

CMST 3041¹ – Performance of Everyday Life

Spring 2018

T/Th 9:00 AM – 10:20 AM

Coates Hall 111

Instructor: Patrick McElearney

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Office: Coates Hall 325

Office Hours: T/TH 10:30-11:30 AM; 12:15-1:15PM, or by appointment

Course Description: The view of life as theater is an ancient and enduring metaphor for human reality. To paraphrase Shakespeare's quotation: 'We are all merely actors performing on a world stage.' Some scholars in communication studies argued for a performance paradigm, wherein performances shape, and are shaped by, culture, everyday life, personal narrative, folklore, ritual, political protest, social belonging, and identity. From a communication standpoint, we can view the body and bodily acts as a semiotic matter, material signifiers signifying meaning for viewers. Thus, body and bodily acts are legible, readable, interpretable, communicable, and constitutive.

This course will explore relationships in, between, and among performances of everyday life in a variety of social, cultural, and historical contexts. In addition, we will examine the constitutive effects of performance through various communication contexts.

The goals of the course are:

1. To broaden and deepen an understanding of performance as communication (and vice-versa), and of performance's various forms and functions in society and culture;
2. To enhance intercultural and historical awareness and sensitivity by examining some beliefs about and practices of communication/performances quite different from our own;
3. To explore the use of performance as both a metaphor and a method of understanding the communication and behavior of others; and,
4. To discuss and critique fundamental theories related to the field of performance studies.

Recommended Prerequisite: CMST 2040 Introduction to Performing Literature.

Required Text: Elizabeth Bell, *Theories of Performance*.

Other Readings: I will upload .pdfs onto Moodle

Course Requirements: Each student is expected to attend scheduled class meetings; participate in class discussions, exercises, performances, and workshop activities; and read the assigned materials. Beyond these minimum expectations, each student is responsible for two exams, one analytical paper and two group performances and/or presentations.

¹Syllabus language borrowed in large part from Dr. Rachel Hall, Syracuse University; Dr. David Terry, and Dr. Nicole Costantini Louisiana State University; and, Dr. Matthew Spangler San Jose State University

In calculating your final grades, the course requirements have the following point values:

Participation, in-class activities, and quizzes	200
1 term paper	100
1 midterm exam	100
1 Discussion Leader	100
1 performance and/or presentation	100
1 final exam	100
Total possible points	700

A+ = 700-686; A= 685-651; A- = 650-630; B+ = 629-616; B= 615-581; B- = 580-560; C+ = 559-546; C= 545-511; C- = 510-490; D+ =489-476; D= 475-441; D- = 440-420; and, F= 41 9>

Participation (and attendance): All students are expected to participate in class discussions, quizzes, activities, workshops and assigned performances. Performance theory (the content of this course) is predicated on the notion that the presence of the physical body “matters” and thus you will frequently be asked to engage your body as a tool of intellectual inquiry; your body is a way of knowing. We will explore varying facets of culture, communication and performance and each of you will bring your own unique experiences and views into the mix. I expect that each student will be respectful of their peers – this means that each student should take care to use language and actions that are comfortable and inclusive for everyone. This also means that you should respect each person’s learning process. Additionally, part of your participation in class will include your role as an audience member.

Attendance is a mandatory part of this class and will count as part of your participation grade. I do understand that sometimes things happen and you will, on occasion, miss a class. That being said, I am allowing you to have three “free” absences that will not affect your grade. I suggest saving these absences for moments of importance i.e. illness or family emergency. If you miss more than three classes, you will lose points from your overall participation grade. University excused absences will be the only exception to this rule. This, of course, does not apply for a performance day midterm. Thus, if you know in advance you cannot attend most class meetings and/or cannot show up on assigned dates, *you should consider dropping this class.*

Analytical Paper: Descriptive and analytical account of the theatrical, aesthetic, ethical, and/or political underpinnings of a selected social or cultural performance. Potential topics are virtually limitless. Your paper should be based on field notes, participant-observations, and/or interviews that explore the performance. You should ground your analysis in theories, concepts, and terminology introduced in this course. You will have three (3) options for completing this assignment. That is, there will be three different paper assignments, allowing you some choice of which topic you want to write about and whether you want to get the assignment done early in the semester or wait until near the end. All papers should be no less than five, and no more than seven, pages (typed in Times New Roman, double-spaced, 12 pt. font, with 1-inch margins), and papers should be well-organized, written clearly, concisely, cogently, and please carefully proofread for errors. Because you have an option as to which assignment you’ll do, and thus a choice of due dates, no late papers will be accepted past the final deadline.

