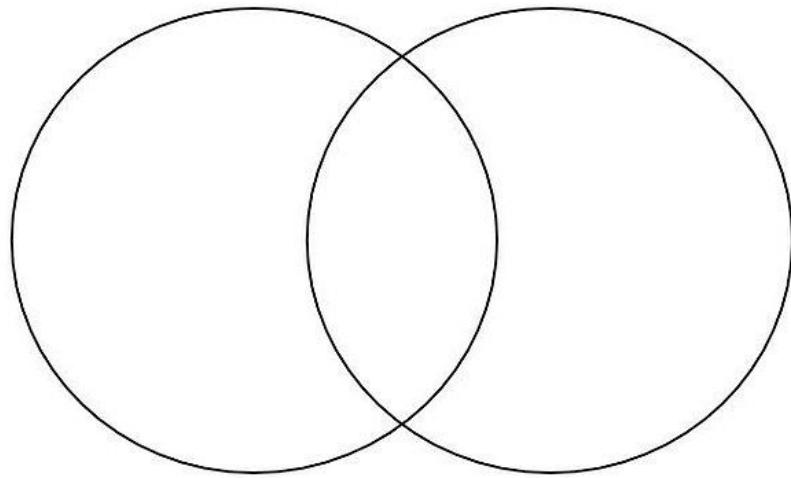


QUIDDLE :art, movement, and inquiry  
by the school of making thinking



ISSUE #1  
SYLLABUS, IMPOSSIBLE  
Fall 2016

*Quiddle (v):*

- 1) To attend to serious subject matter in a carefree and silly manner.
- 2) To inquire by all means available, possible or necessary.

QUIDDLE is an interdisciplinary and multi-media journal that aims to enliven and expand our experience of the traditional academic platform. We maintain a strong commitment to inquiry while welcoming creative methods which elude the structures of the standard scholarly journal. Serving as a site for both critique and innovation, Quiddle affirms the transformative potential of putting on a silly hat while sitting with a serious thought.

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**And:** The School of Making Thinking ([www.theschoolofmakingthinking.com](http://www.theschoolofmakingthinking.com))

## SYLLABUS, IMPOSSIBLE

*The humble syllabus is a hybrid creature of unacknowledged creative potential.*

At once a pedagogical apparatus and an inspiring map of projected insights to come, it oscillates between administrative routine and expanded flights of intellectual imagination. It can be the most exciting part of a course, existing prior to the real and before any physical limitation, suggesting futures of transformative epiphany.

In Volume 1 of QUIDDLE, we have attempted to release the syllabus from its practical responsibilities and the constraints of our material world. What if the syllabus were to become a purely imaginative form?

We invited artists and thinkers to send us syllabi for classes or workshops which fantastically explode the disciplinary boundaries of art and thought: syllabi that bend the surfaces of the possible and the true, pedagogies that make productive use of obscurity and paradox, and lesson outlines that assign works of implausible challenge and impossible beauty. Our issue offers you syllabi that could not possibly be actualized; with tasks set forth from possible worlds that cannot be made real.

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## **Matthew Goulish on Syllabi & Classroom Practices**

*Matthew Goulish is a Professor at The School of the Art Institute, founder of performance groups "Every House has a Door" and "Goat Island," and the author of "39 Microlectures in Proximity of Performance." Knowing that Goulish is renowned for his experimental pedagogical approaches to performance, we reached out to him and asked him to further elaborate a few key passages from 39 Microlectures:*

### **Aaron Finbloom:**

In section 3.1, you describe a Tibetan learning ritual whereby a student repeats a nonsensical phrase meant to create an increase of mental ability without stating how or why it will. You explain that this example “presents us with the frightening possibility that learning only takes place in the presence of the unlearnable.” What exactly would it mean for all learning to only take place in the presence of the unlearnable? What are some examples of Western learning practices that, despite appearing not to contain the unlearnable, do in fact contain it?

### **Lina Moreno:**

In section 2.1 “The Example of Glass”, you tell your reader about glass, an example of something that cannot be defined without the inclusion of time. At a given moment, glass is a solid while over time, it behaves as a liquid. Glass does not change the definition of what solids or liquids are but it is both in different scales of time; it contains difference. Could the same be said of the learnable and the unlearnable? How do you experience the simultaneous properties of the learnable and the unlearnable contained in ideas, thoughts, and in teaching at specific moments or over time?

### **Matthew Goulish:**

A curator and sometime instructor who was an art world figure of notoriety had scheduled a visit at the art school where I teach. The administration posted a short list of times for students to sign up for a coveted studio visit. I stood in the hall after class talking with one of my writing students who also painted, and I asked her if she planned to sign up. To my surprise she said no. Based on previous experience, she said, she considered this person “like a train without a track,” and now she craved more structure in her practice and life. Maybe her statement indirectly confessed why she had enrolled in my class. The more I mulled it over, the more I began to think about my own style in the classroom as, at least in aspiration, a track without a train. The first time the MFA Writing Program asked me for a copy of my syllabus, for a panicked moment I wondered whether I needed to fake something rather than submit the actual document. Then I realized that if they liked the fake I would need to make it real, which would have been undesirable if not impossible, so I resolved to stand by the fact of my one-page semester plan, a

diagramed network of blanks to be filled with students' names, designating correspondences of who would write in response to the writing of whom, or to which reading, and when. The reading list of seven selections made it look slightly less skeletal. Otherwise it resembled a ghostly blueprint for possibilities that, if I did my job, would come into existence.

