**CMST 3041 – Performance of Everyday Life**

Spring 2017 TTh 10:30 AM – 11:50 AM Coates Hall 109

*Syllabus language borrowed in large part from Dr. Rachel Hall, Syracuse University and Dr. David Terry, Louisiana State University*

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Office Hours: TTh 1:00-2:00 PM, or by appointment

**Course Description:** The view of life as theater is an ancient and enduring metaphor for human reality. In recent years, there has been a resurgence of interest in the perspective of life as theater and in performance-centered approaches to communication, daily life and culture.

This course will explore the relations between performance and everyday life in a variety of social, cultural, and historical contexts. We will examine the performative elements in "ordinary" speech and behavior, in aspects of selfhood, identity, and personality, and in a variety of communication contexts. We will also look at such everyday performance genres as conversations and personal narratives, folklore and oral traditions, festivals and celebrations, ceremonies and rituals, media events and politics. Throughout the course, we will engage performance as a method of inquiry, experimenting with performance exercises and staging live performances to better understand the theoretical material we will consider.

The goals of the course are:

1. To broaden and deepen an understanding of performance as communication (and vice-versa), and of performance's various forms and functions in society and culture;
2. To enhance intercultural and historical awareness and sensitivity by examining some beliefs about and practices of communication/performance quite different from our own; and
3. To explore the use of performance as both a metaphor and a method of understanding the communication and behavior of others.

**Recommended Prerequisite**: CMST 2040 Introduction to Performing Literature.

**Required Text**: Elizabeth Bell, *Theories of Performance*.

**Course Requirements**: Each student is expected to attend scheduled class meetings; participate in class discussions, exercises, performances, and workshop activities; and read the assigned materials. Beyond these minimum expectations, each student will be responsible for one analytical response paper, two group performances, and two exams.

For the purpose of calculating final grades, the course requirements shall bear the following weights:

Attendance and in-class activities 200

1 analytical paper 100

1 midterm exam 100

1 final exam 100

2 group performances 2 @ 100 200 =

Total possible points 700

**A+ = 700-686 A= 685-651 A- = 650-630 B+ = 629-616 B= 615-581 B- = 580-560 C+ = 559-546 C= 545-511 C- = 510-490 D+ =489-476 D= 475-441 D- = 440-420 F= 419>**

**Attendance:** Attendance is a mandatory part of this class and will count as part of your participation grade. I do understand that sometimes things happen and you will, on occasion, miss a class. That being said, I am allowing you to have two “free” absences that will not detract from your grade. I suggest saving these absences for moments of importance i.e. illness or family emergency. If you miss more than two classes, points will be subtracted from your overall participation grade. University excused absences will be the only exception to this rule.

Performance theory (the content of this course) is predicated on the notion that the presence of the physical body “matters” and you will frequently be asked to engage your body as a tool of intellectual inquiry. Thus, if you know in advance you cannot attend most class meetings and/or cannot show up on performance dates, *you should drop this class*.

**Participation:** All students are expected to participate in class discussions, activities, workshops and assigned performances. We will explore varying facets of culture, communication and performance and each of you will bring your own unique experiences and views into the mix.I expect that each student will be respectful of their peers – this means that each student should take care to use language and actions that are comfortable and inclusive for everyone. This also means that you should respect each person’s learning process.

Part of your participation in class will include your role as an audience member. This means that you will be present to provide your undivided attention to in-class performances. After each set of performances, we will have in-class discussion about the performances and how they relate to the theory/class material. Be positive while working with your classmates – offer feedback in a way that is constructive rather than overly critical. It is at this point that I again remind you of the importance of attendance – it is equally as important to perform as it is to observe and support your classmates.

**Analytical Paper:** Descriptive and analytical account of the theatrical underpinnings of a selected social or cultural performance. Potential topics are virtually limitless. Paper should be based on your own participant-observations of and reflections on the performance in question, and the analysis should be grounded in the theories, concepts, and terminology introduced in this course.

You will have three (3) options for completing this assignment. That is, there will be three different paper assignments given during the semester, allowing you some choice of which topic you want to write about and whether you want to get the assignment done early in the semester or wait until nearer to the end. All papers should be 5 pp. in length (typed, double-space, 12 pt. font, 1 inch margins), and we will expect them to be well-organized, written clearly, concisely, and cogently, and carefully proofread for errors. Because you have an option as to which assignment you’ll do, and thus a choice of due dates, no late papers will be accepted.

