Performance in Context
Introduction to Performance Studies

University of Houston/Fall 2013
Theatre: THEA 6397-1 (25840)
Keith Byron Kirk - Professor
Class Time/Location: Wed. 9AM-NOON, THEA/DANCE Conference Room
Office Hours: Tues./Thursday 2:30-3:30 or by Appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION:
This graduate level course explores performance studies as a practice, a theory, and academic discipline that in each instance remains dynamic and unfinishable. The study of multiple performances, whether they be cultural, social, or artistic in nature is a constantly changing, shifting observation of instances of interaction. More importantly the instances of performance we will engage are interdisciplinary and intercultural. To be “Inter”—is to exist between,” or “on the way from something to something else.” It is an exploration of the liminal, of the constant shifts of human performance as instances of change. Along with theoretical and methodological readings case studies will be drawn from multiple sources that engage multiple areas of performance. During this course we will view all types of performance using both existing and emergent methodologies. The final four weeks of the course will consist of workshops, discussions, and group interaction toward the completion of student created projects.

METHODS OF EVALUATION:
1. Attendance at and active participation in all seminar sessions.
2. Weekly written submission of 2pgs.: 2 questions and 1 comment or issue arising from each of the required readings; context for those questions or issues. Copy due via email by 5pm previous evening (Hard copy at beginning of each class session; no late submissions will be accepted.)
3. Oral presentation of 1 set of readings and of 1-2 questions for class discussion. (Submit written copy of presentation notes to professor no later than 5pm previous evening.)
4. Submission of abstract of proposed research project, specifying research question, bibliography already consulted, and likely bibliography to be used.
5. Project Diaries noting comments, work related inquiries, research, general notations regarding performance projects.
6. Final paper (15+pp) on topic of student’s interest, determined in relation to course materials. Objective: solid, first-draft of a paper that can be further revised for conference presentation and/or publication.

REQUIRED READINGS: (TBD)

Weekly Reading Response:
Although all of your responses should be informed by your careful consideration of the encountered material, the weekly reading response is your opportunity for a more personalized critical engagement with the selected articles and texts. (These should include comments and (2) two questions or issues arising from readings and context for those questions or issues). Whereas a performance response might require you to make an argument directed toward an outside
reader, the reading response is a more personal reflection upon the reading. What questions (if any) do you have about the play, article or text in question? Please limit your responses to no less than 750 words. Each week your responses and questions will be discussed during the class session. An email copy of your weekly responses is due by 5pm the day before each class session. In addition please bring a hard copy for class discussion.

**Plagiarism:**
Plagiarism is literary theft and a betrayal of trust. The term is derived from the Latin word for kidnapper and refers to the act of signing one’s own name to words, phrases, or ideas which are the literary property of another. Plagiarism comes in many forms, all to be avoided: outright copying, or paraphrase, or a mosaic or disguised use of words and phrases from an unacknowledged source. To avoid plagiarism, make it your habit to put quotation marks around words and phrases, or to isolate and indent longer passages that you are using from someone else’s writing. And be sure to cite the source, in a footnote or endnote, or within parentheses in your text. The penalties for plagiarism can be severe. If you are unsure how to use and document sources there are a number of written resources that can be made available to you. *In short, you’re simply too talented to bother which shady scholarship. ‘Nuff said…*

**Late Assignments:**
A late penalty will be assessed for each assignment unless you’ve spoken with me prior to the assignment due date.

**SYLLABUS**
August 26th – 1st Day of Classes
Part 1 – The Field of Performance Studies/Theory

Week 1: Schools of Thought Northwestern vs. NYU
8/28
- Introduction(s), Syllabus, Class Business…
- Thomas, “The Definition of the Situation”
- Discuss Booth, Colomb, and Williams, “The Craft of Research”
- Discuss Becker, “Tricks of the Trade”
- Individual Meetings
- Discuss Your Projects!!!

Week 2: What is Performance Studies: Performativity vs. Theatricality
9/4
- Innes, “Introduction” to *Erwin Piscator’s Political Theatre*
- Innes, on Piscator Ch. 4
- Powell and Shaffer, “On the Haunting of Performance Studies”
- Davis and Postlewait, “Theatricality: An Introduction”
- Davis, “Theatricality and Civil Society”
- Phelan, “The ontology of performance: representation without reproduction”

Week 3: Gesture, Movement, Dance and the Body in Performance
9/11
• 9/12 7:30 PM - Required to attend BILL T. JONES @ CWM LECTURE SPOTLIGHT EVENT!! [http://www.mitchellcenterforarts.org/mitchell-artist-lecture-featuring-bill-t-jones/]
  • Kraut, “Recovering Hurston”
  • Bill T. Jones, “Last Supper at Uncle Tom’s Cabin/The Promised Land”
  • Murphy, “Unrest and Uncle Tom”
  • Birns, “Ritualizing the Past: Ralph Lemon’s Counter-Memorials”
  • Potuoglu-Cook, “Belly Dance and Neoliberal Gentrification in Instanbul”
  • Video: Ralph Lemon’s Geography Trilogy

Week 4: Performance Textiles, Dandyism, and Identity [Jodie]
9/18
• Miller, “Introduction,” and Ch. 4 “Passing Fancies,” Ch. 5 “You Look Beautiful Like That”
• Quizon, “Costume, Kostyom, and Dress: Formulations of Ethnic Identity”
• Kuper, “Costume and Identity”
• Video: Yinka Shonibare Installations

Week 5: Cultural Anthropology and Performance
10/9
• Seizer, “The History and Organization of Special Drama” from Stigmas of the Tamil Stage
• Seizer, “Roadwork: Offstage with Special Drama Actresses in Tamilnadu, South India”
• Seizer, “Introduction” from Stigmas of the Tamil Stage
• Kershanblatt-Gimblett, “On Performance Studies”

Week 6: Performance Ethnography [Rachel]
10/2
• Madison, “Introduction to Critical Ethnography,” Pg. 1-16.
• Perry, “A Silent Revolution”
• Conquergood, “Performing as a Moral Act”

Week 7: Daily Labors, Clothing and Custom (Samantha)
9/25 [Discuss Abstracts]
• Smith, “Dressing the British”
• Harrison, “Clothing and Power”
• Wilkenson-Weber, “The Dressmen’s Line”
• Madison, “The Mike Daisy Affair”
• Madison, “The Labor of Reflexivity”
Week 8: Performing Trauma and Memory  [Alicia]
10/16
• Churchill, *Seven Jewish Children: A Play for Gaza*
• Alexander (Byron), “Were/Are, Fort/Da: The Eulogy as Constitutive (Auto)biography”
• Kuhn, “Memory texts and memory work: Performances of Memory in and with Visual Media”
• Hirsch, “Post-Memory”

PART 2 – The Field of Performance Studies/Practice
Discuss ABSTRACTS/DIARIES AND PROJECTS!!!!!

Week 9: 20th Century Documentary Theatre [Tyrell]
10/23
• Casson, “Living Newspapers: Theatre and Therapy”

Week 10: Performance Workshop (Pam)
10/30  Project Diaries – Project Presentations
• Breen, *Chamber Theatre*, pg. 1-34.
• Sanders, “Introduction,” and “Part 1” from *Adaptation/Appropriation* Pg. 1-42.
• Dean, “Theatre: A Neglected Site of Public History”
• Zimmerman, “The Archeology of Performance”

Part 3
Week 11: Adapting Narrative for Group Performance
11/6
• Bowman, “Novelizing the Stage: Chamber Theatre After Breen and Bakhtin”
• Edwards, “Staging Paradox: The Local Art of Adaptation”
• Edwards, “Into the Abyss: Staging Madame Bovary”
• Boal, “The Joker System”
• Perry, “A silent revolution: ‘Image Theatre’ as a system of decolonization”

Week 12: Performance Workshop Textiles 2/Uniforms, Military, etc.
11/13  Project Diaries – Performance Project Summaries and Read Thru
• Student Submitted Readings TBD
Week 13
11/20 – **Abstract Presentations, Course Review**
  - Student Submitted Readings TBD

Week 14 **Thanksgiving Day Break 24th-27th No Class this week.**
11/27th - 30th No Class

Week 15: **Last Class Session!!! CLASS PRESENTATIONS/PERFORMANCES**
12/4 Course Summations and Questions.

12/13 Final Papers Due!!! BY NOON via email. [KeithBKirk.ed@gmail.com]

**Exam Period**
12/20 Official End of Fall semester!! Happy Holidays

Notes/Dates:
Your Presentation Dates: