PERF201
Performance and Circus Studies
S1 Day 2017

Department of Media, Music, Communication and Cultural Studies

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General Information

Unit convenor and teaching staff
Lecturer in Dance and Performance Studies
Jon Burtt
jon.burtt@mq.edu.au
Contact via 0469 553 732
Y3A 193C
Tuesday 10.30-11.30

Credit points
3

Prerequisites
12cp at 100 level or above

Corequisites

Co-badged status

Unit description
This unit is a broad introduction to performance and circus practices, covering a wide range of forms and disciplines. This unit focuses on giving students an introduction to the social and cultural history of new performance forms from the rise of New Circus, post-modern dance and new forms of theatre in the 1960s to the multimodal contemporary forms that they have developed into today. The unit is aimed at all students including those with no prior performance experience. Students have the opportunity to create self-devised performance work in solo/duo and group contexts.

Important Academic Dates
Information about important academic dates including deadlines for withdrawing from units are available at [https://students.mq.edu.au/important-dates](https://students.mq.edu.au/important-dates)

Learning Outcomes
On successful completion of this unit, you will be able to:

- absorb, understand and apply knowledge and skills in written and creative forms.
- recognise and examine the socio-cultural underpinnings of contemporary performance and circus cultural history and various forms.
- interpret, articulate, and communicate ideas, problems, and disciplinary debates in oral, written and creative practice forms.
employ socially appropriate and ethical conduct in performance and circus practice.
work independently and collaboratively in response to project aims and demands.
engage with practice in ways that demonstrate respect for and awareness of diversity
and intercultural perspectives.

### Assessment Tasks

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Weighting</th>
<th>Hurdle</th>
<th>Due</th>
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<tr>
<td>Solo/duo performance project</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>week 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>week 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group performance project</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>week 12</td>
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**Solo/duo performance project**

**Due:** week 5  
**Weighting:** 20%

A short self-devised creative work, in either solo or duo form, engaging with a creative application of circus practice in relation to one other contemporary performance form such as dance, physical theatre, text-based theatre, music, or another related form.

The performance will be assessed in terms of delivery and content, in particular the level of engagement, how well the piece has been rehearsed, the structural coherence of the piece as a whole, the level of creativity involved and the ability of students to communicate the ideas informing the piece in both the performance and class discussions.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- absorb, understand and apply knowledge and skills in written and creative forms.
- interpret, articulate, and communicate ideas, problems, and disciplinary debates in oral, written and creative practice forms.
- employ socially appropriate and ethical conduct in performance and circus practice.
- work independently and collaboratively in response to project aims and demands.
- engage with practice in ways that demonstrate respect for and awareness of diversity and intercultural perspectives.

**Essay**

**Due:** week 8  
**Weighting:** 50%

This 2500 word essay should draw on themes and discussions from the first 7 weeks of the unit referencing unit lectures and readings. Students will be required to succinctly and clearly
articulate their understanding of a topic in the form of an analysis of the work of one figure or group from modern circus, new circus or contemporary circus, discussing the implications of the artist or group's work in relation to issues such as gender and sexuality, political and social issues, animal rights, perceptions of risk and aesthetics, the performing body, and also discussing how the work is positioned within a broader performance context.

Students will be assessed on the standard of their essays in relation to quality of the writing and critical discourse, such as: the relevance and coherence of their critical study of the topic; the level of understanding and integration of unit readings, themes and discussions to support their arguments; evidence of an appropriate essay structure, and use of correct academic protocols and grammar.

The essay will be submitted via the Turnitin link on the iLearn page.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- absorb, understand and apply knowledge and skills in written and creative forms.
- recognise and examine the socio-cultural underpinnings of contemporary performance and circus cultural history and various forms.
- interpret, articulate, and communicate ideas, problems, and disciplinary debates in oral, written and creative practice forms.

