

THEATRE 615B: PERFORMANCE THEORY

Instructor: Markus Wessendorf
Phone/Email: 956-2600; wessendo@hawaii.edu
Office: Sakamaki Hall A404

Fall 2013
MW 1:30pm-2:45pm
Men's Dress

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

1. Student demonstrates broad and in-depth knowledge in performance theory.
2. Student demonstrates original thought by conducting an independent research project resulting in a final paper.
3. Student demonstrates ability to present his/her research within a conference format.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course provides a broad introduction to performance theory, a relatively new discipline that gradually evolved since the 1960s and only became established academically with the founding of the first Performance Studies department at New York University in 1980. Performance theory includes theatre, performance art, and other performing arts, but it also extends to the wide range of performances and performatives that are not artistic in nature: from ritual to sports to entertainment to the "presentation of self in everyday life" (Goffman). As a field, performance studies is partially responsible for the so-called "performative turn" in various social sciences and humanities, many of which have come to accept the assumption that all human practices are, to a certain extent, performances (with major consequences for the methodologies of history, ethnography, anthropology, linguistics, etc.). This "performative turn" has also affected art institutions that used to be adverse to any aspects of theatricality in modern art. (One major indication for this development is the recent discovery of performance art by major museums such as the retrospective of Marina Abramović's work or the series of concerts by the German band Kraftwerk at the Museum of Modern Art in New York.) Performance theory, of course, has also changed the way we approach research in our own discipline, theatre studies. In this course we will use the textbook created by one of the founders of Performance Studies, Richard Schechner. Since there are different schools of performance theory, however, it will be important to approach Schechner's ideas critically.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

1. Punctuality and attendance at all classes.
2. Careful reading of all assigned materials, *before* class.
3. Thoughtful and energetic participation in all class discussions.
4. All writing assignments have to be handed in *on time* (no exceptions!!!).
5. Bring the appropriate readings to class with you.

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS AND EXAMINATIONS:

1. *Term paper*—You are expected to write a 10-12 page, double-spaced, type-written essay that must be an **independent** and **original** work of your own scholarship. The term paper should present an overview and analysis of either one theoretical discourse (performance, ritual, performativity, etc.) or the work of one theorist (Victor Turner, Judith Butler, Jon McKenzie, et al.) discussed in class. In addition to the texts already

assigned in class, you are expected to consult at least 3 additional books on that discourse/by that author for this assignment. The due-date for the term paper is **November 27**. Each term paper also requires a 1-2 page prospectus (including bibliography) that is due three weeks earlier, on **November 4**.

2. *Presentations*—You are required to give three 10-minute presentations in class that provide a short introduction to one of the readings assigned for the respective course session. You are also expected to hand in a 2-3 page, type-written version of each introduction two weeks after the respective presentation.

3. *Midterm exam*—The midterm exam will take place on **October 16** and will cover the subjects discussed in class up to that point.

4. *Journal*—You will be required to keep a journal in which you document your responses to class discussions as well as your reflections on the assigned readings. Your response may focus upon any of the following: the writer's key ideas, definitions, background, point-of-view, methodology, and thematic interconnections with other readings discussed in class (see questionnaire below). Please date your entries. Also, every Monday you are expected to email your most recent journal entries to your instructor. On **November 25** you will exchange (printed-out) journals with a partner in class. On **December 4** you will give a 10-minute presentation based on your partner's journal.

5. *Conference*—On **December 9**, the last day in class, we will have 2-hour conference during which each student will give a 20-minute presentation of the material that s/he worked on in the term paper. The presentation, though, should not simply consist in the reading aloud of the term paper, but should rather be a well-rehearsed lecture using a re-edited version of the text—i.e., re-edited with an audience of listeners in mind.

GRADING:

Prospectus & Bibliography:.....	5%
Term Paper:.....	20%
Midterm Exam:.....	20%
Conference:.....	15%
3 Presentations:.....	15%
Journal & Journal Presentation:.....	15%
Class Participation:.....	10%

REQUIRED TEXTS (Available at the UH Bookstore):

- Richard Schechner. *Performance Studies: An Introduction*. 3rd ed. New York and London: Routledge, 2013. (= **PSAI**)
- Henry Bial, ed. *The Performance Studies Reader*. 2nd ed. New York and London: Routledge, 2006. (= **TPSR**)

