

# CMST 2040: Performance of Literature

Coates Hall 137

M/W/F 8:30-9:20 am & 9:30-10:20 am

**Instructor:** Travis L Williams

**Office:** Coates 322

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12:30pm or by appointment

**Office Hours:** M/W 10:30 am-

*“For to postpone until ‘later’ consideration of the humanly essential in the name of being ‘realistic’ is to practice the kind of deadly practicality which now stands our civilization in peril of annihilation.” –Theodore Roszak*

Mailbox: 136 Coates Hall (Department of Communication Studies main office)

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## 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.

## Course Goals:

CMST 2040 is an introductory level communication course designed to familiarize students with the study of literature through performance. This class is based in the assumption that performance is a method of understanding and enjoying literature as an expression of profound human experience. We will explore different methods of performing texts as well as learning to write about literary texts, performances and the act of performing.

*As a General Education Humanities Course, CMST 2040 will teach students an awareness of, and the ability to formulate, rational interpretations of human experience AND enrich their competency in written and oral communication.*

***Through the semester we hope to:***

- Ignite, engage and 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 self and other as they interact in engaging human experience.
- Activate a flexible, effective, and expressive voice in the performance of literature.
- Release a responsive and expressive body in the performance of literature.
- Sharpen basic communication skills.

### **Course Requirements and Expectations:**

- **Attendance:** 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 and spirited manner, and complete all assigned responsibilities on time. ***In other words, when you signed up for this course, attendance and participation became two of your assigned responsibilities.*** This is particularly true in a class dedicated to active performance, wherein the role of audience-member is an important element. You are allowed 3 no-questions-asked excused absences. After that I will deduct 20 pts. from your final grade in the course. (e.g. you lose 20 pts. if you are absent 4 times, 40pts. for 5, ect.). This includes doctor's appointments, sickness, funerals, and flat tires. The only absences excused from this policy are university-sponsored events etc.

**Workshops:** Before you present your final performance for each unit you will workshop your performance. This is essentially a practice run that allows you to get feedback from myself and your classmates before the final performance. The more prepared you are for your workshop, the more substantive the feedback you will receive. My expectation for workshops is that you have your performance **fully memorized** and have made at least two performance choices. Further, part of your workshop grade comes from your attendance, participation and thoughtful contribution to your classmate's work.

- **Performances:** The focus of this class is well established: live performance. ***You must deliver all three assigned performances in order to receive a passing grade in the course.*** It is imperative, due to the time constraints of each semester, for performances to be given on the days that they are assigned. The penalties for missing a performance are severe as a result: 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. Your earliest chance to complete the

performance requirement is after everyone else has fulfilled his/her spot, or if another becomes available. If you miss class, come prepared to perform every class period until the performance requirement is fulfilled. **Performances must be memorized.**

- **Quizzes and Exams:** Over the course of the semester you will take seven quizzes and two major exams (a midterm and a final). The dates and content of each quiz are listed on the tentative course schedule. ***I do not offer make-up quizzes*** should you be absent on the day of a scheduled quiz or exam. However, I do drop your lowest quiz grade. If you know you are going to miss class for a university excused absence it is your responsibility to schedule to take the quiz early.
- **HopKins Black Box Shows:** The Hopkins Black Box theatre serves not only as a classroom space for students of performance studies but 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 their understanding of performance as object of analysis and an epistemological 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. Shows dates and times are listed on the departmental website.
- **Written Work:** Part of understanding performance is learning how to articulate your response to performance. In addition to your production response you will write a **5-page analysis** of your prose selection. **The quality of your writing matters and is part of the content of this course.** I will assess your writing in terms of both content and style. Style includes components such as paper organization, sentence structure, accurate word choice, typographical mistakes, passive voice, spelling, and basic grammar errors.
- **Cellphones and Computers:** ***I expect that all cell-phones will be entirely deactivated upon entering the Black Box.*** Vibrate is not an acceptable option. If you're caught texting at any point during class, you will be asked to leave. If your phone makes any sort of noise, whatsoever, be it a ring or a vibration, during a performance, you will be docked 50% of your performance grade. This policy extends to surfing the Internet. There are no excuses, save for a direct order from me to do so.
- **Accommodation:** 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 Affairs (112 Johnston Hall) so that such accommodations may be arranged. After you receive the accommodation letters, please meet with me to discuss the provisions of those accommodations.

## **Grading**

### Performances:

Poetry Performance	100
Prose Performance	100
Compiled Performance	100

### Tests:

Midterm	150
Final	150

### Written Work:

5 Page Dramatistic Analysis	150
Black Box Paper 1	50
Black Box Paper 2	50

### Participation:

Participation (class activities etc.)	50
Reading Check Quizzes	100

### **Total Points Available**

**1000**

**A+ = 1000-980 A = 979-930 A- = 920-900**

**B+ = 899-880 B = 879-830 B- = 829-800**

**C+ = 799-780 C = 779-730 C- = 729-700**

**D+ = 699-680 D = 679-630 D- = 629-600**

**F = 599-0**

Because of fairness on all sections, extra credit is not offered in this course. Also due to the plus/minus grading system there is no more rounding on grade computations. Your grades will be available on moodle at times for you.

A's are reserved for exceptional work. An A indicates the student performed well above and beyond the expectations in course.

B's are reserved for those who engaged with the assignments and performed above and beyond the minimum requirements of the assignment.

C's are average. This indicates you completed the minimum requirements of each assignment.

D's and F's are for those who do not complete the minimum requirements of the assignments.

**I confirm that I have read the syllabus for CMST 2040 (Fall 2015), and understand, and will abide by, the expectations and the course policies detailed therein:**

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Signature

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Date

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Print Name Clearly

Add email address and other pertinent information below: