

CMST 2040 Performance of Literature  
Fall 2017 Section 1 & 2  
MWF 8:30-9:20am & 9:30-10:20  
Coates 137

*Key wording, assignments, and general notions in this syllabus have been modeled after or borrowed from Stephanie Heath, Cynthia Sampson, Chris Collins, and Melinda Nelson-Hurst.*



**Office:** Coates 321

**Office Hours:** Monday – Thursday, 10:30-11:30am

**Course Description:**

CMST 2040 is an introductory level communication course designed to familiarize students with the study of literature through performance. This class is based in 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 the act of performing.

**Instructor:** Naomi Bennett

**Email:** nbenn11@lsu.edu

**Learning Objectives:**

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:**

- Embody imaginative and intellectual responses to 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 via performance and text.
- Activate a flexible, responsive, and expressive voice and body in the performance of literature.
- Consider the body as key site of culture, politics, and transformation.
- Sharpen written and oral communication skills.



“When I believe in my ability to do something, there is no such word as no.”  
— Max Brooks, *World War Z: An Oral History of the Zombie War*.

## Assignments

There will be three performances, three papers, and various other in-class activities. Each performance and paper will have its own assignment sheet posted on Moodle and will be discussed in class.

### Performances:

The focus of this class is live performance. ***You must present all three 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 (for my policy on other late work, see page 4). Your earliest chance to complete the performance requirement is after everyone else has fulfilled their 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.

### Workshops:

Each of the three performances will be 'workshopped' in class prior to the final showing. When developing a performance, it is important to have a practice run that allows you to get feedback from myself and your classmates, who can offer valuable insight and critique that you might not see on your own. For these workshop performances, you should be familiar enough with the text that you can look up from the page, and you should have already made several strong performance choices. How you use the feedback offered by myself and your classmates in the development of your final performance will be factored into your final performance grade.

### Giving Feedback (Critiquing):

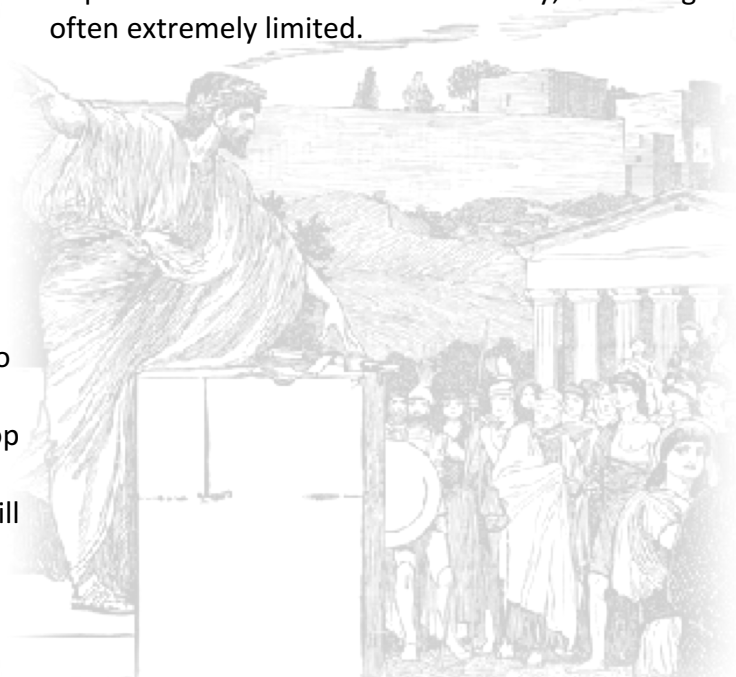
Part of learning to be an effective performer is learning to be a good (and critical) member of the audience. So, part of this class will be learning how to give (and take) constructive criticism. We will learn two methods: the "Sandwich" method – for workshop performances, and the D.I.E.T. method – for final performances. More information on each of these will be posted on Moodle.

