

Department of Communication Studies
CMST 7941: Re-membering: performacne history/ography
 Spring 2012, TH 3-6, 137 Coates Hall
 “performacne makes history go even as it is going away”— Della Pollock

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

In this seminar, we will explore the intersections of performance and history with two main lines of inquiry.

- 1) History OF Performance: We will explore performance as both an object of historical inquiry asking questions such as: How did people perform in the past? How do those performances inform our present? What future do current performance practices seek to enact? What are the most salient histories that inform our given present as performance scholar practitioners in academe? How do we understand performance practices in temporal context? How are performance traditions adapted to changing circumstances? What remains the same, what is lost? How and why to performance practices deemed vital in one time and place seem to disappear? How and why do they re-appear in other contexts? How do some performance practices evolve as cultures interact with each-other?
- 2) History THROUGH performance: We will explore performance based methods of historiography asking questions such as: how can we use the tools of performance to re-member the past? what happens if we take seriously the notion that history is an embodied activity? How do we account for the past drawing from the repertoire of performance practices as well as the material archive of documents, monuments, and artifacts? What does it mean to engage with the past through a “performative epistemology: a mode of knowing by doing and feeling the sensuous, concrete, vital, risky, relational, and highly contingent claims of live performance”? (Pollock Oral Traditions 263-4)

Course Readings (in order that we will use them)

PROFESSING PERFORMANCE SHANNON JACKSON ISBN: 9780521656054
CITIES OF THE DEAD ROACH ISBN: 9780231104616
EXCEPTIONAL SPACES POLLOCK ISBN9780807846841
WITNESSING:BEYOND RECOGNITION OLIVER ISBN: 9780816636280
RINGS OF SATURN SEBALD ISBN: 9780811226158

SCENES OF SUBJECTION
HARTMAN
ISBN: 9780195089844

THEATRE/ARCHAEOLOGY
PEARSON AND SHANKS
ISBN: 9780415194587

SAPPHO IS BURNING
DuBOIS
ISBN9780226167565

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF A DISEASE
ANDERSON
ISBN: 9781138744509

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

Archive to Repertoire Presentation	20%
Course Discussions (green team 10%; yellow team 5%; red team 5%; overall 5%)	25%
Final Project prospectus	20%
Final Project	35%

DESCRIPTION OF THE ASSIGNMENTS

Archive to Repertoire Presentation (20%)

This requirement asks you research a significant performance practice in it's historical context and share some of your findings for the group. Your criteria for selection are the following:

- 1) You should choose a practice that can be located at least 20 years prior to your birth (e.g. if you choose lawn mowing and you were born in 1980 you should be able to tell use something about how lawns were mowed by some folks sometime before 1960)
- 2) The practice must be a performance which, for our purposes, means that it must be a) embodied b) aesthetic c) for a live audience.
- 3) Your research into the practice should include at least one digital source, one physical book source, and one non-digital, non-book source (e.g. oral history, museum artifact, archived letter, microfilm of newspaper)
- 4) Your presentation should include interaction with one physical object of historical significance (e.g. if you are focusing on a sewing practice you might bring in a spool of thread)
- 5) Your presentation must include at least one attempt at a "how to" demonstration of a portion of the performance practice.(e.g. if you were teaching a martial art you might not have time or ability to teach us how to kick and punch but you might be able to show us how to tie a belt)
- 6) Your presentation should put your selected practice in conversation with at least one performance tradition (i.e. this should not be presented as an idiosyncratic performance by one virtuoso performer but a snapshot of an ongoing performance tradition)

- 7) Your presentation should include at least some potential linkages between the performance practice and its socio historical context. These may, and likely will, be tentative but they should be thoughtfully integrated.
- 8) Your presentation should be between 5 and 10 minutes in length and should represent significant editing. (i.e. you should have material for a 20-30 minute presentation that you have thoughtfully edited down for us. 5 thoughtful minutes is preferred to 15 rambling minutes.
- 9) You should be prepared for a question and answer session of at least 20 minutes.

Discussions 25% :

Red Team (10%): Your job is to review your course notes carefully and to NOT read the assigned reading and come to class prepared to:

- 1) begin class with a summary of where you think we are so far in our ongoing discussion
- 2) ask first the yellow team, then the red team questions to help you get a sense a) what the book is about b) how the book connects to our ongoing conversations c) if and why you might want to read the book given your research interests.

