

Performing the Body / The Body Performing *seminar proposal*

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SEMINAR DESCRIPTION:

Both ‘performance’ and ‘performativity’ have become popular concepts in critical theory, with scholars in fields as disparate as anthropology, rhetoric, literature, psychology, and cultural studies citing one or both of them frequently in recent research. Though they often operate in tandem and both take the embodied practices of a human body as their central focus, theories of performativity and theories of performance have quite different things to say about what bodies do and what bodies are.

In this advanced interdisciplinary seminar, we will explore the points of intersection and divergence between 1) performative theories of bodily identity, beginning with Judith Butler’s seminal theory of gender as a performative, rather than material, state of the body, and 2) theoretical approaches to performing bodies. At least half of our readings will be drawn from critical theatre history and theatre studies, fields of research that have been largely overlooked in contemporary body theory.

SEMINAR OBJECTIVES:

- 1) students will be able to define clearly how the notion of ‘performativity’ is related to but distinct from the practice of ‘performance’
- 2) students will be able to apply both types of theories to critical analysis of social, cultural, theatrical, and literary texts
- 3) students will practice revising their own written work based on feedback from peer reviewers
- 4) students will practice giving constructive feedback (technical, structural, and content-oriented) to student peers on weekly writing assignments

A NOTE ON WRITING ASSIGNMENTS:

The peer review system is the bread-and-butter of professional academia, and the writing assignments for this seminar are structured to give graduate students practice giving and receiving peer feedback on their written work. Seminar participants will be expected to write a 1-3 page position paper each week addressing the readings. (*Note: papers should not under any circumstances exceed 3 pages out of courtesy for your peers and your professor.*) Up to 1 hour of in-class time each week will be spent reading another student’s paper and giving written feedback on it. Each student will then have one week to revise their paper based on the feedback provided by their peer before turning both versions in to the instructor for final grading. In addition to practicing professional skills, the exchange of papers among seminar participants is intended to foster interdisciplinary thinking and cooperation.

GRADING:

- 50% of final grade = weekly written assignments and revisions
- 30% of final grade = your feedback on peer papers
- 20% of final grade = attendance and quality of participation in class discussions

READINGS & TERM SCHEDULE

Week 1: overview, syllabus, assignments

Week 2: PERFORMATIVITY VS. PERFORMANCE: WHERE IT ALL BEGAN

- J.L. Austin. "How to Do Things With Words: Lecture II" pp. 147-152
reprinted in *The Performance Studies Reader*, ed. Henry Bial
- Judith Butler. "Performative Acts & Gender Constitution" pp. 154-166
reprinted in *The Performance Studies Reader*, ed. Henry Bial
- Richard Schechner. "Drama, Script, Theatre, & Performance." *TDR* 17, #3 (1973)

Week 3: USING PERFORMATIVE THEORY

- Mark Franko. "Majestic Drag: Monarchical Performativity and the King's Body Theatrical."
TDR 47, 2 (Summer 2003): 71-87
- Alecia Youngblood Jackson. "Performativity Identified." *Qualitative Inquiry*, v. 10 #5
(2004): 673-690
- Thomas Winter. "'The healthful art of dancing': Luther Halsey Gulick, gender, the body, and
the performativity of national identity." *Journal of American Culture*, vol. 22, #2
(Summer 1999): 33-38

Week 4: PERFORMATIVE THEORIES OF RACE

- Louis Miron and Jonathan Inda. "Race as a Kind of Speech Act." *Cultural Studies: A
Research Annual* 5 (2000): 86-97
- John T. Warren. "Doing Whiteness: On the performative dimensions of race in the
classroom." *Communication Education*, v. 50, #1 (April 2001): 91-109
- Nella Larsen. *Passing* (1929 novella)
- Catherine Rottenberg. "Passing: Race, Identification, and Desire." *Criticism*, vol. 45 #4
(Fall 2003): 435-452

