

**CMST 4140:1 Analysis and Performance of Poetry (Performances of Death and Dying)
Spring 2014, TU/TR 1:30pm-3:00pm, 237 Coates Hall**

Life changes fast.
Life changes in the instant.
You sit down to dinner and life as you know it ends
—Joan Didion, *The Year of Magical Thinking*

David Terry, Ph.D
578.6838 (office)
229 Coates Hall
Office Hours: T&R 3:00-4:00 pm & by appointment
davidterry@lsu.edu

(Always e-mail me through Moodle first. Allow 24 hours for a response/ 48 hours on weekends)

Course Description: Advanced study of selected forms, styles, and genres of oral and written poetry through solo and group performance. "All the world is a stage" is more than a metaphor. Scholars across the humanities and social sciences argue convincingly from diverse perspectives that the embodied aesthetics of performance are a central means through which we create, maintain, and change the cultures in which we live. This course assumes that performances are not just entertaining distractions from "real" life; they are a primary way in which human beings develop shared social and cultural lives. Focusing in particular on poetic performances of death and dying, this course is designed to introduce you to performance as a *research method*, a way of learning about the world around you.

Guiding questions:How do cultures create meaning around death and dying?
What are some key differences between prose and poetry as literary forms and as modes of engagement?
What does it mean to think and act poetically around death and dying?
How can we make performances that are aesthetically engaging, ethically sound, and reflect the complexities life?

Objectives: After successful completion of this course you should be able to:

- LO1. Describe some key difference between prosaic and poetic aesthetics and conduct careful poetic readings of fiction and non-fiction
- LO2. Discuss the role of performance in the creation and maintenance of cultures around death and dying.
- LO3. Work with others on a research team investigating cultural questions through a performance lens.
- LO4. Produce original, engaging works of performed scholarship.

Prerequisite: CMST 2040: Introduction to Performing Literature

Required Reading:

Core Texts: (Everyone will need)

- Joan Dideon *The Year of Magical Thinking* ISBN: 9781400078431
 - Sherwin Nuland *How We Die* ISBN 9780679742449
 - Atul Gawande *Being Mortal* ISBN 9780805095159
-
- Foster *Communicating at the End of Life: Finding Magic in the Mundane* (FREE EBOOK: access is available from this direct link:<http://libezp.lib.lsu.edu/login?url=http://www.tandfebooks.com/action/showBook?doi=10.4324%2F9781410615459&>)
 - Several PDFs posted on Moodle throughout the semester

Additional Texts: Within the next few weeks you will receive a list of "optional" readings for the course. One person in your group will be responsible for a set of readings but not everyone in the class will read the same texts. Coordinate with members of your group to make sure that someone reads significant portions of all the list.

Assignments: You will receive a letter grade in each of the following categories that corresponds to the "Interpreting Grades" schema below. Grades will be posted on Moodle in a timely fashion so that you will be aware of your current standing.

Grading Scale

A + 98-100%	A 93-97.99%	A- 90-92.99%
B + 88-89.99%	B 83-87.99%	B- 80-82.99%
C + 78-79.99%	C 73-77.99%	C 70-72.99%
D + 68-69.99%	D 63-67.99%	D 60-62.99%
F 0%-59.99%		

Grading is a complex form of communication. Please review the following page to help you interpret your grades:

Grade	What it means	How to earn it
A	Excellent Exceeds expectations in multiple ways, is creative, intelligent, committed and prepared.	Make the performance/paper your own. An A performance is fully embodied, committed, full of energy, and it leaves the audience seeing the world just a little bit differently than they did before they encountered it. An A paper is thoughtful, well organized, and considers counter arguments. It builds an idea that leaves the reader seeing the world just a bit differently than she or he did before reading the paper.
B	Very Good Demonstrates work beyond the expected level of competence and preparation	Thoroughly cover everything the assignment asks you to do as competently as possible. Dot your i's, cross your t's. Make sure that you hit every element of the performance or paper assignment guideline and that you clearly demonstrate your understanding of the concepts and ability in the skills asked for. Make sure to point your reader/audience in the right direction every step of the way so that they have a good idea where you are taking them and how all the pieces fit together.
C	Satisfactory Fulfills requirements with average competence and preparation.	Address almost everything on the assignment guidelines. Make sure that you have a working knowledge of the concepts and/or skills involved. In performance: Be memorized. Rehearse enough that you can get through the piece without blanking. Hit every single thing on the assignment list in at least a minimal way. Make at least a couple of strong committed choices. In writing: basically cover the idea asked for. Proofread for errors.
D	Needs Improvement Falls short of several criteria and/or presents major deviation from assignment.	Make an attempt to fulfill the assignment, but do your work at the last minute when you don't have enough time to cover everything the assignment asks for. Don't proofread. Don't rehearse (or if you do, make sure to do it alone and not with someone to watch and give you feedback). In performance: Have a general idea of what you want to do, but make weak choices and don't commit to them. In Writing: Have a general idea of what you want to say, but make sure that your writing meanders and leaves the reader unsure what you are saying.
F	Failing/Unsatisfactory Does not meet the minimal requirements of the assignment.	Do nothing at all or do work that does not meet the minimum requirements for the assignment.

Assignment	Description	% of Final Grade
Online Discussions	<p>You will have weekly online discussions with one reading group throughout the semester. Your participation in these discussion will help you demonstrate what you have gained from completing weekly readings and help you to understand concepts that you find most challenging. They will also serve as "rough drafts" for your papers and performances and help you study for your exams. You will be graded primarily on the degree to which your posts show substantive engagement with the reading and your group members. You will not receive credit for late posts. First posts are usually due on Sunday evenings by 11:59pm with other posts allowed until right before class on Tuesday.</p> <p>For each reading:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Write down what you think are the 3 most important ideas from this weeks reading that have NOT already been posted by members of your group when you make your first post. 2) Post at least one of the following in response to the reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A question of clarification: something that you had a hard time understanding that you want some help with. Your question should indicate thoughtful engagement with the text. (e.g. "I can tell that the author is arguing that medicalization of the body is a bad thing but I'm not sure why. Would anything a body does in a hospital be medicalized? NOT "What is medicalization of the body?" —since the text presumably would offer some sort of answer to the latter question that you should at least try to grapple with) • An open ended question for discussion that you would like to talk over with your group (e.g. I felt like my body was medicalized when I was at the dentist today. the dentist kept talking about me instead of too me. Has anyone else ever had a similar experience?) 3) For weeks when there are mini performances post a short description of what you plan to do for your performance (it's ok to be somewhat cryptic if your performance depends on the element of surprise, but give at least some sense of what you will do for your mini performance) 4) Post meaningful replies to at least two of your groupmates' questions and/or mini performance descriptions <p>NOTE: You can and should do more than the above. These discussions are your opportunity to synthesize and understand the material better and to apply it to your lives. In addition to the points you earn for each discussion, part your participating grade for the semester will be based on how valuable your group members find your participation in these discussions.</p> <p>The last member of your group to post ALL of the above will be selected as the group's spokesperson to summarize your discussion for the next in class meeting.</p> <p>For the purposes of these discussion consider ALL reading lectures and performances completed since your last group discussion.</p> <p>Roughly one discussion/ week for 15 weeks.</p>	15%
Group Participation	<p>At the end of the semester I will ask each of you to confidentially grade your group members based on how much they have helped or impeded your collective learning during the semester. I will average the scores you receive from your group members with a score that I assign you based on my observation throughout the semester to calculate this portion of your grade.</p>	10%

Assignment	Description	% of Final Grade
In-Class Participation and Quizzes	Although you will not be graded on attendance per se, your regular engaged presence in class is obviously an important part of this grade. Clearly, there are lots of days you need to not only be here but be “hands on” to help this class reach its potential. If the online discussions do not convince me that you are keeping up with the reading, I will also assign pop quizzes to keep you honest. I expect you to come to class each week having read assigned reading, watched assigned films, and/or listened to assigned audio. You also earn points for active, committed participation in class discussions and activities and lose points for regularly engaging in behaviors that disrupt our ability to be a supportive, engaged learning community.	10%
Mini-Performances	Throughout the semester you will create and share short performances that illustrate, challenge, and extend ideas from the reading. You will be graded primarily on the energy and commitment with which you perform and the degree to which you have articulated your performance to course theory and learning objectives. Roughly one performance per week for 15 weeks. You will also be invited to re-perform all or part of some of these performances for the larger group. These revised performances will be graded on overall artistic quality as well as the guidelines above. Everyone must complete at least one revised performance for the semester but only your "best" revised performance will be calculated into your final grade, so it is in your best interest to revise as many as you can.	15%
Midterm Performance	Create a compiled performance that collages at least 3 different cultural responses to death and dying. Your performance must be poetic in form meaning there is nothing “extra” in the performance and everything has been edited for a specific, meaningful “how” as we will discuss in class. You may work in groups. Your performance should be between 2 and 3 minutes long per group member.	15%
Final Performance	Create a compiled performance that collages at least 4 different cultural responses to death and dying. Your performance must be poetic in form meaning there is nothing “extra” in the performance and everything has been edited for a specific, meaningful “how” as we will discuss in class. You may work in groups. Your performance should be between 3 and 4 minutes long per group member.	20%
Final Exam	You will have approximately one week to complete this take home essay exam in which you will demonstrate your mastery over the course learning objectives listed in this syllabus.	15%

EXPECTATIONS: The following is a list of what I expect from students in my courses. They are policies based on years of experience in the classroom. I believe that they reflect my commitment to creating an equitable, engaging, and safe learning environment for all students. If you have questions about any of these policies please see me within the first two weeks of the course so that we can discuss them in greater detail.

Cultivate a positive attitude: Embrace this class or drop it. I want us all to have fun and get as much as we can out of our time together. I try and make my courses engaging and avoid "busy work." For your own (and your classmates') mental health, make it the best experience you can or find another course that better meets your needs. If you choose to stay I expect that you will engage the class in a mature way, demonstrate commitment to the learning goals, contribute your thoughts and insights, ask questions, work hard, and challenge yourselves.

Participate with respect: This is a highly participatory course in which you will learn collectively (together and from each other) and kinesthetically (with your whole body, not just your mind). Performance requires that we take risks. Therefore, this course requires an ethical commitment to approach one another with care and respect so that we can collectively create a safe and supportive learning environment. Provide constructive comments for your fellow classmates. Respect diversity and each other. Challenging ideas is encouraged. Challenging people is not.

Be on time: Being late will hurt your ability to learn and is disrespectful to everyone else's time. If you are late for some reason beyond your control, make sure not to interrupt anything as you come in (especially not someone else's performance).

SCREEN FREE CLASSROOM: We will embrace technology outside of the classroom, but in order to facilitate our kinesthetic engagement with the course and each other this classroom will be 100% screen free. Other than a watch to keep us on time we will turn off all laptops, tablets, and phones during the entire class. This means you will need to print out any electronic readings or take suitable notes on them and bring your notes with you to class. If you have a documented disability or a personal emergency that requires exception to this rule, please advise me of the situation in writing BEFORE the class period begins.

Manage your time: Success in a three-unit college course is based on the expectation that students will spend, on average, three hours per week in class and **6 hours per week outside of class** reading, writing, preparing, studying, rehearsing, discussing and otherwise engaging with course materials. If you find that you are spending significantly more time than this on the course, please come and see me as early as possible to discuss better study strategies. If you choose to spend significantly less time than this on the course, please adjust your expectations for your final grade accordingly.

The Americans with Disabilities Act and 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 of Disability Affairs (112 Johnston Hall) so that such accommodations may be arranged. After you receive your accommodation letter, please meet with me at some point during the first two weeks of class to discuss the provisions of those accommodations. See LSU PS-26 for details.

Do not ask for special deals: In order to maintain a fair and equitable learning environment all students must take the same course. Any opportunities to earn points, or retake or make-up or take late quizzes and assignments must be available to all students in the class (see LSU PS-44). Adding extra credit and other accommodations thus adds significantly to my workload and limits my ability to teach the class as designed. Accordingly:

- Please do not ask for special accommodation for assignments (excluding those requested through the Office of Disability Affairs covered above).
- Please do not ask for extra personalized credit assignments. I will say no (no matter how much I like may like/dislike you personally).
- Please do not invoke "special" cases or circumstances. It is unfair to other students for me to take into account whether or not the grade you earn will prevent you from graduating, maintaining eligibility for sports or other activities, getting financial aide, becoming disqualified, etc.
- Please remember that your actions and decisions have consequences. This isn't personal. I don't grade your life choices, I grade you as I grade everyone else, as fairly as possible within the confines of the course.

Do not plagiarize: unless you put something in quotation marks and cite where you got it from I will assume that you are presenting all work you turn in for this course as your own original work. If you try to pass off work done by others as if it is your own work this is grounds for serious repercussions. I will report all suspected cases of

academic dishonesty to the office of Student Advocacy and Accountability. For more details see saa.lsu.edu/plagiarism/html.

Discuss grades respectfully: My primary motivation is to help you meet the course learning objectives. I understand that it can be very disappointing to not receive the grade that you desire or feel you deserve. I do not want such disappointment to inhibit your learning. I also know that I do, sometimes make mistakes. Accordingly, I am happy to discuss your grades with you. Please come to see me in person after you've had at least 24 hours to consider your response but within two weeks of the grade posting to discuss your grade on any assignment. If you believe you deserve a higher grade than you have received please bring a written statement with you that explains why you think your work on a given assignment is deserving of a higher grade based on the criteria above (e.g. if you believe you deserve an "A" be prepared to help me see how your paper "exceeds expectations in multiple ways").

