Acting, Being, Doing, Making: Introduction to Performance Studies
Professor Jill Dolan and Professor Stacy Wolf

THR 300/COM 359/ENG 373/ANT 359
Fall 2011
1:30 – 2:50, T/Th
185 Nassau, Room 219

Office hours:

• Thursdays, 11:00 – 12:00, 113 Dickinson
• Thursdays, 3:00 – 4:00, 214 Lewis Center for the Arts

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Course Description
Performance studies is an interdisciplinary field that examines performance in all its expansiveness. From theatre, dance, music, visual art, and other “framed” performances, to an individual’s actions and behaviors in everyday life; from storytelling, folklore, and blogs; to political speeches, rituals, and celebrations, performance studies analyzes “twice-behaved behavior”—that is, repeatable, embodied activities. Performance studies is distinguished by its two-fold focus on theory and practice; by its borrowings from anthropology, sociology, and cultural studies, as well as from theatre history, theory, and practice; and by the global reach of its objects of study and its examples.

This course explores performance studies in theory and in practice. We ask, What is performance? How can we describe, analyze, and interpret performance? Is there a limit to objects that can be analyzed as performance? How do spectators respond to performance events that aren’t housed in conventional theatre architecture? How do people walking by a street performer interpret what they’re seeing and what it means in a larger cultural context? What do theatre and performance in everyday life have in common? How do people “perform” in a media-saturated culture in which interactions aren’t necessarily live or face-to-face? How can we understand performance globally, being attentive to cultural differences and yet identify similarities across cultures and histories?

This course offers a hands-on approach to the field. Students will apply key readings in performance theory to sites that might include theatre, concerts, museums, sporting events, and/or community celebrations, and will observe people’s behaviors in everyday life (for example, in restaurants and on the street) as performance. We will analyze live performance, adapting techniques applied to written texts to space- and time-based events. We will also practice ethnographic methods with which to collect stories to adapt for performance.

Course goals include:

• Reading and understanding key theories of performance
• Attending a range of performances at various venues
• Analyzing and interpreting performances, both framed and unframed
• Collecting observations from fieldwork
• Creating performance by adapting stories or observations
• Articulating commonalities and differences among performance forms and sites
• Interacting with guest artists and speakers
• Identifying an area of interest and developing an extended research, writing, and performance project

**Texts:** All readings on e-reserve, which is accessible through Black Board at [https://blackboard.princeton.edu/webapps/login/](https://blackboard.princeton.edu/webapps/login/). You need to look for readings by titles—the e-reserve lists them by the editor’s name and not the authors. Some readings are on Blackboard as PDFs under “course materials.” These are marked as PDFs on the syllabus. At Labyrinth on Nassau St.: 1) Marina Carr’s Plays One, which includes the two we’re reading; and 2) Anna Deavere Smith’s play, *Fires in the Mirror*. Both are required.

**Week #1:**

**Thursday, 9/15**  
Course Introduction

**Week #2: What is Performance? What is Performance Studies?**

**Tuesday, 9/20**  
(pp. TK)


**Thursday, 9/22**  
(66 pp.)


**Week #3: Performativity and Performance in Everyday Life**

**Tuesday, 9/27**  
(28 pp.)

- Gender continuum exercise.

**Thursday, 9/29**  
No class, Rosh Ha'Shana holiday

**Week #4: Archives, Repertoires, and Analyses**

**Tuesday, 10/4**  
(Approx. 80 pp.)
• Deborah Paredez, “Queer for Uncle Sam: Anita’s Diva Citizenship in *West Side Story,*” approx. 24 ms. pp. (PDF)
• Watch *West Side Story* [film, 1961] available on video reserves on Blackboard.

**Thursday, 10/6**
(Approx. 20 pp.)


**Week #5: Religious Performance**

**Tuesday, 10/11**
(48 pp.)


**Thursday, 10/13**
Proposal ideas workshop; on your own.

**Week #6: Performance and Place**

**Tuesday, 10/18**
(83 pp.)


**Wednesday, October 19:** See *Phaedra Backwards,* written by Marina Carr, directed by Emily Mann, at McCarter Theatre, 8 p.m. Ticket information TK.