**SYLLABUS
THEATRE 615B
THEORY**

**FALL 2013
PERFORMANCE**

DATE	SUBJECT/ASSIGNMENT DUE
Mon 19 Aug	Introduction to Course
Wed 21 Aug	Schechner: <i>Prefaces & What Is Performance Studies?</i> (PSAI ix-27)
Mon 26 Aug	Schechner: <i>What Is Performance?</i> (PSAI 28-51)
Wed 28 Aug	Goffmann: <i>Belief in the Part One Is Playing</i> (TPSR 61-65); Geertz: <i>Blurred Genres: The Refiguration of Social Thought</i> (TPSR 66-69); Carlson: <i>What Is Performance?</i> (TPSR 70-75); Phelan: <i>Marina Abramović: Witnessing Shadows</i> (TPSR 78-86)
Mon 2 Sep	LABOR DAY
Wed 4 Sep	Schechner: <i>Ritual I</i> (PSAI 52-70)
Mon 9 Sep	Turner: <i>Liminality and Communitas</i> (TPSR 89-97); Bell: "Performance" and other Analogies (TPSR 98-106); Mason: "The Blood That Runs Through the Veins" (TPSR 107-117)
Wed 11 Sep	Schechner: <i>Ritual II</i> (PSAI 70-88)
Mon 16 Sep	Faber: <i>Saint Orlan: Ritual as Violent Spectacle and Cultural Criticism</i> (TPSR 118-124); Santino: <i>Performative Commemoratives, the Personal, and the Public</i> (TPSR 125-133)
Wed 18 Sep	Schechner: <i>Play</i> (PSAI 89-122)
Mon 23 Sep	Huizinga: <i>The Nature and Significance of Play as a Cultural Phenomenon</i> (TPSR 137-140); Bateson: <i>A Theory of Play and Fantasy</i> (TPSR 141-151); Kaprow: <i>Just Doing</i> (TPSR 159-163)
Wed 25 Sep	Schechner: <i>Performativity I</i> (PSAI 123-148)
Mon 30 Sep	Austin: <i>How to Do Things with Words</i> (TPSR 177-183); Derrida: from <i>Signature Event Context</i> (TPSR 184-186); Parker/Sedgwick: <i>Introduction to Performativity and Performance</i> (TPSR 200-207)
Wed 2 Oct	Schechner: <i>Performativity II</i> (PSAI 148-169)
Mon 7 Oct	Butler: <i>Performative Acts and Gender Constitution</i> (TPSR 187-199); Fabian: <i>Theatre and Anthropology, Theatricality and Culture</i> (TPSR 208-215)
Wed 9 Oct	Schechner: <i>Performing I</i> (PSAI 170-197)
Mon 14 Oct	Brecht: <i>A Dialogue about Acting</i> (TPSR 219-222); Grotowski: <i>The Actor's Technique</i> (TPSR 223-228); Strasberg: <i>A Dream of Passion</i> (TPSR 229-230)
Wed 16 Oct	MIDTERM EXAM
Mon 21 Oct	Schechner: <i>Performing II</i> (PSAI 198-220)
Wed 23 Oct	Harding: <i>Presenting and Re-Presenting the Self</i> (TPSR 231-248); Blair: <i>Reconsidering Stanislavski</i> (TPSR 249-261)
Mon 28 Oct	Schechner: <i>Performance Processes I</i> (PSAI 221-243)
Wed 30 Oct	Okpewho: <i>The Oral Artist: Training and Preparation</i> (TPSR 274-279); De Marinis: <i>The Performance Text</i> (TPSR 280-299)

Mon 4 Nov	Schechner: <i>Performance Processes II</i> (PSAI 244-262) PROSPECTUS AND BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR TERM PAPER DUE!
Wed 6 Nov	Meyerhold: <i>First Attempts at a Stylized Theatre</i> (TPSR 265-273); Barba: <i>The Deep Order Called Turbulence</i> (TPSR 300-309); Zimmerman: <i>The Archaeology of Performance</i> (TPSR 310-319)
Mon 11 Nov	VETERANS DAY
Wed 13 Nov	Schechner: <i>Global and Intercultural Performances I</i> (PSAI 263-287)
Mon 18 Nov	Bell: <i>Performance Studies in an Age of Terror</i> (TPSR 56-58); Wessendorf: <i>Culture of Fear</i> (handout)
Wed 20 Nov	Schechner: <i>Global and Intercultural Performances II</i> (PSAI 287-308)
Mon 25 Nov	Turner: <i>Performing Ethnography</i> (TPSR 323-336); Bhabha: <i>Of Mimicry and Man</i> (TPSR 337-344); Wessendorf: <i>Zombie Walks and Zombie Economics</i> (handout) EXCHANGE JOURNAL WITH OTHER STUDENT IN CLASS!
Wed 27 Nov	Schechner: <i>Global and Intercultural Performances III</i> (PSAI 308-331) TERM PAPER DUE!
Mon 2 Dec	Gómez-Peña: <i>Culturas-In-Extremis</i> (TPSR 345-356); Conquergood: <i>Performance Studies: Interventions and Radical Research</i> (TPSR 369-380)
Wed 4 Dec	Journal Presentations & Wrap-Up
Mon 9 Dec 2:15 – 4:15	Conference

Questions that might guide your reading of the assigned texts...

What do you consider the one major concept presented in the assigned reading? Explain.

List (by rank) the five most important sentences of the essay and give reasons for your decision.

Which notions in the text were radically new at the time of first publication?

Which ideas of the author would you (still) consider relevant?

What does the essay reveal about its author (class, race, gender, education, religious beliefs, predilections, attitudes, etc.)?

What does the author take for granted that you don't?

Who is the intended reader/audience of the text?

What use could be made of this text? How could it inspire a performance?

Try to describe the text in performative terms. (For example, does it follow an Aristotelian structure: beginning—middle—end? Could it be performed as a dialogue or a monologue? Is it written like a rather dry lecture for the initiated, or more like an inspired speech for a mass audience? Etc.)

How wide is the range of theatrical aspects that the author considers in his/her writing? (Does the text only discuss drama, or does it also deal with questions of staging and performance, the spectator and theatre space, etc.?)

Do you agree with the author? Do you find his/her arguments flawed? Give examples.

Try to find more examples that confirm the author's line of argument.

Assume the role of "devil's advocate" by conceiving of a counter-theory that totally—and convincingly—opposes the author's argument in all points.