### Dramatistic Analysis:

Though we will employ dramatistic analysis of your chosen text for each of the three performances, the second, prose performance will require you do turn in a written dramatistic analysis using Kenneth Burke's pentad as a tool for understanding and interpreting your chosen text. The pentad is useful in helping break down literature so that you can better understand the material you are performing. Being able to interpret the message of the author is important, both in everyday life, and as a performer who is staging another person's intended message. More details on the assignment will be posted on Moodle.

### Black Box Response Papers:

As performance students, it is important to see performance. The HopKins Black Box (HBB) serves not only as your classroom, but as an experimental laboratory theatre space for faculty, graduate students, and guest artist to create performances and present workshops. As students of performance you will be required to attend two (2) HBB productions (and encouraged to see all of them!) and write a 1-2 page written response for each. Guidelines for responses will be posted on Moodle. I encourage you to plan ahead and reserve tickets early, as seating is often extremely limited.

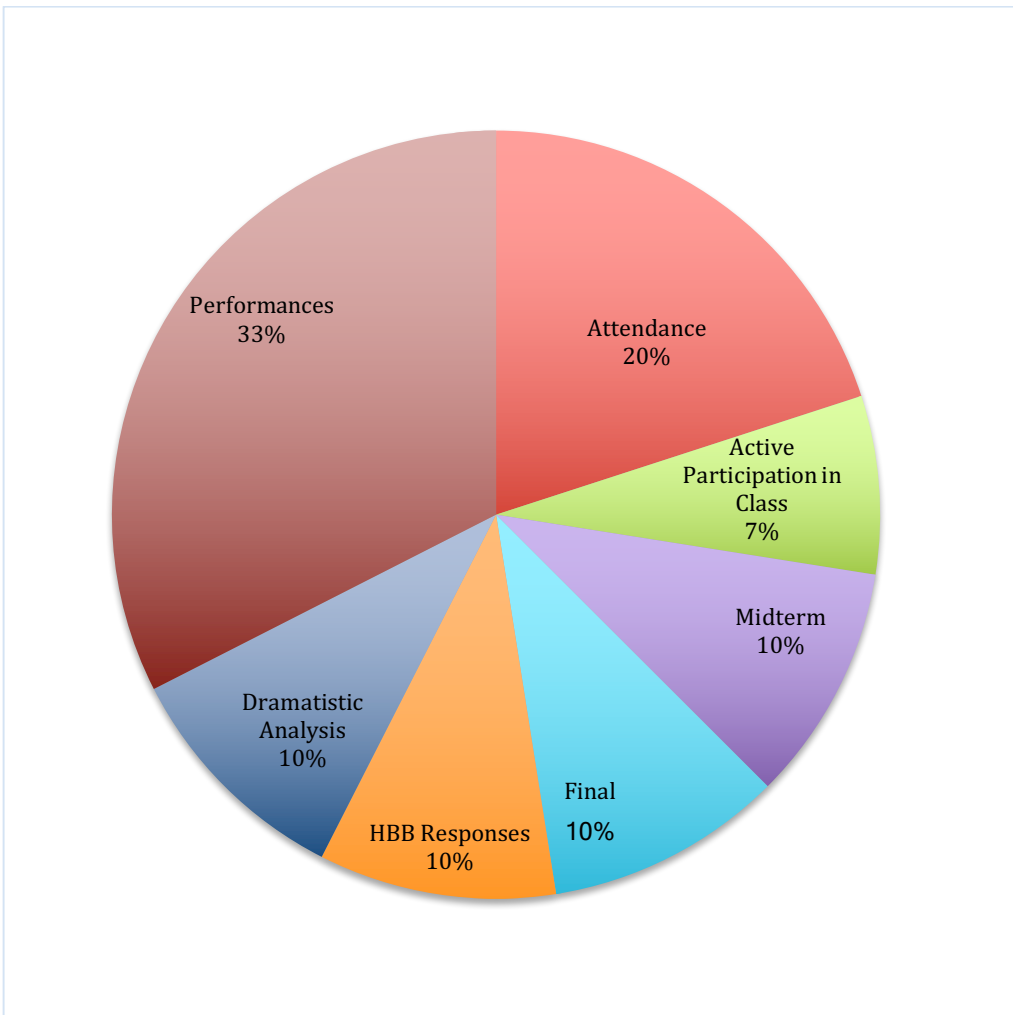


**Evaluation & Grading**

Final grades will be determined based on scores earned in the following assignments. All work must be done during the semester and not made up after the fact. The class assignments will be calculated as follows:

| <b>Assignment</b>                  | <b>Grade Breakdown</b> |
|------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Poetry Performance .....           | 75pts                  |
| Prose Performance .....            | 100pts                 |
| Compiled Performance .....         | 150pts                 |
| HBB Responses (x2) .....           | 100pts (50pts each)    |
| Dramatistic Analysis .....         | 100pts                 |
| Attendance.....                    | 200pts                 |
| Active Participation in Class..... | 75pts                  |
| Midterm Exam .....                 | 100pts                 |
| Final Exam.....                    | 100pts                 |

*\*A full schedule will be posted separately on Moodle\**



**Grade Scale:**

- 98-100 = A+
- 93-97 = A
- 90-92 = A-
- 87-89 = B+
- 83-86 = B
- 80-82 = B-
- 77-79 = C+
- 73-76 = C
- 70-72 = C-
- 67-69 = D+
- 63-66 = D
- 60-62 = D-
- 0-59 = F

