

## Graduate Performance Studies HUMA887



**Course Outline**

**Winter 2017**

**Tuesday, 1.30-4.30**

**Prof. Emer O'Toole**

**Office: H1001.6**

**Office hours: TBC**

**Ph: 514.848.2424 x4094**

**[emer.otoole@concordia.ca](mailto:emer.otoole@concordia.ca)**

## Course Description

Performance Studies is a radical field. Some consider it an “anti-discipline.” Arising in the ‘70s at the intersection of theatre and anthropology, it had a double impetus: first – to do battle with the dominion of the Western canon and give due scholarly consideration to the art forms and cultural practices of Othered cultures; second – to use performance as a lens through which to understand human activities outside the realm of art, including religious rituals, political events, play, language, day-to-day interactions and even things we might intuitively suppose are the opposite of performance – our genders, sexualities, ethnicities or nationalities. Performance Studies has an inherent politics – dissident, queer, anti-hegemonic – encouraging us to think beyond fixities and hierarchies. This graduate course is for any student who wants to break down barriers between academic disciplines; tug at the boundaries of what education is for; and interrogate what kinds of knowledge are valued versus what kinds are valuable. Over the semester we’ll engage with the theories of seminal thinkers including Jacques Derrida, JL Austin, Judith Butler, Diana Taylor, Rustom Bharucha, Richard Schechner, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, and Shannon Jackson. We’ll also work from our own embodied knowledges and experiences, becoming attuned to how we perform our identities, and where we learned our scripts.

## Course Objectives

By the end of this course, you will:

- Have a deep understanding of the discipline of performance studies
- Have applied performance theory to a variety of cultural phenomena
- Have developed tools to reflect on performances of cultural identity
- Have engaged with major theoretical texts and ideas
- Have learned through performance-based activities and practical ethnographic re-enactments
- Have learned how to edit Wikipedia as part of your graded assessments

## Texts

I will endeavour as far as possible to make readings available electronically and keep your book costs down. You will have approximately 3 hours of course reading a week. The readings below may be subject to some changes as I finalise the course.

## Assessment

Type of Assessment	Percentage of Overall Grade
Wikipedia Entry	30%
Journals	20%
Workshop & Supporting Statement	20%
Term Paper	30%

## Attendance

Attendance is mandatory and if your attendance drops below 80% (i.e. – if you miss 3 classes) you will not pass the course. If you have a genuine need to miss a class (for example, a religious holiday), then this must be communicated to me in advance. I only require a doctor’s note for extended illnesses.

## Assessments

Detailed information on all assessments will be offered in the full version of the course outline. In the meantime, if you have any questions, please e-mail me and ask!

## **Week 1 – What is Performance Studies?**

**Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> Jan**

### **Overview**

We'll start simply, by establishing the parameters of Performance Studies as a discipline.

### **Set texts**

Schechner, Richard. "Performance Studies: The Broad Spectrum Approach" *The Performance Studies Reader*. Ed. Henry Bial. 5-7

Schechner, Richard. "What is Performance Studies?" *Performance Studies: An Introduction*. NY; London: Routledge, 2003. 1-27

Conquergood, Dwight. "Performance studies: Interventions and radical research." *TDR/The Drama Review* 46.2 (2002): 145-156.

Phelan, Peggy. "Introduction" *The Ends of Performance*. Eds Peggy Phelan and Jill Lane. NY: NYU Press, 1998.

## **Week 2 – Performativity 1: Speech Acts**

**Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> Jan**

### **Overview**

Complete the following adage

Sticks and stone may break your bones but words will \_\_\_\_\_

- A) Never hurt you
- B) Break your heart
- C) Under certain circumstances actually produce rather than simply represent the structural conditions of your existence

### **Set Readings**

Austin, JL. 'How to do things with words: lecture II'

Derrida, Jacques. 'Signature, Event, Context.'

## **Week 3 – Performativity: Identity**

**Tues 24<sup>th</sup> Jan**

### **Overview:**

Goffman theorises the self as a series of more or less intentionally performed interactions between an internal essence and a social world. For Butler, there is no stable internal essence; rather, our identities are performed into being over time in dialogue with social structures that reward or punish our repetitive acts. Harper's personal essay implies that humans read each other's performances all the time, and that the stakes of this reading are raised when we occupy positions of difference or marginality. In this seminar we'll engage with these thinkers and also consider the limitations of Butler's theory of gender performativity, particularly in terms of its ramifications for trans folk.

**Set Reading**

Butler, Judith. "Performative acts and gender constitution: An essay in phenomenology and feminist theory." *Theatre journal* 40.4 (1988): 519-531.

Extract from: Goffman, Erving. *The presentation of self in everyday life*. 1959. NY: Garden City, 2002.

Extract from: O'Toole, Emer. *Girls Will Be Girls: Dressing Up, Playing Parts and Daring to Act Differently*. London: Orion, 2015

Extract from: Serano, Julia. *Excluded: Making feminist and queer movements more inclusive*. NY: Seal Press, 2013.

