

## CMST 2040: Performance of Literature

*Key wording, assignments, and general notions in this syllabus have been modeled after or borrowed from Lindsay Michalik, Danielle McGeough, and Raquel Polanco.*

Coates Hall 137 HopKins Black Box Theatre. MWF 9:30-10:20am.

Instructor:	Bonny McDonald	Office:	311 Coates
Email:	bmcdo21@lsu.edu	Office Hours:	T/TH 10:30-11:30pm
Mailbox:	136 Coates Hall	Phone:	578-6682

### REQUIRED TEXTS

Collins, Billy, ed. Poetry 180: A Turning Back to Poetry. New York: Random House, 2003.

Pelias, Ronald J. and Tracy Stephenson Shaffer. Performance Studies: The Interpretation of Aesthetic Texts (2nd Edition). Iowa: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company, 2007.

Shapard, Robert and James Thomas. New Sudden Fiction: Short-short stories from America and Beyond. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2007.

Stern, Jerome, ed. Microfiction: An Anthology of Really Short Stories. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1996.

Assignment sheets will be available on Moodle.

### COURSE DESCRIPTION/GOALS

Welcome! CMST 2040 is a *General Education Humanities Course* designed to familiarize students with the study of literature through performance. Positioning literature an important expression of the human experience, the course asks students to encounter literature with their own bodies and voices—to embody texts in live performance. In so doing, we hope to:

- Embody imaginative and intellectual responses to imaginary worlds, literary texts, and language.
- Stimulate an awareness of the dramatic potential of all literature.
- Deepen appreciation of and empathy toward self and other as they interact via performance and text.
- Activate a flexible, responsive, and expressive voice and body in the performance of literature.
- Consider the body as key site of culture, politics, and transformation.
- Sharpen written and oral communication skills.

### COURSE REQUIREMENTS, EXPECTATIONS & POLICIES

Social Contract: As members of a learning community, instructors and students agree to a tacit social contract. That contract ensures that all participants will attend every class meeting, engage one another in an informed, spirited, and respectful manner, and complete all assigned responsibilities on time. Since I will ask you to take personal and academic risks in this class, you and others benefit by preparing for every class, by offering honest and kind feedback, and by entering the black box space with full energy and attention.

Active Participation: Active participation includes contributing to class discussions, offering constructive suggestions or asking thoughtful questions after performances and during workshops, participating fully in group activities and in-class assignments, and bringing requested/appropriate course materials each day, and making sure to pick up after yourself in the black box before leaving class. Each class day, I will make a notation regarding your participation. You will also track and evaluate your own participation. Print out a participation sheet on Moodle. Make sure to bring this sheet to class every class day, as I will pick it up at random intervals, and failing to have it will result in -5 points from your participation grade. At the end of the

semester, I will square my own assessment with yours. Participation points may not be made up outside of class.

Attendance Policy: You are expected to attend all classes. Missing experiential or other information may negatively effect your participation on days following an absence. You will not receive participation points for days you are not present. Additionally, absences in excess of 3 days will result in a 30% deduction from your participation grade. Excessive tardiness counts as a ½ absence. The only absences formally excused are university-sponsored events, with full documentation, preferably before the date of the absence. If you are absent, it is your responsibility to keep up with the assignments in the course.

## MAJOR PERFORMANCES

- Your three major performances must be completely memorized.
- It is imperative (due to the time constraints of the semester) that **performances are given on the days they are scheduled**. Please let me know well in advance of university-related events or possible conflicts.
- Failure to perform on an assigned day will result in the reduction of one letter grade for each class period missed until the performance is completed.
- If you are absent or tardy on a performance day, and you miss your assigned slot, you will not automatically be granted a make-up slot. Make-ups will be scheduled on a case-by-case basis, and absences must be accompanied by a note stating the date and reason for your absence (i.e. verifiable emergencies & university excused absences).
- Please make every effort to be on time to class on all performance and workshop days. If you are late to class on a performance day, **please wait in the hallway and listen for applause before entering the room so that you do not disrupt someone else's performance**.
- A large part of performance is having an audience to perform for and learning how to be an engaged audience member. If you miss *any* performance day without a university excused absence (even if you are not scheduled to perform that day), your own performance grade will be penalized by 10%.

## PERFORMANCE WORKSHOPS

- Workshops are a mandatory part of this class and a necessary part of building a successful final performance. Come to each workshop with an open mind and a willingness to experiment with the input of your peers. During workshops, you will develop and refine your ideas about staging and performing the material you have chosen.
- You should be prepared to actively participate in discussing your fellow classmates' workshop performances by offering thoughts or suggestions.
- If you are not fully memorized or have not made the required performance choices on the day of your workshop, you will only be able to earn up to 50% of the possible points for that session.