How can we harness the implicit structures of the classroom for creative practices? Some of my interest in teaching concerns itself very little with subject matter, but with this question. Maybe a return to fundamental structures registers as a rupture. Given relations, between teacher and student, between student and other student, between teacher and course readings, between student and course readings, between student and self; each configuration offers different opportunities, and for me these remain largely unaffected by changes of so-called content. I often think, when I think this way, of my father the electrical engineer, with his intricate wiring diagrams. He once explained to me the function of the substation, that parcels high-voltage current into smaller streams and distributes it for residential use. Year later this gave me the idea for the "step-down." Why is it that after a lecture, the host annihilates the beautiful atmosphere by immediately asking, "Are there any questions?" A terrible silence follows, and then a series of anemic and embarrassed furtive inquiries, with mismatched responses by the eager speaker. The transition between listening and speaking, always difficult, requires time and silence, two things that seem to strike terror into the hearts of event organizers. I think this problem is simply remedied with a "step-down" at the lecture's end, in which the speaker ruminates informally for a few moments on the value or application of the lecture just completed. It's a conceptual substation; it becomes the responsibility of the supplier to re-bundle the discourse to a usable size. For this reason my syllabus includes several instances of "5 – 10 minutes of silence" to allow for these transitions. Students may write during this silent time, and conversation will follow. The larger question is: to what extent is thought transferrable, from electrical engineering to writing, or anything else?

To return to the train question, I tried to think of the syllabus as pure structure: the track that would guide the train of the students, a to-the-minute schedule for each of the fourteen classes that would leave them free to think about other things than structure, that would restrict nothing but how long they had to work on each of their three presentations, how long those presentations would last, and the object to which those presentations would attend. Clarity is never a given, but, among other things, an agreement within a community.

We would spend one hour in the second session talking about the meaning of response. In fact, it would take me six hours (two sessions) to present the preconditions for the course; what the structures are, how they work, how each part needs each other part, the requirement of respect. I tried to keep the plan as empty and neutral as possible, considering the ecology of the time we would have together, the total number of minutes divided by the total number of students, maximizing each presentation and conversation, asking what is the reason for talking about (a.k.a. "critiquing") writing or art work, and what forms such conversation might take. Many themes I had rehearsed elsewhere, and students knew

something of my approach before signing up, especially the essay you mention, “The Example of Glass.” I recently published “Palinode of Glass,” a response to youthful critics who pointed out to me that the theory of glass as a highly viscous liquid had been disproven. I must admit, structures are never neutral, although they may strive for neutrality. I did strive for simplicity – if the students don’t “bring” the train, the class will remain only a track, beautiful but empty. The life supplied would strain and rupture the structures on offer. It will actualize them. I take inspiration from the poet Susan Howe and her engagement with the archive as a repository of actual paper, with textures and smells that intertwine with language.

I might have been drawn to the train metaphor at the outset because at that time an actual train ran outside my classroom window, near enough to silence conversation while it rumbled past, near enough to see the passengers’ faces. I devise a syllabus with its framing structures. Clarity when it functions best allows everyone to find a place for themselves in the proceedings. It offers an irresistible invitation. But something always interrupts, and that interruption carries the unknown, perhaps the unknowable. The noise of the passing train ridicules the lesson-in-progress, drowning out the profound point I was making. Do I allow room for that? Do I include it in the syllabus? The question becomes epistemological, concerning the very nature of knowledge, which ultimately concerns its limits. I borrow, as I often do, a formulation from Stanley Cavell, to say that I cannot know what you are thinking, but I cannot doubt that you are thinking, and I adjust accordingly. Thus I construct myself, in knowing and in believing and between their differences. To lose one’s skepticism regarding knowledge becomes foolish and dangerous. William James spoke of the need to keep in mind how little of the universe we can say we understand compared to the vastness that we know to exist. The classroom as I have known it thus far exists as a point on the face of the earth.

## A syllabus is a map – a strange geometry

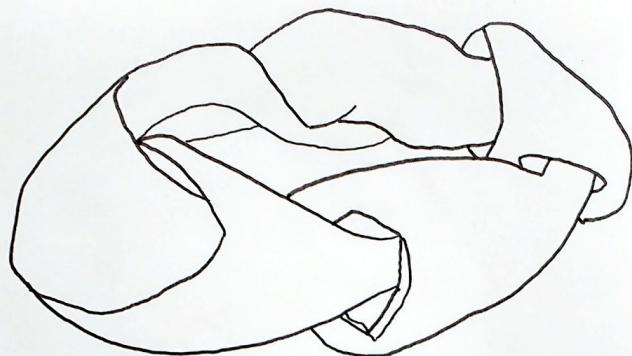
Notes + Drawings

Lina Moreno

1. If you draw a map, draw one that brings you to this same place and time but that brings you transformed. A route that could make you different –or differently– but not better. You would have to fold time; or would folding shapes be enough?

Reading:

Kasner, E. and Newman, J. *Topology –the pinnacle of perversity; or Removing your vest without your coat* in Mathematics and the Imagination (P. 165–298)



