

Issues and Contexts in Contemporary Performance (MUSI 7806/ED 6920)
Summer Institute for Critical Studies in Improvisation:
"Improvisation as Practice-Based Research"
Memorial University of Newfoundland
June 29 to July 12, 2014

INSTRUCTOR: Jesse Stewart, PhD

CONTACT: jesse_stewart@carleton.ca

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This intensive two-week graduate seminar will explore improvisation as a form of practiced-based research. Practice-based research and cognate terms such as practice-led research, arts-based research, arts-based educational research, research/creation, etc., refer to qualitative research methods that use creative arts practices in the investigation, representation, and expression of knowledge. In this course, we will examine some of the ways in which improvisatory arts practices within and across a variety of fields can be integrated with scholarly research agendas. How can academic research questions, methodologies, and outcomes benefit improvisatory creative practices and vice versa? The course will also examine the changing institutional frameworks that support practice-based research in general and improvisation studies in particular.

Hosted by the International Institute for Critical Studies in Improvisation (IICSI) and Memorial University's School of Music, the course will run in tandem with Sound Symposium, St. John's biennial festival of experimental sound-based arts practices including not only music, but also dance, theatre, literature, film, media arts, multi-disciplinary work and installation art. In addition to preparing readings, attending lectures, participating in class discussions and workshops, and presenting their own work, members of the class will attend Sound Symposium events during the second week of the summer institute. All members of the class (i.e. those auditing the course and those taking the course for credit) will prepare for and stage a collaborative public performance at Sound Symposium on Thursday July 10, 2014. Those seeking credit at MUN or elsewhere** will also submit an essay on improvisation and practice-based research, as well as a journal in which they reflect on course content and their own engagements therewith. In addition, summer institute participants are expected to give a presentation on their work at an academic symposium that will take place on Friday July 11, 2014. They also will be encouraged to submit their work to the academic peer-reviewed journal *Critical Studies in Improvisation / Etudes critiques en improvisation*.

** Participants seeking course credit who are not Memorial University students should contact the summer institute coordinator: Professor Frederique Arroyas (farroyas@uoguelph.ca).

REQUIRED READING:

Leavy, Patricia. *Method Meets Art: Arts-Based Research Practice*. Guilford Press, 2009.

This book is available in both print and electronic form through www.amazon.com and www.amazon.ca for roughly \$40. Additional required readings may be assigned during the course, in which case they will be made available in electronic form.

RECOMMENDED READING:

Those wishing to deepen their background knowledge of practice-based research/arts-based research may wish to consult the texts:

Barone, Tom and Elliot Eisner. *Arts Based Research*. Sage Publications, 2012.

Barrett, Estelle and Barbara Bolt, eds. *Practice as Research: Approaches to Creative Arts Enquiry*. I. B. Tauris, 2007.

Cahnmann-Taylor, Melisa and Richard Siegesmund. *Arts-Based Research in Education*. Routledge, 2008.

Knowles, J. Gary and Ardra Cole. *Handbook of the Arts in Qualitative Research: Perspectives, Methodologies, Examples, and Issues*. Sage Publications, 2007.

Rolling Jr., James Haywood. *Arts-Based Research*. Peter Lang Publishing, 2013.

Smith, Hazel and Roger T. Dean, eds. *Practice-led Research, Research-led Practice in the Creative Arts*. Edinburgh University Press, 2009.

Picard-Aitken, Michelle and Frédéric Bertrand (for Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada). "Review and Conceptualization of Impacts of Research/Creation in the Fine Arts Final Report." < http://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/about-au_sujet/publications/RC_fine_artsFinalE.pdf > 2008.

EVALUATION (for those taking the course for credit):

Essay (worth 50% of total grade)

Summer institute participants who are taking the course for credit are asked to submit an essay that examines and/or theorizes some form of improvisatory arts practice in relation to practice-based research. Essays should be roughly 4000 to 5000 words (16 to 20 double-spaced type-written pages) plus a list of works cited.

Essays are due August 5, 2014 and should be submitted to the course instructor via email (jesse_stewart@carleton.ca).

Summer Institute collaborative performance (worth 50% of total grade)

All summer institute participants (including students taking the course for credit, those auditing the course, and faculty mentors) are asked to take part in the planning and realization of a collaborative improvisatory performance that will be staged on Thursday July 10, 2014 as part of the Sound Symposium. Although the form and content of the performance will depend to a considerable extent on the interests and proficiencies of the members of the class, a possible direction for the group project will be to create a remix of Sound Symposium itself.

In addition to audio recordings of Sound Symposium concerts and workshops (that we will make with the permission of the performers and the festival), some members of the class may choose to conduct and record ethnographic interviews with festival performers and/or audience members (again with permission and with research ethics clearance--see below). Alternatively, some summer institute participants may wish to create textual, theatrical, musical, filmic, kinaesthetic, and/or artistic responses to the Sound Symposium. We will endeavour to weave all of these components together in our improvised collaborative performance.

