**The Nature of Performativity 2 credits**

**Fall 2016 Room TBA**

**Timeslot TBA**

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**Description**

The course examines the concept of performativity, one of the important terms in our research of gender and sexuality. The course traces its development in philosophy, its introduction to feminist and queer inquiry, and examines its complicated relationship to the concept of nature: we will look at the development of the concept of performativity in speech act theory and deconstruction which enabled its productive work in Gender Studies exemplified by the work of Judith Butler and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick who look at ways in which performativity helps us better understand gendered embodiment and affect. We will also trace the queerness of performativity to discussions of femininity and theatricality. We will close with readings from new materialism to see how performativity helps reconfigure the concept of nature.

**Learning outcomes:** Students will be familiar with the development and the genealogy of the concept of performativity in poststructuralist thought and its immediate connection to and implications in Gender Studies. Students will also gain basic competence in affect theory and new materialism. The oral and written assignments help students to improve their skills to articulate their thoughts as academic questions and problems and to make scholarly arguments.

**Requirements**

**Class participation:** You are required to attend class consistently. Please come to class having read, and bringing with you, the assigned texts. Your active participation (listening as well as speaking) will be expected. Generally, the more active class participation is in a class, the more intellectually stimulating it becomes, so I hope that you will always share your thoughts during discussion. You may miss one class without formal documentation of illness or any other case of vis major. Please let me know in advance if you know you won’t come to class.

**Groupwork:**

At the beginning of most classes, we’ll spend 15-20 minutes in groups. During this time you can discuss your impression of the texts and suggest questions for general class discussion. At the end of the class we will discuss a limited selection of these points and questions. **For this component of the course to work well it is very important that you arrive to class on time.**

**Written assignments:**

**1 writing assessment paper**

You have to write 1 reaction paper during the course You have to submit your reaction paper before or at the end of week 4. Here are the guidelines for a reaction paper:

**Guidelines for reaction papers**

1. What is a reaction paper?

Reaction papers in this course are not only summaries of the texts. They focus on one problem or question that you identify in relation to and/or within the text.

The reaction paper focuses on one text but is otherwise an open exercise. For ideas how you should construct a reaction paper, see the next section.

The reader should be left at the end with an understanding of why you have chosen to focus your attention on this one problem or debate in particular: what is the relevance of this problem for you?

Reaction papers should be around **500 words**. Please include the title of the reading you are writing about, your name, the name of the course, and the date of submission.

2. Guidelines for preparing your reaction paper

You don’t have to do all this, but some of this may help.

Read the text and list to yourself what to you seem like the keywords and concepts/problems. Try to summarize its argument with the help of these keywords and concepts. Practice writing a short summary: how much can you omit by still being able to say what the text is about and what it argues.

When you are done, you can return to your list of keywords.

Can you find one question or problem that:

a) relates to these key words and concepts;

b) produces a reaction in you (negative, positive, ambivalent, familiar, alien, boring, exciting, relevant, irrelevant).

Write an intellectual argument that summarizes the problem or question. In this argument you should:

- cite from the text to support yourself

- explore the nature of your personal response to the problem: asking why it might seem irrelevant or relevant to you

Make notes while reading that form a discussion with the text itself:

- Yes, but I think that …

- I see that, however…

- I feel that this is important because…

- It seems that there is something very tricky here but interesting…

- In my opinion, this is out of date and irrelevant…

- Good quote! Shows how…

3. Organization

Use your notes to make a rough draft of your reaction paper, which should be organized in the following way:

• An introductory summary of the overall argument of the text (no longer than the 1/3 of the whole paper)

• A body

• A conclusion.

I. Introduction

• give a brief and very general summary of the argument of the text (this should not take more than a short paragraph) in order to contextualize your focus

• briefly identify your focus in this reaction paper

II. Body

• exposition of your reaction and argument; for an effective academic prose, you can rely on the following academic writing tips:

• make sure your paragraphs (including citations) provide support for your argument;

• each paragraph should contain one idea;

• there should be transitions between paragraphs. For instance, the final sentence of each paragraph should lead into the next paragraph.

III. Conclusion

The conclusion can be:

• a restatement of what you said in your paper,

• a comment that focuses your overall reaction, or

• As short as 1-2 sentences

!! Note: your conclusion should include no new information.

**Term paper**

You’ll have to write a term paper of 2500 words at the end of the course based on a thorough engagement with course readings. For instance, you can draw attention to connections between texts, or you can illustrate some of the readings through a literary or visual example in way that shows your engagement with the course. The hard copy of the term paper will be due on Dec 15. **Please make sure your paper has a title, it has your name on it and that it has page numbers and includes the word count!**

**Grading:**

Attendance and participation: 10%

Group work: 10%

Reaction paper: 20% each

Term paper: 40%

**Note on extensions**: If you need an extension on any of the deadlines, email me at least two days prior to the deadline (I will most likely grant an extension). I may not honor requests that come in last minute. I will most probably not honor requests about the deadline for giving peer feedback.

**Note on plagiarism**: It is your responsibility to make sure that your written work does not include any plagiarism (make sure you clearly mark your notes including quotations for yourself in order to avoid accidentally pasting them in your text). Any assignment which is found containing plagiarism will receive an F with no possibility of rewriting and you’ll receive an email notification of the problem. Any recurrence may result in failing the course.

**Schedule:**

**Week 1:**

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Introduction of the course

Josette Féral: “Theatricality: the Specificity of Theatrical Language” *SubStance* 98-99, 2002, 94-109;

Marcel Mauss: “Body Techniques,” in Sociology and Psychology, trans. Ben Brewster (London and Boston: Routledge and Keenan Paul,1979), pp. 95-123.

**Week 2:**

J.L. Austin: excerpts from How To Do Things With Words, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962;

“Performative Utterances” in Philosophical Papers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 233-252.

**Week 3:**

Derrida, Jacques. “Signature, Event, Context,” in *Limited Inc*, trans. Alan Bass (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1982), pp. 1-23.

**Week 4:**

Judith Butler: “On Linguistic Vulnerability,” in *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative* (New York and London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 1-43.

**Week 5:**

Jeffrey Weeks: “Inverts, Perverts, and Mary-Anns: Male Prostitution and the Regulation of Homosexuality in England in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Century,” in *Against Nature: Essays on History, Sexuality, and Identity*, (London: Rivers Oram Press, 1991), pp. 46-68.

David Halperin.: “The Democratic Body: Prostitution and Citizenship in Classical Athens,” in *One Hundred Years of Homosexulity and Other Essays on Greek Love* (New York: Routledge, 1990), pp. 88-113

**Week 6:**

Recommended: Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Excerpt from *Letter to M. d’Alembert on the Theatre*, trans. Allan Bloom (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1968). Pp. 75-93.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Excerpts from *The Social Contract and The First and Second Discourses* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002), pp. 200-202, 213-223, 227-228.

David Marshall: “Rousseau and the State of Theater,” in The Surprising Effects of Sympathy: Marivaux, Diderot, Rousseau, and Mary Shelley (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), pp. 135-178.

Marshall continued

**Week 7**

Sophie Carter: “'This Female Proteus': Representing Prostitution and Masquerade in Eighteenth-Century English Popular Print Culture,” Oxford Art Journal, Vol. 22, No. 1, 1999, pp. 57-79.

Joan Rivière: “Womanliness as Masquerade,” in Formations of Fantasy, eds, Victor Burgin et.al., (London: Methuen, 1986), pp. 35-45.

Recommended: Stephen Heath, “Joan Rivière and the Masquerade,” in *Formations of Fantasy*, eds, Victor Burgin et.al., (London: Methuen, 1986), pp. 45-61.

**Week 8:**

Eve Kosofksy Sedgwick: “Shame, Theatricality, and Queer Performativity: Henry James’s The Art of the Novel,” in *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003), pp. 35-67.

**Week 9:**

Sara Ahmed: “Affective Economies,” Social Text, 79, Volume 22, Number 2, Summer 2004, pp. 117-139.

Lisa Duggan a & José Esteban Muñoz: “Hope and Hopelessness: A Dialogue,” Women & Performance: a Journal of Feminist Theory, Vol. 19, No. 2, July 2009, 275–283.

**Week 10:**

Elizabeth Grosz: “Darwin and Feminism: Preliminary Investigations for a Possible Alliance” in *Material Feminisms*, eds. Stacy Alaimo and Susan Hekman (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2008), pp. 23-52.

Recommended Timothy Morton: “Queer Ecology,” *PMLA* (March, 2010), 1–19.

**Week 11:**

Lisa Blackman: “Is Happiness Contagious?” New Formations, 63:15-32.

Elizabeth A. Wilson “Ingesting Placebo,” *Australian Feminist Studies* 23: 31-42

**Week 12:**

Karen Barad: “Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter,” Signs, vol. 28, no. 3, 801-831.

This syllabus is subject to change.