Yellow team: your job is to SKIM the text (as demonstrated on the first day of class)

- 1) identify sources in the bibliography that you are familiar with (if any) and write a one sentence description of what is most important to you about each of those sources
- 2) read the index and identify the 3-6 most commonly indexed terms that are used throughout the book (i.e. not terms that are applicable only to one chapter)
- 3) go to the first instance in which each of those terms and write down the definitions of those terms
- 4) read the conclusion (with eye towards those key terms)
- 5) read the introduction (with an eye towards those key terms)
- 6) read the first and last paragraph(s) of each chapter
- 7) skim the remainder
- 8) come to class with an a 100-200 word summary of the book based on the above

Green Team: Your job is to read the text **thoroughly** and come to class prepared to connect it with our ongoing course objectives. You should come to class with

- 1) a written summary suitable for an annotated bibliography (100-200 words)
- 2) a favorite passage to read aloud
- 3) at least 3 discussion questions that are raised for you in your reading that you think would be worthwhile for us to explore
- 4) sufficient knowledge of the text to provide guidance where the yellow team summary may have fallen short

OTHER: for weeks when you are none of the above you should read the text carefully and be prepared to be an active participant in the discussion lead by the above folks.

Final Project Prospectus (20%)

This is a 3-5 page paper that should outline how you plan to complete your final project for the course. Your paper should address the following questions (in any order you see fit as long as all are answered):

- 1) What do you want to know?

What research questions guide your project? What do you want to know that you do not yet know? Why do you think these questions are compelling? What lead you to them?

2) How will you find out?

What method(s) will you use to investigate your questions? How will you know if you have used them correctly? What leads you to believe that these are necessary and sufficient methods to answer your questions?

3) Who cares?

What ongoing conversations do you think your project will contribute to? What makes you think

4) What form your final project will take? (paper, performance, conference presentation, website, cdrom, video game, curated archive, endurance performance art, oral exam, other or some combination of the above). Why have you selected this format or these formats? (NOTE: you must have at least some written and some “live performance” component to your presentation but the percentage of each is up to you)

5) How much class time will you need for the “live” component of your final project? (minimum 5 minutes, maximum 25 minutes) Will you need the HBB for your final presentation?

6) How would you like to be evaluated? What kind of feedback would you like? Toward what end do you see the project developing? What personal professional goals will you use this project to move towards?

7) If not readily apparent from the above: how is this a historical project?

8) If not readily apparent from the above: how is this a performance project?

Final Project (35%)

Based on the prospectus submitted above, in consultation with me to ensure feasibility, relevance, and rigor of your project, you will develop your own final project graded, as much as possible, on criteria that you have selected.

GRADING

In my description of the assignments, I believe my grading criteria are clear. Please note that the highest grade you can earn for a late assignment is a “D” – although I will not give or accept a late final exam. For some of the assignments, you will receive an additional handout in which I explain things more thoroughly than I do here. Should you ever have questions regarding your grade or grading generally, please don’t hesitate to ask me.

The grading scale for this course is: 92 or above = A; 83-91 = B; 74-82 = C; 65-73 = D; 64 or below = F

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 Accessibility Office so that such accommodations may be arranged. After you receive your accommodation letters, please meet with me to discuss the provisions of those accommodations during the first two weeks of class.

January 10
Introduction

January 17
Read: Shannon Jackson Professing Performance;
green team:
red team:
yellow team:
archive to rep presentation:

January 24

Read: Roach, Cities of the Dead

green team:

red team:

yellow team:

archive to rep presentation:

January 31

Field Trip to National Hansen's Disease Museum (Carville, LA) (meet at museum, apron 20 minute drive from campus)

Can Drive:

Needs a ride:

Has Conflict:

February 7

Read Pollock Exceptional Spaces

green team:

red team:

yellow team:

archive to rep presentation:

February 14

Read Oliver Witnessing

green team:

red team:

yellow team:

archive to rep presentation:

February 21

Read; Rings of Saturn Sebald

green team:

red team:

yellow team:

archive to rep presentation:

February 28

Read Scenes of Subjection Hartman

green team:

red team:

yellow team:

archive to rep presentation:

March 7

Read Theater/Archaeology Shanks and Pearson;

green team:

red team:

yellow team:

archive to rep presentation:

March 14

Read Sapho is Burning

green team:

red team:

yellow team:

archive to rep presentation:
Final Project Proposals due

March 21 SPRING BREAK

March 28
Read Autobiography of a Disease
green team:
red team:
yellow team:
archive to rep presentation:

April 4 SSCA? Make up for missed readings OR green team choice reading (subject to approval)
green team:
red team:
yellow team:
archive to rep presentation:

April 11
Final Presentations (HBB NOT AVAILABLE)
A:
B:
C:
D:

April 18 (IN HBB)
Final Presentations
A:
B:
C:
D:

April 25 (IN HBB)
Final Presentations
A:
B:
C:
D: