

Expressive Cultures: Performance  
CORE-UA 740.001 (Spring 2016)  
Instructor: Prof. Karen Shimakawa

## Course Syllabus

### Course Description [*revised 2/6/16*]

Welcome to "Expressive Cultures: Performance." In this course we will focus on *performance* as a form of cultural expression, as a site of cultural change, and as a building block of "culture" itself. What "counts" as performance? Does it have to be on a stage? (What counts as a stage?) Does there have to be an audience? Why do performers perform? What difference (or differences) does performance make? We will consider a wide range of performances -- on the stage, page, screen, and street -- in order to explore these questions. Our objectives for this course are to:

- learn and apply the concept of "performance" as a lens to study culture
- learn to "close read" performances, analyze them critically, and write about them clearly
- become familiar with the fundamental theoretical approaches to "performance," and to understand and articulate their cultural relevance
- explore the usefulness of "practice-based" research methods
- develop presentation and critical writing skills

### Class Meetings:

### Office Hours:

#### Lecture (Section 001):

Prof. Karen Shimakawa ([kshimakawa@nyu.edu](mailto:kshimakawa@nyu.edu))

MW 9:30a-10:45a

194M, Room 306

T 3-5:30 & by appointment

sign up @ [calendly.com/kshimakawa](https://calendly.com/kshimakawa)

721 Broadway, Room 604

#### Discussion Section 002:

Ethan Philbrick ([ep1241@nyu.edu](mailto:ep1241@nyu.edu))

T 8:00a-9:15a

12WVL 114

T 11a-12p

721 Broadway

Room 618

#### Discussion Section 003:

Ethan Philbrick

T 9:30a-10:45a

GODD B07

Discussion Section 004:

Tara Willis ([taw265@nyu.edu](mailto:taw265@nyu.edu))  
T 8:00a-9:15a  
12WVL 113

W 11a-12p  
721 Broadway  
Room 618

Discussion Section 005:

Tara Willis  
T 9:30a-10:45a  
SILV 504

Course-related URLs

Class website: go to [nyuexpressivecultures2016.wordpress.com](http://nyuexpressivecultures2016.wordpress.com). It's a protected site, so if you are not able to see the site, that means you need to email me and let me know, and I'll send you an invitation. You'll need to create an account if you don't already have one.

Citation style: Purdue University website on research and citation (MLA and Chicago Style): [owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/2/](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/2/)

Paper submissions: for all paper assignments, we're using an online submission procedure ([instructure.canvas.com](http://instructure.canvas.com)). You will receive an invitation to create an account (choose username and password) a few days after the start of the semester.

NYU Museum Gateway: for Paper #2 you will need to do field research at a museum. Your NYU ID card will get you into many museums in NYC for free -- see <https://www.nyu.edu/life/student-life/getting-involved/museum-gateway.html> for details.

Plagiarism: Please familiarize yourself with NYU's policy on plagiarism in the Student Handbook and on the Tisch School of the Arts website (<http://tisch.nyu.edu/faculty/academic-integ>). It is your responsibility to make sure you understand what constitutes plagiarism, and how to avoid committing it.

Course Requirements (detailed descriptions follow)

1. For each class meeting (except where noted below) there will be assigned readings. Please come to lecture with the reading assignment completed, and be ready to explore, critique, and discuss them.

2. In addition, at the end of each class meeting I will give you a few thought prompts/questions directed at the next set of readings. We'll also post them to the class blog. Prior to each class meeting (no later than midnight the night before) please post your response to that question. (350 words maximum)
3. For one discussion section you will present a performance example of your choosing that relates to the readings to be discussed at that meeting. (5 minutes of performance shown/described plus 5 minutes of discussion)
4. Quizzes: there will be SIX short-answer quizzes over the course of the semester. These may take place in either the lecture or the discussion sections, dates TBD. The scores for FIVE of these quizzes will be factored into your final grade for the course.
5. Papers: there are FOUR short papers (1250-1500 words each). You will have the option of revising ONE of the papers for a higher grade. Your new grade for the assignment, if higher, will be AVERAGE of your old and new paper grades.
6. Final examination: there will be an in-class final examination on the last day of class (Monday, 5/9).

