

CMST 2040: Performance of Literature

Department of Communication Studies | College of Humanities and Social Sciences



Fall 2018 | Section 4 | T/Th 10:30 – 11:50 AM | Coates 137 (HopKins Black Box theatre)

Instructor: **Greg Langner**
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Office: **Coates 321**
Office hours: **T/Th 12:30 – 1:30 PM**

Required Textbook:

Pelias, Ronald J. and Tracy Stephenson Shafer. **Performance Studies: The Interpretation of Aesthetic Texts (2nd Edition)**. Iowa: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company, 2007.

Source Texts:

Collins, Billy, ed. *Poetry 180: A Turning Back to Poetry*. New York: Random House, 2003.

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.

Additional materials will be distributed through Moodle as needed.

Course Overview and Outcomes:

The study of literature through performance; reading, analysis, and performance of prose, poetry, and drama (LSU catalogue description). CMST 2040 is an introductory-level Communication course designed to familiarize students with the study of literature through performance, and vice versa. We recognize performance as a method of understanding and enjoying literature, which itself is a profound expression of human experience. We explore different methods for performing texts, as well as methods for learning to write *about* literary and other texts through the lens of performance.

As a result of this course, students should be able to:

1. Engage and embody imaginative and intellectual responses to literary texts and language.
2. Stimulate an awareness of the dramatic and intertextual potential of all literature.
3. Deepen appreciation of/empathy towards ‘self’ and ‘other’ as they engage via performance and text.
4. Activate a flexible, responsive, and expressive voice and body in the performance of literature.
5. Consider the body as a key site of culture, politics, and transformation.
6. Significantly sharpen and enhance both written and verbal communication skills.

Communication Studies and Performance:

Study after study demonstrates the top skill valued across virtually every professional industry is the ability to effectively communicate, closely followed by the ability to think critically and creatively.

Through Communication, *Performance* is both a subject of study *and* a method for understanding culture and human experience. We can recognize performance as a deliberate artistic practice, as a means of cultural expression and ritual, and as a series of radically interwoven everyday social behaviors. Performance courses within Communication Studies offer students a unique way to enhance their understanding of the world, while significantly developing and magnifying the critical skills most necessary within any career field.

COURSE POLICIES

SPECIAL NEEDS ACCOMMODATION

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 with [LSU Disability Services](#) (124 Johnston Hall) so that such accommodations can be arranged. After you receive the accommodation letters, please meet with me to discuss the provisions of those accommodations during the first two weeks of class.

ATTENDANCE & LATE WORK

If you are absent, you will not be allowed to turn in assignments that were due or to make up any quizzes, exams, or projects. The only possible exception is if you have a documented, excused absence. Notify the instructor in advance if you know you are going to miss class, and the reason for your absence.

Failing to attend class on your own assigned performance days, without an excused absence *and* prior notification given to the instructor, will result in a severe penalty to your overall grade. If you fail to deliver any of your three required performances, you will be unable to receive a passing grade in the class.

Because CMST 2040 is a practice-centered course, you are also required to attend two mainstage performances taking place in the HopKins Black Box theatre throughout the semester, so that you can write an analytical response to the show (assignment instructions are detailed on the following page). There will be no opportunity to make-up these written responses if you fail to attend.

This semester you have the option to attend two of the following three productions: (1) *Institutionally Aggravated* (Aug. 31), (2) *NAPPY: hairstories* (Sep. 12-16), and (3) *Housekeeping* (Oct. 24-28).

Specific performance times for each production can be viewed on the HopKins Black Box theatre Facebook page.

CLASSROOM RESPECT

Do not talk over others. Give your full attention during class discussions, lectures, workshops, and performances. Arrive to class *on time*. Regularly communicate with your instructor as needed. If you are late (don't be), *do not ever enter the classroom during another student's performance*. Wait for applause, then enter.

PLAGIARISM & ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Plagiarism will not be tolerated. If you plagiarize even a portion of any assignment, exam, etc., you will receive an automatic 'F' in the class.

TECH & EMAIL

Do not have your phone out during class (seriously); keep your phone on silent or vibrate. If you use your phone during another student's performance, you will automatically lose 10% of your grade on that same performance. Laptops and tablets are not permitted in this class unless otherwise confirmed by the instructor.

Always use your campus email when emailing the instructor; always state your first and last name, and the title and section number of the class in the *subject line* of the email. When the instructor replies to your questions via email, always respond to confirm (this is a good habit in most professional settings).

EXTRA CREDIT

Extra credit *may* be offered at some point, but there are no guarantees for any extra credit opportunities.

ASSIGNMENTS & GRADES

PARTICIPATION & IN-CLASS WORKSHOPS

30% of your total grade.

You will never receive credit for simply showing up to class. Earning a Participation grade means actively and consistently engaging in class discussions, lectures, and activities, and with a demonstrated understanding of the material.