**Thursday, 10/20**

• **Guest:** Prof. Melissa Sihra, Professor of Drama, Trinity College, Dublin
• Marina Carr, *By the Bog of Cats*
• Marina Carr, *The Mai*

**Week #7: Applications of Performance Studies** (Midterm week)

**Tuesday, 10/25**
(15 pp.)

• **Guest:** Omi Osun Olomo/Joni Jones, Associate Professor, Theatre & Dance, Director, Center for African American Studies, University of Texas at Austin.
• Workshop on performance ethnography.

Thursday, 10/27  
**Student Presentation/mid-term applications**

Week #8: Break (Tuesday, 11/1 and Thursday, 11/3)

**Week #9: Performance Ethnography and Performance in Everyday Life**

Tuesday, 11/8  
(16 pp. + play)

• Anna Deavere Smith, *Fires in the Mirror* (play, Labyrinth)
• Anna Deavere Smith, *Fires in the Mirror* (video, on reserve on Blackboard)

Thursday, 11/10  
(26 pp. Insert Jill Lane and Ann Pellegrini here instead)


Week #10: Disability Studies

Tuesday, 11/15  
(34 pp.)


Thursday, 11/17  
**Proposal draft workshop; on your own.**

Week #11: Music

Tuesday, 11/22  
(40 pp.)

• Daphne Brooks, “‘This voice which is not one’: Amy Winehouse Sings the Ballad of Sonic Blue(s)face Culture,” *Women & Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory* 20:1 (March 2010): 37-60.
Thursday, 11/24: Thanksgiving

**Week #12: Reenactments and Reconstructions**

Tuesday, 11/29 (43 pp.)

- Rebecca Schneider, Chapter Four, “Poor Poor Theatre,” *Performing Remains: Art and War in times of Theatrical Reenactment* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 111-137.

Thursday, 12/1

- **Project proposals due.**
- *Dionysus in ’69*, Brian de Palma, dir., Performance Group’s original production. Video e-reserves.
- *Dionysus in ’69*, Rude Mechs reconstruction of the original production. (TK)
- *Dionysus in ’69*, print archive with script, commentary, and photographs of original Performance Group production (available at circulation/reserve desk on first floor at Firestone Library—must be read in Firestone)

**Week #13: Rude Mechs**

Tuesday, 12/6 **Rehearsal for symposium.**

Thursday, 12/8 **Rude Mechs workshop.**

Friday, December 9, 4:00-6:30, and Saturday, December 10, 9:00-6:00, Performance Studies Symposium, James Stewart Theatre, 185 Nassau. Also see Dionysus in ’69 by the Rude Mechanicals, Matthews Theatre, 185 Nassau, Friday, December 9, 8:00 p.m. Attendance required at symposium events and performance. See [http://www.princeton.edu/arts/arts_at_princeton/theater/event/pss/overview/](http://www.princeton.edu/arts/arts_at_princeton/theater/event/pss/overview/) for more information on speakers and events.

**Week #14: Wrap up.**

Tuesday, 12/13 (19 pp.)

- Debrief from symposium.

Thursday, 12/15 **Synthesis and review.**

**Course Requirements and Deadlines:** See appendix for details (posted separately on Blackboard)

1. **20%:** Attendance and participation.
2. **30%**: Two performance responses to reading material with supplemental writing.
3. **20%**: Mid-term application project.
4. **30%**: Final project/paper.
   a. Project ideas to be worked with peers, **Thursday, October 13th**
   b. Proposals worked with peers, **Thursday, November 17th**
   c. Proposals due, **Thursday, December 1st**
   d. Presentation during reading week, **Wednesday, January 11th**. **Please reserve 1:00-5:00 for presentations, then 5:30-7:30 for a class dinner.**
   e. Final project/paper due, **Tuesday, January 17th**, Dean's Date