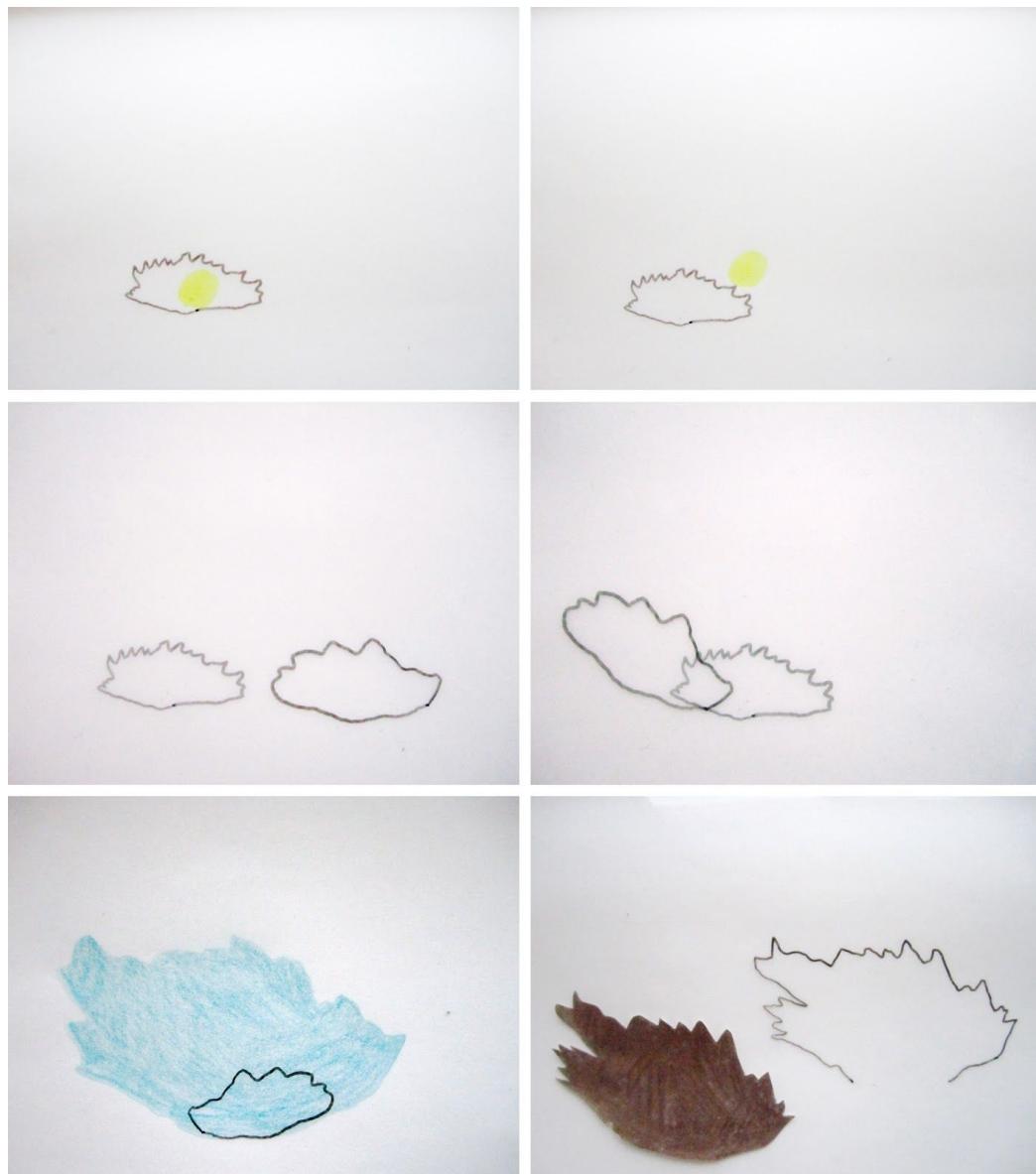
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2. You could draw a map delineating your route to a series of actions you don't yet understand.

Accumulation, excess, reiteration, repetition.

Stop exaggerating, or exaggerate better.

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3. Imagine two sets:

Set #1

- A place
- An image, a fragment of a text or an object
- A gesture

Set #2

- Fractals
- Doughnuts
- Corals

Use repetition and recombination to organize the elements in set #1 in the shapes suggested by set#2, create structures other than linear.

Readings and links:

Davis, B., Sumara, D., & Luce-Kapler, R. (2007). "Learning forms" in *Engaging Minds: Changing Teaching in Complex Times* (Second edition). New York: Routledge.

Weltheim, M. (2009) The beautiful math of coral [video file] from  
[http://www.ted.com/talks/margaret\\_wertheim\\_crochets\\_the\\_coral\\_reef?language=en#t-4452](http://www.ted.com/talks/margaret_wertheim_crochets_the_coral_reef?language=en#t-4452)

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5. Organize a series of actions where an output becomes an input and where something unlearnable takes place. Lead others.

Reading:

Goulis M. (2000) *Pedagogy in 39 Microlectures in Proximity of Performance*. (p. 51-56)

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6. If my words are honest, you could also choose not to draw a map. Why thinking everyone else does?  
 There are places, or at least there were places, where no map was ever used. That is, until you told them.  
 Before that, only the common agreement to give in.  
 That was the dream!

Impossibility is not madness, just unknowing hesitation.

# A Lens, an Experience, a Timeline, and the Ever-Reflecting Response Between Popular Television and Class Structure in America

Nisse Greenberg

## Course Description:

On its surface and also on a very deep level this course is about television and the role it has played over the past 30 years in shaping our conceptions of class in the United States. It is a course that assumes that television is a simultaneously reflective and absorbent lens that swallows our society's perceptions of class structure and vomits them back to us, which affects our perceptions of class structure which we demand television take into account. It is like being in a bathroom with mirrors on either side of you and watching as the image of your self shifts little by little until it disappears into the vertical horizon (the verizon? Is that how they got their name? Ugh. I wanted to invent that word!)

On a different level, that is neither deeper nor shallower, this is an experiment in what it feels like to be in an audience together. This course will avoid discussion without forbidding it. It will ask its participants to imbibe the same experience and then go on with their day, and hope that the conversation about the material only happen in the moments of packing up - of running into each other outside of class - as they cross paths at a mutual friend's place. The discussion will feel like discussion about TV typically feels: spontaneous and exciting because you're connected about a shared experience - it is a conversation full of exclamation points and question marks - it is a conversation with purpose that you've thought of in the meantime and you've been eagerly awaiting a moment to share your thoughts.

This course will take place over the span of a year, 5 days a week for 4-5 hours a day. The course participants will come to the same comfortable room with couches and chairs and coffee and water out of a water cooler. It will be from 1-5pm, though it will sometimes go over, and there is no one stopping participants from coming earlier and eating their lunch in the room. Y'know, if that sounds fun.

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The course will be broken down into four sections that will take 12 weeks each. Each section has a daily schedule that is listen below.

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### ***Section 1: Urban Poverty is an Alternative Economy: or An Echo Chamber of Segregation***

#### ***October-December***

Each day the room will be without electricity or heating. There is a payphone and a personalized phone book in the room. In order to start class, the class must pay all the utility bills to get the electricity turned back on.

There are 4 companies that offer your utilities.

Company 1: A monthly plan for \$800,000/mo for unlimited of all utilities (internet, heating, electricity, water)

Company 2: A 3 month plan for \$1,900/mo for unlimited electricity, heating, and water. Internet costs an extra \$40/mo if you get the 3 month plan, but \$10,000/mo if you don't.

