

SPRING SEMESTER 2016
COMM 5860—Topics in Performance: Performative Writing

Instructor: Dr. Justin Trudeau Th 6:00-8:50 GAB 321
Office: 320B GAB
Office Hours: T, TH 10:30-11:30, and by appointment

Telephone: 565-3526
Email: jtrudeau@unt.edu

TEXTS:

- Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1980.
John Berger, *And Our Faces, My Heart, Brief as Photos*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1984.
Anne Bogart, *A Director Prepares: Seven Essays on Art and Theatre*. New York: Routledge, 2001.
Walter Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word*. 3rd ed. New York: Routledge, 2012.
Ron Pelias, *Performance: An Alphabet of Performative Writing*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2014.
Tami Spry, *Body, Paper, Stage*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2011.
Kim Stafford, *The Muses Among Us*. Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 2003.

Course Handouts and Readings

Course Description:

This seminar is a workshop in experimental scholarly/critical writing. In particular, the course asks how the written text can function in a more expressively performative or theatrical manner. The principal goal of the seminar is to prepare you to produce and critique writing that may challenge current modes of acceptable expository academic writing. Writing for both the page and the stage, we will explore what some good writing does when viewed from a variety of textual and theoretical perspectives.

You will be evaluated by means of directed reading assignments, writing exercises and performances. In a round-robin fashion, each student will perform a piece of their own writing; perform the writing of an someone else, and finally, direct another student to perform an original writing piece.

Course Evaluations:

Seminar Participation/Writing Assignments	25%
Writer as Performer	25%
Writer as Audience	25%
Writer as Director	25%

GRADING SCALE AND RATIONALE

<u>A- 90-100%</u>	<u>Distinguished mastery, exceptionally well-prepared, creativity</u>
<u>B- 80-89%</u>	<u>Good mastery, excellence in preparation, original application</u>
<u>C-70-79%</u>	<u>Acceptable mastery, basic preparation, correct technique</u>
<u>D-60-69%</u>	<u>Unsatisfactory grasp, incomplete assignments</u>
<u>F-0-59%</u>	<u>Failure to complete the assignment during the scheduled time</u>

Seminar Participation/Writing Assignments 25%

Your enrollment in any course, but particularly a graduate seminar, entails certain social responsibilities. Attendance, preparedness, and involvement with group discussions are obvious social responsibilities in a course such as this. Missed days in which you are scheduled to give writing assignments or a performance will automatically reduce your grade to a maximum “D” level. Excused absences are those that are verifiable as well as documented.

Because this seminar is interdisciplinary, exploratory, and experimental, it also requires both intellectual curiosity and a willingness to “play along”---i.e., a willingness to try on new ways of thinking and doing. Among other things, this means having a firm enough command of the various assignments and issues for each of our meetings to be able to risk opinions, observations, and questions in class. Certainly, different individuals will make different kinds of contributions. But everyone should realize that a course like this requires the commitment and cooperation of its members. While no seminar can truly succeed unless the investigation is conducted in a spirit of openness and a sense of a shared commitment to a common goal, that may be especially true in our case this semester.

While my evaluation of your week-by-week contributions to the seminar will be somewhat subjective, there are several more-or-less tangible things you can do to meet the “good citizenship” standards outlined above (and, thus, increase the likelihood of your receiving a positive evaluation from me). Some of the following will be commonsensical enough, given the norms and standards of graduate seminars, but others may require further elaboration. If you have questions, I won’t know that unless you ask them.

1. *Keep up with the reading.* This is a common expectation for any course, although I know from experience that it is honored more in the breach than in the observance. This seminar, like most, will give you plenty of reading to do.

What's more, it will be next to impossible for you to do the writing exercises each week unless you first study the assigned readings, because in most instances the reading assignments will give you 'clues' as to how to solve the puzzles of the writing assignments—and vice-versa. In a few cases, we'll study a given text from more than one angle (which means that if you don't finish a reading assignment due for week 3, for instance, don't put it away or ignore it, for we might come back to it during week 10). I assume that reading and writing are interdependent skills; thus, to write "experimentally" entails learning to read "experimentally," too.

2. *Complete all the writing exercises and turn them in on time.* During assigned weeks, you will have a relatively short (2-3 pages) writing assignment to complete. In addition, a copy of each of your writings must be distributed to the other members of the seminar 2-3 days prior to our next meeting, so that everyone will have time to read it and formulate a response to it.
3. *Prepare a written set of notes, comments, questions, etc., for each class meeting.* Much of our class time will be devoted to discussing each other's written work. For these discussions to be productive, we all need to prepare for them by: (a.) reading everyone's work, and (b.) developing some written comments on/about everyone's work. While I don't want to quantify the writing you should prepare before class by way of response others' work, or the amount of speaking you should do in class, suffice it to say that you should be prepared enough to step into the role of discussion leader or principal discussant at any point in the class. One question we can/should consider in response to an author's work is: "What is a useful response to written work such as this?" Asking yourself that question, repeatedly, can go a long way toward helping you focus on comments that will be productive and useful to the author and the group as a whole. At various points in the semester I will charge each student with leading a discussion of the readings as well.
4. *Be prepared to perform your own writing each week—and perhaps to perform the work of others.* I use the term "perform" in the loosest sense here, asking you to imagine any number of vocal/physical actualizations of the text, ranging from merely "reading aloud" to some more complex staging. One of our aims in this course is to explore the relations between writing and performance: e.g., whether it is possible or advantageous to develop written texts that "perform" on their own, *without* the physical presence of the human actor; whether it is advantageous to write in such a way as to *require* the mediation of an actor, and so forth. Suffice it to say that you shouldn't be surprised if I ask you to get on your feet once in a while....

