CAST150: Introduction to Creativity, the Arts, and Social Transformation
Spring, 2015

PROVISIONAL SYLLABUS AND CALENDAR

Instructor
Cynthia Cohen, Ph.D.
Director, Program in Peacebuilding and the Arts
International Center for Ethics, Justice and Public Life
Office: ASAC (Abraham Shapiro Academic Complex) 3rd Floor, Room 321
Phone: 781-736-2133; Messages: 781-736-8577
Email: cecohen@brandeis.edu

Office hours on Wednesday afternoons 2 – 4 or another mutually agreeable time. In any case, please make appointment by emailing cecohen@brandeis.edu

Teaching Assistant
Jenn Largaespada, ’16
Office: TBD
Email: jlargaespad8@gmail.com
Office hours by appointment.

Graduate Assistant
Lisette Anzoategui
Office: Abraham Shapiro Academic Complex (ASAC) 3rd Floor, Room TBD
Email: Lisette@brandeis.com
Office hours by appointment.

Class
Tuesdays, 2 – 4:50
Spingold Theatre, Room 111
Introduction

CAST150: Creativity, the Arts, and Social Transformation is an interdisciplinary exploration of theory and practice at the nexus of creative expression and social change. We will explore multiple forms of creative expression – story, dance, music, theatre, visual arts, urban design, etc. – and several different approaches to social change, including non-violent resistance to injustice, rehumanization, and reconciliation.

Why a course that explores the relationships among creativity, the arts and social transformation? Throughout the world, artists, cultural workers, activists and peacebuilding practitioners are incorporating the arts into efforts to strengthen relationships across difference, achieve social justice, and create less violent societies. They work in a wide array of art forms – music, literature, theater, visual arts, storytelling, digital art and broadcast media, architecture, conceptual art and folk expressions of all kinds. Their projects are intended to accomplish different goals, such as helping enemies perceive each other’s humanity, helping survivors recover from trauma, supporting people to mourn losses and to empathize with each other’s suffering, to address injustices and to imagine a new future. They involve people as creators, performers, participants, audience members, witnesses, and critics.

Some of these initiatives operate in single neighborhoods; some are international in scope. Some are one-time events, others involve creating sustainable institutions, and processes that last for decades. Some are highly effective; we want to understand how to maximize their effectiveness. Some are less effective, and some well-meaning arts-based initiatives even do harm. In this course, we will discuss risks of harm and identify ways to minimize them.

Although there is a great deal of activity in this field, until very recently, little has been documented that defines and assesses what comprises excellent work in this area. This documentation would help policy-makers or practitioners understand the range of contributions, the accomplishments and the limitations of interventions that incorporate the arts and cultural work. Rarely do the artist-changemakers who design such projects have the opportunity to reflect on them, to assess them honestly, and to explore the ethical questions that emerge from this kind of practice. Rarely do they understand the larger peace-building field or work in coordination with practitioners in other fields who are working toward similar goals. At Brandeis, including through this class, we are working to begin to fill this gap.

This course is designed for students in the arts, peace, conflict and coexistence studies, politics, sociology, anthropology and international global studies, and for students in sustainable development, and coexistence and conflict. It is for those already engaged in peacebuilding/cultural projects, and for those who think of doing this kind of work in the future. It is for students who are practitioners (of the arts, development, conflict transformation, activism, etc.) and for those who might work as administrators, funders, advocates and/or policymakers, or collaborate with artists and cultural workers from their positions in agencies of many kinds.

For students majoring in CAST (Creativity, the Arts, and Social Transformation) this course offers a set of frameworks that will support you to understand the relationship among the ideas
and practices you will encounter in other courses in the minor as well as various co-curricular projects.

In the spring of 2015, the class will focus on:

• Skills of listening, performing, critical thinking, collaboration, interdisciplinary inquiry.
• Creative approaches to seeking justice and building peace in several countries around the world, including the United States, Liberia, Peru and Cambodia.
• Understanding aesthetic engagement in general and the unique contributions to social transformation of music, the visual arts, poetry, dance, and theater.

