

Professor Grobe
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Office hours: W 2-4pm
(and by appointment)
in Johnson Chapel #105

ENGL 230: INTRODUCTION TO PERFORMANCE THEORY

TUESDAYS & THURSDAYS, 11:30-12:50

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The term “performance” can refer to any of the stylized doings that define our world. This, of course, includes the traditional performing arts, but it also encompasses religious rituals, public ceremonies, political protests, sports events, social media use, etc. “Performance” can even describe the regimented behaviors that structure our everyday lives, whether we’re aware of them or not.

In this course, you will explore this full range of performance through readings, screenings, and attendance at live performances. We will be guided in our approach by critical and theoretical texts in the interdisciplinary field of “performance studies.” Guiding questions will include: How is a performance different from a text? How do we enact a shared reality? How have the major forces shaping our world (e.g., race, gender, sexuality, class, ethnicity, nationality) been created and sustained through acts of performance?

REQUIRED TEXTS *(available at Amherst Books)*

Richard Schechner, *Performance Studies: An Introduction*, 3rd ed. (Routledge, 2013)
Diana Taylor, *Performance* (Duke UP, 2016).

All texts labeled **(cp)** appear in the course packet *(available in Johnson Chapel #001)*
All materials labeled **(Moodle)** will appear on the course’s Moodle site

COURSE FORMAT & REQUIREMENTS

What will happen in class?

A typical class session will combine discussion (of the readings, viewings, etc.) with mini-lectures on key terms, concepts, or contexts.

Attendance

After add/drop period has ended, you are allowed only two excused absences from class—no notification required and no questions asked. An absence is excused as long as you submit (within a week of the missed class) a 300-500-word reflection on the readings/viewings we considered that day.

How will my grade be calculated?

10%	Participation
50%	Five short essays
20%	One video-essay
20%	Take-home final exam

Participation

There are many ways to participate in class. The most obvious one is to **speak up during discussion**: voicing your opinion or analysis, replying to the comments of others, connecting our discussion to ideas that came up earlier in the semester, or raising new examples that either corroborate or challenge what's being said.

Equally important, though, is to **ask questions**. This can happen during mini-lectures (asking me for clarification, further examples, etc.), and it can happen during discussion (e.g., asking a particular classmate to expand on a comment, asking the class to consider another aspect of our topic, etc.) It can even happen by e-mail or in office hours. But it will have to happen, one way or another. If you know this will be difficult for you, come talk to me about it.

Essays

The due dates for these five, short essays are noted on the schedule below. Each one is marked with the following symbol: ⇒. Prompts for each essay will be available on Moodle, and you will submit them via that site.

Video-essay

In class, you will learn how to combine image, video, sound, and text into a video-essay. For your final project, you will use these skills to explore the nature and significance of a particular performance practice, which you will choose in consultation with me.

Take-home Exam

At the start of finals period, you will receive instructions for a short take-home exam. This exam, which will invite both critical and creative responses, is meant to help you synthesize and display the knowledge you gained throughout this course.

SCHEDULE

THE WORLD AS THEATER

- Tu. Jan. 24 Introduction
Th. Jan. 26 Lakoff & Johnson, excerpts from *Metaphors We Live By* (cp)
Shakespearean and classical examples of the *theatrum mundi* metaphor (cp)
Plato's Allegory of the Cave (from *The Republic*) (cp)

M. Jan. 30 Public conversation with Prof. Brian Herrera on the history of casting

- Tu. Jan. 31 Herrera, "The Best Actor for the Role, or the Mythos of Casting..." (cp)
[Class visit by Prof. Herrera]
Th. Feb. 2 Calderón, *The Great Theater of the World* (cp)
Féral, excerpt from "Theatricality: The Specificity of Theatrical Language" (cp)

WHAT IS PERFORMANCE?

- Tu. Feb. 7 Taylor, Chapters 1-3
Th. Feb. 9 Schechner, Chapters 2 & 7

Tu. Feb. 14 Taylor, *Performance*, Chapter 4
Bell, "Performance Studies in an Age of Terror" (cp)
Th. Feb. 16 ACTIVITY: What do you practice?

⇒ **Su. Feb. 19 Personal essay (800-1000 words) due at 8pm**

WHAT IS PERFORMATIVITY?

- Tu. Feb. 21 Austin, excerpts from *How to Do Things with Words* (cp)
Taylor, Ch. 5
Th. Feb. 23 Butler, excerpt from "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution" (cp)
Sedgwick & Parker, Introduction to *Performativity and Performance* (cp)

Tu. Feb. 28 Koestenbaum, "The Codes of Diva Conduct" (cp)
Excerpts from various etiquette manuals (Moodle)
Th. Mar. 2 WATCH: *Paris Is Burning* (Moodle)
WATCH: one episode of *RuPaul's Drag Race* (Moodle)

M. Mar. 6 Public lecture by madison moore, author of *The Theory of the Fabulous Class*

- Tu. Mar. 7 Moore, "Tina Theory: Notes on Fierceness" (cp)
[Class visit by Dr. moore]
Th. Mar. 9 ACTIVITY: Keywords

⇒ **Fr. Mar. 10 Keyword entry (500 words + images) due at 8pm**

******SPRING BREAK******

PLAYING FOR REAL

- Tu. Mar. 21 Schechner, Chapter 3
Abramović, *Spirit Cooking* (video & print) (**Moodle**)
Various videos/articles about Abramović and “Pizzagate” (**Moodle**)

Th. Mar. 23 ACTIVITY: Ritual at Amherst College

⇒ **Su. Mar. 26 Ritual essay (~500 words) due at 8pm**

- Tu. Mar. 28 Schechner, Chapter 4
Ono, excerpts from *Grapefruit* (**cp**)
Roach, “Deep Play, Dark Play” (**cp**)

Th. Mar. 30 WATCH: *The Act of Killing* (**Moodle**)

⇒ **Su. Apr. 2 Play essay (~500 words) due at 8pm**

- Tu. Apr. 4 Taylor, Chapters 6 & 7
Foster, “Choreographies of Protest” (**cp**)
Th. Apr. 6 deLoria, excerpts from *Playing Indian* (**cp**)
WATCH: *The Couple in the Cage* (**Moodle**)

⇒ **Su. Apr. 9 Protest essay (~500 words) due at 8pm**

RE-ENACTMENTS AND SURROGATIONS

- Tu. Apr. 11 Roach, excerpt from *Cities of the Dead* (**cp**)
Schneider, excerpt from *Performing Remains* (**cp**)

Th. Apr. 13 ACTIVITY: Video-essay workshop

- Tu. Apr. 18 Richards, “What Is to Be Remembered?” (**cp**)
Richards, “Who Is this Ancestor?” (**cp**)

Th. Apr. 20 Hartigan, “Embarrassing Time, Performing Disunity: Rugby, the Haka, and Aotearoa-New Zealand in the United Kingdom” (**cp**)

[Class visit by Prof. Hartigan]

- Tu. Apr. 25 Phelan, “Shattered Skulls” (**cp**)
WATCH: *Twilight: Los Angeles* (**Moodle**)
WATCH: assorted Kendrick Lamar videos (**Moodle**)

Th. Apr. 27 Conclusion

⇒ **W. May 3 Video-essay due**

Su. May 7 Take-Home Exam distributed

Fr. May 12 Take-Home Exam due