Company 3: Electricity per month is \$20,000/mo, heating is \$80,000/mo, water is \$5,000/mo and internet is \$2,500/mo. They are not unlimited. They are limited to a reasonable amount of each, but if you go over it is \$700/kW for electricity, \$1000/gas unit, \$100/oz of water, \$250/kHz of internet.

Company 4: \$100/day unlimited electricity, \$50/day for unlimited heating, \$10/day for unlimited water, \$150/day for unlimited internet. You can't set up payment plans, so you have to contact each day.

There are trained representatives for each of these companies who understand their pricing structure and attempt to sell the group on all the plans. The class participants have to pool and use their real money. And make real decisions. Also, the representatives put the people who call on hold a lot. (1)

Once the class has gotten, at least, electricity to turn on the television, they then take in:

1 Episode of *Shameless* (The American Version)

1 Episode of *Everybody Hates Chris*

Read a "separatist manifesto"(2) silently

1 Episode of *The Wire*

1 Episode of *Trailer Park Boys*

(1) - There are no rules on what can be brought in from outside of class (including generators and space heaters), but they have to figure that out on their own.

(2) - 60 Separatist Manifestos will be from: (John Africa, The Original Confederacy, The Zapatistas, The Neo-Confederate Movement, Marcus Garvey, The Alaskan Independence Party, The Second Vermont Republic, Parti Quebecois, Boer-Republicans: Freedom Manifesto (Afrikaners), The Revolution (by Ron Paul), The Pamphlets of the American Revolution, ISIS Manifesto, etc. )

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**Section 2: Suburban Poverty is the Attempt to Hold On: or An Inability to Make Your Mind up Between Patriotism and Treason**

### **January-March**

A climbing wall is made out of the walls of the room. For the first 30 minutes of class, you must get on the climbing wall and not touch the ground. There are way more hand holds than foot holds. You can move, but the ceiling isn't that high and it's probably pretty crowded. If you touch the floor, you must start over.

Then the class watches:

2 Episodes of *Rosanne*

A clip of Michael Moore on a talk show

2 Episodes of *Malcolm in the Middle*

A clip of Michael Moore on a talk show

2 Episodes of *The Middle*

At the end of 4 weeks the class watches *Roger and Me*. At the end of 8 weeks the class watches *Sicko*. At the end of 12 weeks the class watches *Capitalism: A Love Story* (All are Michael Moore films).

Each class is given a laptop during the class. It can connect to the internet, but only to the webforum: PsychCenter.com, and only to the Mental Health>Support>Depression tab. So you can only read people asking the internet what to do about their depression, and the answers that they receive. You *are* allowed to respond.

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### **Section 3: Class Envy is a Process of Projecting**

#### **April-June**

Each day starts with a game of opposite-Never Have I Ever with only feelings. In other words, the players will be saying a feeling they *have* had before. As in: "I have felt..." If nobody else has ever felt that way, you get to pick your chair for class. You are therefore incentivized to share feelings that nobody has felt but you. You keep going until everyone has gotten a chair.

The class watches:

1 Episode of *Breaking Bad*

2 Episodes of *It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia*(1)

1 Episode of *Veronica Mars*

Each Thursday there is an episode of *Fawlty Towers* added to the end

Each Friday there is another episode added:

Friday 1-5: Parts 1-5 of Jon Ronson's *Secret Rulers of the World*

Friday 6-10: An Extra Episode of *Veronica Mars*

Friday 11-12: An Extra Episode of *Breaking Bad*

There is a full library of books, and you are asked to hang out an extra hour after class is over and read whatever catches your fancy. The library is only stocked with conspiracy theory texts.

(1) - The last three days of class (when they've run out of *Always Sunny* episodes, they will instead watch 1 episode of *Better Call Saul*)

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**Section 4:** *The Only Thing True About the Top is That You Have the Furthest to Fall***July-Sept**

Each day starts with being given a handful of water that you must hold onto for 20 minutes. At the end of 20 minutes, you are asked to hand back in your water. Whoever has the most water left, is safe. The rest of the class participants must dunk their socks in milk and put them back on their feet for the rest of class.

The first day of class, they all watch the documentary *Born Rich*. Which is a documentary by a very rich person about what it is like to be born rich.

The class then watches:

- 1 Episode of *Arrested Development*
- 1 Episode of *The Bernie Mac Show*
- 1 Episode of *The Riches*
- 2 Episodes of *Modern Family*

The class then goes through an hour long etiquette class with my step-grandmother Toni. Toni was born in 1928 in Belgium. She ran through the woods from Nazis during WWII and she moved to New York where she met my Grandfather and they ran away from my Grandmother. She believes that having good manners is more important than solving poverty. She has a thick French Belgian accent, which I'm pretty sure is fake, because I think she actually comes from Syrians. She would never admit that. She worked at The Met as a tour guide and has no problem talking to people about what she likes to talk about. She also is now in her final years, and therefore suffering through Alzheimer's/Dementia. She can't remember what she's told you and what she hasn't.

# Sketches for "Nodal" Syllabi

*Tom Haviv*

## Nodal Syllabus 1 "closed-circuit"

### Course Description

Nodal Syllabus 1 works partly as a syllabus and partly as a performance script; the goal of this syllabus is to introduce participants to the foundational texts of combinatorial literature within the frame of a time-based performance.

Students grouped in pairs are placed at nodes on the map of the city (or a virtual map of a virtual city), such as a cafe, library or bench, etc. A finite number of locations and students are chosen, so that there is always a pair of students at any given node. For example, if there are ten participants, the course designer chooses five locations.

At each node, a pair of students looks over a single text that is assigned to the node. Attached to each text is a writing prompt, which the pair must respond to, leaving an audio, visual or textual trace of their encounter on an online repository.

After each encounter, new pairs are randomly chosen and randomly assigned to one of the nodes.