Group performance project

Due: **week 12**
Weighting: **30%**

A group-devised work in the form of a project involving the creative application of discipline-specific knowledge and practical skills, engaging with unit themes and drawing on not only circus arts but other performance forms such as dance, physical theatre, text-based theatre, music, and other related forms.

For the performance project, assessment will be based on delivery and content: how well rehearsed the student was; their level of creativity; the level of learning of discipline-specific skills; the level of engagement and contribution to the collaborative group process; the level at which unit themes, readings and discussions have informed the work; and the ability of the student to communicate the ideas informing the piece in both the performance and class discussions.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- absorb, understand and apply knowledge and skills in written and creative forms.
• interpret, articulate, and communicate ideas, problems, and disciplinary debates in oral, written and creative practice forms.
• employ socially appropriate and ethical conduct in performance and circus practice.
• work independently and collaboratively in response to project aims and demands.
• engage with practice in ways that demonstrate respect for and awareness of diversity and intercultural perspectives.

**Delivery and Resources**

**Delivery:**

PERF201 classes are held in Building Y3A Room 187 (Drama Studio). From weeks 1 to 7 classes comprise a lecture and a practice-based component, from weeks 8 to 12 classes are predominantly practice-based leading to a group-devised show in week 12. All students need to wear appropriate clothing to engage with the physical activities of this unit, ie short or long-sleeved t-shirt or leotard and knee or full-length tights or track pants.

**Readings List:**

**week 1 - Origins of Modern Circus and the Rise of New Circus**

required reading:


related reading:


**week 2 - Contemporary Circus**

required reading:


**related reading:**


*Sideshow Magazine, ArtsHub*, (links on ilearn)

**week 3 - The Circus Disciplines**

**required reading:**


**related reading:**


**week 4 - Circus Side Shows and Curiosities**

**required reading:**


**related reading:**

**week 5 - Who Gets to Do Circus?**

**required reading:**


**related reading:**


**week 6 - Political and Cultural Identity in Circus**

**required reading:**


**related reading:**


**week 7 - Animals in Circus**

**required reading:**


**mid-semester break - Reading Circus within a Broad Performance Context**

**required reading:**


**other readings for self-directed research:**


Ellingsworth, J. (2011) 'You can look, but with your eyes shut: the Quebecois circus', Sideshow Magazine [online]


### Unit Schedule

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<th>Week</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Assessments</th>
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https://unitguides.mq.edu.au/unit_offerings/77961/unit_guide/print
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<tr>
<th>Lecture</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Related Reading</th>
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Sideshow Magazine, ArtsHub, (links on ilearn) |
### Lecture 3: The Circus Disciplines

**required reading:**


**balancing**

**related reading:**

Basic Techniques in Circus Arts - CdS, Tightwire, pdf
Basic Techniques in Circus Arts - CdS, Rola Bola, pdf
Basic Techniques in Circus Arts - CdS, Stilts, pdf
Basic Techniques in Circus Arts - CdS, Unicycle, pdf

**videos:**

documentary film *Man on wire* [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=owIj5_PEc4c](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=owIj5_PEc4c)

**floor acrobatics**

**related reading:**

Basic Techniques in Circus Arts - CdS, Acrobatics, pdf
Basic Techniques in Circus Arts - CdS, Hand to Hand, pdf
Basic Techniques in Circus Arts - CdS, Handstand, pdf
Basic Techniques in Circus Arts - CdS, Pyramids, pdf

**videos:**

Circa’s poetic acrobatics … contemporary dance meets extreme acrobatics, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e-m0jsNiac](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e-m0jsNiac)

**aerial acrobatics**

**related reading:**

Basic Techniques in Circus Arts - CdS, Rope and Silk, pdf
Basic Techniques in Circus Arts - CdS, Fixed Trapeze, pdf
Basic Techniques in Circus Arts - CdS, Aerial Hoop, pdf

