



**Instructor:** Steph Berntson

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**Course Number:** DRE222H5S

**Course Title:** The Performance Text

**Course description:** “The Performance Text” explodes and explores concepts of “performance”. In a series of rehearsal-style classes, the class will examine performance from a variety perspectives -- from a theatrical form to social event to a working cultural methodology. At heart, this course borrows from psychological developmental theorist Joseph Chilton Pearce: “Play is the only way the highest intelligence of humankind can unfold”. We will renovate our sense of performances -- of “plays” -- through rigorous *play*.

Through ten diverse performance styles, including manifestoism, oratory, performance poetics, digital communication, and social events, students will focus on the relationship between embodied performance and written text. Alongside this, we will consider the interplay of words and performance before, during, and after the “show”, identifying slippages in the notation, reconstruction, and archival processes. Conceptually, this course borrows from dramaturgical analysis, and demands students read performance itself as a text. We then respond to those readings by generating texts of our own on a weekly basis: in effect, exploding and exploring concepts of “text”, too.

This course is, at once, a creative approach to performance theorizing and a critical approach to creativity. Weekly creative engagements with our performance forms - including writing, vocal play, graphic design, or physical interpretations - are an integral part of this course, and will gird a series of theoretical readings from Performance and Cultural Studies, and process-texts from composers, directors, poets, and geographers. Within this

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creative/critical dialectic, we will find ourselves investigating the tradition of tension between the textual and live in performance beginning in Antiquity and persisting in Twitter feeds: which is to say “The Performance Text” recognises its exercise is not a at all a new one, but we will approach it with novelty. Fiction, here, becomes a tool of urgent relevance.

**Required Reading:** Selections from *The Performance Studies Reader (Second Edition)*, online materials, live performance viewings and A/V materials introduced in class or by assignment.

**First Texts to be Studied:**

**Artistic:**

Foster Wallace, David. “This is Water” (2008 Commencement Address at Kenyon College). Transcript: *A More Intelligent Life. The Economist Online*. 19 September 2008.

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

**Critical:**

Bay-Cheng, Sarah. “Translation, Typography, and the Avant-Garde’s Impossible Text”. *Theatre Journal*.

Carlson, Marvin. *Performance: A Critical Introduction*. London: Routledge, 1996.

Huizinga, Johan. “The Nature and Significance of Play as a Cultural Phenomenon”. *The Performance Studies Reader: 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.* Henry Bial. New York: Routledge, 2010. 280-299.

**Method of Instruction:** Three one-hour lectures per week, grouped by performance form. Within each week, we will do each of the following in variable configuration:

1. witness (watch, perform, and discuss a series of performances;
2. engage with philosophies of performance and aesthetics through readings; and
3. write creatively and critically in the week’s given mode.

The course will periodically feature guest lecturers.

**Method of Evaluation:**

Participation (lost with absence in excess of 11 classes)	10%
Test on theoretical terms and concepts	15%
Small analytical assignment	15%
Group presentation	15%
In-class writing and major written assignment	20%
Weekly performance reports	25%