

Course Syllabus - Liberatory Art Calisthenics

Portland Community College SE Campus 2305 SE 82nd Ave, Portland, OR 97216
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Course Information

- Course Title: Liberatory Art Calisthenics
- CRN: 15468
- Credits: Noncredit
- Term and Year: Winter 2025
- Prerequisites: None
- Class Meetings & Times: Fridays, 3:00 to 5:50pm Jan 9 - Mar 13
- Modality / Location: Southeast TABOR 126

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

- Instructor Name: Willow D'Arcy Harmer
- Email: willow.harmer@pcc.edu
- Phone: 503-901-0878
- Office Location: None
- Office Hours: None
- Instructor Webpage: <https://www.pcc.edu/staff/willow-harmer/>

Note: Please email me for all non-urgent matters. If something urgent arises, feel free to send a text message. Kindly reserve phone calls for situations where email and texting are not possible.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This class is about deconstructing the layers of programming that society teaches us about being obedient and relying on a source of authority to tell us we are doing something correctly. The idea of "calisthenics" is a metaphor for using exercises to build up your endurance, strength and willpower day to day over time, strengthening your mind. Self liberation isn't just about ideas, it's about the ability to live in a liberated way, which takes practice.

Cultural programming teaches us that there is only one answer to each question, and that we must defer to something in order to do things right. Art making can come from a completely different place, one that sometimes requires that you do something that nobody else has told you is OK. Sometimes you have to break the rules, and that can be scary, difficult, or even triggering.

We are programmed from childhood to sit in our chair and defer to the authority of the teacher. We are taught to follow the rules, the laws, the structure and be good, obedient and passive workers who do what we are told. Many people, when we find ourselves in a situation where we might need to break a few rules for a good reason (often because the rules are oppressive, unfair, illogical or harmful) we freeze. Even the most rebellious among us sometimes freeze when faced with something that taps into that deep programming of authority.

Art is a place where this can be explored, where rules can be broken without anyone getting harmed. It may be uncomfortable and scary, and it may cost you materials, but all freedom comes with costs. Sometimes the cost is in feeling alienated and ashamed, sometimes the cost is the responsibility that comes with agency and autonomy, sometimes the cost is something you make doesn't come out good and you have to reinvent the wheel to find out what works. What cost are you willing to pay to liberate your own mind?

Because this class is overtly critical of the authority model of education that programmed us in this way in the first place, I will attempt to structure the class WITH you, and we will build the rest of the syllabus together. I have a lot of ideas and information I have curated that I can share with you, and I have some exercises I think might be a good jumping off point, but I want to co-create the class with you.

TEXTS

The Girl with the Incredible Feeling by Elizabeth Swados. You can read it here:
<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1Zi7Mg6UZyd9bwrYAcmZ8Ag7FmU5jeMWR?usp=sharing>

James C. Scott in a chapter of his book, Two Cheers for Anarchism.
<https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/james-c-scott-two-cheers-for-anarchism#toc7>

Recommended:

The Artist's Way by Julia Cameron

Art and Fear by by David Bayles and Ted Orland
https://artistryinaction.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/david_bayles_ted_orland_art_and_fear.pdf

The Pedagogy of the Oppressed by Paulo Freire
<https://ia601303.us.archive.org/8/items/PedagogyOfTheOppressed-English-PauloFreire/oppressed.pdf>

Software/Hardware/Equipment:

An ability to view PDFs so you can read the texts and other information.

A Google Drive account. You can use your PCC student account. I made a couple of shared folders for the class.

MATERIALS

A sketchbook or something similar to draw, sketch, and write in. Something to draw and write with, pens, pencils, markers, etc. Whatever you like best.

On the first day, bring art materials you loved to use as a child or WOULD have used if you had access to them.

After that, you bring the supplies you love using the most, the ones that speak to you. If you don't know yet, bring a few options. Nothing has to be expensive or high grade, and you are always welcome to change your mind. I don't know yet whether the class has easels yet, so hold off until after the first class to bring anything big so you know whether you need to bring a table easel or not.

Accommodations and Services

If you need any kind of accommodations, let me know and I will work with you to the best of my ability. PCC can get special equipment such as special chairs, etc. for students who need accommodations. I can work with you if you need things in another format.

PCC is committed to supporting all students. If you plan to use academic accommodations for this course, please contact your instructor as soon as possible to discuss your needs.

Accommodations are not retroactive; they begin when the instructor receives the "Approved Academic Accommodations" letter from you (submitted in person for courses on campus; via email for Online Learning courses). To request academic accommodations for a disability, please contact an Accessible Education & Disability Resources counselor on any PCC campus. Office locations, phone numbers, and additional information may be located on the [Accessible Education & Disability Resources website](#).

Sanctuary College Statement

PCC is a sanctuary college. For more information and resources, see the [resources for undocumented students page](#).

Inclement Weather Statement

Our course is typically unaffected by college campus and facility closures or delayed class start times. Our regular due dates [and Zoom class meeting times (if a remote class)] apply. However, if PCC must close all operations, our regular due dates will be adjusted accordingly. Please check your email for my instructions and continue to check Brightspace during closures.

Flexibility Statement

The instructor reserves the right to modify course content and/or substitute assignments and learning activities in response to institutional, weather, or class situations.