**videos:**

contemporary flying, Les Arts Sauts [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TK6E2vA-rAY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TK6E2vA-rAY)
aerial urban spectacle, Fura del Baus [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CYMVv7m7dOU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CYMVv7m7dOU)

**juggling/manipulation**

**related reading:**

Basic Techniques in Circus Arts - CdS, Juggling, pdf
Basic Techniques in Circus Arts - CdS, Diabolo, pdf
Basic Techniques in Circus Arts - CdS, Flower stick, pdf

**videos:**
Gandini 4X4 classical ballet meets juggling https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5oU2Z-z2DK4, Menard’s P.P.P. … juggling meets transgender performance art https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fbili397PDU

clowning art/acting

related reading:

Basic Techniques in Circus Arts - CdS, Acting, pdf


videos:

Slava’s Snowshow https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zka2NwXQQa0 … radical clowning.

… and a controversial return of a ‘new’ discipline being taught in ‘contemporary’ circus schools:

equestrian art

related reading:


videos:

cavalia, https://vimeo.com/139743449

Lecture 4: Circus Side Shows and Curiosities - the insect circus, side-shows and freaks (joint lecture with Dr Undine Sellbach)

required reading:


related reading:


videos:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I9jnLzpEaXE … history of the circus side show

Insect Circus Show and Museum https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fs5K0-xUYE … micro circus.

Jim Rose Freak Show https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DiciOSDQMcw … [disturbing footage!]
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<tr>
<th>Lecture 5: Who Gets to do Circus? [online lecture]</th>
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**required reading:**


**related reading:**


**videos:**

Cirque Bijou’s show with ‘differently-abled’ bodies,
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lz42IcajFps

Circus and autism, Company 2 Kaleidoscope,
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oMRrL3jV0v0

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<th>Lecture 6: Political and Cultural Identity in Circus</th>
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**required reading:**


**related reading:**


**videos:**

Circus Oz Living Archive … Circus Oz’s engagement with the political - land rights, uranium mining, women’s rights, http://archive.circusoz.com/

Briefs https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cj4v948CORU&list=RDcj4v948CORU#t=220

Hot Brown Honey,
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t4BpjrARQpA

Jennifer Miller from Circus Amok,
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IN9LZgEtWZc
Learning and Teaching Activities

Overview of Learning and Teaching Activities

Students in this unit will study performance practices across a broad spectrum of circus through various research approaches including performance theory, gender studies, historiography, animal studies, and practice-based circus arts. The unit looks at circus within a broad performance context and therefore draws on a wide range of performing arts disciplines including dance, physical theatre, text-based theatre, music, and other forms, and will involve a theoretical and practice-based approach to learning with a range of assessment outcomes both
written and practice-based.

Performance and Circus Studies as Academic Disciplines

Circus studies is an exciting and growing field of performance study uniquely placed to interrogate social and cultural issues. The history of modern, new, and contemporary circus reveals a responsive and malleable form that has always responded to the social and cultural issues of the day. Learning about the theoretical underpinnings of circus is therefore a central part of this unit and the essay comprises 50% of the total marks. Students will need to absorb the lectures and the readings, select a topic to research, and then apply their understanding of the topic to researching and writing an academic essay (assessment 2).

Practice

The sort of circus and performance practice explored in class is based on social circus which is a form of circus aimed at including different bodies, genders and ethnicities, and varying levels of experience and ability. The idea of circus practice which underpins this unit is an expanded contemporary understanding of the form as it interconnects with other performance disciplines such as dance, theatre, film, and music. Students in this unit will have access to learning different types of skills from juggling, balancing acts, dance, partnering, pyramids, and clowning, through to floor and aerial acrobatics. Music and sound, generating performance scripts, and visual and staging elements also form part of the practice. This means students will be exposed to a wide range of performance disciplines and skills which they can draw on to develop a short act (assessment 1) in the first part of the semester and develop content and skills for the group creative performance project (assessment 3) in the second part of the semester.