## WRITTEN WORK

- General: Part of understanding performance is learning how to articulate your response to performance. You will be expected to produce two written responses to HBB performances, a five-page paper analyzing your prose selection, and one page for each performance explaining your text and performance choices. For this reason, the quality of your writing matters and is part of the content of this course. I will evaluate your writing in terms of both content and style. Style includes components such as paper organization, sentence structure, accurate word choice, typographical mistakes, spelling, and basic grammar errors. Please refer to Purdue OWL online for formatting rules. I prefer MLA style, but let me know if you are well-versed in a different style, and I will accommodate it. I always encourage you to take your paper to Studio 151 or

other campus writing services for free tutoring or advice about how to improve your writing. Detailed assignment sheets will be posted on Moodle in advance of due dates for written work.

- **HBB Responses:** The Black Box theatre serves not only as a classroom space, but also as an experimental laboratory theatre space where faculty and graduate students produce and direct full-length performance productions and guest artists perform and/or host workshops. For students of performance, these productions provide an invaluable opportunity to broaden our understanding of performance as an object of analysis and a method for approaching a wide variety of cultural texts. Thus, you are required to attend two black box productions over the course of the semester and turn in a 1 to 2 page written response. Responses are due in class on the Wednesday following the performance (unless otherwise noted) and guidelines for these responses will be posted to Moodle. Please look at the HBB schedule carefully and plan accordingly. I also highly suggest that you call the **HBB (225-578-4172)** to reserve tickets before the performance you plan to attend, as seating is generally limited. There are no make-up options for these responses.
- **Talking Points:** In lieu of quizzes, I will ask you to prepare 10 “talking points” in response to our class texts. These can be hand-written or typed, in paragraph or bullet format, and designed to facilitate class discussion of readings. In each, you should: 1) Pick something from the readings that interests you, whether you agree or disagree, and explain why. 2) Offer an example from your own life or popular culture that supports or contradicts an aspect of the reading. 3) Ask a question of your peers, the book, or me. You can assume these are due on days you have been assigned readings for class. Sometimes, the reading prep will take the form of a mini-assignment, which I will specify in advance.

### **ADDITIONAL COURSE POLICIES**

**Materials:** You will need a notebook of some kind for jotting down ideas, feedback, and taking notes in class. You might want something with a hard back or a clipboard because we will often work on the floor in the HBB.

**Email:** I often use email to maintain communication with the class, post workshop and performance dates, and/or send updated class schedules. Please check your email regularly for announcements.

**Cellphones and Computers:** All cellphones should be turned OFF and put away upon entering the Black Box. If your phone makes any sort of noise whatsoever during a performance or workshop, be it a ring or a vibration, you will be docked 10% of your performance or workshop grade. Same goes for checking email, Facebook, surfing the web, etc.

**Know thine honor code:** If you are caught plagiarizing a paper, or cheating on a quiz or exam, it is ground for failing the assignment, and possibly the course. Just don't do it. If you're not sure how to properly cite something, look it up in a style manual or ask a librarian. They are experts and extremely helpful. Consult your student handbook for further guidelines about academic misconduct.

**The Americans with Disabilities Act and the Rehabilitations 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 for Disability Affairs (112 Johnston Hall) so that such accommodations may be arranged. After you receive the accommodation letters, please make an appointment to meet with me to discuss the provisions of those accommodations.

### **GRADES**

If you wish to discuss your grade on a particular assignment or in the course overall:

- **Arrange a time to meet with me during office hours.** Grades will not be discussed via email or telephone (this is a university-wide policy, to protect your privacy). Please do not approach me about grades right before or after class.
- A grade posted to Moodle for two weeks or more is absolutely final.
- Feel free to make an appointment to discuss your work *before the assignment is due*. I am more than happy to help you create your best work!

<b>Assignment</b>	<b>Points possible</b>
Performances:	
Poetry Performance	75
Prose Performance	100
Final Compiled Performance (including script)	150
Tests:	
Midterm (Scantron-style)	100
Final (take home, with one essay in-class)	100
Written work:	
HopKins Black Box performance response 1	25
HopKins Black Box performance response 2	25
Five-Page Critique Paper	150
Participation:	
In-class Participation	100
Workshops (3 @ 25 pts)	75
Reading:	
Talking points and/or mini-assignments (10 @ 10 pts)	100
<b>Total Points Possible:</b>	<b>1000</b>

A=1000-900   B=899-800   C=799-700   D=699-600   F= 600-0

“A” means you have excelled in your performance or written work, expending special time and energy to make something you well know is impressive. “A” work makes me say “Wow!”

“B” means you have completed all assignments **and** have gone the extra step beyond. A “B” indicates that you have thoroughly prepared, followed the assignment requirements, and made the audience/reader interested in your work.

“C” means you have successfully accomplished the assignments and are able to construct and deliver a solid performance or written assignment, but have not put in the kind of extra time and energy which distinguishes your work from the average effort.

“D” and “F” indicate you have not met the basic criteria of assignments and/or you have turned in or presented deficient work.

## TENTATIVE CLASS SCHEDULE

This schedule is subject to change as we adapt to each other; make sure to check your e-mail regularly and get notes from a friend if you miss class so you will be aware of any changes.

