

CMST 3041: *PERFORMANCE IN EVERYDAY LIFE*

Syllabus language borrowed in large part from Dr. Rachel Hall, Syracuse University

Fall 2016 T/TH 10:30am-11:50pm 228 Coates

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COURSE DESCRIPTION: The view of life as theater is an ancient and enduring metaphor for human reality. In recent years, there has been a resurgence of interest in the perspective of life as theater and in performance-centered approaches to communication, daily life and culture.

This course will explore the relations between performance and everyday life in a variety of social, cultural, and historical contexts. We will examine the performative elements in "ordinary" speech and behavior, in aspects of selfhood, identity, and personality, and in a variety of communication contexts. We will also look at such everyday performance genres as conversations and personal narratives, folklore and oral traditions, festivals and celebrations, ceremonies and rituals, media events and politics. Throughout the course, we will engage performance as a method of inquiry, experimenting with performance exercises and staging live performances to better understand the theoretical material we will consider.

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/performance quite different from our own; and
3. To explore the use of performance as both a metaphor and a method of understanding the communication and behavior of others.

RECOMMENDED PREREQUISITE: CMST 2040 Introduction to Performing Literature.

REQUIRED TEXTS: Elizabeth Bell, *Theories of Performance*.

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 will be responsible for two short analytical response papers, two group performances, and two exams. For the purpose of calculating final grades, the course requirements shall bear the following weights:

Attendance and in-class activities		100 +
1 analytical paper		100 +
1 midterm exam		100 +
1 final exam		100 +
2 group performances	2 @ 100	200 =
Total possible points		600

A = 600-540 B= 599-480 C= 479-420 D=419-360 F= 359-0

A+ = 100-98% / A = 97-93 / A- = 92-90% → The same pattern will apply for B, C, and D

Attendance and In-class activities (100 points): Performance theory (the content of this course) is predicated on the notion that the presence of the physical body “matters” and you will frequently be asked to engage your body as a tool of intellectual inquiry. Thus, if you know in advance you cannot attend most class meetings and/or cannot show up on performance dates, *you should drop this class.*

Both the University and the Department expect you to attend class every day. Because you will be tested on material presented in class lectures, discussions, and performances, and because much of that material will not be found in the textbook, it would be to your advantage to attend class. If you miss class, for whatever reason, you are still responsible for any material covered or assignments given during your absence, and you will still be held to the stipulations regarding make-up work and due dates for the various assignments and exams that are detailed below.

Two no-questions-asked absences will be allowed. After that, students will lose 5 points for not being in attendance on days that we have in-class activities, which are most class days. Students will also lose 5 points for missing peer performances—a key component in working through the material at hand for each unit. Exceptions will be made for university excused absences with full documentation.

Analytical Paper (100 pts): Descriptive and analytical account of the theatrical

underpinnings of a selected social or cultural performance. Potential topics are virtually limitless. Paper should be based on your own participant-observations of and reflections on the performance in question, and the analysis should be grounded in the 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 given during the semester, 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 nearer to the end. All papers should be 5 pp. in length (typed, double-space, 12 pt. font, 1 inch margins), and we will expect them to be well-organized, written clearly, concisely, and cogently, and 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.

Midterm and Final Exams (2 @ 100 pts each): There will be two exams given at the end of the semester. The exam will be composed of objective questions (T/F, multiple choice, matching, fill-in-the-blank, short answer/identification). You will need to bring a small Scantron form with you to class on the exam day. The exam will be cumulative, focusing on major concepts from the text, lecture, and student forums, videos, and performances. No "make-up" exams will be given. While the focus will be major concepts, the nature of such a test is detail-oriented, so be sure to thoroughly familiarize yourself with the material before each exam.

Group performance projects (2 @ 100 pts each) The class will divide into small groups of 4-6 students and be assigned dates for performance projects. Each group will select two performances projects to work on together outside of class, and then present them to us on the assigned dates. Live performance projects are designed to complement the lecture and reading material to give you some experiential knowledge of abstract terms and concepts, and to illustrate issues and problems we'll be covering. By way of analogy, you can think of these projects as the performance studies equivalent of a "lab experiment" in one of the "hard" sciences, where you are asked to perform certain tasks so that you can see and experience for yourself some of the things you read about or hear about in the course. 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 you: "the show must go on," as they say—and it must go on at the appointed date, regardless of whether all participants are in attendance.** If a group member has a university-excused event during the semester, the group should schedule their performances around that date and make a note of it in their request.

A note on grading performance work: Performance 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."

DISABILITIES: The Americans with Disabilities Act and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 states: "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 can be arranged. After you receive the accommodation letters, please meet with me 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