Policies and Procedures

Macquarie University policies and procedures are accessible from Policy Central. Students should be aware of the following policies in particular with regard to Learning and Teaching:

Academic Honesty Policy http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/academic_honesty/policy.html


In addition, a number of other policies can be found in the Learning and Teaching Category of Policy Central.

Student Code of Conduct

Macquarie University students have a responsibility to be familiar with the Student Code of
Results

Results shown in iLearn, or released directly by your Unit Convenor, are not confirmed as they are subject to final approval by the University. Once approved, final results will be sent to your student email address and will be made available in eStudent. For more information visit ask.mq.edu.au.

Late Submissions

No extensions will be granted. Students who submit late work without an extension will receive a penalty of 10% per day. This penalty does not apply for cases in which an application for Disruption to Studies is made and approved.

Technology Used and Required

The unit uses the following technology: iLearn and Turnitin.

Student Support

Macquarie University provides a range of support services for students. For details, visit http://students.mq.edu.au/support/

Learning Skills

Learning Skills (mq.edu.au/learningskills) provides academic writing resources and study strategies to improve your marks and take control of your study.

- Workshops
- StudyWise
- Academic Integrity Module for Students
- Ask a Learning Adviser

Student Enquiry Service

For all student enquiries, visit Student Connect at ask.mq.edu.au

Equity Support

Students with a disability are encouraged to contact the Disability Service who can provide appropriate help with any issues that arise during their studies.

IT Help

For help with University computer systems and technology, visit http://www.mq.edu.au/about_us/offices_and_units/information_technology/help/.

When using the University’s IT, you must adhere to the Acceptable Use of IT Resources Policy. The policy applies to all who connect to the MQ network including students.
Graduate Capabilities

Discipline Specific Knowledge and Skills

Our graduates will take with them the intellectual development, depth and breadth of knowledge, scholarly understanding, and specific subject content in their chosen fields to make them competent and confident in their subject or profession. They will be able to demonstrate, where relevant, professional technical competence and meet professional standards. They will be able to articulate the structure of knowledge of their discipline, be able to adapt discipline-specific knowledge to novel situations, and be able to contribute from their discipline to inter-disciplinary solutions to problems.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- absorb, understand and apply knowledge and skills in written and creative forms.
- interpret, articulate, and communicate ideas, problems, and disciplinary debates in oral, written and creative practice forms.
- work independently and collaboratively in response to project aims and demands.

Assessment tasks

- Solo/duo performance project
- Essay
- Group performance project

Critical, Analytical and Integrative Thinking

We want our graduates to be capable of reasoning, questioning and analysing, and to integrate and synthesise learning and knowledge from a range of sources and environments; to be able to critique constraints, assumptions and limitations; to be able to think independently and systemically in relation to scholarly activity, in the workplace, and in the world. We want them to have a level of scientific and information technology literacy.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- absorb, understand and apply knowledge and skills in written and creative forms.
- recognise and examine the socio-cultural underpinnings of contemporary performance and circus cultural history and various forms.
- interpret, articulate, and communicate ideas, problems, and disciplinary debates in oral, written and creative practice forms.
- work independently and collaboratively in response to project aims and demands.
Assessment tasks

- Solo/duo performance project
- Essay
- Group performance project

Problem Solving and Research Capability

Our graduates should be capable of researching; of analysing, and interpreting and assessing data and information in various forms; of drawing connections across fields of knowledge; and they should be able to relate their knowledge to complex situations at work or in the world, in order to diagnose and solve problems. We want them to have the confidence to take the initiative in doing so, within an awareness of their own limitations.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- absorb, understand and apply knowledge and skills in written and creative forms.
- recognise and examine the socio-cultural underpinnings of contemporary performance and circus cultural history and various forms.
- interpret, articulate, and communicate ideas, problems, and disciplinary debates in oral, written and creative practice forms.
- work independently and collaboratively in response to project aims and demands.