Grading

Your course grade will be calculated as follows (percentages):

class participation	20
blog posts	15
performance presentation	5
quizzes (5)	10
papers (10% each)	40
<u>final examination</u>	<u>10</u>
TOTAL	100

Required Texts

All readings will be available on the class website.

Assignment Schedule

date	assignment	topic(s)
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M 1/25	n/a	introduction	
W 1/27	Schechner, <i>Between Theater &amp; Anthropology</i> (excerpt)	what is "performance"? (anthropological approaches)	
M 2/1	Austin, <i>How to Do Things With Words</i> , Ch. I-III	performativity (linguistic approaches)  performance/performativity and social identity	
W 2/3	Felman, <i>The Scandal of the Speaking Body</i> (excerpt)		
M 2/8	Goffman, <i>The Presentation of Self and Stigma</i> (excerpts)		
W 2/10	Butler, "Endangered/Endangering," Gross, <i>What Blood Won't Tell</i> Ch. 2		
M 2/15	(no class -- Presidents Day)		
W 2/17	de Certeau, "Walking in the City," Bourdieu, "Structures, <i>habitus</i> , practices"	performing bodies in space	
M 2/22	Kleist, "On The Marionette Theater," Turkle, <i>Evocative Objects</i> (excerpt)	performative things	
W 2/24	Garoian, "Performing the Museum," Ochsner, "Understanding the Holocaust" <b>Paper #1 (everyday performance) due via upload by 23:59</b>	performative museum exhibition	
M 2/29	Sontag, <i>Regarding the Pain of Others</i> and <i>On Photography</i> (excerpts), Barthes, <i>Camera Lucida</i> (excerpt), Didi-Huberman, <i>Images In Spite of All</i> (excerpt)	performative images (photography)	
W 3/2	Preciado, <i>Pornotopia</i> (excerpt); McCullough, <i>Ambient Commons</i> (excerpt)	performative architecture	
M 3/7	Garland-Thompson, "From Wonder to Error," Taylor, "A Savage Performance"	museum bodies	
W 3/9	Taylor, <i>The Archive and the Repertoire</i> (excerpt); Lepecki, <i>The Body as Archive</i>	museum bodies, cont'd.	
M 3/14	(no class -- Spring Break)		
W 3/16			
M 3/21	Abramovic, <i>House With An Ocean View</i> (excerpt)	performance of/in the museum	
W 3/23	Kaprow, <i>Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life</i> (excerpt), Boal, "Poetics of the Oppressed" <b>Paper #2 (museum performance) due via upload by 23:59</b>	performance as method/research	
M 3/28	Guest lecture: Tara Willis Lemon, <i>Come Home Charlie Patton</i> (excerpt)	TBA	
W 3/30	Hsieh, <i>Out of Now</i> (excerpts)	research as performance  digital performance/practices	
M 4/4	Ono, <i>Grapefruit</i> (excerpt)		
W 4/6	Fabiao, <i>Actions</i> (excerpt)		
M 4/11	<i>How to do Things With Videogames</i> (excerpts), Bilal, <i>Shoot an Iraqi</i> (excerpt); <a href="http://wafaabilal.com">wafaabilal.com</a>		

W 4/13	Jakovljevic, "Shattered Back Wall" <b>Paper #3 (practice-based research) due via upload by 23:59</b>	
M 4/18	[class cancelled]	
W 4/20	Guest lecture: Ethan Philbrick -- readings TBA	
M 4/25	Moten, <i>In the Break</i> (excerpt), Kun, "Death Rattle," Auslander, "Musical Personae"	sound performance
W 4/27	Raley, "Walk This Way," Schneider, <i>Performing Remains</i> (excerpt)	locative performance; re-performance
M 5/2	TBA	
W 5/4	<b>Paper #4 (staged performance) due via upload by 23:59</b> review	
M 5/9	Final examination in class	
W 5/11	Optional paper revision due via upload by 23:59p	

