

CMST 3040: Performance Composition
Coates Hall 137
Section 00: T/Th 12-1:30 pm

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Office: Coates 318
Office Hours: T/Th 8:00-9:00 am
and 11:00am-12pm

Required Texts: Roselee, Goldberg. *Performance Art: From Futurism to the Present*.
3rd ed. Thames and Hudson. 2011

Course Goals: CMST 3040: Performance Composition is designed to provide students with the tools and skills to write, adapt, create and embody various types of personal, political, cultural and professional texts for the performance stage. This course is based in the assumption that embodied performance is a unique heuristic for coming to experience and understand the world around us. In order to succeed in this course, everyone involved (including your instructor) must keep in mind that this course is about the *process* of discovery rather than achieving a preconceived goal.

Through the semester we hope to:

- a. Stimulate an awareness of how our bodies and voices perform both on the stage and in various contexts
- b. Think critically about physical, social and aesthetic space
- c. Cultivate, expand and defamiliarize our understanding of language as a tool for understanding the world around us
- d. Reconsider our approach to knowledge by questioning, how we come to know what we know and engaging in performance composition and practice as a heuristic tool
- e. Discover the ability to see, hear, think and create innovative connections between various aspects of human experience through performance.
- f. Continue to sharpen our basic communication skills

Course Requirements and Expectations

- a. This a 3000 level course with 2040 Performance of Literature as a prerequisite. Your choice to take this course allows me to assume that you found something enjoyable and valuable about the study and practice of performance. While 3040 will certainly present some familiar and some new challenges and uncertainties, I am operating under the assumption that you are open to struggling through those challenges. In short, I expect that you want to be here and that you want to perform.

- b.** This class takes a different approach to knowledge acquisition and assignment completion. I do not know what your performances will look like or what you will discover. This class is in large part about letting go of the idea of a preconceived end goal we must work toward and being open to chance, possibility, serendipity and surprise. This approach will be challenging for everyone involved—including myself! It will require patients, trust, hard work and an open mind.
- c. 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.
- d. Major Performances:** The focus of this class is well established: the composition and execution of live performance. ***You must deliver all four major 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.**
- e. Minor Performances:** In addition to the four major performances you will complete in this course you will give four minor-performances throughout the semester. These exercises are designed to allow you to experiment with various texts and techniques in front of a live audience. I fully expect that what you discover through your mini performances will become potential raw material for your major performances. Because of time constraints the penalty for missing mini performances is more severe. Failure to give a mini performance on the assigned day will result in a half credit deduction. You will then have one class day to make it up before receiving a zero for the assignment.

- f. **Quizzes and Exams:** Over the course of the semester you will take six 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.
- g. **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. ***You must attend Nico Wood's guest artist production of Sideshow on Thursday 9/18 at 7:30.*** The second performance you attend is your choice.
- h. **Written Work:** As the title of this course implies, the primary focus of this course is the composition of performance. Much of the composition process involves writing in ways that are probably familiar and unfamiliar to you.
- a. ***Composition Journal:*** You are required to keep a composition journal where you complete various creative writing exercises, reflect upon a concept or idea and free write. The idea is that the creative writing you do in your journal will provide material to draw on for both major and mini performances. I will assign some form of journal activity most class days. I will collect your journal at midterm and again at the final exam.
- b. ***5 page HBB Analysis Paper:*** Part of understanding performance is learning how to articulate your response to performance by thoughtful analysis. **Everyone is required to see Nico Wood's production of Sideshow 9/18 @ 7:30** so that we might use the production as an exemplar for understanding how to conduct a performance analysis using the DIET formula. Then you will write your own 5-page analysis of the second show you attend in the HBB. **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 [350 pts.]

Performance 1 [50 pts.]
Performance 2 [50 pts.]
Performance 3 [50 pts.]
Performance 4 [50 pts.]
Final Performances [150 pts]

Written Work [200 pts.]