Week 5: DISABILITY & PERFORMATIVITY

- Kat Kleman Davis et al. "In motion, out of place: the public space(s) of Tourette Syndrome."
Social Science & Medicine 59 (2004): 103-112
- Susan S. Stocker. "Problems of Embodiment and Problematic Embodiment." *Hypatia*, vol
16, #3 (Summer 2001): 30-54
- Margrit Shildrick and Janet Price. "Breaking the Boundaries of the Broken Body." *Body and
Society*, v. 2, #4 (1996): 93-113

Week 6: PERFORMATIVITY & THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

- Rosalind C. Morris. "All Made Up: Performance Theory and the New Anthropology of Sex and Gender." *Annual Review of Anthropology*, vol 24 (1995): 567-592.
- Lise Nelson. "Bodies (and Spaces) do Matter: the limits of performativity." *Gender, Place, & Culture*, vol. 6, #4 (1999): 331-353

Week 7: POLITICS OF PERFORMATIVITY

- Peter Diger. "Performativity Trouble: Postmodern Feminism and Essential Subjects." *Political Research Quarterly*, Vol. 47, #3 (Sept. 1994): 655-673
- Molly Anne Rothenberg and Joseph Valente. "Performative Chic: The Fantasy of a Performative Politics." *College Literature*, vol. 24, #1 (Feb. 1997): 295-304
- Melissa Clarke. "Rosa Parks' performativity, habitus, and ability to play the game." *Philosophy Today* #44 (2000): 160-168

Week 8: THE LINE GETS BLURRY

- Elizabeth Reitz Mullenix. "Private Women / Public Acts: Petticoat Government and the Performance of Resistance." *TDR* 46, 1 (Spring 2002): 104-117.
- Andrew Parker & Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick. "Introduction to *Performativity & Performance*." pp. 167-174, reprinted in *The Performance Studies Reader*, ed. Henry Bial
- E. Patrick Johnson. Chapter #5: "Sounds of Blackness Down Under" pp. 160-218 from *Appropriating Blackness* (2003)

Week 9: PERFORMING PERFORMATIVE IDENTITIES

- Jill Dolan. "Gender Impersonation Onstage" pp. 3-13
in *Gender in Performance*, ed. Laurence Senelick
- Debby Thompson. "'Is race a trope?': Anna Deavere Smith and the question of racial performativity." *African American Review*, vol. 37, #1 (Spring 2003): 127-138
- Judith Lynne Hanna. "Tradition, Challenge, & Backlash: Gender Education Through Dance." pp. 223-238, from *Gender in Performance*, ed. Laurence Senelick
excerpt from *Appropriating Blackness*

Week 10: THEORIES OF THE PERFORMING BODY

- Joseph R. Roach. chapter #1: "Changeling Proteus: Rhetoric and Passions in the Seventeenth Century" pp. 23-57 from *The Player's Passion* (1985/1993)
- Joseph R. Roach. chapter #6: "The *Paradoxe* as Paradigm: The Structure of a Russian Revolution" pp. 195-218 from *The Player's Passion* (1985/1993)

Week 11: TRAINING THE PERFORMING BODY

Phillip B. Zarrilli. "(Re)Considering the Body and Training: Introduction" pp. 85-99
from *Acting (Re)Considered* (1995)

Carrie Sandahl. "The Tyranny of Neutral: Disability and Actor Training." pp. 400-419
from *Bodies in Commotion*, eds Carrie Sandahl and Philip Auslander (2006)

Week 12: ANALYZING THE PERFORMING BODY

Gay McAuley. chapter #3: "Energized Space: Moving Bodies" pp. 90-126
from *Space in Performance* (1999)

Patrice Pavis. chapter #3: "The Actor" pp. 55-131
from *Analyzing Performance: Theatre, Dance, Film* (2003)

Week 13: (no writing due, except revision of week #12 essay)

Readings for this seminar will be made available in a coursepack, and they will be posted online through the library's electronic reserve system.