



Instructor: S. Bernston

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Course Number: DRE222H5S

Course Title: The Performance Text

Course description: “Performance Text” will explode and explore conceptions of “performance”. By turns, performance will be interrogated from its roots in theatre to, more generally, a method of interpretation. At heart, this course borrows from developmental theorist Joseph Chilton Pearce: “Play is the only way the highest intelligence of humankind can unfold.” We will renovate and augment our sense of “plays” through rigorous play.

Within this broad definition, students will focus on the relationship between embodied performance and written text. We will pursue the interplay of words and performance before, during and after “the show”, investigating the use of text versus non-textual materials for performance creation, as well as diverse modes of archiving performances in text and the difficulties of translating notation and reconstruction across performance styles. Further, we will read performance itself as text, and elucidate formal divergences in “performance”. Students will encounter written texts from dance and music theatre, in addition to “straight” drama, and look at the wide variety of elements (actor, visual/sound design) within each. We will then extend this analysis beyond the theatre, to oratory, rhetoric, mass, slam, and other public performances, all as they intersect with written text.

This course is, at once, a creative approach to performance theorizing and a critical approach to creativity. Creative engagements with performance forms, including writing, vocal play, visual/sonic design and physical interpretations,

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will gird a series of theoretical readings from both theatre and performance studies. Alongside our creative and critical dialectic, we will pursue a correlative (but limited) investigation of the longstanding tradition of tension between verbal forms (poetry, music, situational writing, narrative) and live performance: which is to say, we know our exercise is not a new one, but we will approach it with novelty.

Required Reading: A coursepack, online materials, live performance viewings and A/V materials introduced in class or by assignment.

First Texts/Authors to be Studied:

Theoretical:

Selections from Carlson, Marvin. *Performance: A Critical Introduction*. New York; London: Routledge, 1996. (Coursepack)

Worthen, W.B. “The Disciplines of the Text: Sites of Performance”. / Jackson, Shannon. “Professing Performances: Disciplinary Genealogies”. / Bateson, Gregory “A Theory of Play and Fantasy”. *The Performance Studies Reader: 2nd Ed.* London, New York: Routledge, 2004. (Coursepack)

Artistic:

OK Go. “This Too Shall Pass RGM”. 1 Mar 2010. *OK Go Net*. Web. 1 May 2011.
<<http://www.okgo.net/media/videos/>>

Marinetti, F.T. “The Manifesto of Futurism”. *Documents of 20th Century Art: Futurist Manifestos*. Ed. Umbro Apollonio. New York: Viking Press, 1973. 19-24. Print. (Coursepack).

Reed, Ishmael. “Beware this Poem”. *Poems, Poets, Poetry*. Ed. Helen Vendler. Boston: Bedford Press, 1997. Print. (Coursepack)

Method of Instruction:

Mondays: A series of lectures to introduce fundamentals

Wednesdays: Presentation of performance texts

Fridays: In-class writing, music, and performance exercises

Method of Evaluation:

Participation	5%
Presentation of Text	15%
Weekly in-class practical “text” work	15%
Essay/Major Written Assignment	35%
Final Exam	30%