## *Projects in Art and Technology: Multimedia Improvisation*
### Offered by Northwestern University's Center for Art and Technology

**INSTRUCTORS: Kathryn Farley and Dan Zellner**

**The class will meet on Thursdays from 2-5 in Louis #105.**
**Enrollment: 15 students.**
**One credit.**

**OFFICE HOURS:** 10:00-12:00 on Thursdays in Dan Zellner's Office, Digital Media Services, 2nd Floor East, University Library

**READING: in course packet**

**COURSE OBJECTIVES**
Performance has become a keyword in recent intellectual history, functioning as a lens to focus critical thinking about human experience in philosophy, literature and the humanities, sociology, cultural anthropology, linguistics, education, law, and other disciplines. *Projects in Art and Technology: Multimedia Improvisation* contributes to this strong academic interest in performance as a concept and/or metaphor that foregrounds the creative, constructed, collaborative, and contingent nature of human communication and interaction.

The fundamental premise of the course is that theory is enlivened and most rigorously tested when it hits the ground in practice. Likewise, performance and all artistic practice can be deepened, complicated, and challenged in meaningful ways by engaging with technology and its many uses to enhance theatrical production. Anchored in this commitment to a bracing dialectic between the creative and the critical, the imaginative and the intellectual, making and interpreting, the course allows for an in depth and interdisciplinary approach to both the study and practice of theatre in the 21st century.

To achieve a more fluid balance between theoretical, practical and experiential viewpoints in each class session, we will engage students in the follow ways:

Theory:
*Review and discussion of required reading
*Dialogue with guest speakers in the context of theme of the course
*Articulation (written and oral) of their own perspectives concerning integration of art and technology

Practical Application
*Improvisational exercises and exploration of digital stage environment
*Hands on work with technology and integration/preparation of media
*Involvement in production of THE TICKET - acting and operation of computer equipment

Regarding the integration of digital tools and techniques and live performance, course participants will collectively explore the following issues: how has the use of technology on stage begun to re-configure the complex relationship between text, performer and artistic process? What are the dramaturgical considerations of integrating computer-generated imagery into live-action performance? In what ways might technology serve to intervene in or mediate a performance text? Finally, how can we begin to re-conceive notions of performance and performativity as they apply to this new medium? Specifically, has the nature of spectatorship changed (particularly in relation to virtual vs. "real" spaces)?

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**
The purpose of ***Projects in Art and Technology: Multimedia Improvisation*** is to provide students a unique opportunity to collaboratively conceive, stage and present an improvisational multimedia work-- a comedic performance that will combine digital media with improvisational methods, as developed by Neva Boyd's Hull House creative group play, the work of Viola Spolin, and Second City artists. The foundation of the text will be Dan Zellner's "***The Ticket***", a Commedia Dell' Arte inspired contemporary scenario which draws on familiar Chicago characters, places and narratives to formulate a comedic tale of ambition and power. The innovative storytelling techniques employed in the workshop represent a performance tradition indigenous to this city and an art form that encourages a high level of performer and audience interactivity. Supporting this work will be technology that is "theatre friendly" (i.e. easy to use/keeps pace with the creative process), including: software, such as Arkaos, a program used by University of Georgia in its introductory interactivity classes, and hardware (projectors, screen, computer and audio equipment), as adapted in consultation with UIC's Electronic Visualization Lab (EVL).

As an enhancement to classroom experimentation with improvisation techniques and new media technologies, pioneering practitioners and scholars in the field of digital theatre will be invited to take part in weekly activities and present their work. In order to participate in the course an extensive background in either performance or computer technology is ***not*** required. We do ask that you approach the class with an open mind and a spirited commitment to collaboration, experimentation and play.

**WEEKLY BREAKDOWN**

**Week 1 (Sept. 25)-Introduction**
In class: Overview of class, distribution of "***The Ticket***" script, introduction to equipment and class procedures, overview of final project and distribution of CIRA application worksheet, student assessment, presentation by Sam Ball, Professor of Theatre, Northwestern University, read through of "The Ticket".

**Assignment for next class: Read texts to review for class.**

**Week 2 (Oct. 2)-Collaboration**
 (Readings by Viola Spolin-Chapter 1, *Improvisation for Theatre*, Robert Edmund Jones-Chapters 7 and 8, *The Dramatic Imagination*, Commedia article (**find**) and Granstmanship center Guidelines re: Grant Writing

In class: Discussion of readings and overview of storyboarding, demonstration of digital improv by members of Studio Z Theatre Company of Chicago, actors and tech group run scenes 1-3 and begin to work on scenes 4-6.

**Assignment for next class: conceive and present final project proposal outline with a few images in storyboard format for class presentations**

**Week 3 (Oct. 9)-Development Environment**
(Readings by Philip Auslander- Intro, Chapter 1, *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture*, Lance Gharavi- "Experiments in New Media", *Theatre in Cyberspace*, ICI Principles ("Jack Principles"), Mark Reaney-"Virtual Scenography: The Actor/Audience/Computer Interface", *Theatre Design and Technology Journal Winter 1996 and "Theatre in a VR Environment"* (**pull articles from Web source**).

In class: Discussion of readings, guest speaker: JellyVision founder and team members, actors and tech group run scenes 7-8 and begin to work on scenes 9 and 10.

**Assignment for next class: Read texts, actor and media notes.**

**Week 4 (Oct. 16)-Digital Narrative- Writing and Directing Dramas Utilizing New Technology Formats**
(Readings by Charles Deemer- "New Hyperdrama", *Theatre in Cyberspace,* Pierre Levy, Chapter 1 (**find book**), Janet Murray- Chapter 4, *Hamlet on the Holodeck*, David Saltz-"12 Aspects of Integrating New Media in Performance").

In class: Discussion of assigned texts, check-in re: final projects, actors and tech group run scenes 4-6 and begin to work on scenes 7 and 8, guest speaker: David Tolchinsky, Director, Program in Creative Writing for the Media, NU.

**Assignment for next class: Read texts, integrate notes from instructors into final project proposals (to be turned in).**

**Week 5 (Oct 23)-Performance and Technology: Theories and Practice**
(Readings by Johannes Birringer- Introduction, *Performance on the Edge*, Critical Art Ensemble- "Digital Restraint" *The Drama Review Winter 2000*, Brenda Laurel- Chapter 1, *Computers as Theatre*, Dan Zellner-'Directions in Theatre", *Theatre in Cyberspace*).

In class: Discussion of readings, actors begin rehearsing scenes 1-3 of "The Ticket" while tech group is introduced to media for these scenes.

**Assignment for next class: Read texts, actors notes, individual projects- begin work on organizational outline (to be turned in).**

**Week 6 (Oct 30)- Putting It All Together I**
(Readings by Johannes Birringer- Chapter 1, *Media and Performance Along the Boarder*, David Saltz- "Beckett Cyborgs", *Theatre in Cyberspace*, Jeffrey Sweet-article (**get from Dan**).

In class: Review of final projects, discussion of readings, actors and tech group run scenes 9-10. Begin full run-through (or speed through).

**Assignment for next class: Read texts, actor notes, work on final project proposals, tech group conceive kiosk presentations.**

**Week 7 (Nov 6)-Putting it All Together II**
Tech group presents kiosk environment, begin full run-through (or speed through).

**Week 8 (Nov 13)- Dress Rehearsal of "The Ticket" and presentation of kiosk environment.**

**Week 9 (Nov 20)- Final Dress and final tech for show. Final revisions to kiosk plans.**

Note there will not be class on Thurs. Nov. 27 as it is Thanksgiving Day.

**Week 10 (Dec 4)- Final Performance of "The Ticket" during class time**

**Week 11 (Dec 11)- Final Project Proposals due (with 8-10 page analysis) by 5:00 in Dan Zelner's office 2-East, Digital Media Services, University Library.**

**ASSIGNMENTS:** Participation in weekly classroom sessions, completion of weekly reading assignments, brief pop quizzes, a comprehensive final performance project grant application with 6-8 page written analysis.

**Grading:**
*10% Class participation*
*10% Responses to pop quizzes*
*30% Presentation of final projects to group, participation in "**The Ticket**" production*
*50% final performance with 8-10 page written analysis*

**CENTER FOR ART AND TECHNOLOGY PROGRAM**
**Northwestern University**
The Center for Art and Technology exists to bring together scholars and creators in the arts with those in technology for the purpose of enriching study and practice in both fields. In order to foster cutting edge thinking and practice, we seek to create intersections among artistic and technological disciplines, to encourage dialogue and collaboration, to

create cross-disciplinary working groups of students and faculty, and to actively exhibit and disseminate the creative and scholarly outcomes of these activities. We intend to prepare artists/scholars to be contributors to a much needed contemporary approach to problem solving in cultural and scientific communities.