Turn in your work when it is due: No late papers. No exceptions. Know when assignments are due and plan ahead. I will NOT extend the deadline for written work for any reason. All papers are turned in to Moodle in electronic form with deadlines announced significantly in advance. In the rare event that Moodle is down during the time frame that the paper is due I will accept a paper copy of the assignment (during the next class period after the due date ONLY) as a temporary stand in until you can upload the paper online. Fried hard drives and the like are no excuse. I expect that you have a redundant back up system for your files (e.g. save them to more than one of the following: Google docs, on your hard drive, in a dropbox, on a flash drive, e-mail it to yourself). I expect that you will plan ahead and have the bulk of your paper done the day before it is due and use those last few hours to proofread and copy edit. That way if something does arise at the last minute you will still have something to turn in for the bulk of the points. You are strongly encouraged to upload early drafts of your major assignments early and then replace them with a more complete versions later. If you turn in a partial assignment by the time the assignment is due I *may* give you (and all other students) the opportunity to revise the paper for additional points, but I will NOT extend the deadline for written work for any student for any reason.

Be present for in-class exams: As a general policy, I do not give make-up tests. If a make-up is necessary because of an extenuating circumstance, it will be in essay format.

Plan to perform on your assigned dates: There will be NO make-ups for any in class quizzes or performances worth less than 5% of your final grade. In rare circumstances (e.g. university excused absence, communicable illnesses, earthquakes, death in the immediate family), I may offer you the opportunity to reschedule a **major** performance or in class presentation if doing so does not disrupt the schedule for the rest of the class but my priority will always be to provide the best learning opportunity for the entire class, even if doing so inconveniences you personally. If such a situation arises please let me know as soon as possible so that I can make appropriate modifications to the schedule. (HINT: If you know you will be missing class your best bet in preserving both your own sanity and the integrity of the course schedule is to find another student who is presenting on a different day who is willing to switch with you well ahead of time.)

Remember it is your responsibility to be at all class sessions: PS-22 "Student Absence from Class" defines attendance as "the responsibility of the student" and an expectation that if unfulfilled requires the student to not only contact the professor beforehand (if applicable) but also to "[compensate] for what may have been missed." I expect you to come to class. Period. If you do have to miss a meeting because of a "valid reason for absence" (also defined in the policy) such as a communicable illness or death in the immediate family, please recognize that it is **YOUR responsibility** to obtain the day's notes and announcements both from Moodle and from communication with another student **before** making an appointment to meet with me. I am glad to help you clarify things that you might have trouble with, but I will not re-teach material I already covered in class until you have shown this good faith effort and communicated with me about your absence in an honest, upfront and conciliatory tone (i.e. make it clear you understand that, even when life events are out of your control, course work is your primary responsibility as a student). Any e-mail asking me "what did I miss in class?" that does not follow these guidelines and does not begin with a summary of what you learned from your conversation(s) with your classmate(s) and your consultation of Moodle will not receive a reply.

Beware the end of semester temporary empathy lapse The last few days of the session are stressful for us all. While I will always do my best to help you learn, please keep in mind that I am significantly more able to help you raise your grade early in the semester than later on. *A lack of planning on your part does not constitute an emergency on mine.*

Tentative Course Schedule (subject to change with fair notice)

DATE	What we will do	Reading to be completed BEFORE CLASS	Assignment(s) Due
Week 1			
AUGUST			
TU 25	Introduction to the course: syllabus, structure of course, expectations etc		Decide if this is the right course for you at this time
TR 27	Literalizing Euphemism	<p>http://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/19/opinion/oliver-sacks-on-learning-he-has-terminal-cancer.html?_r=0</p> <p>http://www.nytimes.com/2015/07/26/opinion/my-periodic-table.html</p>	<p>MINI PERFORMANCE:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Choose a metaphor, cliché or euphemism about death (e.g. kicking the bucket) 2) Find a way to literally act out the euphemism (e.g. bring in a small bucket and kick it) 3) Write a simple sentence that incorporates both your name and the euphemism into it (i.e. “I am David and someday I will kick the bucket, but not today”) 4) Create a VERY SHORT (1 minute MAXIMUM) performance that incorporates your literalization of the metaphor: (i.e. hold bucket. say “I am David and someday I will kick the bucket.” Put bucket down. Try to kick the bucket and whiff. Stand up straight and start to take a bow, but accidentally kick over the bucket)
Week 2			
SEPTEMBER			