Examples of texts/writers to be assigned a node and a prompt:

- I Ching
- Tarot
- Oulipo
- John Cage
- Jackson Mac Low

### NOTE on TIME

The time limit of each encounter is adjustable, and each encounter may occur at fixed or variable intervals. The course (game?) ends either when every possible pairing has taken place, or when each text has been encountered by each possible pairing. Regardless, the end, a final meeting is called for all the participants, which will be the first time they have met. In the meeting, students discuss the merits of this learning process, how community can form from one-on-one encounters and an open and sustained meditation on chance as the process by which we gather information and experience.

## Nodal Syllabus 2 "open-circuit"

### Course Description

Unlike Nodal Syllabus 1, which is a "closed-circuit" (a factorialized set of encounters at a fixed set of nodes), Nodal Syllabus 2 envisions an open map. This map serves as a surface from which new textual space may be articulated in conversation, by creating a collaborative read-write "procedure."

The "map" is not combinatorial, and it may span an entire lifetime. The game ends when you no longer want, or are unable, to play.

At the first node (also in geographic space, such as a cafe, library, bench, etc.), a pair of participants is given a prompt to respond to via "txt" for a fixed amount of time. They may take time to discuss the prompt with their partner, or just begin to collaboratively respond (or not respond) together; they may spend the hour-long encounter however they wish.

At the end of each encounter, the conversation is uploaded; to proceed to the next node, the participants must browse the uploaded conversations, and choose another conversation to join and add to. After every participant chooses a conversation, pairs are assigned, and a location and a meeting time must be agreed upon (perhaps time chosen at a regular interval). Note: If more than two people choose a thread, then a third may be added, if more than three, then the conversation is doubled, and another pair creates a parallel thread.

The next round continues with two new partners responding to a conversation thread they have chosen. They add to the text, and then, after an hour, upload it. The process is repeated.

This recursive chain can go on forever. It is a way of inscribing "domains" of conversation, or investigating the internal logic of conversational poetics, and then learning ways to meaningfully, or aesthetically, bypass them. Some conversations may fall to the wayside, and not develop; others may get attention from all participants.

### NOTE *on* TIME

Although it can be open-ended, another version of the game is a set of facilitated encounters, in which each node has a new prompt, and at the end of the combinations, there is a recap, like in Nodal Syllabus 1, where the process and all final texts will be discussed.

### NOTE *on* INCLUSIVITY

The course will begin with a certain number of students, but the circle can widen by adding a new pair of "students" (not one at a time—it should remain even, to keep the dyadic structure). It may be worth noting that these types of dynamics might peter out, that "curating" the open-ended performances with creatively-driven people might make the collaborative art work more interesting. It is also worth considering whether or not participants can "retire" or "suspend" accounts and people can join or temporarily replace them.

### **Nodal Syllabus 3 "writing labyrinth"**

#### **Course Description**

Unlike Nodal Syllabus 1 & 2, Nodal syllabus 3 is entirely driven by participant decision-making. A network of texts (or a geographic network of "sites" to be paired with texts) is drawn. It might be called a "map," but it might be most accurately described as the board of a board game.

This syllabus requires a finite amount of participants and texts; the number of "nodes" should be equal to the number of participants.

At "node 1," each participant is given a text, which is paired with a writing or performance prompt. After completing the prompt, the participant is given a finite set of options to choose from, which have been determined at the outset by the course designers, prior to the game. Each "option" leads to a different "node" where they encounter others who have made the same decision, and, in some cases, empty nodes where no one else has made that decision. Therefore, each option gathers and un-gathers participants depending on the popularity of the option, and, in this way, creates a process that serves as a kind of meditation on social-formation.

In the final "node," which can be defined as a finite set of turns, or by a certain number of people landing on a "final node," or even after certain sequence of options chosen, or writing produced, the writing labyrinth will end, and there will be a full recap with the whole group of participants in the writing/performance process.

### NOTE *on* FORM

There are many possible variations of Nodal Syllabus 3, and many interesting pedagogical effects that may be worth exploring. It might be interesting to make this approach more "narrative" by adding writing prompts that follow a narrative arc. It may also be interesting to do an *ascending-order* nodal syllabus, in which at each node the group gets larger by one person, until, by the final node, where every

participant in the course comes together in a collaborative group. The inverse is possible as well: a *descending-order* syllabus that begins with a group-wide collaborative exercise and subdivides at a fixed rate, until each group is broken down into pairs, or individuals.

## Choreographies through an *alter-economy of understanding*

*anique vered*

This syllabus asks you to read outside its words. To not try to 'make-sense' of it but to be moved by it into another way of understanding yet to be determined. Indeed, it is understanding's morphogenesis - its movement through formation - that this project contends itself with.

[ A moment from me with you.  
I have to ask if you can accept the always-already of your own dissolution.  
I have a feeling it is necessary.  
Can you allow it as agent towards another becoming?  
If not, you might like to stop reading.  
In any case, there is care here. ]

### COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course explores an *alter-economy of understanding* through choreographic practices in speculative topologies of experience.

Whether it be through the social currencies of tribal-based societies, or the money commodity of capital-based systems, economies are typically based on flows and codes. Codes – marks, ledgers, signs, lore, laws, algorithms. Flows – relational bodies formed by the codes. Bodies being that which hinges the movement of things - such as a person or place - and the bodies of the flows themselves. It is these kinds of bodies that this course sees as the medium for choreography.

An *alter-economy of understanding* speculates ways of disengaging from the proliferation of capital-driven approaches through contemporary economic and political systems, as well as social and psychological relations. Here, 'capital' is seen as 1. the command over labour-power with the intention of accumulating surplus-value; and 2. the attempt to capture experience - or what is known as 'real subsumption'. This project sees capital's command over labour as now moving well beyond the body, and into the arresting of all life.

Consequently, in order to circumvent the intensifying commodification of understanding itself by the neoliberal institution, the course attempts to unleash new knowledge exchange practices that move beyond notions of the material and useful, beyond notions of property and utility, beyond the body of 'lived-experience' as we know it and towards alternate eco(l/n)o(g/m)ies of understanding.