Assessment tasks

- Solo/duo performance project
- Essay
- Group performance project

Creative and Innovative

Our graduates will also be capable of creative thinking and of creating knowledge. They will be imaginative and open to experience and capable of innovation at work and in the community. We want them to be engaged in applying their critical, creative thinking.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- absorb, understand and apply knowledge and skills in written and creative forms.
- interpret, articulate, and communicate ideas, problems, and disciplinary debates in oral, written and creative practice forms.

Assessment tasks

- Solo/duo performance project
Effective Communication

We want to develop in our students the ability to communicate and convey their views in forms effective with different audiences. We want our graduates to take with them the capability to read, listen, question, gather and evaluate information resources in a variety of formats, assess, write clearly, speak effectively, and to use visual communication and communication technologies as appropriate.

This graduate capability is supported by:

**Learning outcomes**

- interpret, articulate, and communicate ideas, problems, and disciplinary debates in oral, written and creative practice forms.
- work independently and collaboratively in response to project aims and demands.
- engage with practice in ways that demonstrate respect for and awareness of diversity and intercultural perspectives.

**Assessment tasks**

- Solo/duo performance project
- Essay
- Group performance project

Engaged and Ethical Local and Global citizens

As local citizens our graduates will be aware of indigenous perspectives and of the nation’s historical context. They will be engaged with the challenges of contemporary society and with knowledge and ideas. We want our graduates to have respect for diversity, to be open-minded, sensitive to others and inclusive, and to be open to other cultures and perspectives: they should have a level of cultural literacy. Our graduates should be aware of disadvantage and social justice, and be willing to participate to help create a wiser and better society.

This graduate capability is supported by:

**Learning outcomes**

- employ socially appropriate and ethical conduct in performance and circus practice.
- engage with practice in ways that demonstrate respect for and awareness of diversity and intercultural perspectives.

**Assessment tasks**

- Solo/duo performance project
- Group performance project
Socially and Environmentally Active and Responsible

We want our graduates to be aware of and have respect for self and others; to be able to work with others as a leader and a team player; to have a sense of connectedness with others and country; and to have a sense of mutual obligation. Our graduates should be informed and active participants in moving society towards sustainability.

This graduate capability is supported by:

**Learning outcomes**

- employ socially appropriate and ethical conduct in performance and circus practice.
- engage with practice in ways that demonstrate respect for and awareness of diversity and intercultural perspectives.

**Assessment tasks**

- Solo/duo performance project
- Group performance project

Capable of Professional and Personal Judgement and Initiative

We want our graduates to have emotional intelligence and sound interpersonal skills and to demonstrate discernment and common sense in their professional and personal judgement. They will exercise initiative as needed. They will be capable of risk assessment, and be able to handle ambiguity and complexity, enabling them to be adaptable in diverse and changing environments.

This graduate capability is supported by:

**Learning outcome**

- work independently and collaboratively in response to project aims and demands.

**Assessment tasks**

- Solo/duo performance project
- Group performance project

Commitment to Continuous Learning

Our graduates will have enquiring minds and a literate curiosity which will lead them to pursue knowledge for its own sake. They will continue to pursue learning in their careers and as they participate in the world. They will be capable of reflecting on their experiences and relationships with others and the environment, learning from them, and growing - personally, professionally and socially.

This graduate capability is supported by:
Learning outcomes

- absorb, understand and apply knowledge and skills in written and creative forms.
- recognise and examine the socio-cultural underpinnings of contemporary performance and circus cultural history and various forms.
- interpret, articulate, and communicate ideas, problems, and disciplinary debates in oral, written and creative practice forms.
- employ socially appropriate and ethical conduct in performance and circus practice.
- work independently and collaboratively in response to project aims and demands.
- engage with practice in ways that demonstrate respect for and awareness of diversity and intercultural perspectives.

Assessment tasks

- Solo/duo performance project
- Essay
- Group performance project

Changes from Previous Offering

This is a new unit.