Composition Journal 1 [50 pts.]
Composition Journal 2 [50 pts.]
5 page HBB Analysis Paper [100 pts.]

Quizzes [100 pts.]

Quiz 1 [25 pts.]
Quiz 2 [25 pts.]
Quiz 3 [25 pts.]
Quiz 4 [25 pts.]
Quiz 5 [25 pts.]

Exams [200 pts.]

Midterm [100 pts.]

Final Exam [100 pts.]

Participation [150 pts.]

Mini Performances [100 pts]

Citizen points [50 pts.]

Total of 1000 possible points

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

Tentative Course Schedule

Week 1

T 8/26: ***Welcome to Performance Composition!***

Memory Palace Lecture/Meet Your Group

TH 8/28: Syllabus Performance Assignment (Group Work)

Week 2

T 9/2: Introductions/Syllabus Performances/Discuss memory palace lecture

Explanation of Composition Journal

Th 9/4: Introduction to Storytelling

****HBB Friday 9/5 Graduate Student Showcase @ 7:30 pm****

Week 3

T 9/9: Storytelling Activity/Journal presentations

Due: Composition Journals

Quiz 1: Peterson and Langellier Article (on moodle)/vocabulary builders

Th 9/11: The voice and body as performance technology

Week 4

T 9/16: Storytelling Performances Groups 1 and 2

Th 9/18: Storytelling Performances Groups 3 and 4

Must Attend HBB: Guest Artist Nico Wood: Side Show Thursday 9/18 @ 7:30

Week 5

T 9/23: Performance Analysis/Using the DIET formula/Discussion

Due: Sideshow Discussion Questions

Th 9/25: ***Due: Mini journal Performance 1***

Week 6

T 9/30: ***Due: Mini Journal performance 1 cont'd/Chapter 1 Quiz***

Th 10/2: Fall Break No Class

Week 7

T 10/7: Explanation of Unit II

Lecture: Narrative Point of View/Creating Narrative Persona

Quiz 3: P&S Chapter 4 and 5

Th 10/9: Lecture: Thinking about writing your dramatic analysis

Due: Prose Selection WS/Unit II Rubric

Week 8

T 10/14: Writing Workshop/Midterm Exam Review

Due: Dramatic Analysis Pre-write

Due: Intro/Topic Sentences

Th 10/16: Midterm Exam

*****HBB: A Pigment of your Imagination Thursday 10/16- Saturday 10/19 @ 7:30
and Sunday 10/20 @ 2:30 pm***

Week 9

T 10/21: Prose Workshop Group 3 and 4

Th 10/23: Prose Workshop Group 1 and 2

Week 10

T 10/28: Workshops Cont'd

Quiz 5: P & S Chapter 12

Due: HBB Response for A Pigment of your imagination

Th 10/30: Group 3 and 4 Final Prose Performance

Due: 5-Page Dramatic Analysis

*****HBB: Uncanny Valley Wed 10/29 –Saturday 11/1 @ 7:30 pm. And Sunday
11/2 @ 7:30 pm***

Week 11

T 11/4: Final Prose Performance Groups 1 and 2

Th 11/6: Explanation of Unit III

Quiz 6: Chapter 11

Week 12

T 11/11: Playing with Texts

Due: HBB Response for Uncanny Valley

Th 11/13: Playing with Texts Cont'd/Group Work

Week 13

T 11/18: Group Work Day

Th 11/20: Group Work Day

Week 14

T 11/25: Group Workshops

Th 11/27: ***Happy Thanksgiving! No Class***

Week 15

T 12/2: Final Group Performances

Th 12/4: Final Group Performances/Semester Wrap Up

*****HBB: A Snowy Evening Wednesday 12/3-Saturday 12/6 @ 7:30 pm and
Sunday 12/7 @ 7:30 pm.***

Week 16

Final Exam Week

Due: Responses due for A Snowy Evening at Final Exam