When preparing for the performance, we will have portable digital audio recorders at our disposal. We will also have an instrument called the "reactable" (www.reactable.com). The reactable is a virtual modular synthesizer and digital sampler with a tangible user interface on an illuminated tabletop. By placing and manipulating blocks (or "tangibles") on the table surface, performers can control different parameters of pre-recorded sounds--in our case, sounds derived from Sound Symposium.

All members of the class are asked to participate in the collaborative performance. Members of the class who are taking the course for credit are asked to submit a journal in which they document and reflect on their experiences in preparing for and staging the performance. In addition, students can use their journals to reflect on other course content including lectures, readings, discussions, jam sessions, and the development of their own research. Students are asked to include an evaluation of the collaborative project in their journal (including their own contributions to the performance), suggesting a grade and providing a rationale for their self-evaluation. Journals should be a minimum of 5 double-spaced, typewritten pages. They are due August 5, 2014 and should be submitted to the course instructor via email (jesse_stewart@carleton.ca).

RESEARCH ETHICS:

Seeing as the group project (and possibly some of the individual essays) will involve interviews with Sound Symposium participants, we must adhere to Memorial University's Ethical Principles and Articles of the Tri-Council Policy statement (see http://www.mun.ca/research/researchers/human_subjects1.php). We will seek ethics clearance for the class as a whole, in advance of the course.

TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE (subject to change):

Monday June 30, 2014

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|---------------|--|
| 09:30 - 11:30 | Lecture and discussion (Reading: Leavy Ch. 1) |
| 11:30 - 13:00 | Lunch break |
| 16:00 - 18:00 | Group discussion of participants' research; planning for collaborative performance |
| 20:30 - 22:00 | Improv jam (location: Suncor Energy Hall) |

Tuesday July 1, 2014

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|---------------|---|
| 09:30 - 11:30 | Lecture and discussion (Reading: Leavy Chs. 2 & 3) |
| 11:30 - 13:00 | Lunch break |
| 16:00 - 18:00 | Group discussion of participants' research; planning for collaborative performance |
| 19:00 - 22:00 | Welcome dinner and party at Ellen and Michael Waterman's house (150 Portugal Cove Road) |

Wednesday July 2, 2014

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|---------------|--|
| 09:30 - 11:30 | Lecture and discussion (Reading: Leavy Chs. 4 & 5) |
| 11:30 - 13:00 | Lunch break |
| 16:00 - 18:00 | Group discussion of participants' research; planning for collaborative performance |
| 20:30 - 22:00 | Improv jam (location: Suncor Energy Hall) |

Thursday July 3, 2014

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|---------------|--|
| 09:30 - 11:30 | Lecture and discussion (Reading: Leavy Chs. 6 & 7) |
| 11:30 - 13:00 | Lunch break |
| 16:00 - 18:00 | Trip to Cape Spear |
| 20:30 - 22:00 | Improv jam (location: Suncor Energy Hall) |

Friday July 4, 2014

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|---------------|--|
| 09:30 - 11:30 | Lecture and discussion (Reading: Leavy Ch. 8) |
| 11:30 - 13:00 | Lunch break |
| 16:00 - 18:00 | Group discussion of participants' research; planning for collaborative performance |
| Evening | Sound Symposium opening night events |

Saturday July 5, 2014

All day/evening Sound Symposium

Sunday July 6, 2014

All day/evening Sound Symposium

*15:00 - 17:00 William Parker workshop on large ensemble improvisation

Monday July 7, 2014

All day/evening Sound Symposium

*10:00 - 12:00 IICSI workshop with Marianne Trudel: "Improvisation and meaning"

Tuesday July 8, 2014

All day/evening Sound Symposium
*10:00 - 12:00 Planning for Summer Institute collaborative performance (MMap Gallery)

Wednesday July 9, 2014

Morning Whale watching trip (optional)
Afternoon and evening Sound Symposium

Thursday July 10, 2014

All day/evening Sound Symposium
*10:00 - 12:00 Last minute planning for collaborative performance
*15:00 - 17:00 Summer Institute collaborative performance at Sound Symposium (LSPU Hall)

Friday July 11, 2014

12:00 - 5:00 Summer institute Public Forum (details TBD)
*19:00 - 20:00 IICSI faculty perform at Sound Symposium followed by improv night (where SS participants sign up to perform 5 minute improvisations)

Saturday July 12, 2014

All day/evening Sound Symposium

Sunday July 13, 2014

Farewell gathering (time and location TBA)

* Please refer to the Sound Symposium calendar for details.