

Sophie Seita and Yael Ort-Dinoor
Performative Text and Design
Boston University (2021)

This interdisciplinary co-taught seminar explores the intersections of text, design, performance, publishing, and activism. It examines a number of techniques, forms, media, and theoretical ideas—asking about the political potential of such practices. Our aim is to develop a truly interdisciplinary approach to thinking about the form a text might take. The course will be complemented by field trips to archives, zine library, DIY spaces (in NY, and the Boston area), and will incorporate a number of creative exercises, theoretical reading, and a combination of studio and seminar style teaching. Our topic is ‘text in space’; that means: we will be concerned with the question of how text can appear spatially, be it on a wall, on the page, or on other materials (costume, flags) or how it might be used as a performative object. Other themes include: labour, liveness and documentation, ephemeral vs. permanent, alternative publishing, activist archiving, DIY spaces, avant-garde publishing as activist spaces and practices. Some questions we will be addressing: How can we activate, enact, translate linear and non-linear thinking? How can we think *into* space? How can text perform on the page, or on / with other materials, and in spoken, signed, or visual forms of communication? What if our guiding principle for work is to reject functionality? A provocation: what would it mean to be or make work ‘against use’? We will be looking at writers, artists, and critical theorists who’ve debated the value of deliberately obscure work, work that’s aslant, at uncomfortable or awkward angles; work we need to grapple with, work that resists our immediate consumption.