Course Goals

Creativity, the Arts, and Social Transformation engages students in exploring theory and practice at the nexus of creativity, the arts, and social transformation. We explore dilemmas and constraints as well as accomplishments and possibilities.

Specifically, students will:

• Conduct, analyze, and creatively synthesize an oral history interview with someone different from themselves.
• Participate actively in preparing for, conducting, and synthesizing learning from a design lab, to collaboratively envision creative approaches to particular problems, issues or possibilities.
• Read about theory and practice, witness a variety of art forms, and reflect on their learning in weekly reflections.
Course Requirements

CAST 150 requires students to:

- Prepare for and attend classes, including completing readings and writing weekly reflections. 25%
- Complete assignment #1: Conducting and synthesizing learning from the process and content of an oral history interview. See assignment #1 attached. 25%
- Complete assignment #2: Participating actively in a design lab involving artists, scholars, activists and other students. See assignment #2 attached. 25%
- Complete assignment #3: Synthesizing and extending learning through performance, portfolio, or through original scholarly or creative work on topics of your choice. See assignment #3 attached. 25%

Course Readings and other Resources

Most readings, dvds and cds will either be posted on Latte (the electronic bulletin board) or are available on-line. In a few cases, books and dvds will be available through the Reserve Desk at the Library (or can be purchased for shared or individual use)

Course Policies

1. Attendance is required at all class sessions. Because everyone’s learning in the class is strengthened by the contributions of other members, please prepare thoroughly and ask to be excused only in cases of serious health or other emergencies. If you are unable to attend class, please inform the instructor before the beginning of class if at all possible.

Attendance at class sessions implies being present to conversations and activities in the room. Laptops or tablets can be used in class solely for the purpose of taking notes. Please refrain from checking email or texting or looking up material on the internet during class sessions, unless the instructor specifies otherwise.

2. You are welcome to confer with each other on papers, performances, projects and class presentations. Writing, however, should be your own. Please be sure to credit the source of any ideas borrowed from or inspired by others. For more information, the University policy on academic honesty is contained in section 5 of the Rights and Responsibilities handbook.

3. This class requires the use of tools that may disclose your coursework and identity to parties outside the class. To protect your privacy you may choose to use a pseudonym/alias rather than
your name in submitting such work. You must share the pseudonym/alias with me and any teaching assistants as needed. Alternatively, with prior consultation, you may submit such work directly to me.

Note: If you are a student with a documented disability on record at Brandeis University and wish to have a reasonable accommodation made for you, please see the instructor before the third session of class.

### Schedule of Class Sessions, Topics and Assignments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INTRODUCTION OVERVIEW</th>
<th>Title/Focus of Class Session</th>
<th>Assignments. These reading and writing assignments should be completed before class meets on this date.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 13</td>
<td>Introductions/interviews and listening/overview of course and assignments</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| January 20             | Aesthetic engagement, cultural work, creativity, purposes of art | Write by midnight, Wednesday, January 14th: Reflection #1, as soon as possible after our class session. What did you discover or affirm about what you want to learn from the class? What did you learn about yourself as a listener? What did you discover about building a sense of community through the sharing of stories?

Read:
Cohen: “Creative Approaches to Reconciliation”
http://www.brandeis.edu/ethics/peacebuildingarts/pdfs/CreativeApproaches.pdf

Lehrer: “Alpha Waves (Condition Blue)” and “The Shakespeare Paradox” from Imagine: How Creativity Works”


CAST 150 Assignment #1
CAST 150 Assignment #2

Write: 2nd Reflection, post on latte by 10
p.m., Monday, January 19th. Choose three ideas (one idea from “Creative Approaches to Reconciliation,” one idea from Imagine: How Creativity Works” and one from Lederach, “On Aesthetics: The Art of Social Change”) and write about why these ideas stand out for you. Why are they important? Why do you agree or disagree? How do they relative to your own experiences of building trust and of creativity?

### January 27

**Narrative forms:** oral history, storytelling, fiction

**Read:**

**Listen:**
Andrew Solomon, A Time of Hope http://themoth.org/posts/storytellers/andrew-solomon

**Read:**

**Write:** 3rd Reflection, post on latte by 10 p.m. Monday, January 26th. How can oral history, stories and fiction be crafted to contribute to social transformation?

### APPROACHES TO SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

**February 3**

**Overview of Approaches to Social Transformation:** 3 frameworks
- Resistance, Re-humanization, Reconciliation
- Permeable Membrane between Art and Society/the Moral Imagination
- Power and Love

**Watch:**
Acting Together on the World Stage

**Read:**
*Acting Together Volume I: “Introduction: Setting the Stage”*


Kahane, pages ix – 56, and *Power and Love: A Theory and Practice of Social*
**February 10**

Excerpts from Portraits of Purpose.  
Attend: At least two ‘Deis Impact events  
Write: Reflection #5. Contrast the theory of change that animates work described or enacted in two different ‘Deis Impact events, drawing on frameworks discussed on February 3 and Nussbaum’s list of capabilities. |

**BREAK - February 17**

**February 24**

| Presentations of creative works based on interviews.  
Extended class for all who can make it:  
12 – 1:30  
2 – 3:30  
4 – 5:30 | Complete Assignment #1 and prepare creative presentations. |

**March 3**

| Intercultural Exchange: Azerbaijan, Liberia, USA  
Music and Dance: Human Rights, Women’s Rights, Spirituality, Refugee issues | Write Reflection #6 as soon after class as possible; due by Wednesday, March 4, midnight. What stands out from you about the experience of sharing your creative work with others in the class, as well as witnessing your classmates’ presentations?  
Read: Biographies of Fargama Qasimov and Dr. Aida Huseynova  
Shapiro-Phim: Introducing the Liberian Women’s Chorus for Change  
Stone: Music Can Turn Your Heart |

*Change*

Write reflection #4: Do you combine power and love in your own social change practice? If so, how?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Read</th>
<th>Write</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>March 10</td>
<td>Feminisms and Queer Activism</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>Reflection #7. Drawing on March 3rd class, as well as films and reading for March 3 and March 10, reflect on women's roles as peacebuilders and/or on how the arts contribute to gender and lgbt justice.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| March 17   | Healing trauma, community resilience, truth and justice | Excerpts from Saul, *Collective Trauma, Collective Healing: Promoting Community Resilience in the Aftermath of Disaster*  
Lerner-Febres: “Memory of Violence and Drama in Peru: The Experience of the Truth Commission and the Yuyachkani Theatre Group”  
Watch: Just Performance: Enacting Justice in the Wake of Violence  
Write: Reflection #8. TBD. | |
| March 24   | Development, Urban Design, shifting paradigms | Excerpts from Lerner: *Urban Acupuncture*, as assigned in class  
Excerpts from Cleveland and Shifferd: *Between Grace and Fear: The Role of the Arts in a Time of Change* | |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>March 31</td>
<td>Honoring the 50th Anniversary of Voting Rights March in Selma</td>
<td>Write: Reflection #9. TBD.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Write: Reflection #10. What can we learn from the civil rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>movement activities of 1965 that are useful for today’s struggle for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>racial justice?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BREAK – April 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 14</td>
<td>Tentative: Design Labs</td>
<td>Read: Thich Nhat Hanh, <em>Peace is Every Step?</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 21</td>
<td>Tentative: Synthesis; Song-writing; Jane Sapp</td>
<td>TBD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Participation in Leonard Bernstein Festival of the Arts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>April 23 – 26</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NO CLASS April 28 – Brandeis Friday</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ASSIGNMENT #1: ORAL HISTORY AS AN ARTISTIC PRACTICE

We listen, if we listen well, with our whole selves (body, spirit, intellect, eye, imagination) and respond, in conversational form, in a way that indicates to the person we are interviewing that we have really heard. If we have not really heard, that is painfully and immediately evident and the interview is a failure.


This assignment offers you an opportunity to engage in the processes of oral history, as it is described and interpreted by Mary Marshall Clark in her essay “Oral History: Art and Praxis.” Her approach focuses on listening that is active, engaged, enlivening and respectful.

1: Read the essay “Oral History: Art and Praxis” by Mary Marshall Clark, available online. Take note of the four ways in which she links oral history and community cultural development; the “steps” she recommends; and the 6 principles and guidelines at the end of her chapter. Take good notes on this chapter or read it twice. Become familiar with her ideas.

2. Choose someone to interview who is different from you in a significant way, perhaps in terms of ethnic identity, race, economic class, age, gender, and/or life experience. It could be someone in our class, someone at Brandeis, or someone in the community. It could be someone from a culture you would like to learn more about, or from a community whose story you feel needs more visibility here at Brandeis. It should be someone you can interview in person.

3. Check with that person to see if he or she would be willing to share their story with you in a recorded interview; find someone eager to participate, and someone who will not mind you sharing their story with your classmates and possibly with the Brandeis community. Check with your interviewee to see if they have any concerns about sharing their story. Let them know that, if they wish, they can ask you not to record certain portions, or to delete certain portions after the interview is complete.

4. Prepare yourself for the interview by exploring background information and creating a list of questions or topics you hope to learn about during the interview. You can conduct the interview using a tape recorder, your cell phone, or your computer. Test the equipment and be sure you are comfortable with it.

5. Conduct the interview in person at a time and place of mutual convenience. The place should be relatively private. The interview should last about 45 – 60 minutes, but definitely no less than 20 minutes and probably no more than 90 minutes. If you still have questions, you might be able to arrange a follow-up. It is more important to listen well than to cover all of the questions or topics on the list. Your job is to elicit the stories that your interviewee wishes to tell.

6. Listen to the interview, focusing on the content. Make an outline of the content, as if you are taking notes on a meeting. Transcribe one brief story, or one portion of the interview (2 – 3 minutes is sufficient) to transcribe word for word.
7. Consider whether there are any possible risks of harm to you or to the interviewee if certain of their stories would be shared. Think about ways to either avoid those stories or minimize risks of harm in your approach to sharing it.

8. **Craft a creative presentation of one of the stories you heard for a presentation in class on February 24. If you feel there are any possible risks to the interviewee, choose a way of presenting their story that minimizes risks of harm.** Your presentation can be in the form of a storytelling performance, an ethno-poem (i.e. finding the poetry in the narrators words and crafting a poem using those phrases), a fictional short story, a short graphic novel, the script for a dialogue, the design for a mural, a ballad, or some other creative form. Presentations should be 5 minutes in length. If your creative work is longer, choose an excerpt to present. If it is a visual work or a shorter, respond to questions and/or share your reflections on conducting the interview and preparing your creative work.

9. Write a 2–4 page reflection paper on the process and content of the interview and creating your presentation, linking to ideas of Mary Marshall Clark.
   - Why did you choose the particular person you interviewed?
   - What did you learn about conducting an oral history interview?
   - What did you learn from the stories, experiences and perspectives of someone different from you?
   - Indicate what you intend to do in class and why you have chosen the form?

10. Complete this part of the assignment by turning in a document that includes:
- the list of questions or topics that you prepared before conducting the interview
- your outline of the interview as you listened to the recording
- a word for word transcription of one brief section of the interview
- your final 2–4 page reflection paper
This four-part document should be turned in no later than midnight, Sunday, February 22nd (the final Sunday of winter break).

11. Present your creative work based on the oral history interview on February 24th during an extended class session.
ASSIGNMENT #2: STAFFING AND EXPERIENCING DESIGN LABS AS CREATIVE INTERVENTIONS

This assignment offers you an opportunity to engage actively in a real world social change initiative through a ‘design lab.’ A design lab is a process for bringing together various constituencies related to a problem, issue or possibility to think in creative ways and to design structures and/or processes and/or expressions that lead to a more just, peaceful, resilient, vibrant community, institution, country, network, movement, or world.

At the center of the design lab is a 3 – 6 hour convening, a gathering of 6 – 12 people who will bring their knowledge, talents, and perspectives to devise creative approaches to problems, issues or possibilities. What makes the design lab effective is the careful choice of participants, research ahead of time, the skillful facilitation of conversation, and a commitment to implementation. Each lab will be designed differently, but generally will include introductions and team-building; sharing of research and perspectives; small group work; generating recommendations.