**Attendance:**

Attendance is required and will be taken daily and entered into Moodle. You are allowed **three (3)** absences, no questions asked. Anything beyond that will cause you to lose attendance points that cannot be made up. *\*If you have a university approved excuse, I give can make up assignments for missed days, but per the nature of the class, I cannot give make ups for attendances points.*

**Active Participation in Class:**

This is a performance class. Aside from just being present, you also need to actively engage in class activities. This means warm-ups, performance exercises, discussions (which includes doing the assigned readings), presenting work and providing feedback to your classmates.

**Classroom Electronics Policy:**

In this course, no electronic devices (laptops, phones, iPads, other tablets, etc.) may be used. These devices may seem helpful for note-taking, but in reality, they are distracting to both their users and any students around their users (not to mention to the instructor). Studies over the past several years have consistently shown that laptop use in class is detrimental to learning for multiple reasons. In addition, taking notes by hand has been shown to increase understanding and retention of topics discussed in class.

In addition: all cell-phones should be put on silent or turned off during class and **left in your bag**. Vibrate is not acceptable. If I see you checking your phone, pulling it out of your pocket, texting, or your phone vibrates or rings during class both your **attendance and participation** grade will be reduced to **zero (0)** for that day. If you have an extenuating circumstance and you need to keep your phone on for some reason, you must let me know ahead of time.

**Classroom Dress Policy:**

You need to come prepared to be participate in physical activities. Wear clothes that allow for a full range of physical movement. Please no tight jeans or skirts.

**Classroom Behavior:**

This classroom is our space. We need to respect each other at all times. I do not tolerate racist, sexist, heterosexist, or discriminatory language of **any kind**. It is important to remember we are here to learn from each other, and to do so requires us to be open to new concepts and different ways of being than we may be used to. This might also mean that when giving a performance on sensitive subject, you'll want to be intentional and careful in the choices you make. And, as an audience member seeing a performance that you may or may not agree with, you'll want to be open-minded to how you evaluate what your classmates have to share.

