

Coates Hall 137 (HopKins Black Box Theatre)

Section 03 meets T/TH 9-10:20am; Section 04 meets T/TH 12-1:30pm

Instructor: Bonny McDonald  
Email: bmcd021@lsu.edu

Office Hours: T/TH 8-9am and T/TH 11-12  
Office: 8-9 in **HBB 137 Coates**; 11-12 in **311 Coates**

### **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 and other readings will be available on Moodle.

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION/GOALS**

CMST 2040 is a *General Education Humanities Course* designed to familiarize students with the study of literature through performance. Based on 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 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:**

- Use live performance and performance exercises to ignite, engage, and embody imaginative and intellectual responses to social realities, 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 in engaging human experience.
- Theorize the corporeal body as a critical site of culture, politics, and change.
- Activate a flexible, responsive, and expressive voice and body in the performance of literature.
- Sharpen written and analytical 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. In other words, when you signed up for this course, participation became one of your major assigned responsibilities. 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: One way to confront communication, public speaking, and/or performance anxiety is by practicing in less formal settings, and active class participation is a great way to do this. I define active

participation as follows: responding to instructor questions or otherwise 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. **If you simply attend class but do not actively participate, you will not receive full credit for class participation.** Each class day, I will evaluate your participation and record it with a + (good), - (ok), - (poor), x (absent) on the attendance sheet. These results will be tallied twice during the semester and recorded as your two 50-point participation grades. **Participation points may not be made up outside of class.**

**Attendance Policy:** You are allowed 3 no-questions-asked unexcused absences throughout the semester; each additional absence will result in a 30 point deduction from your final grade. These points will be deducted first from your participation grade, then, if exceeding 100 points, from your final, then midterm exam grades. This policy includes doctor appointments, sicknesses, funerals, and flat tires. The only absences excused from this policy 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. Please do not ask me to sit down with you to go over what you have missed-it is *your* responsibility to catch up.

### **MAJOR PERFORMANCES**

- All 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.** You will have ample time to check your personal schedule and request or sign up for specific performance days before the performance date. Once workshop and performance schedules are posted, it will be up to you to initiate a date switch with one of your classmates if necessary. You must **both** email me at least **two** days before your performance date in order to switch dates.
- **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.** Walking in on a classmate's performance will result in a **10 point deduction** from your performance grade; no excuses will be accepted.
- 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 points.**
  - Please speak to me at the beginning of the semester about any **university excused sports-related travel** or other conflicts so we can schedule your performances and workshops accordingly. I can make arrangements only if you speak to me within a reasonable amount of time, which is **at least one week before the performance or workshop date.**

**AUDIENCE LOGS:** On workshop and performance days, you will be asked to turn in a very short written feedback form to some of your peers. On a small piece of paper, you will record your thoughts using a + (something that worked); - (something that needs work); and ? (a question for the performer). At the end of

class, you must hand these responses to your classmates. You will not get credit for feedback that is inappropriate or rude. After you have read your stack of logs, your duty is to staple the stack and turn it into me for full credit the next class day after your performance.

### PERFORMANCE WORKSHOPS

- Workshops are a mandatory part of this class, and a necessary part of building a successful final performance. During workshops, we will work with students to develop and refine their ideas about staging and performing the material they have chosen. Come to each workshop with an open mind and a willingness to experiment with the input of your peers.
- To receive FULL workshop points, you must be fully memorized on the day of your workshop, have made the required number of staging/character choices, and 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 the lowest D, or 60% of possible points, for that session.**
- If you do not show up to class on the day of your workshop and cannot provide me with a university excused absence, you will receive a zero for your workshop. Also, I will not meet with you outside of class to make up workshop unless you have a university-approved excuse. In this case, I recommend meeting with a class member to run your piece before the final performance.

### WRITTEN WORK

Part of understanding performance is learning how to articulate your response to performance. You will be expected to produce two written responses to performances, three self-evaluations of each of your performances, a **five-page paper**, and one page for each major performance explaining your text and your performance choices. 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. I recommend getting a copy of an MLA guide and following it closely.

**PERFORMANCE SELECTIONS:** For the prose and poetry performances, you will be required to turn in a typed sheet that includes the title of your selection, the author's name, the page number of the text, and 1-2 paragraphs as to what drew you to the text/why you chose to explore it via performance, as well as either a line-by-line analysis (poetry) or general character analysis (prose). For the final compiled performance, you will include your name, a title for your performance, a carefully edited script, and a brief artist statement addressing the purpose of the compilation.

**SELF-EVALUATIONS:** After each of your performances, you will be required to turn in a typed paragraph evaluating your own performance. In it, you should reflect on what went well, what didn't, how you would change your preparation process and performance experience, and how you think the audience received your performance. Your self-reflection is worth 5 points of your grade and is due via email the same day as your performance (by 11:59pm).