In the spring semester of 2015, all students in CAST 150 will participate as researchers and documenters in a design lab. Some may also participate as co-facilitators, members of the core team, participants in the convening.

Initial preparation for design labs has already begun, based on requests from people in extended community surrounding the program in Peacebuilding and the Arts:

• Dignifying the Stories of Brandeis Workers and Building Student-Worker Relationships at the University (with the Brandeis Labor Coalition)

• Strengthening Relationships of Trust Across Racial and Class Differences Among Brandeis Students

• Creative Approaches to Strengthening Racial Justice in Policing and Criminal Justice Systems

• Portraits of Purpose and the Racial Justice Movement (with photojournalist Don West and institute director Libbie Shufro)

• United States Department of Arts and Culture (USDAC) Campus Chapters (with USDAC and Imagining America)

Design labs include the following steps and roles:
• Identify an issue, problem, or possibility that affords opportunity for useful, creative attention.
• Identify a core group of 3 – 4 people who take responsibility for:
  o Initial framing of the issue, problem or possibility
  o Working with researchers to prepare participants
- Working with facilitators to plan the flow of activities during the lab itself
- Receiving reports and recommendations from the design team, and, working with implementers to choose whether and how to take action and implement recommendations

- Identifying researchers, who gather information, stories, background, needs and concerns from ‘experts,’ including community members, artists, scholars, policy-makers, activists. (Note: students in CAST 150 will sign up as researchers.)

- Identifying and inviting participants, 6 – 12 people who will be brought into conversation in an intensive session. In some cases, CAST 150 students will be participants in the labs.

- Identifying facilitators, 1 – 2 people responsible for designing and managing the flow of conversation and exercises during the design lab; these might or might not be members of the core group. In some cases, students can serve as co-facilitators.

- Identifying implementers, at least two people from among those involved in other roles who are committed to advancing work on the issue, problem or possibility once the design lab is complete. In some cases, students may choose to play a role in implementation.

- Identifying documenters, 1 – 3 people committed to documenting the session (choosing methods and carrying them out) and synthesizing the findings of the sessions into two reports: a detailed report for participants, and a summary to share with the public (Students in CAST 150 will sign up as documenters; outlines for reports will be provided.)

- Designing the sequence of activities of the lab itself, undertaken by implementers (in consultation with others as possible)

- Preparing participants through conversation and creating and sharing documents (including background info, bios of participants, etc.), undertaken by core group and researchers, including students in CAST 150.

- Reviewing recommendations and implementing action steps

Grades will be based on:
- Effort and earnestness of participation
- Feedback from members of core group
- Contributions to preparatory documents
- Contributions to detailed report on and summary of the lab
- 2 – 4 page reflection on what you have learned through the process
CAST 150: Spring 2015

ASSIGNMENT #3:
CULMINATING PROJECT

This assignment is designed to give you an opportunity to synthesize what you have learned in the course, hone your presentation skills, and/or explore more deeply the contributions of a particular art form to social transformation, or creative approaches to social transformation in a particular region or surrounding a particular issue, or a theoretical question about aesthetic engagement and social change.

For your culminating project, choose one of the following:

1. Prepare a brief storytelling performance based on your oral history interview and present it as part of the Festival of the Arts. You will have support from Professor David Sherman of the English Department and the Office of the Arts.

   To choose this option, you would need to make a decision by the end of February, and be present to present your story on April EXACT DATE AND TIME as part of the festival of the arts.

2. Prepare a portfolio in which you document and reflect on the intellectual and creative journey that this course has represented. The portfolio should include:
   a. 5–10 elements. An element could be a paper you wrote, a photograph or quote from one of the readings, an excerpt from a comment you posted on latte, the flyer for an event you witnessed as part of the class.
   b. A reflection (one paragraph to one page in length) on that element and what it represents in your journey
   c. A 1–2 page introduction that orients the portfolio viewer to what s/he will encounter in the portfolio;
   d. A 1 – 2 page conclusion, identifying key themes of your journey, new questions that are emerging, ideas about next steps..

3. Write a 5–8 paper and/or develop an original creative work that allows you to explore an art form, region, issue, or question at the nexus of creativity, art and social transformation more deeply that we did in the course itself.