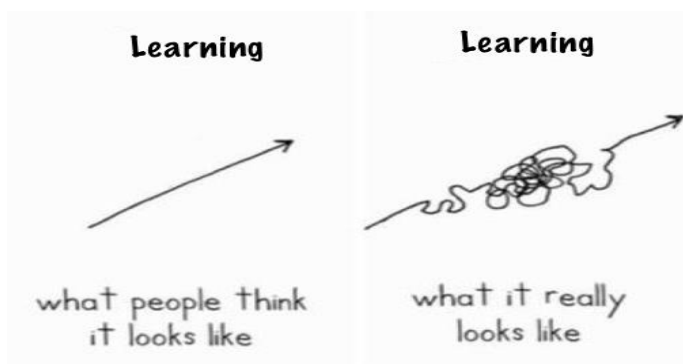
**Late Work:** (except performances – see page 2)

All assignments will be turned in through Moodle – I will not accept any assignments through email or hardcopy. Period. Assignments turned in late will incur a five (5) point penalty per calendar day they are overdue. If you have a university approved absence or extenuating circumstances, it is your responsibility to contact me outside of class AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. In cases with a university approved excuse, I can grant usually grant an extension.

**Communication:**

You can reach me at [nbenn11@lsu.edu](mailto:nbenn11@lsu.edu) any time. I will do my best to respond within 24 hours, though on weekends or when I am away at a conference may take longer. I also expect you to check your email and Moodle regularly, in case there are updates about the class. If you need to contact me or your classmates, you have access to the emailing system in Moodle. If you have missed a class and are emailing to find out what we covered or to get class notes, please email one of your classmates, not me.

*\*If I do not respond to your email within 24 hours, assume I have not received it and politely send another. If you cannot access you LSU email, let me know IMMEDIATELY. Otherwise I will assume you are receiving and reading all of my emails – which I send frequently.*





**Available Help:**

Please come talk to me. My job is to help you learn. If you have not taken a performance class before, this class may seem harder than you might expect. Remember that this is a different way of learning, based as much on skill and knowledge that can be learned as any other introductory class. If you feel like you are having difficulty or something comes up, let me know as soon possible. The sooner I'm aware of any issue, the more likely I am to be able to help. There are also several resources available on campus. [Communication across the Curriculum](#) (CxC) offers writing support that can assist you in the development of your essays. The [Shell Tutorial Center](#) housed in Middleton Library also offers services that can help. There are counseling services available through the [Student Health Center](#) that are great for helping you process any of the things going on in your life. [LSU Cares](#) is a university initiative that is available to both students and instructors to helping students find resources and develop realistic plans dealing with a variety of life, school, and personal stressors. The [Food Pantry](#) is available to provide supplemental food to students in need who may experience hunger or food insecurity. School is only one part of your life, so please take care of you.

**Academic Honesty:**

Plagiarism is a complicated issue. We will discuss plagiarism (what it is, how to avoid it) as a class. You can read the LSU policies on plagiarism to better understand how the school feels about it. In short, any time you present other people's work as your own without properly citing the source, you're committing plagiarism. With proper citation, any of these issues can be avoided.

**ADA Accommodations:**

The Americans with Disabilities Act and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 states: "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 can be arranged." After you receive the accommodation letter, please meet with me privately to discuss the provisions of those accommodations.

**Inclement Weather:**

Unless the University is closed, we will have class. This means even if there is an early morning downpour, we will be meeting. I do not like coming to school in rain as much as anyone else, but we simply do not have time in the schedule to miss days because of rain.

**Title IX & Sexual Misconduct Policy:**

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 is a comprehensive federal law that prohibits discrimination based on the gender of students and employees of educational institutions that receive federal financial assistance. In accordance with Title IX and other applicable law, Louisiana State University (LSU) is committed to providing a learning, working, and living environment that promotes integrity, civility, and mutual respect in an environment free of discrimination on the basis of sex and sexual misconduct which includes sex discrimination, sexual harassment, dating violence, domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking and retaliation. LSU prohibits sex discrimination and sexual misconduct. This policy applies to all persons without regard to sexual orientation, gender identity and/or gender expression. Sex discrimination and sexual misconduct violate an individual's fundamental rights and personal dignity. LSU considers sex discrimination and sexual misconduct in all of its forms to be serious offenses. This policy has been developed to reaffirm these principles and to provide recourse for individuals whose rights have been violated. This policy establishes a mechanism for determining when rights have been violated in employment, student life, campus support services, LSU programs and/or an academic environment.