**Group Performance Assignments-**The class will divide into small groups of 4-6 students and be assigned dates for performance projects. Each group will select two performances projects to work on together outside of class, and then present them to us on the assigned dates. Live performance projects are designed to complement the lecture and reading material to give you some experiential knowledge of abstract terms and concepts, and to illustrate issues and problems we’ll be covering. By way of analogy, you can think of these projects as the performance studies equivalent of a “lab experiment” in one of the “hard” sciences, where you are asked to perform certain tasks so that you can see and experience for yourself some of the things you read about or hear about in the course. Although the instructions for each project will be fairly simple and straightforward, in order to do them well, you will need to have a good understanding of the conceptual material, too. **Given the number of students in the course and the nature of these exercises, there will be no “make-up” opportunities for you: “the show must go on,” as they say—and it must go on at the appointed date, regardless of whether all participants are in attendance.** If a group member has a university-excused event during the semester, the group should schedule their performances around that date and make a note of it in their request.

*A note on grading performance work:* Performance efficacy is subjective to a degree – but on the other hand, you don’t have to be an expert to tell the difference between hastily prepared, sloppy work and carefully prepared, intelligent work. You will be graded first and foremost on meeting all the requirements of the assignment in your performance. But you will also be graded on making something worth watching, something interesting, engaging, energetic, and well-rehearsed. A ‘D’ performance will miss the mark in some key way, leaving us thinking, “That was weak; They clearly slapped this together in ten minutes.” ‘C’ performance meets requirements in a rote way, leaving us thinking, “Well they got the idea but that was just OK.” A ‘B’ performance will leave us thinking, “That was good; they had their ish together.” An ‘A’ performance will have everyone thinking, “Wow, that was awesome.”

**Cell Phones/Laptops/Tablet Devices**- The use of cell phones are strictly prohibited in our class sessions. If your cell phone rings during class, I reserve the right to answer it. While I understand that texting has become largely integrated into our communication practices, it is a distraction in class. If you are caught texting, you will lose participation credit for that day. This is not something I will announce in front of the class, I will simply make a note in my records. There will be times where you may want to take notes in class and you are welcome to do so on a laptop or tablet. If I notice that you are using a device for anything other than notetaking, I will ask you to not bring it to class again.

**Plagiarism**- There will be a zero tolerance policy for plagiarism. All students are expected to do complete their own work and properly cite all sources used in any assignment/speech/project/homework. Unless otherwise stated, all students are expected to turn in their own individual work – the class will be notified of any group assignments. Please refer to LSU policies regarded plagiarism, which can be found here: <http://www.lib.lsu.edu/instruction/plagiarism2.html>

\*\*If you have any questions or are unsure of what an act of plagiarism is, please do not hesitate to ask.

**Late Work**: All students are expected to turn in assignments on the days that they are due. I do not accept late work. If you know in advance that there is an event or situation that will cause you to not be able to turn in an assignment on its due date, please talk to me. I will not be able to help you if I’m made aware of the situation after it occurs. I also understand that sometimes events occur that are outside of your control. I will only accept work after the due date with proper documentation – i.e. a doctor’s note, a death certificate, etc.

**Discussing Grades**: Any questions or concerns that you may have about your grades should be addressed in person. I prefer that you come to office hours (or make an appointment with me) for these discussions. You can email me about setting up an appointment or to give me a heads up about coming to office hours, but do not send questions about your grade electronically. Emailed questions will receive the automated response of “please come to my office hours to address your concerns.”

We will have a 24/7 policy for discussing grades on major assignments. This means that there will be a 24 hour grace period for you to reflect on your grade before we can discuss it. After the 24 hour grace period, you have 7 days to discuss that particular assignment with me. Once the 7 day period has passed, all grade discussion for that assignment will be over.

After many semesters of hearing this phrase, I have put a ban on the following sentence and any variation of it: “…but I need an A in this class to\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.” While I do take sympathy with all of the phrases that could fill in the blank, your grade is your responsibility and pleading with me at the end of the semester is not going to help you. I want each of you to succeed and will do my best to assist you. That being said, all grades in this class will be based on merit. It is your responsibility to complete assignments, keep up with the reading, participate in class, etc. It is also your responsibility to keep up with your grades over the course of the semester. We will have much more productive conversations if we talk consistently during the semester than we would if you only come to see me at the end.

If there is an outside situation that is affecting your performance in our class, please talk to me about it as early as possible. The earlier that we can make accommodations, the better off you will be; it is much harder to deal with a situation after the fact.

**The Americans with Disabilities Act and Rehabilitation Act of 1973:** If you have a disability that may have some impact on your work in this class and for which you may require accommodations, please see a Coordinator in the Office of Disability Affairs (112 Johnston Hall) so that such accommodations may be arranged. After you receive your accommodation letter, please meet with me at some time during the first two weeks of class to discuss the provisions of those accommodations.

**SEXUAL HARRASSMENT AND MISCONDUCT**: LSU’s TITLE IX policy makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender are Civil Rights offenses subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, etc. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you can find the appropriate resources here for defining, reporting, and resolving sexual misconduct cases here: <http://www.lsu.edu/hrm/policies_and_procedures/Title_IX_item71081.php> and here: <http://www.lsu.edu/hrm/policies_and_procedures/Title_IX_Resources_item71342.php>