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

Week 3: Using Performative Theory
- Mark Franko. “Majestic Drag: Monarchical Performativity and the King’s Body Theatrical.” TDR 47, 2 (Summer 2003): 71-87

Week 4: Performative Theories of Race
- Nella Larsen. Passing (1929 novella)

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
**Week 6: Performativity & The Social Sciences**


**Week 7: Politics of Performativity**


Melissa Clarke. “Rosa Parks’ performativity, habitus, and ability to play the game.” *Philosophy Today* #44 (2000): 160-168

**Week 8: The Line Gets Blurry**


**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


**Week 10: Theories of the Performing Body**


Week 11: Training the Performing Body
from Acting (Re)Considered (1995)
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.**