Ahmed, Sara. 'Interview with Judith Butler.' *Sexualities* 19.4 (2016): 482-492.

**Week 4 – Embodiment****Tuesday 31<sup>st</sup> Jan****Overview**

A core tenet of Performance Studies is that there are different ways of knowing – knowing that; knowing how; textual knowledge; embodied knowledge. In this first of our weeks on embodiment we'll consider the ways in which the body knows and the ways in which it can help us learn.

**Set Reading**

Conroy, Colette. *Theatre and the Body*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.

Treize, Bryoni. "Embodying Embodiment in Holocaust Tourism." *Performance, embodiment and cultural memory*. Ed. Colin Counsell and Roberta Mock. Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009.

Jones, Joni L. "Performance ethnography: The role of embodiment in cultural authenticity." *Theatre Topics* 12.1 (2002): 1-15.

**Week 5 – Embodiment 2****Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> Feb****Overview**

We'll continue our exploration of embodiment by considering its use as a conceptual tool through which to "do" human geography, critical race theory, and plain old literary and theatrical analysis.

**Set Reading**

Colbert, Soyica Diggs. *The African American Theatrical Body: Reception, Performance, and the Stage*. Cambridge University Press, 2011. P. 1-16

Parks, Suzan-Lori. *The America Play*

Extract from: Young, Harvey. *Embodying black experience: Stillness, critical memory, and the black body*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2010.

Extract from: Roach, Joseph. *Cities of the dead: Circum-Atlantic performance*. Columbia University Press, 1996.

**Week 6 – Performance and Cultural Memory**

## Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> Feb

### Overview:

History, we're so often told, is written by the victors. But Diana Taylor's work implicitly asks us to look beyond such defeatism. While certain histories might not be represented in archives, they often persist in repertoire, where, with an attentive eye to cultural memory, performance theorists can find them. This approach to history helps us to uncover what was presumed lost, and, also, to recognise the reality of that which we can't uncover.

### Set Readings

Extracts from: Taylor, Diana. *The archive and the repertoire: Performing cultural memory in the Americas*. Duke University Press, 2003.

Schneider, Rebecca. "Performance remains." *Performance research* 6.2 (2001): 100-108.

Extract from: Paulla, Ebron. *Performing Africa*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1999.

## Week 7 – Mid-term Break

### Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> Feb

## Week 8 – The Liveness Debate

### Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> Feb

### Overview:

In the age of CGI and 4DFX, why does performance persist? What is it for? What is intrinsic to it as an artform? For Peggy Phelan a clear answer to this is the medium's liveness and ephemerality. With performance you get a special, once only, un-mediated, embodied experience, in real time and in real space. Philip Auslander disagrees – after all, the machinery of your eye is a form of mediation; after all, if sound takes seconds to be technologically transferred through a televisual system, it also takes nanoseconds to travel through space from the performer's lips to your eardrums. This debate is not just taxonomic, it is also about the limits of embodiment and the intersection of technology with our basic humanity.

### Set Readings

Auslander, Philip. *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture*. London: Routledge, 2008. Chapter 2.

Phelan, Peggy. *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*. London: Routledge, 1993. Chapter 7.

Hillaert, Wouter. "(Long) Live the Experience: Reflections on Performance, Pleasure and Perversion". Trans. Lisa Wiegel, Lisa Uytterhoeven and Peter M. Boenisch. *Border Collisions: Contemporary Flemish Theatre*. Spec. Issue of *Contemporary Theatre Review*. Eds Lourdes Orozco and Peter M. Boenisch. 20.4 (2010): 432-436

## Week 9 – Ritual

### Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> March

### Overview:

Rituals, whether sacred or secular, regulate and structure our lives. Performance Studies examines rituals as "twice-behaved behaviour" as well as something that many of the participants understand to be "performative" i.e. – to be both a product and producer of

reality. This week we'll engage with the influential work of anthropologist/performance theorist Victor Turner and think through how rituals mark stages of progression in life as well as how they form and maintain communities.

### Set Readings

Turner, Victor. "Liminality and communitas." *The ritual process: Structure and anti-structure* 94. Ithica: Cornell UP, 1969. 94-130.

Turner, Victor and Edith Turner. "Performing Ethnography." *The Drama Review: TDR*, Vol. 26.2 Intercultural Performance. (Summer, 1982), pp. 33-50.

## Week 10 – The Interculture Wars Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> March

### Overview

The performance theorists' dedication to engaging with the cultures and ritual practices of formerly colonized peoples undoubtedly came from an inclusive, humanist intention, but it wasn't long before white Western engagements with "Othered" cultural artefacts were raising hackles. What Schechner and co. deemed mutually beneficial and enriching cultural exchange looked a lot like exploitative cultural piracy to postcolonial and cultural materialist thinkers – with good reason. This week, we'll engage with this divisive academic subject and try to articulate some positive steps for engagement and understanding in such fraught terrain.

