

HUB XCC 433 D1, Spring 2020
Thinking through Puppets and Performing Objects:
Using Theatrical Tools to Communicate the Complex, the Abstract, and the Technical

Friday 11:15 am–2:00 pm
CFA Room 310

Instructors

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Introduction to the Cross-College Challenge

The Cross-College Challenge offers a unique project-based learning experience in which interdisciplinary student teams from across BU's undergraduate colleges tackle real-world problems and develop leadership, teamwork and communication skills. Students from any major will collaborate with both on- and-off campus sponsors exposing students to current challenges impacting BU and the City of Boston in areas such as arts management, technology, entrepreneurship, sustainability, and beyond. Some teams may also investigate enduring human questions such as inequality, social justice, and human creativity. This course will focus on puppetry as a unique project-based learning experience.

Introduction to Thinking Through Puppets

Puppetry and other forms of object performance are experiencing a renaissance in the US and across the globe. But what can they offer a research university, where not only creating but also communicating new knowledge to a range of audiences is increasingly important? These "animated objects" have traditionally been used to convey narrative content; can they help research to become a compelling story that engages, informs, and even entertains an audience--by activating their intellect and affect? In this course, students from across BU's many colleges will explore how a broad range of puppetry techniques can help them to investigate and then communicate abstract theories, philosophies, and complex processes, injecting them with humor, suspense, and awe. Through visual storytelling, metaphors, materiality, and the handmade, participants will research the function and power of animate objects as tools of arts research. They will engage in analyzing ideas, making and performing, reflecting and giving feedback. The final products will be two puppet slams (a collection of short, experimental works), one based on the students' own research in small groups, and the other in collaboration

with BU doctoral students, who are client partners for this project. Other stakeholders are the office of the Associate Provost for Graduate Affairs at BU and the Puppet Showplace Theater, which in hosting the second event is lending its brand along with providing its venue.

BU HUB Objectives

XC 433 will meet **BU Hub Learning Outcomes** for **Oral Communication, Creativity/Innovation, Teamwork/Collaboration** and **Research and Information Literacy**. In particular:

- Students will learn and demonstrate the ability to search for, select, and use a range of publicly available and discipline-specific information sources ethically and strategically to address research questions.
- By producing their work in a series of iterative phases, students will demonstrate an understanding of the overall research process and its component parts, and be able to formulate good research questions or hypotheses, gather and analyze information, and critique, interpret, and communicate findings. For some teams, the fruits of research will yield new approaches to enduring questions, or new artistic expressions, or fresh arguments.
- Students will be able to craft and deliver responsible, considered and well-structured oral and/or signed arguments using media and modes of expression appropriate to the situation.
- Students will demonstrate an understanding that oral/signed communication is generally interactive, and they should be able to attend and respond thoughtfully to others.
- Students will be able to speak/sign effectively in situations ranging from the formal to the extemporaneous and interact comfortably with diverse audiences.
- Students will receive explicit training in teamwork and sustained experiences of collaborating with others, students will be able to identify the characteristics of a well-functioning team.
- Students will demonstrate an ability to use the tools and strategies of working successfully with a diverse group, such as assigning roles and responsibilities, giving and receiving feedback, and engaging in meaningful group reflection that inspires collective ownership of results.
- Students will demonstrate understanding of creativity as a learnable, iterative process of imagining new possibilities that involves risk-taking, use of multiple strategies, and reconceiving in response to feedback, and will be able to identify individual and institutional factors that promote and inhibit creativity.

Student Supplies

- 8 x 11 or larger bound/spiral blank page journal of at least 80 pages

Course Assignments

This seminar requires your active involvement in a variety of class activities. Not all work will be graded, but that does not mean it is unimportant. Students who prepare diligently for class, participate actively, and take the assignments seriously generally learn more and perform better than those who do not. Specific course requirements are:

- **Annotated Bibliography (10%) (Individual)**
 - This assignment gives students the opportunity to practice crucial research and information literacy skills, both on their own and in collaboration with team members. Teams will formulate a research question, then individuals will locate and evaluate a variety of scholarly and non-scholarly sources to inform the team's approach to the Student Slam project.
- **Student Slam (15%) (Individual and Teamwork)**
 - This assignment gives students the opportunity to address all HUB areas, as well as to lay a foundation for the final project. Based on their research, classroom exercises, and relevant models, teams will create and perform a short puppet slam piece. A slam is a series of short-form (3-10 minutes), experimental puppet works, meant to expand the boundaries of the form before a live audience.
- **Doctoral Students' Slam (30%) (Teamwork)**
 - The culminating project for this course gives students the opportunity to address all HUB areas. In collaboration with their client partners, BU graduate students, teams will perform a 10-minute puppet slam piece at Puppet Showplace Theater and participate in a "defense" that helps us evaluate the process rather than simply the product. Teams should be prepared to demonstrate an understanding of how puppets and objects work, as well as an awareness of how they incorporated risk-taking, creativity, craft, client expectations, and audience awareness into their process.
- **Teamwork Contracts (5%) (Teamwork)**
 - Students will work in different teams, for the Student Slam and for the Doctoral Slam. To facilitate these collaborations, students will receive explicit training in Team Learning Assistant (TLA) software. For each project, students will learn how to use the tools and strategies of working successfully with a diverse group, such as assigning roles and responsibilities, giving and receiving feedback, and engaging in meaningful group reflection that inspires collective ownership of results.
- **Reflections (6%) (Individual)**

- Students will reflect on their learning experiences and progress during the course, after the Student Slam and the Doctoral Slam. Students are welcome to document their thoughts about the new skills and knowledge acquired through these projects in a brief written essay or more creative format (e.g., photo-essay, short video).
- **Attendance, Preparation, Participation, Homework (24 %) (Individual and Teamwork)**
 - Each regular class meeting is worth 2% of your final grade, broken down as follows: 0.5% for attendance, 0.5% for preparation/engagement, 1% for timely completion of homework.
 - Your regular attendance and participation, careful preparation, and respectful citizenship are essential both to your own learning and to your classmates' learning, particularly when working in teams. Participation can be both active and passive: respectfully listening to your classmates' ideas during discussion is just as important as sharing your own thoughts. Likewise, taking notes, contributing to small-group activities, completing homework and in-class exercises, responding thoughtfully to other students' creative work, and arriving to class on time are all forms of participation. This portion of the course requirements will address all HUB areas.
- **Journal checks (10%) (Individual)**
 - Students will practice responding to assigned texts and experiment with creative strategies in a journal. In this way, students will cultivate creativity as a learnable, transferable skill. At regular intervals throughout the course, we will do checks of the journals. You may be asked to photograph or scan pages and upload portions of your journal to Blackboard, or we may collect them for short periods or conduct spot checks. While we are looking for engagement in course content, there is no one way to create a journal.

Required outside class hours

- **Spring 2019 XCC Launch:** Friday, 1/24, 3:30-5:30PM, Photonics Colloquium Room
 - Meet students and faculty across the XCC program, as well as be introduced to the campus resources to help you with your projects.
- **Student Puppet Slam:** Friday, 2/28, 7:30 pm
 - Students should arrive at the CGS 511 by 5 pm to prepare. This activity addresses all four HUB areas.
- **Attend [Puppet Showplace Puppet Slam](#):** Saturday, 3/21, 8 PM
 - Seeing what happens at a real-life puppet slam as an audience member

will provide more context for the slam you'll be producing. This is creative research and addresses the Research and Information Literacy and Creativity/Innovation areas.

- **Meet off-campus on at [Puppet Showplace](#):** Friday, 3/27, 10:30 am - 12:30 pm
 - Class will meet at the PST, to see a performance and to get a tour of the theater. This is primarily creative research and addresses Research and Information Literacy. It also addresses oral communication since students will be able to discuss the procedures they will use with the theater director. It also supports creativity/ innovation, giving students a chance to see the possibilities and limits of the medium.
- **Meetings with grad students**
 - Several times during the semester, teams will meet with their assigned graduate students at mutually convenient times to work on the Doctoral Slam. This addresses all HUB areas.
- **Puppet Showplace Doctoral Slam:** Friday 4/24, 7 pm (call time at 5 pm)
 - Students will need to make much of this day available. We will do a final prep during class time, then reconvene at the Puppet Showplace Theater promptly at 5 pm. This addresses all HUB areas.
- **HUB showcase:** Saturday, 5/2, 9-11:30 am
 - All XCC sections will highlight their projects during this end-of-semester showcase. This addresses all HUB areas.
- **Final Defense:** Thursday, 5/7, 12-2 pm
 - Teams will meet with instructors to defend their doctoral slams and debrief about the course. This addresses all HUB areas.

Policies

- **Attendance:** So much of what we do for this class takes place during class, so every absence is a loss of work that you cannot make up. Each student is allowed one absence without penalty; however, it is the student's responsibility to check in with the instructors and/or team members, in advance if possible, and create a plan for any missed work. See section above regarding loss of points for attendance and missed activities.
- **Lateness:** Class will begin promptly. Regularly arriving late to class will be cause for a private conversation with the instructors, followed by grade penalties if appropriate.
- **Email policy:** Instructors will make announcements by email, so we ask that you check your email regularly. You are responsible for the information we send you. Likewise, we will check our email at least once daily for questions from you. Please allow 24 hours for a response during the week, 48 hours over the weekend.

- **Electronic Devices:** [Recent research](#) shows that “the mere presence of [a smartphone] reduces available cognitive capacity.” Think about our class as an organism—if one part of the organism is distracted, this distraction can impact the health of the entire organism. Laptops/tablets are permitted in class only for course-related activities (e.g, accessing assigned reading, communicating with clients). Please close extraneous programs and keep phones silenced and out of sight. You will receive advance notice when laptops are necessary.
- **Plagiarism:** Plagiarism is the presentation of another’s work as your own, even by mistake- is a violation of BU regulations. Plagiarism may result in failing this course and possible further penalties. Be sure to read and comply with BU’s [Academic Conduct Code](#) for undergraduate students. If you are in doubt, consult the instructors.
- **Rules governing teamwork:** 1. No team member shall intentionally restrict or inhibit another team member’s access to team meetings, team work-in-progress, or other team activities without the express authorization of the instructor. 2. All team members shall be held responsible for the content of all teamwork submitted for evaluation as if each team member had individually submitted the entire work product of their team as their own work. If you have any questions or doubts, consult the professors.

Additional Resources

- **Graduate Assistants:** Devyani Chheteri: dchhetri@bu.edu & Musa Khan: musakhan@bu.edu
- **Research Librarian:** Marci Cohen: mcohen2@bu.edu
- **Teaming (feel free to email or text):**
 - Lauren Evans: ljevans@bu.edu; 508-523-3994
 - Emily De Redon: ederedon@bu.edu; 781-775-4061

DAILY SCHEDULE

- 1/24** Introduction to the course & puppetry; discuss syllabus & expectations (including journal pages); In class activities related to Creativity/Innovation & Research and Information Literacy areas: 1) *Freewrite*: What are puppets? What is the source of my knowledge on puppets? 2) Brown Paper Bag Puppets 3) Visual Journal

Spring 2019 XCC Launch, 3:30-5:30PM, Photonics Colloquium Room

- 1/31** Discuss clips & present topics from Structured Brainstorming (11:15-12); receive instruction in the principle of teaming and discuss teaming with Lauren Evans & Emily De Redon (12-1); discuss Research and Information Literacy with Marci Cohen (1-2); Assign Annotated Bibliography

Homework due: 1.5 hours of watching clips; excerpts from *Puppetry: A World History*; **Structured Brainstorming for Student Slam**

Journal pages: 1-2 pages of recall of the paper puppet activity (take-aways and reflection) and 3-5 pages of visual/sketchnotes in response to the viewings.

- 2/7** Demo different techniques; Discuss viewings; Practice creativity/innovation by creating a piece & sharing

Homework due: Team contract for Student Slam (by 10 AM) (NOTE: Teams will need to arrange to meet during the week to complete the contract assignment; before meeting plan to watch the [Teaming Prezi](#) and read pp. 13-20 of the TLA Handbook and fill out the Individual Contract Worksheet (part 1 & 2))

Journal pages: Respond to prompt (Blackboard: Content/Readings, Viewings, Assignments/2/7 folder)

- 2/14** Bring laptops to class for team conferences about Annotated Bibliographies with Jessica; Studio time to work on Student Puppet Slam; Amato away Practice research & information literacy, oral communication, teamwork/ collaboration, creativity/innovation

Homework due: [Annotated Bibliography](#) (by 10 AM)

Journal pages: Respond to prompt (Blackboard)

- 2/21** Discuss and apply the process of conveying abstract concepts through image/metaphor as forms of Creativity/Innovation; Constellation(s) or

Poem-object exercise; Students receive graduate pairings; Studio time to work on

Student Puppet Slam

Homework due: Selected poetry; Molly Bang, *How Pictures Work*; watch Julio Torres's "[My Favorite Shapes](#)" (or if you have HBO, here is a link to the [HBO special](#); trailer [here](#)); Be prepared to discuss how shapes, colors, and other art elements make meaning.

Journal pages: Respond to readings/viewings (Blackboard)

2/28 Final preparation for Student Puppet Slam; Practice oral communication via structured feedback using CRP model

Homework due: Short blurb about each team's performance and brief bios about each team member; Teams must set up a time to meet/call graduate students during coming week

Student Puppet Slam: CGS 511: 7:30-9 PM (call time at 5)

3/6 Teams meet with graduate collaborators to begin planning Doctoral Slam; Bozek at NEMLA

Homework due: Team Contract for Doctoral Slam, Reflection on Student Slam/Teamwork

3/13 Spring Break

3/20 Studio time: Teams meet to plan and craft puppets/performing objects, check in with instructors

Homework due: Proposal for Doctoral Slam

3/21 Attend Puppet Slam at Puppet Showplace Theater

3/27 **Class meets at [Puppet Showplace Theater](#):** PST performance (10:30-11:30) & tour (11:30-12:30); Amato at NAEA

Homework due: Take your visual journal to the slam to take notes. Review the elements of art and read articles/powerpoints in folder labeled "Elements" and create several pages of visual journal entries that encapsulate these. See

prompts in the folder.

4/3 Studio time; Teamwork check-in with Lauren Evans & Emily De Redon
Practice Oral Communication, Teamwork/Collaboration, Creativity/Innovation

4/10 Studio time with graduate students, prepare for Roxie Myhrum's visit
Practice Oral Communication, Teamwork/Collaboration, Creativity/Innovation

4/17 Feedback session with Roxie Myhrum and graduate students
Practice Oral Communication, Teamwork/Collaboration, Creativity/Innovation

Homework due: Draft of Doctoral Slam piece(s)

4/24 Final prep & load (12-1); reconvene at PST at 5:00 pm
Graduate Puppet Slam: PST: 7-9 pm

5/2 Spring 2020 XCC Showcase, 9 am-12 pm

5/7 Closing reflection/defense, 12-2 pm
Homework due: Individual reflection on course & Doctoral Slam