**Required Texts:**

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

*Available at:* <http://www.loc.gov/poetry/180/p180-list.html>

Pelias, Ronald J. and Tracy Stephenson Shaffer. *Performance Studies: The Interpretation of Aesthetic Texts* (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition). Kendall/Hunt, 2007.

Shapard, Robert and James Thomas. *New Sudden Fiction: Short-short Stories from America and Beyond*. W.W. Norton & Company, 2007.

Stern, Jerome, ed. *Microfiction: An Anthology of Really Short Stories*. W.W. Norton & Company, 1996.

**[incomplete] List of Poets / Authors**

|                            |                    |                             |
|----------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------|
| Douglas Adams              | Marilyn Hacker     | Catherine Sasanov           |
| U-Meleni Mhlaba Adebo      | Langston Hughes    | George Saunders             |
| Sherman Alexie             | A.E. Housman       | Cheryl Savageau             |
| Maya Angelou               | Erica Jong         | Robert Service              |
| Margaret Atwood            | James Joyce        | Dr. Seuss (Theodor Geisel)  |
| Hugo Ball                  | Sor Juana          | Anne Sexton                 |
| Russel Banks               | John Keats         | Ntozake Shange              |
| Djuna Barnes               | Jack Kerouac       | Robert Shearman             |
| Charles Baudelaire         | Stanislaw Lem      | Percy Bysshe Shelley        |
| Matsuo Bashō               | Audre Lorde        | Leslie Marmon Silko         |
| Perer S. Beagle            | Robert Lowell      | Shel Silverstein            |
| Aimee Bender               | Mina Loy           | Charles Simic               |
| Elizabeth Bishop           | Naguib Mahfouz     | Gary Snyder                 |
| David Blair                | Carlo Matos        | Wallace Stevens             |
| William Blake              | Wallace McRae      | Robert Louis Stevenson      |
| Anthony Bourdain           | A.A. Milne         | Janaka Stucky               |
| Richard Brautigan          | Lorrie Moore       | Algernon Charles Swineburne |
| Charles Bukowski           | Toni Morrison      | Wisława Szymborska          |
| William S. Burroughs       | Eileen Myles       | James Tate                  |
| Lord Byron                 | Ogden Nash         | Dylan Thomas                |
| E.E. Cummings              | Pablo Neruda       | Hunter S. Thompson          |
| Diane di Prima             | Flannery O'Connor  | Leo Tolstoy                 |
| Junot Diaz                 | Sharon Olds        | Yamamoto Tsunetomo          |
| Emily Dickinson            | Mary Oliver        | Tristan Tzara               |
| T.S. Eliot                 | Chuck Palahniuk    | Kurt Vonnegut               |
| Paul Eluard                | Dorothy Parker     | Dara Weir                   |
| Eugene Field               | Marge Piercy       | John Wieners                |
| F. Scott Fitzgerald        | Sylvia Plath       | Saul Williams               |
| Elsa von Feytag-Lorinhoven | Edgar Allan Poe    | Edith Wharton               |
| Robert Frost               | Adrienne Rich      | Colson Whitehead            |
| Neil Gaiman                | Rainer Maria Rilke | Walt Whitman                |
| Gabriel Garcia-Marquez     | Arthur Rimbaud     | William Wordsworth          |
| Charlotte Perkins Gilman   | David Rivard       | W.B. Yeats                  |
| Allan Ginsberg             | Tom Robbins        | Yevgeny Yevtushenko         |
| Louise Gluck               | Rumi               | Tom Yuill                   |
| Melissa Goodrum            | Salman Rushdie     | Adam Zagajewski             |