

Professor Grobe
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FYSE 121: THE WORLD, PERFORMED
(Tuesdays & Thursdays, 11:30-12:50)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

"Mere theater!" we might say dismissively of a political event. "He just loves drama," we might say about a friend behind his back. "She's such a diva!" "He's putting on a show!" You get the idea. Our language often implies that the world is a theatrical performance, and when it does we usually mean that it's insubstantial or inflated or fake.

But seeing the world as performance can also be a powerful and empowering act. In this course, we will chart the history of this Janus-faced concept in the West, from its ancient roots in the notion of the *theatrum mundi* (the theater of the world) to the present-day understanding that gender, for instance, is "performed."

We will attend performances and watch films; read dramatic, literary and theoretical texts on this theme; and discuss them together as a class. You will also attend non-theatrical events in order to examine them "as performance." In frequent writing assignments, you will learn how to bridge the gap between the Big Ideas of this course and particular texts or performances, but we will focus, not just on critical analysis, but also on the creative craft of essay-writing. For instance, special attention will be paid to the way your writing might evoke a lost or absent performance for your reader.

REQUIRED TEXTS (all other readings, marked ** below, appear in the course packet)

Shakespeare, Henry IV, Part I (Folger Shakespeare Library, Simon & Schuster, 2009)

ISBN: 0743485041

Handke, *Kaspar and Other Plays* (Hill & Wang, 1970)

ISBN: 0809015463

Bial (ed.), *Performance Studies Reader*, 2nd ed. (Routledge, 2007)

ISBN: 0415772753

NOTE: These books are available at Amherst Books. The course packet will be available in class, and the cost of this packet will be billed to your account as a course fee.

COURSE FORMAT & REQUIREMENTS

Reading & Class Discussion: This is a small, discussion-based class. Your chief duty is to read deeply and well, completing all assigned readings, so that you can participate actively in class. As you read, think not only of the text's meaning and

significance, but also of how it relates to other things: experiences you've had, texts you've read (whether in this class or beyond), performances you've witnessed, etc. All of these will be helpful as we explore the text together in class.

Writings: This class will involve two kinds of writing: 1) brief, informal exercises (weekly, on average) and 2) formal essays (at the end of each unit). Quality and clarity of writing are equally important in both kinds of assignment, but their purposes differ. The exercises are descriptive, evocative, and designed to generate material for discussion (or for later writing). The formal essays stage a more deliberate and more thorough kind of argument.

Grading:

NOTE: You must complete all assignments in order to earn a passing grade.

Formal Essays	50%
Exercises/Responses	30%
Presentation (Unit 2)	10%
Class Participation	10%

Class Schedule:

UNIT ONE – ALL THE WORLD'S A ...

*NOTE: You will share a short reading response with your classmates about each of the following plays: *Life is a Dream*, *Henry IV*, *Kaspar*. I will assign you a day and time to circulate your response.*

- T Sept. 8 – Assorted Shakespeare speeches**
Classical precedents for these speeches**
Plato's "Allegory of the Cave"***
- Th Sept. 10 – Lakoff & Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (excerpts)**
- T Sept. 15 – Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* (excerpt)**
Calderón, *The Great Theater of the World***
- Th Sept. 17 – *Life Is A Dream* (Act I)**
- T Sept. 22 – *Life Is A Dream* (Acts II-III)**
- Th Sept. 24 – *Henry IV*, pt. 1 (Act I)
- T Sept. 29 – *Henry IV*, pt. 1 (Acts II-III)
- Th Oct. 1 – *Henry IV*, pt. 1 (Acts IV-V)
- T Oct. 6 – Handke, *Kaspar*
- Th Oct. 8 – Handke, *Kaspar*
- Su Oct. 11 – Personal Essay due at noon**

UNIT TWO – THE WORLD IS/AS A ...

Note: You will present one of the readings to the class and bring in a description or video of a “performance” related to that reading. (Alternatively, you may stage a relevant performance of your own devising.) Eligible readings are marked with a diamond. Please coordinate with the other student presenting that day.

Performance

T Oct. 13 - No class; Monday schedule

Th Oct. 15 – Taylor, “Acts of Transfer”**

◆ Carlson, “What Is Performance?” (Bial 70-75)

◆ Bell, “Performance Studies in an Age of Terror” (Bial 56-58)

Theatricality/Ritual

T Oct. 20 – Féral, “Theatricality: The Specificity of Theatrical Language”**

◆ Goffman, “Belief in the Part One Is Playing” (Bial 61-65)

◆ Geertz, “Blurred Genres” (Bial 66-69)

Th Oct. 22 – ◆ Turner, “Liminality and Communitas” (Bial 89-97)

◆ Bell, “‘Performance’ and Other Analogies” (Bial 98-106)

Faber, “Saint Orlan” (Bial 118-124)

Performativity/Play

T Oct. 27 ◆ Austin, “How to Do Things with Words” (Bial 177-183)

Butler, “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution” (Bial 187-199)

◆ Parker & Sedgwick, *Performativity & Performance* (Bial 200-207)

Th Oct. 29 – ◆ Huizinga, “The Nature and Significance of Play...” (Bial 137-140)

◆ Bateson, “A Theory of Play and Fantasy” (Bial 141-151)

Sutton-Smith, “The Ambiguity of Play” (Bial 152-58)

The Art of Doing

T Nov. 3 – Montano, *You Too Are a Performance Artist* (excerpts)**

Kaprow, “Just Doing” (Bial 159-163)

Ono, *Grapefruit* (excerpts)**

[Peer review of first paragraphs in class]

Th Nov. 5 Writing workshop of drafts

Sun Nov. 8 Interpretive Essay due at noon

UNIT THREE – WORLDLY ACTS

Performing Nationality & Empire

T Nov. 10 deLoria, *Playing Indian* (excerpt)** [intro. & chapter 1]

Th Nov. 12 WATCH: *The Couple in the Cage*

Performing Gender, Race & Class

M Nov. 16 8pm: Screening of *Paris Is Burning*

T Nov. 17 *Paris Is Burning*

Th Nov. 19 WATCH: *RuPaul's Drag Race* (episode: "Jocks in Frocks")

###THANKSGIVING BREAK###

Acts of Violence

M Nov. 30 SCREENING: *The Act of Killing*

T Dec. 1 Simpson, "*The Act of Killing* and the Dilemmas of History"**
Paramaditha, "Tracing Frictions in *The Act of Killing*"**

Th Dec. 3 Walker, "Referred Pain: *The Act of Killing* and the Production of a
Crime Scene"**
Nichols, "Irony, Cruelty, Evil (and a Wink) in *The Act of Killing*"**
King, "Born Free? Repetition and Fantasy in *The Act of Killing*"**
Crichlow, "It's All About Finding the Right Excuse in Joshua
Oppenheimer's *The Act of Killing*"**

Acts of Protest and Mourning

T Dec. 8 WATCH: *Twilight: Los Angeles*

Th Dec. 10 Phelan, "Shattered Skulls: Rodney King and Holbein's *The
Ambassadors*"**

T Dec. 15 Conclusion

Fr Dec. 18 **Final Essay due**