Writer as Performer 25%

This assignment asks you to assume the role of writer and, in class, perform your own work. The piece should run 15-20 minutes in presentation, be memorized, and well rehearsed and executed. Manuscripts are due the class period before you are scheduled to perform.

Writer as Audience 25%

For this assignment you are to write a 15-20 minute performance piece, and submit your manuscript anonymously to be performed by someone else in the class. Manuscripts are due on Th, Mar 3d where they will be distributed to a classmate to be performed. No one should guess or consult with one another regarding the piece that they are assigned to perform. All performances must be memorized.

Writer as Director 25%

Write a 15-20 minute piece and direct a classmate in the performance of your piece. The instructor will assign performers. Manuscripts are due Th, Apr 21st.

Academic Integrity

All students are expected to conform to the University's code of conduct. Students who cheat or plagiarize will fail the assignment concerned, will be turned in to the University's Judicial Committee, and may receive a failing grade for the course.

Access Policy

We cooperate fully with the University's Office of Disability Accommodation to provide reasonable accommodation to students who require it. Students who wish to self-identify should register with the ODA no later than the second day of class.

Policy on Incompletes

Per university policy, I will award grades of "Incomplete" only in cases where a student has completed 75% of the coursework AND the grade is warranted by a medical or military excuse. Inability to complete coursework in a timely fashion does not constitute an acceptable reason for requesting or receiving an incomplete.

Class Evaluation--SPOT

Spring 2016 SPOT Administration Dates: April 18th - May 1st

Disclaimer

This syllabus should not be construed as a binding contract on the part of the instructor or teaching assistants. We reserve the right to change any aspect of the course without notice.

A Notation of Read means have the reading done by that course day. Due means it is due on that day. A notation of writing assignments followed by a number means that it is due that day.

TENTATIVE COURSE CALENDAR

Week One

Th, Jan 21

Performance, Performativity

Introduction of Course

Week Two

Th, Jan 28

Performative Writing

Read: Austin, "How To Do Things With Words"

Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution"

Pollock, "Performing Writing"

Pelias, "Performative Writing as Scholarship"

Writing #1: Performative Utterances

Week Three

Th, Feb 4

Recovering Voice(s)

Read: Stafford, *The Muses Among Us*

Writing #2: Random Autobiography

Week Four

Th, Feb 11

Definitions and Key Terms

Read: Foucault, "What is an Author?"

Langellier and Peterson, "Shifting Contexts in Personal Narrative Performance."

Bowman & Bowman, "On the Bias"

Conquergood, "Rethinking Ethnography"

Bogart, *A Director Prepares*

Manuscript Due for Performance #1

Writing #3: Embarrassment

Week Five

Th, Feb 18

Performance #1—Writer as Actor

Week Six

Th, Feb 25

The Collaborative "I"

Read: Eakin, "Relational Selves, Relational Lives"

Pollock, "The Performative 'I'"

Gingrich-Philbrook, "Autoethnography's Family Values"

Bowman & Bowman, "Performing the Mystory"
Writing #4: Ground Zero

Week Seven
Th, Mar 3

Paging the Body
Read: Spry, *Body, Paper, Stage*
Manuscript Due for Performance #2
Writing #5: Embodied Knowledge

Week Eight
Th, Mar 10

Images
Read: Barthes, *Camera Lucinda*
Writing #6: Studium/Punctum

Week Nine
Th, Mar 17

Spring Break—No Class

Week Ten
Th, Mar 24

Anecdotes
Read: Pelias, 1-98
Geertz, "Deep Play"
Madison, *Performing Theory/Embodied Writing*
Viramontes, "Towards Transcendence"
Writing #7: The One About ...

Week Eleven
Th, Mar 31

Performance #2—Writer as Audience

Week Twelve
Th, Apr 7

SSCA—No Class

Week Thirteen
Th, Apr 14

Ways of Speaking 1: Quotation
(Class moved to COMM library)
Read: Pelias, 99-208
Benjamin, "Unpacking My Library"
Writing #8: Reported Speech

Week Fourteen
Th, Apr 21

Ways of Speaking 2: Mode
Read: Berger, *And Our Faces, My Heart, Brief as Photos*
Writing #9: Poetry and Prose
Manuscript Due for Performance #3

Week Fifteen

Th, Apr 28

Ways of Speaking 3: Voice

Read: Barthes, "The Grain of the Voice"

Ong, *Orality and Literacy*

Writing #10: Re-presenting Voice

Week Sixteen

Th, May 5

Writer as Director Rehearsal

FINAL EXAMINATION WEEK

Th, May 12

Performance #3—Writer as Director