



WHEN YOU SAY; AN EMBODIED ORAL HISTORY EXERCISE

OSUN Connected Learning Contest Winner

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Course: Blank Pages to Stages

Blank Pages to Stages

This class was a two part devised theatrical experience. The students worked with community artists and each other to develop a full length original script, which they then worked on as actors for a final reading on Zoom.

Practical and pedagogical value

This lesson works really well because it allows the students to have a high level of agency (they pick the prompt, they choose who they interview) and also the excitement of seeing each other perform, and preparing their own performances. This is a great differentiated learning activity, as the options for "performance" are actually limitless: for more introverted students, it's totally fine to draw a picture as a "set" or write a short script, or whatever they are comfortable with.

The assignment

WHEN YOU SAY

An Embodied Oral History Project

LENGTH: three days, but can be compressed into a two day lesson, or extended into longer than three. **SUPPLIES NEEDED:** Zoom

For this assignment, you will need groups of students who already have some rapport with each other. We did this in my class about two months into the semester, and the students were already very comfortable with each other, which I think contributed greatly to the depth of the project.

DAY ONE: *What is Oral History?*

Provide meaningful background and discussion for students on the topic of oral history, and it's value in their community.

Homework:

All students should interview an elder from their life or another classmate, and ask them to tell them a story from their childhood or young adulthood about a moment of growth. They can write it down, record it on their phone (video and/or just audio) or just listen and remember.

DAY TWO: *Group Work with Stories.*

- Students are divided into groups of three. You can utilize Zoom Breakout rooms for this.
 - Give them ten minutes to share their stories with each other, however they would like.
 - Give them five minutes to discuss what images, phrases, ideas, or characters felt especially interesting to them.
 - Give them 25 minutes to rehearse different ways of highlighting all the stories.
 - Examples: do a story as a skit where each character is played by members of the group.
 - Write a monologue for one person about what you think a particular character was thinking in the story.
 - Use the story to inspire movements, and create a short dance or movement piece based on the story.
 - The options are unlimited! The goal is to highlight what they love about each story, however they want to do that.

- Sharebacks from each group to the whole class.

Homework:

Do any prep that is needed to prepare the performances to be presented to the whole class the next day. Feel free to bring in props or costumes.

Day Three: Performances.

- One group at a time, the students present their three stories in whatever form they have rehearsed.
 - After they perform, the students should talk about the process. What worked? What felt hard? What did you learn?
 - The rest of the class should offer supportive feedback: what did they feel touched by? What do they remember from each performance?

Notes:

- You can repeat this lesson several times with different prompts. Some highlights include: what is a memory that always makes you laugh? What's one thing you regret?
Who do you miss from your childhood?