Date	Events/Topics	Work/Reading due by start of class
Wed 1/14	Performance Exercises & General Principles	
Fri 1/16	Performance Exercises & General Principles	Read: Syllabus and course schedule
Mon 1/19	MLK day	NO CLASS
Wed 1/21	Intro to Performance; Definition of Performance Studies	Read: Pelias & Shaffer: Ch. 1 & 2 <b>Due: talking points</b>
Fri 1/23	History of Performance Studies	Read: Pelias & Shaffer Ch. 3 <b>Due: talking points</b> <b>BRING TEXTBOOK TO CLASS</b>
Mon 1/26	Body and Voice; Exploring Personae	Read: P & S Ch. 6 Watch: "Amy Cuddy: your body language shapes who you are" on Youtube. <b>Due: talking points</b>
Wed 1/28	Body and Voice; Performing Poetry	Read: "Ovuh Dyuh," J.K. Dowdy and "Rethinking Elocution" by D. Conquergood <b>Due: talking points</b>
Fri 1/30	Performing Poetry cont. & Memorization	<b>DUE: Poetry Selection ~ hard copy in class</b> Read P & S Ch. 8 <b>Due: talking points</b>
Mon 2/2	Poetry Workshops Group 1	<i>Attendance required for all groups</i>
Wed 2/4	Poetry Workshops Group 2	<i>Attendance required for all groups</i>
Fri 2/6	Poetry Workshops Group 3	<i>Attendance required for all groups</i>
Mon 2/9	Poetry Performances Day 1	
Wed 2/11	Poetry Performances Day 2	
Fri 2/13	(Remaining Poe Perfs?) Audience and Evaluation	Read P & S Ch. 10 & 12 <b>Due: talking points</b>
Mon 2/16	MARDI GRAS	NO CLASS through 2/18
Fri 2/20	The Dramatistic Approach	Read P & S Ch. 5 <b>DUE: Prose Selection</b> <b>Due: talking points</b>
Mon	Storytelling	P & S Ch. 4

2/23	/ Ethics of speaking-for	<b>Due: talking points</b>
Wed 2/25	In-class activities; Translating prose into performance	<b>BRING <i>Microfiction</i> TO CLASS</b>
Fri 2/27	<b>MIDTERM EXAM</b>	<b>BRING Scantron</b>
Mon 3/2	Empathy	P & S Ch. 7 <b>Due: talking points</b> <b>BRING PROSE SELECTION TO CLASS</b>
Wed 3/4	Connecting with audience; first line performances	Watch "Patsy Rodenburg: The Second Circle" on Youtube <b>Due: talking points</b> <b>BRING PROSE SELECTION TO CLASS</b>
Fri 3/6	Cutting Prose & Critique Paper Assignment, Writing tips	<b>Read:</b> Critique Paper Assignment, P & S Appendix B <b>Review:</b> P & S Ch. 5 Dramatistic Approach
Mon 3/9	Prose Workshop Group 1	<i>Attendance optional for other groups</i>
Wed 3/11	Prose Workshop Group 2	<i>Attendance optional for other groups</i>
Fri 3/13	Prose Workshop Group 3	<i>Attendance optional for other groups</i>
Mon 3/16	Prose Performances Day 1	<b>DUE: Final prose scripts</b>
Wed 3/18	Prose Performances Day 2	<b>DUE: Final prose scripts</b>
Fri 3/20	Prose Performances Day 3	<b>DUE: Final prose scripts</b>
Mon 3/23	Prose Performances Day 4 / Critique paper concerns	<b>DUE: Final prose scripts</b>
Wed 3/25	Compiled Scripts/ Performance Art	
Fri 3/27	<b>Performance Art, cont.</b>	
Mon 3/30	<b>Performance Art, cont.</b>	
Wed 4/1	Performance Art, cont.	<b>DUE: Five-Page Critique Paper</b>
Fri 4/3	SPRING BREAK	NO CLASS through 4/10
Mon 4/13	Compiled Performance General Workshop	<b>DUE: Theme for Compiled Performance</b>
Wed 4/15	Comp. Workshops Day 1	<i>Attendance optional for groups 3 and 4</i> <b>BRING DRAFT</b>
Fri	Comp. Workshops Day 2	<i>Attendance optional for groups 3 and 4</i>

4/17		BRING DRAFT
Mon 4/20	Comp. Workshops Day 3	<i>Attendance optional for groups 1 and 2</i> BRING DRAFT
Wed 4/22	Comp. Workshops Day 4	<i>Attendance optional for groups 1 and 2</i> BRING DRAFT
Fri 4/24	NO CLASS	NO CLASS
Mon 4/27	Final Performances Day 1	<b>DUE: Final Compiled Scripts</b>
Wed 4/29	Final Performances Day 2	<b>DUE: Final Compiled Scripts</b>
Fri 5/1	Final Performances Day 3 (last day of class)	<b>DUE: Final Compiled Scripts</b>
Mon 5/4	Final Performances Day 4 / Wrap up	10am-12pm