### Set Reading

Bharucha, Rustom. "A reply to Richard Schechner." *Asian Theatre Journal* 1.2 (1984): 254-260.

Schechner, Richard. "A Reply to Rustom Bharucha." *Asian Theatre Journal* 1.2 (1984): 245-253.

O'Toole, Emer. "The Eternal Interculture Wars: Reading the Controversy Surrounding Bisi Adigun and Roddy Doyle's *Playboy of the Western World*."

### Optional Reading

Knowles, Ric. *Theatre and Interculturalism*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.

Bharucha, Rustom. *The politics of cultural practice: Thinking through theatre in an age of globalization*. Wesleyan University Press, 2000.

Lo, Jacqueline, and Helen Gilbert. "Toward a topography of cross-cultural theatre praxis." *TDR/The Drama Review* 46.3 (2002): 31-53.

Adigun, Bisi. 'Arambe Productions: An African's Response to the Recent Portrayal of the Fear Gorm in Irish Drama.' *Performing Global Networks*. Ed. Karen Fricker and Ronit Lentin. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2007. 52-65.

## Week 11 – Space, Power, Protest Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> March

### Overview

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o says that "The war between art and the state is really a struggle between the power of performance in the arts and the performance of power by the state – in short,

enactments of power.” Space is critical to how power – whether of art or of the state – performs. This week, we’ll read wa Thiong'o alongside Doreen Massey, Sophie Nield and Baz Kershaw, exploring how imaginative occupations of space – such as the Occupy Movement – can perform truth to power.

### Set Readings

- wa Thiong'o, Ngũgĩ. "Enactments of power: the politics of performance space." *TDR* (1997): 11-30.
- Nield, Sophie. "There is another world: Space, theatre and global anti-capitalism." *Contemporary Theatre Review* 16.01 (2006): 51-61.
- Kershaw, Baz. 'Fighting in the Streets: Dramaturgies of Popular Protest, 1968—1989. *New Theatre Quarterly (NTQ)*, 13.51 (1997).
- Massey, Doreen. "Politics and space/time." *New Left Review* 196 (1992): 65.

### Optional Readings

- Klein, Naomi. *No Logo: No Space, No Jobs, No Voice*. New York: Picador, 2002. Chapter 12: 'Culture Jamming: Ads Under Attack.'
- Nield, Sophie. "Siting the people: power, protest, and public space." *Performing Site-Specific Theatre*. Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2012. 219-232.
- Graeber, David. "The New Anarchists" *New Left Review*

## Week 12 – The Social Turn

### Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> March

#### Overview

Claire Bishop first termed the contemporary wave of art that directly engages with socio-political problems 'the social turn.' Because of the 'social work' that this kind of art performs, many have read it as anti-hegemonic and progressive: it eschews commoditization, and brings people together, not merely as spectators, but also as actors, potentially constituting anti-oppressive communities. Bishop expresses sympathy with socially engaged practice which aims to dealienate a society fragmented by capitalism but argues that it remains crucial to analyse such practice as art. What happens when a commitment to the aesthetic is absent?

#### Set Readings

- Bishop, Claire. "The social turn: Collaboration and its discontents." *Artforum* 44.6 (2005): 178.
- Extract from: Jackson, Shannon. *Social works: Performing art, supporting publics*. Routledge, 2011.

#### Optional Readings

- Alston, Adam. 'Audience Participation and Neoliberal Value: Risk, agency and responsibility in immersive theatre.' *Performance Research* 18.2 (2013): 128-138.
- Bourriaud, Nicolas. *Relational Aesthetics*. Dijon: Les Presses du Reel, 2002.
- Harvie, Jen. 'Democracy And Neoliberalism In Art's Social Turn And Roger Hiorns's Seizure.' *Performance Research* 16.2 (2011): 113-123.
- . *Fair play: Art, Performance and Neoliberalism*. London; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.

## **Week 13 – Play**

### **Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> April**

#### **Overview**

Play is a paradox, showing at once that culture is not rational (otherwise, why on earth would Concordia have a quidditch league), yet that humans use the mind to create another reality - a shared, fictional space - alongside the world of nature: "In acknowledging play you acknowledge mind, for whatever else play is, it is not matter" (Huizinga). Johan Huizinga believes that in the phenomenon of play, which we share with animals, we can find the foundational material of human civilization. The biologist Stefano Mancuso believes that baby sunflowers play. David Graeber thinks electrons dance. Today, we're going to play an educational game of flippy cup and decide whether or not we agree with any of them.

#### **Set Readings**

Extract from: Huizinga, Johan. *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-element in Cult.* Beacon Press, 1955.

Graeber, David. "What's the point if we can't have fun?" *The Baffler*

Mancuso, Stefano. "The Roots of Plant Intelligence" Ted Talk

## **Week 14 – Reflections**

### **Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> April**

#### **Overview**

We will reflect.