Referencing post-structuralism, biopolitics, cognitive capitalism, Butoh and affect theory, the course has no teacher or central-holder of its syllabus and each class's direction. Rather, the so-called 'invisible hand' guides the pedagogy, through notations surfacing from the class' emergent economy.

On completion of the course, students can expect to:

- be competent in (un)choreographic<sup>1</sup> practices that take place outside of the physical body and

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<sup>1</sup> '(Un)choreographic practices', according to Anique Vered and Joel E. Mason who seemingly coined the term '(un)choreography', are "disparate gestures by independent bodies and voices. It's an imbalance in articulation. It's a

- material environment;
- be familiar with common and alternate valuation codes and can practice ways of imposturing<sup>2</sup> them in physical, virtual and other textural milieu;
- be able to embody the displacement of the relative limit of the capitalist system, such that it can be erased in a collective manifestation moving through and outside of its command;
- resist the capture of experience.

## COURSE OUTLINE

### DIMENSION ONE<sup>3</sup>

Focus:

This dimension will explore (*un*)choreographic practices that take place outside of the physical body and material environment as a pathway into the course's post-human somatic-environmental thinking practice. It will allow traces of understanding's morphogenesis to emerge, offering students a topological landing of creation and erasure as they transmute into the texture of the emerging alter-economy that is their learning-taking-form.

Assigned readings<sup>4</sup>:

- Jason Read. 2003. *The Micro-Politics of Capital: Marx and the Prehistory of the Present*.
- Angela Melitopoulos and Maurizio Lazzarato. *Machinic Animism*
- Kurihara Nanako. 2000. *Hijikata Tatsumi: The Words of Butoh*. TDR (1988-), Vol. 44, No. 1 (Spring, 2000). 12-28
- Giles Deleuze. 1989. 'The Powers of the False' in *Cinema II: The Time-Image*. Translated by Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta
- William James. *Essays in Radical Empiricism* – selected excerpts
- Erin Manning and Brian Massumi. 2014. *Thought in the Act: Passages in the Ecology of Experience* – selected excerpts
- A book that unleashes the experience of Butoh through the holding of its bound cover with the pages open

Class exercises:<sup>5</sup>

- Understanding in the physical body: volume and perception through Butoh

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scatter-politics and directionless movement leading us to somewhere." ('The (un)choreography of Dance Politics'. 2015. *Radical Pedagogies*. Inflexions Issue 8. 12.)

<sup>2</sup> 'Imposturing' refers to the practice of performing invisibility in order to infiltrate certain social and political codes.

<sup>3</sup> The notion of 'dimension' is engaged to speak to the interweaving of temporality and spatiality in the course.

<sup>4</sup> Excerpts from the course's readings will be spontaneously selected by the participants whilst pedagogical activities are undertaken, where the texts emerge as a felt quality of the learning environment. 'Reading' then, becomes an infusion of textual excerpts into the consumptive-production of knowledge in this alter-economy of understanding.

<sup>5</sup> It is important to note that worded descriptions of experiential exercises tend to be limited in their coverage of the happening. Potential students and readers are again reminded to move into, through and outside the words as a means to orientate in the syllabus.

- Spheres and limits: shifting perception towards a crystalline understanding
- Fusing with the material environment: accessibility, ability and dissolving understanding
- Movement in the outer-conscious body: relating with an unknown texturality
- Notating codes and flows: marking, scoring and disappearing moments

## DIMENSION TWO

### Focus:

Dimension Two will investigate *codes of valuation and ways of imposturing in physical, virtual and other textual milieus*, to explore measures of difference, dynamics of relationality and platforms for shifting (sharing). Here, as students' bodies encounter other bodies – of form, of flow and of topology – the affective traces are legered and reverberate. Position placing and rhythms of relations becoming marks. Marks becoming a score. The score being a notation of change. The score of difference coding the economy. But the code itself is uncapturable, as it morphs into the body of shared experience – a topology - where the forms infuse, such that invisibility happens. An introduction to living invisibly in the disruption of an uncapturable code.

### Assigned readings:

- Brian Massumi. 2015. *Politics of Affect*
- Video: Randy Martin: *Dance and Finance—Social Kinesthetics and Derivative Logics*
- Jean Baudrillard. 1993. *Symbolic Exchange and Death (Theory, Culture and Society)* – selected excerpts
- Amy Robinson. 1994. *It Takes One to Know One: Passing and Communities of Common Interest*. *Critical Inquiry*. Vol 20, No 4. Symposium on 'God' (Summer, 1994). 715 – 736
- #627. 2015. *Recollections from a collective encounter untitled 'this is life living'*
- Maurizio Lazzarato. 2011. *The Making of the Indebted Man: an Essay on the Neoliberal Condition*
- Sara Ahmed. 2004. *Affective Economies*

### Class exercises:

- Points of difference in the bodies of flows: gradient moving
- Traversing the real-imaginary: immanent position shifts to express emergent narratives
- A symbolic exchange: exchange of the symbol that is marked in the transient
- Dissolution of structures of knowing: disappearing into the notation
- Play.

"Thus the whole of existing society, founded on labour as a commodity, is henceforth founded on a poetic licence, a figurative expression..."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Karl Marx. 1847. *Misere de la Philosophie*. 34-35.

## DIMENSION THREE

### Focus:

This dimension focuses on *embodying the displacement of the relative limit of the capitalist system, such that it can be erased in a collective manifestation moving through and outside of its command*. It begins with an exploration of the morphogenesis of capital – the taking form of its command over the power of bodies, over agency. It engages students in a process of entering and re-entering and entering and re-entering (ad infinitum) this manifestation of control such that its relative limit is overcome by the very bodily force that fuels it. From here, a double-entendre of 'manifestation' emerges: where manifestation of this limit occurs in both its representation and its refusal. A performing the gradients of disappearance.

### Assigned readings:

- Inke Arns and Sylvia Sasse. *Subversive Affirmation: On Mimesis as a Strategy of Resistance*
- Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, 2013, *The Undercommons: Black Study and Fugitive Planning*
- Brian Massumi, 2015, *The Power at the End of the Economy*
- The Invisible Hand. 2016. [ ]
- Antonin Artaud, 1958, *The Theatre and Its Double* (trans. Mary Caroline Richards)
- Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. 1972. *Anti-Oedipus – Capitalism and Schizophrenia*
- The Invisible Committee. 2014. *To Our Friends*.

