Peter. "Bodies, Disability and Spaces: The Social Model and Disabling Spatial Organisations," *The Body: A Reader*, pp. 182-186.

### Recommended readings:

- Davis, Lennard J. "Visualizing the Disabled Body: The Classical Nude and the Fragmented Torso," *The Body: A Reader*, pp. 167-181.
- Grosz, Elizabeth A. 1994. *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Kracauer, Siegfried, and Thomas Y. Levin. 1995. Ch: "The Mass Ornament." In *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard Univ. Press, pp. 75-88.

### In-class viewing and discussion of (excerpts):

- Leni Riefenstahl, *Olympia* (1936)
- Xavier Le Roy, *Self Unfinished* (1998)
- Jérôme Bel, *Disabled Theatre* (2012)
- Saša Asentić & Collaborators, *Dis\_Sylphide, a dance piece on disability and dance history in Germany* (2018)
- La Ribot, *Happy Island* (2018)

### Recommended viewing (lecture-performance):

- Claire Cunningham (2019)
- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_71OINTwi0E](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_71OINTwi0E)

**May 18 | \*\*\* FINAL PAPERS DUE \*\*\*\***