**CRITIQUE PAPER:** Toward the middle of the semester, I will ask you to write a **five-page paper** analyzing and critiquing a classmate's performance. Based on the analysis of your classmate's texts, your observation and

participation in their workshop, and their final prose performance, you will critique your classmates' adaptation of their text, using Burke's Pentad as a frame. The paper **MUST** be written in Times New Roman 12-point font, with one-inch margins, double-spaced, with no extra spacing between paragraphs. It should be clear and concise, with concrete examples. If you fail to turn in this paper on or before its due date, I will deduct one letter grade per day overdue. A detailed assignment sheet will be posted on Moodle.

**HBB PERFORMANCE 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 their 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 on Moodle. HBB performances take place on Wed.-Sat. evenings and on some Sun. afternoons throughout the semester. 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**.

### **ONE-ON-ONE COACHING SESSION**

Before each major performance, students must arrange a 30-minute meeting with me during office hours or some other agreed-upon time to work on his/her/zir performance in a one-on-one coaching session. For the poetry performance, you must be nearly-memorized to receive full credit. For the prose performance, you can either meet to cut the script, to make character and staging decisions, or to work on a nearly-memorized piece. For the compiled script, you can meet in order to develop the script and staging choices, or to work on the nearly-memorized performance.

### **ADDITIONAL COURSE POLICIES**

**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 points** from your performance or workshop grade. Same goes for checking email, Facebook, surfing the web, etc. Computers should be turned off/kept out of sight. You will not receive excessive notes in this class, and should do fine with taking them down by hand.

**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. It is your responsibility to remain aware of all emailed comments, announcements, notes, and changes.

**The end of semester temporary empathy lapse:** The last two weeks of the semester are stressful for everyone. 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.

**Know thine honor code:** Particularly as it relates to plagiarism. 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. 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.

**QUIZZES & TESTS**

**QUIZZES:** There will be 6 quizzes on the assigned readings. All but one will be listed on the syllabus. One is a pop quiz. One quiz grade will be dropped. Two quizzes will take the form of a short typed paragraph in response to the reading rather than a traditional assessment.

**TESTS:** The midterm will be a traditional multiple-choice exam covering the lecture and text materials from the first half of the class. The final exam is a take-home affair that asks you to synthesize what you have encountered in the class. One question on the final exam will take place in class on the finals day. You must attend to get credit for this 10-point question, no exceptions.

**GRADES**

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

- Grades *will not* be discussed via email or telephone (this is a university-wide policy, to protect your privacy). Please do not email me with specific questions about your grades.
- Additionally, please don't approach me with questions about your grades right before or after class in the Black Box. Instead, come to my office hours or contact me for an appointment. If possible, stop by or request a meeting within a week of getting your grade.
- Grades will not be discussed within the first 24 hours after you have received your grade, or if it has been more than two weeks since the grade was posted to Moodle.
- 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>Grading</b>		<b>Points possible</b>
Performances:	Poetry Performance (including self-evaluation)	75
	Prose Performance (including self-evaluation)	100
	Final Compiled Performance (including self-evaluation)	125
Tests:	Midterm	100
	Final	75
Written work:	HopKins Black Box performance response	50
	Five-Page Critique Paper	125
	Performance Selections	
	Poetry	20
	Prose	20
	Compiled	45

Participation:	In-class Participation	100
	Workshops: 3 @ 25 pts	75
	Audience logs 5 @ 4 pts	20
Quizzes:	Quizzes	50
Coaching:	One-on-one session	20
<b>Total Points Possible:</b>		<b>1000</b>

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

“A” does NOT mean you have simply successfully completed all assignments. It means you have been consistent and have excelled in performances and written work. An “A” assignment makes me think, “Wow, I’m blown away!”

“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. A "B" assignment makes me think, "Good work, this is very well done."

“C” means you have successfully accomplished the basic requirements of an assignment and are able to construct and deliver a solid performance or written assignment, but do not go a step beyond. A "C" assignment makes me think, "Average effort; this is just okay."

“D” and “F” indicate you have not met the basic criteria of assignments and/or you have turned in or presented deficient work. Such work makes me think, "Ouch, that was rough," and/or "This student clearly did not prepare."

SYLLABUS CONTRACT – CMST 2040, ~~FALL 2013~~SPRING 2014

Due in class on Thursday, 1/23

\*\*Student may not receive credit on any assignments, in or out of class, without turning in this contract.

I confirm that I have read the syllabus for CMST 2040 (Instructor: Bonny McDonald/Spring Semester ~~2013~~2014), and understand and will abide by the expectations and the course policies detailed therein.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Name Clearly