### Class exercises:

- Participant research: embodying desiring-machines in a post-human social
- Limits as charge: becoming the waves into which other charges flow
- Currents in contact: charging the field to (with)hold itself
- Movement potential: harnessing impersonal power
- Manifestation: tactics for performing negation

## DIMENSION FOUR

### Focus:

The course's final dimension is a simulated experiment in *resisting the capture of experience*. Via this practice, it is hoped that students can subvert capital's exploitation of experience - the capture and commodification that is the enslavement of this neo-liberal era – and allow the emergence of a schizoid understanding that can be hosted only by its own eternal disappearance. An anti-productive experiment in understanding without a body to stand-under. The course ends with this holographic pathway to the return of experience.

### Assigned readings:

- Forgotten, 2010 (approx), *A book I no longer have nor no longer remember the name, written by a Thai*

*author about other-worlds interwoven through this spatial and temporal experience*

- Philippe Pignarre and Isabelle Stengers, 2011, *Capitalist Sorcery*
- David Graeber, 2004, *Fragments of an Anarchist Anthropology*
- Akseli Virtanen. 2007. *The Place of Mutation: Vagus, nomos, multitudo.* (trans. Leena Ahola)
- Lauren Berlant. 2011. *Cruel Optimism*
- Georgio Agamben, 1995. *Sovereign Power and Bare Life.* (trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen)
- Peter Pal Pelbart. 2015. *Cartography of Exhaustion: Nihilism Inside Out*

#### Class exercises:

- Sounding the depths: echoes in the real
- Wrestling with time: a backwards cycling through the learning you knew to upheave the known outside of knowing
- Texture, immanence: incoherent topologies
- Tactics for a movement coalition of difference
- Resisting capture: resting in the topology of nowhere.

[ *A moment from me with you.*

*I have to ask if you can accept the always-already of your own dissolution.*

*I have a feeling it is necessary.*

*Can you allow it as agent towards another becoming?*

*If not, you might like to forget what you've read.*

*And please, take care.]*

# Mycological Provisions: Chance, Cage and Fungi

By Chris Kennedy

**Location:** The forest

**Time:** The day after it rains

**Office Hours:** The morning before

**Materials:** A body

This course explores the use of mycology and chance operation to develop a collaborative dance score and archive of site-specific field recordings. Drawing from the work of artist/composer John Cage, the course will use the practice of mushroom hunting to consider concepts of indeterminacy, rhizomatic becoming, and kinetic movement in response to landscape. The course will unfold in 5 parts\* and end with a final dance score informed by a soundtrack of field recordings. They include:

1. **Weather:** Where all things begin; from above; through chance
2. **Ground:** Below the feet; the source material; the soil layer
3. **Spore:** Where ideas circulate; drop, drift, and land onto surface
4. **The Hunt:** A descent into landscape; movement-research; the thrill of the hunt
5. **Mushroom:** Where things emerge; the fruiting body; the edible delight

\*All elements are open to adaptation.

## Part 1: WEATHER

For mushrooms weather is where all things begin. The seemingly sporadic surge in mushroom growth is connected to the rain, temperature and humidity of an environment. The slightest change in any condition may delay or signal the growth of an entire mushroom colony. Recently, mushrooms have been discovered to produce their own weather, releasing water vapor to cool the air around the cap, which create convection currents used to spread their spores.

This section invites contemplation, awareness of the body and research into the life and work of John Cage. Concepts of indeterminacy, aleatoric writing, movement-research and embodied pedagogy are explored.

**MOVEMENT:** Keep a rain diary, noting when it rains and the level of precipitation. Record the sounds of the rain to initiate your sound archive. On a day after it rains, begin to walk your neighborhood, or local park. Gaze, careen and look closely at the landscape for evidence of decay and mushroom growth. Look particularly along trail paths, near sites of disruption like mulch piles, shady undergrowth, and fallen logs. Begin to consider the rhythms of chance in the dates collected, amount of precipitation recorded, and length of each storm. (Consult the I-Ching)

## REFLECTION:

Rothstein, E. (1981, November 22). Sounds and mushrooms. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/1981/11/22/books/sounds-and-mushrooms.html>

Cage, J. (1973). M: *Writings '67-'72*. Mushroom book, p. 112-34. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press.

Cage, J. (1961). *Silence: Lectures and Writings*. Indeterminacy, p. 260-74. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press.

I Ching, the Book of Changes

Watch: In love with another sound: John Cage; Director: Miroslav Sebestik, 1992.

<https://youtu.be/2aYT1Pwp3oM>

## Part 2: GROUND

The soil is a composite of history, a core sample of energetic transformation. In each gram of healthy soil, there are thousands of microorganisms teeming with life. The soil acts as a connector to everything else, a vital life force along which mycelia webs extend and retreat. As fungi and human bodies return to the ground, the soil is infused with nutrients for other organisms to draw life and begin again.

This section will introduce the basics of mycology and the mushroom life cycle. We will also consider the Deleuze-Gauttarian idea of the rhizome, assemblages, networks -- the fungus serving as both a material and metaphor.

**MOVEMENT:** Solo Score. Use your rain diary to generate a sequence of numbers. Use this sequence as a reference for your walk. For instance you might walk 3 paces forward, 2 back, and 4 to the side. Or spend 2 minutes walking toward the north, 7 minutes to the south etc. Think carefully about Cage's idea of indeterminate composition, and chance operation. If a mushroom is discovered, begin the sequence again, or invent something new altogether. Keep a diary of any specimens identified and develop a written score or diagram marking your movement. Record yourself walking and moving.

## REFLECTION:

Stamets, P. (2005). *Mycelium running: How mushrooms can help save the world*. Berkeley, CA: Ten Speed Press.