Performances must be fully memorized on *day 1* of each Workshop Day. Each workshop series is worth 5% of your total grade. *Do not be absent.*

PERFORMANCES

30% of your total grade.

Poetry Performance (10% of your total grade): Fully memorized 2-minute performance of an approved poetry selection.

Prose Performance (10% of your total grade): Fully memorized 3-minute performance of an approved prose/narrative selection.

Compiled Performance (10% of your total grade): Fully memorized 4-minute performance of an approved, strategically compiled selection of multiple texts.

1-minute Personal Selection Performance (up to 3% extra credit): Details will be provided in class.

**Note that I am available during office hours, or by appointment, to provide individual performance coaching.*

DRAMATISTIC (PENTADIC) ANALYSIS

10% of your total grade.

You will conduct a structured and thoughtful analysis of your own *Prose Performance* using Kenneth Burke's Dramatistic Pentad (detailed in Chapter 5 of your textbook).

PERFORMANCE CRITIQUES

10% of your total grade.

You will attend two productions in the HopKins Black Box this semester. Write a 1-2 page response to each performance: First, (1) provide an overall description of the show and its aesthetic; next, (2) interpret what you experienced, and what you think the show aimed to communicate; lastly, (3) make a clear connection between the performance, and your own performance work in this class.

EXAMS

20% of your total grade.

Midterm Exam (10% of your total grade): You will be assessed on your understanding of, and readiness to *apply*, what you have learned from the readings, lectures, discussions, activities, workshops, and performances. Additional details will be provided in class.

Final Exam (10% of your total grade): You will be *comprehensively* assessed on your readiness to apply what we have learned throughout the semester. Additional details will be provided in class.

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|------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| A+ (97% – 100%) | B+ (87% – 89%) | C+ (77% – 79%) | D+ (67% – 69%) | F (0% – 59%) |
| A (93% – 96%) | B (83% – 86%) | C (73% – 76%) | D (63% – 66%) | |
| A- (90% – 92%) | B- (80% – 82%) | C- (70% – 72%) | D- (60% – 62%) | |

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

| Week | Day | Class Agenda | Material(s) Due |
|--------------|----------|--|--|
| 1 | T 8/21 | Introductions, Syllabus Review, Opening Activity | |
| | Th 8/23 | Overview of Performance & Performance Studies | Chapters 1 & 2 |
| 2 | T 8/28 | Tracing Performance through Culture | Chapters 3 & 4 |
| | Th 8/30 | Performance and/of/towards Perspective Building | Chapters 6 & 7 |
| 3 | T 9/4 | Performance through Audience Outlook | Chapters 10 & 12 <i>Institutionally Agg. critique due.*</i> |
| | Th 9/6 | Poetry Performance Workshop, day 1 | Poetry selection memorized. |
| 4 | T 9/11 | Poetry Performance Workshop, day 2 | |
| | Th 9/13 | POETRY PERFORMANCES | |
| 5 | T 9/18 | POETRY PERFORMANCES | |
| | Th 9/20 | Burke's Dramatism as Disciplinary Bridge | Chapter 5 <i>NAPPY critique due.*</i> |
| 6 | T 9/25 | Language and Structure of Aesthetic Texts | Chapters 8 & 9 |
| | Th 9/27 | Performance and Inclusion | Viewings on Moodle |
| 7 | T 10/2 | MIDTERM EXAM | |
| | Th 10/4 | NO CLASS: FALL HOLIDAY | |
| 8 | T 10/9 | Prose Performance Workshop, day 1 | Prose selection memorized. |
| | Th 10/11 | NO CLASS: INSTRUCTOR AT CONFERENCE | |
| 9 | T 10/16 | Prose Performance Workshop, day 2 | |
| | Th 10/18 | PROSE PERFORMANCES | |
| 10 | T 10/23 | PROSE PERFORMANCES | |
| | Th 10/25 | PROSE PERFORMANCES | |
| 11 | T 10/30 | Performance as/within Profession | Viewings on Moodle <i>Housekeeping critique due.*</i> <i>Dramatistic Analysis due.</i> |
| | Th 11/1 | Compiled Performance Workshop, day 1 | Compiled selection(s) memorized. |
| 12 | T 11/6 | Compiled Performance Workshop, day 2 | |
| | Th 11/8 | NO CLASS: INSTRUCTOR AT CONFERENCE | |
| 13 | T 11/13 | COMPILED PERFORMANCES | |
| | Th 11/15 | COMPILED PERFORMANCES | |
| 14 | T 11/20 | COMPILED PERFORMANCES | |
| | Th 11/22 | NO CLASS: THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY | |
| 15 | T 11/27 | Cultural Reach of Performance/Performance Art | Chapter 11 |
| | Th 11/29 | PERSONAL SELECTION PERFORMANCES | |
| Final | F 12/7 | FINAL EXAM (3 – 5 PM) | |

*Remember, you only turn in two performance critiques.