

PaR Project Outline

The practice-as-research project is designed to facilitate your original research in an area of interest to you. The project will have two major components - a scene performance and an academic research paper – and your work on each should inform your work on the other. The greatest value of practice-as-research as a methodology is realized when artistic practice and critical scholarship are exercised simultaneously and in conversation with one another. When you finish reading an article, think through how the arguments presented might impact what you do in your next rehearsal. When you finish a rehearsal, reflect on what information that practice allowed you to glean regarding various critical claims.

Phase 1: Proposal

In this phase, you will do preliminary research in order to narrow your focus to a particular play and set of theoretical arguments that offer a provocative intersection that can be investigated through rehearsal and performance. You will submit a proposal early in the term that will be approved by me (potentially with revisions). The scene proposal should be a minimum of two double-spaced pages, not including the bibliography, although you may write as much as you see fit.

1. Scene Proposal and Research Question

Look through the syllabus and identify one of the plays that we are reading that you would like to use as the centerpiece for your research. This choice may be guided by the critical framework through which we will be examining the play (e.g. Gender & Sexuality) or simply demonstrate your attraction to a particular text. Then choose a scene from that play that you find particularly compelling and answer the following questions:

- What aspects of the scene provoke your imagination?
What makes the scene stand out in your mind? (Is it something a character says or does? Is it something that is not said?)
- Where is the “problem” in the scene? In other words, what might you have to work out/through in rehearsing the scene? (This should be an aspect of the scene you can imagine being done in a number of different ways, to varied effect.)
- What scholarly intersections might help you work through these issues (e.g. topics on the syllabus such as sexuality or post-colonialism, etc.)?

Conclude the proposal with an articulation of the research question. This can be more than one sentence, but should not exceed one paragraph in length. What do you hope to find in working through the scene practically? How might the scholarly concerns be examined through rehearsal and performance?

2. Initial bibliography

- a) Once you have selected your scene, identify a minimum of five scholarly articles or books that you think might inform your direction of the scene. Good places to begin looking for these sources are the library's online subject guides and the sources cited in the articles we are reading for class. Include the proper bibliographic citation, accompanied by a short (1 – 2 paragraph) synopsis of the author's argument and a brief discussion of how her/his work might impact your production (i.e. how might you manifest these theoretical concerns on stage?).
- b) Also identify *at least* two performed versions of your scene, either that you have access to on a recording or that you have seen live. Comment briefly on how the director handles the concerns you have articulated for the scene (the “problems”).

Phase 2: Process

1. Workshop

Each scene will have a workshop during the week we are discussing that play in class. Since workshops will happen throughout the term, each session will engage with different practical concerns. For example, early workshops may deal with casting and text analysis, while later workshops may respond to choices around movement, acting style, etc. Each workshop presentation will be followed immediately by a question and answer session with the director, moderated by me. The Q&A is designed to give you a space to articulate the concerns outlined in your proposal, as well as to talk through issues, questions or concerns you are having midway through the rehearsal process. Your peers will offer verbal feedback in the following categories:

- Clarity and cohesion: Were you able to discern the Reasoning of the scene (to borrow language from Aristotle)? What choices did you think invited this interpretation? Are there particular choices that seem out of sync with the whole? How did these various choices contribute to your affective response to the scene?
- Dialogue with theory: How might the director more actively engage with the theoretical concerns he/she articulates? Is it clear what theoretical models the director is incorporating into the work? Is he/she being explicit about the research question(s) through the performance? Are there spaces in the scene that feel as though there is untapped potential for examining some of these concerns?
- Next steps: Given the stage in the process and the questions he/she has articulated, what engagements or alternative tactics might be useful for the director to consider?

Keep in mind that the process of giving others feedback on their work can be incredibly illuminating for your own, as well. Be generous, thoughtful and constructive.

2. Journal of process

You will keep a journal throughout the course to reflect on your process. After the workshop, you will write an extended entry on what you have done so far in production and how you plan to incorporate the feedback you have gotten. You need not address every single note from your peers, but do try to identify a few contributions to which you can effectively respond. What has worked well for you so far? What do you feel compelled to revisit, both in terms of specific choices and in terms of process? How has your work so far impacted your understanding of and interaction with the theory you are utilizing? This specific entry should be no fewer than two double-space pages. You will turn in your journal with your final paper at the end of the course.

Phase 3: Production

Final performances of the scenes will take place on the last day of class. Your final paper will be due the following week and should utilize reflection on your rehearsal and performance practices to help defend an original thesis. For example, you might choose to examine how the final product changed from the first presentation. How were you able to respond to the concerns of your peers and the demands of the theory? What remains to be investigated? What claim(s) are you prepared to make about your topic and how has it been informed by both current scholarship and your practical engagement? The paper should be a minimum of 2,000 words, not including the bibliography.