Watch: Paul Stamets: 6 ways mushrooms can save the world <https://youtu.be/XI5frPV58tY>

Deleuze, G. & Guattari, F. (1987). *A thousand plateaus: Capitalism and schizophrenia*. (B. Massumi, Trans). Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press. (Original work published 1980).

Rajchman, J. (2000). *The Deleuze connections*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

## Part 3: SPORE

All fungi begin with a spore. In the presence of water, the spore swells as the cell wall expands and ruptures into a thin expanse known as a protuberance. This elongated tube will eventually become a branch of the spore known as a hypha. As the fungal filaments or hyphae grow, they form a visible web known as mycelium. This process requires the linkage of two filaments or mates of differing genders or mating types, of which there are at 21,000 known kinds of pairings. All the genders however look alike and can only be distinguished by their mating behaviors. Some mushrooms may also be asexual.

This section introduces the concept of movement research, contact improv, and the use of chance operation to develop a solo performance.

**MOVEMENT:** Solo Performance. Create a simple map of a nearby park, streetscape, wild area. Place the map on a surface and randomly select 5 points (i.e. use a brush and ink to drip onto the map, or blindfold yourself and use a marker to demarcate points). Next, connect these 5 locations using a pencil or marker - generating a trajectory for movement (See Cage's Fontana Mix or [49 Waltzes for the Five Boroughs](#), for inspiration). Begin by walking the lines created. (Try listening to John Cage Meets Sun Ra while walking - [https://youtu.be/4ZKeb\\_sDRio](https://youtu.be/4ZKeb_sDRio)). Along the way, generate at least 3 gestures or movements that respond to landscape. Perform them for yourself and develop a score (or "movement map") that communicates your experience.

### REFLECTION:

Smith, N. S. (2008). *The underscore, caught falling: The confluence of contact improvisation, and other moving ideas*. Contact Quarterly. <http://nancystarksmith.com>

Bither, P., Brown, T. & Eleey, P. (2008). *Trisha Brown: So that the audience does not know Whether I Have Stopped Dancing*. Minneapolis, MN: Walker Art Center.

Listen/Read: Agriculture and Sound by Roger White and Mary Walling Blackburn:  
<http://www.fluentcollab.org/mgb/index.php/reviews/review/181/404>

Watch: Trisha Brown in "Watermotor", by Babette Mangolte (1978) <https://youtu.be/3FALHd5Viz4>

## Part 4: THE HUNT

In literature from around the world, mushroom hunting often represents love of family, freedom from tyranny, a connection to the sacred, and an escape into the unconscious. While most mushroom hunters seek the elusive bounty of wild edibles, others are interested in the discovery of unknown species and the thrill of the hunt. Many mycological societies organize forays, where groups of hunters descend into the forest to identify as many mushrooms as possible. The walks are gradual and unguided with many walking beyond trail paths, looking for special habitats, trees or soil types. The process is both communal and individual, a slow-paced endeavor that requires a heightened mode of observation and awareness.

**MOVEMENT:** As a group we will hunt for mushrooms. Each person will choose a partner, and record a conversation together while using a GPS app to trace the lines walked. The pairs should move together, noting

any fungi specimens along the way. At the midpoint of the walk, generate 2 movements in response to the landscape. For Part 5, work with your partner to create a soundtrack for an open movement layering your archive of sounds: rain, walking and conversation. Develop a chance operation to determine length, tone, speed and sequence.

### **REFLECTION:**

National Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Mushrooms

Petrescu, D. (2006). The indeterminate mapping of the common. *Field: A free journal for architecture*, 1(1), 88-96.

Choy, T., Faier, L., Hathaway, M. J., Inoue, M., Satsuka, S., & Tsing, A. (2009). A new form of collaboration in cultural anthropology: Matsutake worlds. *American Ethnologist*, 36(2), 380-403.

## **Part 5: MUSHROOM**

When the largest and oldest living organism known surfaces, it manifests as a delicate mushroom no bigger than the palm of a hand. Just below the surface, the mushroom is connected to a vast network of threadlike roots that extend nearly 2,400 acres throughout the Malheur National Forest in Eastern Oregon. Although the fruiting body of the fungus appears as a tiny mushroom, the entire network is actually a singular entity, an unseen web that is slowly regenerating the forest by decomposing it over time.

This final part will introduce the concept of authentic or open movement - allowing the body to organically respond to an environment. We will then develop a final dance informed by previous experiences and scores. A soundtrack that draws from our archive of sounds will compliment the dance.

**MOVEMENT:** The group will engage in open movement to create a final dance piece, using the lines generated through our collective mushroom hunt as inspiration. Three warm-ups, and three rehearsals minimum. The soundtrack for the dance will come from our archive of sounds and conversations. Once completed, perform for at least one or more witnesses (preferably outdoors).

### **REFLECTION:**

Tsing, A. (2015). *The mushroom at the end of the world: On the possibility of life in capitalist ruins*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

The Postdance Dialogues: Jonathan Burrows's Keynote Address:

<http://www.movementresearch.org/criticalcorrespondence/blog/?p=10242>

iLand: Feedback & Final Impressions from Biba Bell:

<http://www.movementresearch.org/criticalcorrespondence/blog/?p=1490>

## Course

*fourfor*

This Course takes its cue from the situationist practice of *dérive*, the American practice of car-based road trips, and the fluxus practice of compositions. It sets forth a loose model for the growth of an open-ended, trust-based, artistic collaboration in small-group by mapping the budding process of the collaborative project *fourfor*, made up of sarah goetz, Sean Merchant, Melissa Precise, and Cameron Sharp. Course prioritizes the psycho-temporal and psycho-geographical states of the course participants, rather than set activities that are likely to take place. There is no rubric for something that does not yet exist. In Course, the week numbers and locations are not set as logistical information at the beginning of the typical syllabus, but allow for non-continuity of location, and irregular, long-term interaction. The full lines and temporal markers denote a not-to-scale path traveled by the *fourfor* in a vehicle, but may be re-configured in three-dimensional space by a cutting and pasting activity to further abstract from the lived experience that motivated the syllabus, and the material of the syllabus itself.

