

Department of Communication Studies

CMST 3040: PERFORMANCE COMPOSITION* Spring 2015, MWF, 12:30-1:20, 137 Coates Hall

**Course syllabus borrowed directly from Dr. Ruth Laurion Bowman*

INSTRUCTOR: Bonny McDonald
OFFICE: 311 Coates Hall; EMAIL: bmcdo21@lsu.edu
OFFICE HOURS: T/TH 9:30-11:30
PHONE: 578-6682

COURSE DESCRIPTION: CMST 3040 is an INTERMEDIATE-level performance studies course. It is designed to build on the knowledge of analyzing and performing literature you acquired in CMST 2040 and to prepare you for more advanced coursework in performance studies and related areas. The course provides you with opportunities to develop skills in reading, writing, analyzing, and performing a broad range of texts and to become better acquainted with how texts and performances are composed.

PREREQUISITE: CMST 2040. In my design of the course, I assume that students have some knowledge of analyzing literary texts and some experience with solo performance from having taken CMST 2040 or equivalent courses. I also assume that, because this is not a required course for anyone, you are taking it because you have some interest in reading, writing, and performance. If you have not taken 2040 and have no interest in these subjects, then you should not take the course.

COURSE TEXT: Bowman and Bowman, "Handbook for Performance Composition."
The text will be made available to you via direct email or Moodle.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:	Participation	10%	
	6 Creative writing exercises	20%	
	Mini Performances (3)	30%	
	Mystory Performance	20%	
	2 Exams	20%	(10% each)

DISCUSSION OF THE COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Participation (10%)¹

Your enrollment in any class, but especially one that relies heavily on group discussion, in-class exercises, and student performances (as does this course) entails certain social responsibilities. Attendance, punctuality, and preparedness are obvious social responsibilities in a small class

¹ *The Americans with Disabilities Act and the 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 for Disability Services (112 Johnson Hall) so that such accommodations may be arranged. After you receive your accommodation letters, please meet with me to discuss the provisions of those accommodations as soon as possible.

such as this. In fact, should you fail to attend class (and on time) on the days your classmates perform you will not earn an “A” on this course requirement. You also will not earn an “A” should you send or receive phone calls, text messages, email, etc. or go online while class is in session. Participation includes informed contributions to in-class discussions, exercises, and workshop activities, and interpersonal sensitivity to others in the class.

Obviously, you cannot begin to meet these responsibilities unless you come to class. But merely showing up for class is not enough; the success of the course depends heavily on your willingness to “keep up” with the work we do here by preparing for and participating in the day-to-day assignments, discussions, and exercises. You also are expected to contribute to the general upkeep of the Black Box by picking-up after yourself on a daily basis.

If you do not like to attend class, do not like to have regular in-class exercises given to you, or do not like to have “participation” required of you, then you have two options: (a) Drop the class, or (b) Be prepared to receive a lower grade for the course than your work on the other assignments might warrant.

While grading “participation” is somewhat subjective, the various exercises and homework problems I’ll give you will be clear and straightforward enough that you should have a good idea of what is expected of you each day. If you do miss class, for whatever reason, it is your responsibility to keep up with the class by doing any work that was assigned during your absence and being prepared when you do return to class.

Creative Writing Exercises (20%)

One of the main goals of this course is to help you develop mastery of different language and thinking skills through the use of models. These models will include various examples of literary and other texts, which we’ll read not only to understand what they might be saying, but to figure out how they are made or composed. The creative writing exercises will be designed to enhance your understanding of texts and textual processes by imitating or applying whatever principles of composition we discover in the models to original compositions of your own.

In many cases, I will ask you to try your hand at the exercises in preparation for discussion and application in class. The materials you compose will also serve as the basis for your graded performances. In other words, there is a little more at stake here than “just” reading and writing creatively.

On the assignment handouts, I will detail what you need to do to earn a satisfactory “C” grade as well as grades higher and lower than a “C.” You may opt to do “satisfactory” work or pursue a higher grade by revising the work you’ve done according to criteria I specify. Note: this may differ slightly from what you’ll find in the handbook: we will discuss the details in class.

Mini Performances and Mystery

Mini Performance assignments help you to wrap your head around some of the performance concepts and methods which will build toward your final performances. I’ll expect each mini performance performance to run approximately 5 minutes (per person) and be well memorized

and rehearsed. All your work for this course is designed to contribute toward the completion of a substantive solo performance to be given at the end of the semester. The final project will ask you to integrate the various forms, styles, genres, and models of composition that we study during the semester into a hybrid work called a “mystory.” Because the course as a whole is designed to help you put together your performance of the mystory in stages or increments, I won’t burden you here with details about the assignment or how to do it. This performance should be approximately 10-12 minutes in length.

Specifics regarding all the performance assignments are detailed in the course “Handbook.”

Exams (2 @ 10% each)

The first (midterm) exam will consist of objective questions (e.g., True/False, Multiple-Choice, Matching, definition/identification) designed to quiz you on the various terms, concepts, and principles emphasized in the first half of the course. The second exam will be a take-home exam consisting of short essay questions designed to assess your understanding of materials and concepts introduced and practiced in the course as a whole. In grading the exams, I look for accurate answers on the midterm exam and accurate, specific, insightful, and concise answers on the final exam. An accurate answer offers the correct information. A specific answer is well supported with pertinent examples. An insightful answer shows some careful thought on the writer’s part. A concise answer accomplishes the above in an efficient, well-organized manner.

GRADING

As will be given for work that indicates achievement that is outstanding relative to the level necessary to meet course requirements. Bs will be given for work that indicates achievement that is significantly above the level necessary to meet course requirements. Cs will be given for work that meets the course requirements in every way. Ds will be given for work that is worthy of credit even though it fails to meet the requirements of the course. Fs will be given for work that fails to meet the basic parameters of the course.