

## **Performance Historiography**

CMST 7941

Fall 2014

Tuesday/Thursday 10:30 am 12:00pm

Online

Rachel Hall

223 Coates Hall

[rchall@lsu.edu](mailto:rchall@lsu.edu)

Office hours: By phone appointment

Historiography refers to the writing of history and includes the construction of objects or subjects to be studied, archival work or interviews, and the creative process of amassing, delimiting, organizing, and narrating or otherwise representing source materials.

Historiography involves staking claims on the past and practices of legitimating in the present via the persuasive presentation of evidence or the intentional refusal to do so. In any case, historiography requires positing a theory of the relationship between the present and the past, which further entails a consideration of the politics, aesthetics, and ethics of re-membling the past to the present. In Della Pollock's terms, performance historiography takes up the challenge of "making history go" without making it go away. In this course, we will read methodological arguments over how to research and write histories, look at different examples of how history has been written, and consider the gendered, racial, ethnic, and sexual politics of historiography's history in the West.

Performance historiography centers its research on bodies, which are the sites where performance, understood as historical action or iteration (the doing of a thing in space and time) must negotiate performativity or reiteration (the historical conventions, stylizations, narratives, scripts, and cultural memories that condition and to some degree limit what it is possible to perform legibly within one's cultural, social, political, and historical context). In this regard, performance historiography addresses the problem of historical agency in the postmodern era, or how to make history repeat itself with a difference. Performance historiography takes up the challenge of historicizing people, experiences, and performances lacking extensive documentation in the archives of sanctioned historical collections. It addresses the problem of how to write histories of people whose cultural traditions are passed down through embodied acts of transmission or whose practices and experiences have been deemed "insignificant," "excessive," merely "personal," or otherwise outside the realm of the properly historical. In other words, performance historiography pays careful attention to how bodies get written into and out of history. It asks: Whose history, told by whom, in what context, and with what motives? Performance historiography is concerned with the status of the researcher or writer vis-à-vis her subject matter. It advocates reflexive historiography and harbors suspicion toward claims to scientific objectivity and naïve positivism on political and ethical grounds. Performance historiography is invested in "the content of the form" histories take—to borrow a phrase from Hayden White. That is, performance historiographers are invested not only in what they research but also in how they present their findings, what forms—narrative or otherwise—their histories take.

## **Required Books (available at the union bookstore)**

Della Pollock, *Exceptional Spaces: Essays in Performance and History*  
Bonnie Smith, *The Gender of History: Men, Women, and Historical Practice*  
Edward Said, *Orientalism*  
Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality Volume 1*  
Joseph Roach, *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance*  
Anne Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures*

Additional course readings are available on Moodle.

## **Grading Scale**

"A" = 90-100; "B" = 80-89; "C" = 70-79; "D" = 60-69; and "F" = below 60

## **Notes on grading**

A or √+	seminar performance is exceptional in all areas of assessment
B or √	assigned work is completed at a graduate level, but not exceptional in any area
C or √-	seminar performance does not meet passing standards

If you want to know my perceptions of your seminar performance at any point in the semester, contact me over email or by phone.

## **Class Meetings**

We will meet virtually every Tuesday morning, with the exception of Sept 2 (instructor has a conflict) and October 2 (Fall Break). In lieu of meeting Sept 2, we will meet twice during the first week of class and have only the online forum during the second week of class. Each Thursday, we will continue our discussion via a Moodle discussion forum.

## **Requirements**

### A. Participation (20%)

Facilitate class discussion: Each of you will play the role of facilitator twice during the course of the semester. Once you will guide our Moodle forum discussion by synthesizing and extending our live discussion via a series of follow-up questions, which you will post to the Moodle forum for that week by 9 am on Wednesday. Another time, you will come to our live meeting prepared to share an object that enables us to test the claims and/or concerns of that week's readings. In other words, you will lead us in a discussion that applies the week's readings to your object.

Virtual meetings: You are expected to attend and participate fully in all course meetings. You are a member of the particular community we will form this semester. I expect you

to treat your colleagues with respect and good humor, extending the benefit of the doubt and treating all questions as legitimate. If/ when you find it necessary to reference outside texts (those not assigned for this course), you should be prepared to briefly summarize key arguments or points for those of us who may not have read those texts.

Moodle Forums: Discussion forums will open as soon as the questions are posted (by 9am on Wednesday) and stay open until noon on Thursday. Every week, students should post one response to the prompt (between 75-150 words) and two replies to other students' comments. Below I have provided the rubric that I will use to evaluate your participation in online forums. In addition to these criteria, I encourage you to submit initial post(s) early in the session, and subsequent responses to the posts of other learners at timely intervals throughout the duration of the session. The goal is to have a dynamic discussion around the topic that lasts throughout the entire session. When relevant, add to the discussion by including prior knowledge, work experiences, references, web sites, resources, etc. (giving credit when appropriate). Finally, contributions to the discussions (posts and responses) should be complete and free of grammatical or structural errors.

#### Moodle Discussion Forum Rubric

Contributions	Description	Credit assigned
Provocative	Response goes beyond simply answering the prompt; attempts to stimulate further thought & discussion	√++
Substantial	Response provides most of the content required by the prompt, but does not require further analysis of the subject	√+
Superficial	Response provides obvious information without further analysis of the concept; lacks depth of knowledge or reasoning	√
Incorrect	Response does not accurately address the prompt; rambling and/or without consistency	√-
None	No response provided to the prompt within the associated timeframe	No credit

B. Written or otherwise performed assignments (10% each or 50% total)

1a) Proposal for historical study (3-5 pp., double-spaced, 12 pt. font, *Due September 9*):

Generate an historical question or problem and situate it with respect to the framework of the course. Articulate your question or problem in terms of what Pollock refers to as historicity. What are the particular challenges you face in terms of “making history go” and not go away in this case? Where/ how will you begin? What will you omit or cordon off as beyond the purview of this project? Will you be relying on an archive and/or repertoire? Does it already exist or do you have to create it?

