Systems for Play

Overview

This is a course in experimental and game-based approaches to art-making and performance. Drawing on a broad range of methods, from event scores to new media to open-ended games, we explore recent and past experimental and playful practices. We then create our own scores, scripts, rules, and other systems for structuring media (text, sound, image, etc.) and performance (dance, theater, music, etc.). Short projects serve both as playful prompts for art-making and opportunities to think critically and generatively about the systems with/in which we live. This is an intermedia production course, there are no prerequisites, and all students are welcome.

Structure

Class time is split between discussing materials and working on student-projects. Materials include readings and examples that introduce methods and histories of play and open-ended approaches to art-making. Considerable time will also be dedicated to playing, rehearsing, and exploring student projects. When appropriate, the class becomes an improvising ensemble or a measurement team or an indeterminate farming collective. Students are expected to be on time, prepared, and ready to work / play.

Course Objectives

- Develop technical and conceptual proficiency in working with open-ended creative approaches.
- Become familiar with practices that blur boundaries between established art media.
- Create a series of projects and document the pieces effectively.
- Develop an appreciation for systems aesthetics and a critical yet generative lens for thinking about systems.

Materials

Materials are available on the course website—www.systemsforplay.com. Check the website regularly and be sure to view all materials that have been posted by 5pm two days before class (5pm on Sunday for the following Tuesday's class). If something resonates with you, follow the rabbit hole—learn about the artist's/writer's inspirations, the technical processes, listen to examples from different angles, think about them while you are walking around, think about them aloud.

Assessment

30% | Attendance & Participation

Participation includes both in-class discussion, online or asynchronous discussion, and documentation. Each unexcused absence over three will result in a lowered letter grade. You are expected to engage with all assigned materials prior to class and come prepared with questions or thoughts for discussion.

35% | Projects

Short projects and exercises will be assigned throughout the semester. Be ready to present projects in class on the date they are listed on the schedule.

10% | Documentation

Video, audio, words, and/or pictures for each project should be posted online within a week after the project's deadline. The documentation does not need to be slick or wonderfully produced, but it should communicate how the piece works, looks, and/or sounds to someone who was not there. The format of your archive is up to you—any posting/ blogging platform, Wordpress, basic html links, Tumblr, even YouTube—all acceptable.

25% | Final Project (collaborative)

10.20 - Presentation of Concept – 10%
11.17 - In-class critique – 10%
TBA   - Final Presentation - 10%

Course Policies

Late assignments will not be accepted without prior approval. Of course, exceptions will be made for emergencies and illness provided there is adequate documentation.

Please speak with me during office hours if you have a disability or other condition that might require modification of the course procedures or exercises. For information visit http://www.virginia.edu/studenthealth/sdac/sdac.html

I expect you to follow the Honor Code. Production courses often call into question traditional notions of fair use, copyright, and plagiarism. If you have questions about a specific project, meet with me during office hours.

I will make every effort to reply to emails within 24 hours. If I don't reply within 24 hours, please email me again.

This syllabus and schedule will change as we move through the course

Music Department Policies

The McIntire Department of Music is committed to providing a safe and equitable learning environment for all students, and holds the following two values as critically important:

1. Power-based personal violence will not be tolerated.
2. Everyone has a responsibility to do their part to maintain a safe community on Grounds.

Please know that as a faculty member, I support a safe and violence-free campus. If you or someone you know has been affected by power-based personal violence, more information can be found on the UVA Sexual Violence website, which describes reporting options and the many available resources. A link is given for reporting misconduct through the university's Title IX process.

If you have concerns or questions about any aspect of this, you can approach any faculty or staff member of the music department, or any of these offices:

- ODOS Dean on Call: (434) 924-7166; DeanofStudents@virginia.edu
- CAPS (individual counseling) :
  - o Day time – (434) 243-5150
  - o After hours – (434) 972-7004
- SARA 24-hr Sexual Assault Hotline: (434) 977-7273
- University Women's Center: (434) 982-2774 or sdvs@virginia.edu
- Campus Police → Call 911 for emergencies or (434) 924-8843

Reporting misconduct

Misconduct includes any type of power-based personal violence and any type of sexual conduct and / or sexual intercourse that occurs without effective consent; misconduct includes intimate partner violence, domestic violence and stalking, as well as sexual harassment, defined as unwelcome verbal, written, physical or other conduct that is sex or gender-based and creates a hostile environment

Electronic Devices

Please use technology respectfully; if the class is impacted by the distraction of social media, I reserve the right to ban laptops and smart phones.

Student Life

I will work to encourage a safe and equitable learning environment in this course. But, what happens in the classroom will be just one element of your experience at UVA this semester. Although I may not always be able to address your questions and concerns, I hope you won't hesitate to contact me about any issues that may be affecting your experience of this class.

Schedule

Week 1	08.25	Introduction
	08.27	A Laboratory of Ideas
Week 2	09.01	The fourth wall, magic circles, courts, & other play spaces
	09.03	Lab: Light
Week 3	09.08	*Experimental* processes & art games
	09.10	Lab: Sound
Week 4	09.15	no class
	09.17	Project 1 Due / Discussion
Week 5	09.22	Games & Rules
	09.24	Lab: Video
Week 6	09.29	Time & Repetition
	10.01	Lab: Movement
Week 7	10.06	no class
	10.08	Project 2 Due / Discussion
Week 8	10.13	Feedback & Cybernetics
	10.15	Lab: Motors and automation
Week 9	10.20	Sampling, Collage, and Remix
	10.22	Lab: Cobra
Week 10	10.27	Cobra Continued
	10.29	Final Project Proposals Due / Discussion
Week 11	11.03	Noise, Glitch, & Failure
	11.05	Project 3 Due / Discussion
Week 12	11.10	Site Specificity
	11.12	Individual meetings and work time
Week 13	11.17	Future Directions / Virtual, Augmented, Artificial lives
	11.19	Rehearsal / work time
Week 14	11.24	work-in-progress discussions
	11.26	work-in-progress discussions
Week 15	12.01	Rehearsal / work time
	12.03	Final Projects Due / Discussion
Week 16	12.08	Final Show / Presentation