TU 1	What is Poetry? poetry	www.poetryfoundation.org/harriet/2012/04/the-difference-between-poetry-and-prose/ How Does a Poem Mean pdf (moodle)	MINI PERFORMANCE: Come to class prepared to tell your group a short story about a personal experience you have had with death.
TR 3	What is a Poetic Performance?		Be prepared to share your group's edited 1-2 minutes poetic performance
Week 3			
TU 8	How Do Death and Dying affect communication?	Read Foster Chapter 1 Beginnings (22pages) AND any one other FULL chapter from the book you choose. PDF on Moodle	MINI PERFORMANCE Create a performance that incorporates no more than 2 sentences from the Foster reading. All the words you use must be from the text and in the order they are presented in the text but you may cut any words that you do not need to make your performance effective.
TR 10			Be prepared to share your group's edited 1-2 minutes poetic performance(s)
Week 4			

TU 15	Mourning and Magical Thinking	<p>LISTEN: http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=4956088</p> <p>Read any one Chapter of Joan Didion The Year of Magical Thinking (book you must purchase)</p>	<p>MINI PERFORMANCE Create a performance that incorporates no more than 2 sentences from the Foster reading. All the words you use must be from the text and in the order they are presented in the text but you may cut any words that you do not need to make your performance effective.</p>
TR 17			Be prepared to share your group's edited 1-2 minutes poetic performance(s)
Week 5			
TU 22	Medicalized Death	<p>WATCH: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0ISIUKKYYrE</p> <p>Read any ONE chapter of Atul Gawande Being Mortal (book you must purchase)</p> <p>AND</p> <p>Read any ONE chapter of Nuland How We Die (book you must purchase)</p>	<p>MINI PERFORMANCE Create a performance that incorporates no more than 2 sentences from the weeks reading All the words you use must be from the text and in the order they are presented in the text but you may cut any words that you do not need to make your performance effective.</p>

TR 24			Be prepared to share your group's edited 1-2 minutes poetic performance(s)
Week 6			
TR 29		Read at least 30 pages of one of the books on the optional list and share your thoughts with your group	MINI PERFORMANCE Stage a one to two minute eulogy for yourself
OCTOBER			
TR 1		Read at least 30 pages of one of the books on the optional list and share your thoughts with your group	Be prepared to share your group's edited 1-2 minutes poetic performance(s)
Week 7			
TU 6		Read at least 30 pages of one of the books on the optional list and share your thoughts with your group	MINI PERFORMANCE Create a performance that incorporates no more than 2 sentences from your ongoing research reading. All the words you use must be from the text and in the order they are presented in the text but you may cut any words that you do not need to make your performance effective.
TR 8		Read at least 30 pages of one of the books on the optional list and share your thoughts with your group	Be prepared to share your group's edited 1-2 minutes poetic performance(s)
Week 8			
TU 13		Read at least 30 pages of one of the books on the optional list and share your thoughts with your group	Be prepared to workshop your midterm performance
TR 15	Workshops		
Week 9			

TU 20	midterm performances	Read at least 30 pages of one of the books on the optional list and share your thoughts with your group	midterm performances
TR 22	midterm performances		midterm performances POST RESPONSES TO MIDTERM PERFORMANCES ON MOODLE
Week 10			
TU 27	midterm performances	Read at least 30 pages of one of the books on the optional list and share your thoughts with your group	midterm performances POST RESPONSES TO MIDTERM PERFORMANCES ON MOODLE
TR 29	NO MEETING FALL HOLIDAY		
<i>NOVEMBER</i>			
Week 11			
TU 3	midterm performances	Read at least 30 pages of one of the books on the optional list and share your thoughts with your group	midterm performances POST RESPONSES TO MIDTERM PERFORMANCES ON MOODLE
TR 5	midterm performances debriefing		midterm performances debriefing POST RESPONSES TO MIDTERM PERFORMANCES ON MOODLE
Week 12			
TU 10		Read at least 30 pages of one of the books on the optional list and share your thoughts with your group	MINI PERFORMANCE Create a performance that incorporates no more than 2 sentences from your ongoing research reading All the words you use must be from the text and in the order they are presented in the text but you may cut any words that you do not need to make your performance effective.
TR 12			Be prepared to share your group's edited 1-2 minutes poetic performance(s)
Week 13			

TU 17	Workshops		Workshops
TR 19	WORKSHOPS		
Week 14			
TU 24	ONLINE WORKSHOPS		
TR 26	NO MEETING THANKSGIVING		
Week 15			
<i>DECEMBER</i>			
TU 1	Final Performances		
W 2 7:30 pm	UNDERGRADUATE SHOWCASE		
TR 3	Final Performances		
FINAL EXAM			
TU 8 3:00- 5:00 pm	Final Performances AND Final Exam		Final Exam Due