1b) Project update (1-2 pp., double-spaced, 12 pt. font, *Due November 4*):

How have your research plans changed in light of course readings and discussion?

2) Archive Fever (4-5 pp., double-spaced, 12 pt. font, *Due September 16*):

Are you relying on an archive and/or repertoire? Does it already exist or do you have to create it? Please explain. Are these spaces of research and writing in some way exceptional or excessive? Explain. How will this shape your approach to the writing of history? How do you understand your relationship to your research materials? Think reflexively about your attraction to your objects of study. Will you attempt to objectivize your relationship to the object/s? Or do you have something else in mind? Where is your body in this scenario? Finally, reflect on the politics of doing historical work in this case.

3) Narrativity (2-3 pp., double-spaced, 12 pt. font, *Due October 7*):

Draft a portion of your research findings in the narrative style. Then append a short reflection on the process of crafting a narrative out of your research materials.

4) Poetics (2-3 pp., double-spaced, 12 pt. font, *Due October 14*):

Re-draft the same portion of your research without recourse to a linear narrative. Then append a short reflection on your process in comparison to the narrative assignment. How were your findings altered by the content of the form? Which approach is the best stylistic choice for your findings and why?

5) Performing History (10 minutes maximum, *Sign up for November 11 or 25*):

Devise a way to perform your historical research for the class. Don't be afraid to play with the politics of representing your object of study/historical analysis.

C. Seminar paper (30%)

Final paper (10-15 pp., double-spaced, 12 pt. font; *December 8 by 5pm*):

In your final paper, you will revise and synthesize the progressive writing assignments that you have completed over the course of the semester into one of the following:

a) Prospectus

If you choose to write a prospectus, you will develop the research and written work already completed for the course into a coherent articulation of a research project and plan of study.

b) Conference paper

If you choose to write a conference paper, you will develop the research and written work already completed for the course to the point that you have a cogent argument, narrative structure, or analytical framework.

c) Other

If neither option “a” nor option “b” suits your present position as a researcher and writer, then you may propose an alternative assignment, which I will take under consideration.

In your final paper, be sure to address and/or demonstrate how you will attempt to “make history go” without making it go away.

## **Course Schedule (subject to change)**

### August 26-28: Introduction to the course

8/26: What is historiography? Communication historiography? Performance and history

8/28: Performance and History

Della Pollock, "Making History Go" in *Exceptional Spaces*

Peggy Phelan, "The Ontology of Performance" in *Unmarked*

Diana Taylor, "Acts of Transfer" in *The Archive and the Repertoire*

### September 2-4: Performance and History

Moodle discussion forum led by Dr. Hall

### September 9-11: Historical Materialism and Post-Marxist Historiography

*Proposal for Historical Study Due (September 9)*

Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History"

Henri Lefebvre, Excerpts from *The Production of Space*

### September 16-18: Deconstruction

*Archive Fever Due (September 16)*

Jacques Derrida, "Preface" and "Writing Before the Letter" in *Of Grammatology*

Jacques Derrida, "Declarations of Independence"

### September 23-25: Feminist Theory

Joan Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis"

Bonnie G. Smith, "Gender and the Mirror of History" and "The Practices of Scientific History" and "Men and Facts" in *The Gender of History: Men, Women, and Historical Practice*

### September 30: Postcolonial Theory

Edward Said, *Orientalism*

Homi Bhabha, Excerpts from *Nation and Narration*

October 2: Fall Break

### October 7-9: Performativity

*Narrativity Due (October 7)*

J.L. Austin, "How To Do Things with Words"

Jacques Derrida, "Signature, Event, Context"

Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution"

"Imitation and Gender Insubordination"

Sedgwick and Parker, "Introduction: Performativity and Performance"

### October 14-16: A Question of Style

*Poetics Experiment Due (October 14)*

Hayden White, "The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality" and "The Question of Narrative in Contemporary Historical Theory," in *The Content of the Form*

Dominick LaCapra, "Rhetoric and History" in *History and Criticism*  
Bonnie G. Smith, "The Narcotic Road to the Past" in *The Gender of History*

October 21-23: Genealogy

Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality Volume 1*

\_\_\_\_\_. "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History"

\_\_\_\_\_. "Introduction: Modifications," in *The History of Sexuality Volume 2*

\_\_\_\_\_. "Questions of Method," in *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality with Two Lectures and an Interview with Michel Foucault*

October 28-30: Histories of Desire

Della Pollock, Part 3 in *Exceptional Spaces*

Carolyn Steedman, "Introduction: Lost and Found," "The World Turned Within," and "The Child as Acrobat," in *Strange Dislocations*

November 4-6: A Genealogy of Circum-Atlantic Performance

*Project Update Due (November 4)*

Joseph Roach, *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance*

November 11-13: (Dis)Playing History

*Performing History Group 1*

Parts 2 and 4 in *Exceptional Spaces*

November 18-20: NCA

November 25: Producing History

*Performing History Group 2*

Della Pollock, Part 5 in *Exceptional Spaces*

Carolyn Steedman, Selections from *Dust*

November 27: Thanksgiving

December 2-4: Historicizing Affect

Joan Scott, "On Experience"

Anne Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings*

December 8: Final Papers Due by 5 pm