

INTERACTIVE PERFORMANCE AND MULTIMEDIA

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Office hours: Tues., Thurs, Friday, 10:00 am–11:00 am; or by appointment

OBJECTIVE

In this class, we will explore the ways interactive media can enhance theatre and performance art, as well as the way interactive media is giving rise to new art forms that combine elements of theater, video, music, sculpture, installation and digital technology. This course combines theory and practice. You will acquire hands-on skills to use computers to trigger and manipulate complex sequences of sound, light, projected images and video, and also to use sensors that respond to touch, light, sound and movement.

REQUIREMENTS

1. **Interactive Artist Presentations and Web pages** (individual). Each student will research the work of someone who has pioneered the use of interactive technologies in performance and/or participatory art. You will give a short presentation about your subject (approximately fifteen minutes), and create a web page for other students to explore in depth. A list of subjects will be distributed during the second week of class, and presentations will begin on the second Thursday, with two presentations each class after that for the following month. A draft of the web page is due on the day of the presentation. You can continue to revise and enhance the website up until the week prior to the take-home exam, at which point I will assess it for a grade.
2. **Interactive Artist Report** (600-750 words not including references). This short report about the artist whom you've chosen for your website should provide a succinct overview (in your own words) of the artist's career and work and an analysis of why the artist is important. You will submit a hardcopy of this paper to me as well as incorporating it into your website (either as a single essay or as text distributed throughout the site).
3. **3 Max Assignments.** These 3 lab assignments are designed to give you the basic skill you'll need to create your interactive prototype and your final project.
4. **Solo Performances** (individual). The first major project of the semester will be a prototype of a performance or installation using interactive media. This project will involve a live performer or viewer/participant, digital audio and/or video wall, and a computer operator to run cues. It is a "prototype" because you will build the project using very simple interactivity: a keyboard to trigger images, video and/or audio. The computer operator can simulate the use of sensors, actuators and complex data processing (e.g. artificial intelligence). You will be paired with another student who will assist you during your presentation, e.g. serving as your computer operator if you are performing, or helping you set up.
5. **Midterm Take-home Exam.** There will be a short take-home Midterm Exam focusing on basic technical and aesthetic concepts.

6. **Final Project.** Your final projects will be created in groups of 2-4. This project may be a full-fledged realization of one of the interactive performance/installation prototypes, or may combine more than one of the prototypes into a single project. The goal is to create a truly interactive environment or object, using of sensors, digital media, computer-controlled lights and/or motors. The project can be a performance, an interactive sculpture or an installation. A variation on this project is to create a fully functional miniature model for an interactive installation, which would allow you to explore ideas that would be very expensive to realize in a human scale. You will receive two grades for this final project, one for the project as a whole, and one for your own individual contribution to the project. In order to help me assess this last grade, please submit a log describing your contribution to the project. This log should also include a discussion of how you would refine or expand the project further if you had more time and resources. This log is due Dec. 15. *I will not assign you a project grade without a log.*

ATTENDANCE

Given the collaborative nature of this course, your consistent attendance and active participation are vital not only for your own sake but for that of your fellow students. If an emergency forces you to miss a class, I expect you to let me know in advance if at all possible.

TEXTS AND MATERIALS

All required readings are on eLearning Commons.

Recommended text: Steve Dixon, *Digital Performance: A History of New Media in Theater, Dance, Performance Art, and Installation* (MIT Press, 2007).

I have not required a text so that you can allocate the money you might otherwise spend on books toward your final project. Each of you should be prepared to contribute up to \$70 to your project (consider this a laboratory fee). However, *in no case should you spend more than that amount!* If your group has three members, this policy means that your project will have a very respectable budget of \$210.

GRADE BREAKDOWN

Participation	20%
Interactive Artist Webpage	5%
Interactive Artist Essay	5%
Max lab assignments	15%
Performance/Installation Prototype	20%
Take-home Midterm	5%
Final Project Presentation (group grade)	10%
Final Project (individual grade)	20%

ACADEMIC HONESTY

All academic work must meet the standards contained in "A Culture of Honesty." All students are responsible to inform themselves about those standards before performing any academic work.

(The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary)

CLASS SCHEDULE (SUBJECT TO REVISION)

Week I: August 18, 20

Tues.: Introduction to the course.

Thurs.: The breakdown of boundaries between traditional art disciplines. Modes of interaction between live performers and media.

Due Tues: Read Saltz, "Live Media"& "Digital literary studies: performance and interaction"

Week II: August 25, 27

Tues.: Class starts at 2:45 pm. Introduction to MIDI.

Due Tues: Read MIDI tutorials on eLearning; Dixon, "Performance and Technology Since 1960"

Thurs.: Introduction to QLab.

Due Thurs: Dixon, "Virtual Bodies," "The Digital Double"; Saltz, Interactivity and Performativity

Week III: September 1, 3

QLab continued. Begin solo performance projects.

Due Tues: Dixon, "Digital Theatre & Scenic Spectacle" and "Telematics"

Artist presentations start Thursday. and continue as scheduled.

Week IV: September 8, 10

Continue to develop interactive performance projects.

Week V: September 15, 17

Continue to develop interactive performance projects.

Week VI: September 22, 24

Solo Performances

Week VII: September 29. Oct. 1

Introduction to Interactive Programming (Cycling74 Max/MSP/Jitter).

Due Thurs: Written Interactive Artist Report

Week VIII: October 6, 8

Topic: Sensors

*Thurs.: Final revisions of webpage due
Take-home Midterm Distributed*

Week IX: October 13, 15

Actuators: interactive lighting and robotics.

Thurs.: Take-home Midterm Due

Week X: October 20, 22

Define Final Projects

Due Tues: Form groups for Final Projects..

Week XI: October 27, 29

Develop workplans for projects.

Due Tues: Written proposals.

Weeks XII-XV: November 3-24

Develop interactive projects.

Week XVI: December 1, 3

Due: Final Project Dress Rehearsals.

Tuesday, December 15, 3:30–6:30pm

Due: Final Project Presentations.

Due: Log recording your contribution to the project.