### Assignment Descriptions & Grading Rubrics

Reading/Discussion/Participation: The class (including lectures and discussion sections) is structured in a discussion-based format -- which means we will be "teaching" largely by asking questions based on the assigned materials. The quality of your experience will only be as good as your participation makes it. I expect you to come to class having completed the reading assignments and ready to actively engage in a conversation about them. "Participation" includes active, engaged discussions in class, timely completion of reading assignments, and on-time attendance. You are permitted ONE absence from discussion section and ONE absence from lecture; subsequent absences or repeated, significant late arrivals will lower your participation grade.

An "A" grade in this category mean that you read the assigned materials carefully and critically by the due date, and that you participate actively in class discussion based on that reading; a "B" grade means that you have completed the reading by the due date and have a general understanding of the contours and conclusions drawn in that material, even if some of the nuances and finer points of the argument are not fully understood, and that you are able to ask questions whose answers contribute meaningfully to your own and others' understanding; a "C" grade means that you have substantially completed the reading assignment and have a general understanding of the topic and arguments; a "D" grade means that you have started, but not completed, the reading assignment and/or have a substantial misunderstanding of the arguments, and/or are not (or only intermittently) engaged in the discussion; an "F" grade means that it appears that you did not do (or understand) the reading and/or are not in attendance.

Notes: (1) I do not disallow devices (computers, phones, etc.) unless they appear to be detracting from your or your classmates' ability to participate fully in class -- in which case I will ask you to either shut them down or leave the class (if you must continue their use); (2) I have no objection to your eating or drinking in class as long as I cannot hear it or smell it and you clean up after yourself.

Blog Posts: At the end of each class meeting (lecture) the TAs or I will offer some kind of "prompt" (provocation or question) pertaining to the readings for the following session. We'll also post the prompt on the class website on the "Blog" page. The day before the next lecture, no later than midnight, you should post your response to the prompt -- as a "Comment" to the post. NOTE: your response need not be long or formally composed -- the point is precision and quality of engagement, not quantity.

These posts will not be graded individually -- your grade will be based on your cumulative, timely fulfillment of the assignment over the course of the semester.

An "A" grade in this category means that you posted all responses on time, and these entries were responsive to the prompt, and evidenced serious thought and thorough engagement with the prompt and the readings. A "B" grade means either that you (a) posted responses on time every time but not all of them evidenced the active and engaged thinking described above, or (b) not all of your posts were submitted by the deadline but were otherwise of "A" quality. A "C" grade means that you did not submit all of the posts on time OR that the majority of your posts did not evidence active critical engagement. A "D" grade means that you did not submit all of the posts on time AND the majority of your posts did not evidence active critical engagement. A "F" grade means that you submitted fewer than half of the required posts.

Performance Presentation: Your TA will circulate a sign-up sheet for you to choose a date for your presentation (once during the semester). For your assigned date, you will seek out one performance example (on YouTube or other video platform, a website/image, or a written description of a performance) that relates to the readings/topic to be discussed that day. The performance example should illuminate some material aspect of the theories contained in the readings, and should be no longer than 5 minutes long. Following the showing, you (and the TAs) will lead a brief (5 minutes) conversation in which you explain the connection you see between your example and the readings. NOTE: since more than one student will be presenting examples in each discussion section meeting, you should coordinate with the other scheduled presenters ahead of time, to ensure that you don't choose the same examples.

An "A" grade in this category means that you have chosen an example that engages with (illuminates, extends, or even challenges) the arguments in the readings; and that you have a clear

analysis of the example and its particular relation to the readings; a "B" grade means that you have selected an appropriate example and presented it adequately to the class, but did not articulate a clear interpretation/analysis; a "C" grade means that your example is superficially related to the general topic treated by the readings but does not directly relate to the particular theories/arguments in the readings; a "D" grade means that your chosen example does not directly engage with the readings in any way; a "F" grade means that you did not do the assignment.

Quizzes: Over the course of the semester there will be SIX unscheduled, in-class, short-answer quizzes whose questions will be drawn from the readings and lectures. The five highest scores will be counted toward your final grade.

Papers: All papers should be 1250-1500 words, typed, titled (an original title specific to your thesis, not the title of the assignment), double-spaced, using correct and complete citation format (MLA or Chicago Style) [footnote citation]. All papers should be uploaded to [instructure.canvas.com](https://instructure.com) (you will create an account) no later than 11:59p on the due date. Late papers will be graded down by one half grade for every day after the due date -- no exceptions except in extreme/severe cases and with appropriate documentation and instructor approval.

- 1) Analysis of "everyday" performance: for this assignment, consider a (non-theatrical) performance -- as the theorists we've read thus far define that term/concept -- that you have witnessed personally some time in the last week. In what sense does this event constitute a "performance"? What "strips of behavior" (Schechner) were isolated? What is the "twice behaved" aspect of the event? Now consider our readings on performativity: in what way(s) is this performance performative? (Due 11:59p Wednesday, 24 February)
- 2) Museum performance: For this assignment, you should visit the museum of your choosing on your own and analyze how the exhibit performs and is performative. (A more detailed explanation of this assignment will be distributed and discussed in lecture.) (Due 11:59p, Wednesday, 23 March)
- 3) Performance as research/research as performance: For this assignment, choose a score from either the Fluxus Workbook or Ono's *Grapefruit*, or design a "score" of your own. Perform that score. Describe the action(s), and your experiences thereof. What did the *doing* of that score reveal/generate for you, that merely *imagining* doing it (or watching someone else do it) would not have? Conversely, considering that "data" that you collected via this research method, what might you be able to generalize -- how might your experience translate into others' use/value/experience? (Due 11:59p, Wednesday, 13 April)

- 4) "Theatrical" performance analysis: For this assignment you will attend a formal, ticketed "performance" as that term is conventionally understood -- that is, a live event, a stage (or designated performance area), with self-identified performer(s) and audience members, maybe even a curtain!, etc. Using the theories we've studied this semester, analyze the performance -- not just a summary of the "plot" or an appraisal of the performers' skill, but an analysis of the performance *event*. Possible questions you might consider: how is this performance performative? What role(s) does/do the space, architecture, objects, etc. play in this process? How might socially-encoded embodiment contribute to the performance's effect(s)? (Due 11:59p, Wednesday, 4 May)
- \*) Optional revision: you may revise one paper for re-grading. If your revised version receives a higher grade, that grade will be averaged with the original grade. (Due 11/59p, Wednesday 5/11)

An "A" grade in this category means that you have written a paper that evidences original, productive, critical thinking on this topic, is directly responsive to the assignment, with a clearly articulated thesis/argument, utilizing the readings from the class where appropriate as well as specific details from your chosen case study to support your argument. The argument should be logical, organized, and compelling, the writing clear, concise, and proofread for grammatical/typographical/logical correctness. A "B" grade means that your paper has elements of all of the above but falls short in one or two aspects. A "C" grade means that you have identified a topic that is responsive to the assignment, relevant and workable, but have not composed a cogent argument about that topic, or gathered/assembled evidence in support of that argument. A "D" grade means that you submitted a paper, but it not have a discernable or workable topic. A "F" grade means that you did not complete the assignment.

### Warnings/Disclaimers

Please note: I don't give warnings or disclaimers. I've chosen the material for this course based on what I think are the most appropriate, most generative materials available. If for any reason something presented in class (lecture or discussion section) upsets or offends you to the point that you cannot safely continue to be present, it is your responsibility to take appropriate action to take care of yourself. If it is absolutely necessary for you to excuse yourself from the room, you should do so. In that event, please communicate with me and/or your TA as soon as possible to discuss the situation.