Performance and/or Presentation-Students will pick—or be assigned—dates for projects. Each student and/or group will work together outside class, then present on the assigned date. Projects are designed to complement the reading material and discussions, and to give students experiential knowledge of teaching terms and abstract concepts, and to illustrate issues and problems we'll discuss. Although the instructions for each project will be fairly simple and straightforward, in order to do them well, you will need to have a good understanding of the conceptual material, too. Given the number of students in the course and the nature of these exercises, **there will be no “make-up” opportunities for missing the assignment—**regardless if all other participants are there or not. If a group member has an upcoming university-excused obligation, the group should schedule their day around that date and make a note of it in their request.

A note on grading performance/presentation work: Performance/presentation efficacy is subjective to a degree – but on the other hand, you don't have to be an expert to tell the difference between hastily prepared, sloppy work and carefully prepared, intelligent work. You will be graded first and foremost on meeting all the requirements of the assignment in your performance. But you will also be graded on making something worth watching, something interesting, engaging, energetic, and well-rehearsed. A 'D' performance will miss the mark in some key way, leaving us thinking, “That was weak; They clearly slapped this together in ten minutes.” 'C' performance meets requirements in a rote way, leaving us thinking, “Well they got the idea but that was just OK.” A 'B' performance will leave us thinking, “That was good; they had their ish together.” An 'A' performance will have everyone thinking, “Wow, that was awesome.” In addition, part of your participation in class will include your role as an audience member. This means that you will be present to provide your undivided attention to in-class performances. After each set of performances, we will have in-class discussion about the performances and how they relate to the theory/class material. Be positive while working with your classmates – offer feedback in a way that is constructive rather than overly critical. It is at this point that I again remind you of the importance of attendance – it is equally as important to perform as it is to observe and support your classmates.

Discussion Leader: Each student will act as a discussion leader once during the semester. As discussion leader, the student will hand to the class a paper outline of the reading. Discussion leaders will also have prepared questions, activities, games, presentations to engage the class on the reading material.

Chapter Notes: I extend a courtesy to students who, at the beginning of class, submit hand written notes on the assigned reading. I will hold onto these notes, and then give them back to students at the beginning of each exam. Please make a photo copy of your notes to use in class for your own record.

Late Work: All students are expected to turn in assignments on the days that they are due. I do not accept late work. If you know in advance that there is an event or situation that will cause you to not be able to turn in an assignment on its due date, please talk to me. I will not be able to help you if I'm made aware of the situation after it occurs. I also understand that sometimes circumstances are outside of your control. ***If you have proper documentation for an excusable absence— i.e. athletics note, a doctor's note, a death certificate, et cetera, then you must see me in my office within one week of your return to class in order to discuss your absence and make up work (bring your note here—not in class). In addition, students must complete missed work no later than two weeks from its initial due date.***

Plagiarism- There is a zero-tolerance policy for plagiarism. All students must complete their own work and properly cite all sources used in any assignment/speech/project/homework. In addition, I will attach turnitin.com to your essay submission. Please refer to LSU policies regarded plagiarism, which can be found here: <http://www.lib.lsu.edu/instruction/plagiarism2.html>

**If you have any questions or are unsure of what an act of plagiarism is, please do not hesitate to ask.

Discussing Grades: Any questions or concerns that you may have about your grades should be addressed to me in person. I prefer that you come to office hours (or make an appointment with me) for these discussions. You can email me about setting up an appointment or to give me some heads up about coming to my office, but do not ask questions about your grade via email. Emailed questions will receive an automated response of, “Please come to my office hours to address concerns about your grade.”

If there is an outside situation that is affecting your performance in our class, please talk to me about it as early as possible. The earlier that we can make accommodations, the better off you will be; it is much harder to deal with a situation after the fact.

The Americans with Disabilities Act and Rehabilitation Act of 1973: If you have a disability that may have some impact on your work in this class and for which you may require accommodations, please see a Coordinator in the Office of Disability Affairs (112 Johnston Hall) so that such accommodations may be arranged. After you receive your accommodation letter, please meet with me at some time during the first two weeks of class to discuss the provisions of those accommodations.

SEXUAL HARRASSMENT AND MISCONDUCT: LSU’s TITLE IX policy makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender are Civil Rights offenses subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, etc. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you can find the appropriate resources here for defining, reporting, and resolving sexual misconduct cases here: http://www.lsu.edu/hrm/policies_and_procedures/Title_IX_item71081.php and here: http://www.lsu.edu/hrm/policies_and_procedures/Title_IX_Resources_item71342.php

Please see Moodle for course schedule, which is subject to change.