CMST 7945: Readings in Performance Studies
Department of Communication Studies
Fall 2014
112 Prescott Hall
M & W 1:30-3:20

Dr. Tracy Stephenson Shaffer
E-mail: tsteph3@lsu.edu
Office: 128 Coates Hall   Phone: 578-6685
Office Hours: M and W 12:30-1:30 or by appointment

Course Description: This course offers students a history of performance studies within the communication discipline. Specifically, we trace how performance studies emerged from oral interpretation paying particular attention to scholarship from publications and journals primarily sponsored by The National Communication Association. We start with a couple survey articles and a longer history. Then, turning back a century (NCA celebrates its 100th anniversary this year), we dig into specific essays (and some textbooks) and work our way forward, making note of significant figures, arguments, moments, and trends along the way. Students engage the material through reading, discussion, research assignments, presentations, and performance.

Grading:

Discussion 300 points
Performance Pedagogy in Practice 1 100 points
Performance Pedagogy in Practice 2 100 points
Major Figure Report 100 points
Volume Report 200 points
Research Presentation 100 points
Final Paper 100 points
TOTAL 1,000 points

I use a 10% grading scale.

Discussion: This course relies on hearty discussion. I don’t assign an impossible amount of reading because I expect everyone to read everything assigned. Read the essays thoroughly and be prepared to talk about them and relate them to the other essays assigned that week as well as the essays assigned the weeks before. The knowledge in this class is cumulative. Please keep up. When engaging in discussion, speak up, feel free to ask questions, make connections, and offer critiques, but also share the floor with your classmates. Discussion also includes being an active audience for your classmates’ presentations and performances. Not counting the first day, this class meets 25 times this semester. Immediately after class, I will assign each student a numerical score from 0-12 based on my assessment of participation. The rubric is as follows:
Discussion is almost one third of your grade.

**Assignments**: The assignments ask you to apply what you are learning. They are as follows:

**Performance Pedagogy in Practice (Round 1 & 2)**. Each of you will select a partner to work with on two projects over the course of the semester. One of the projects will be based on a careful reading of a performance studies textbook; the other will be based on a contemporary article focused on performance practice. Both projects involve a presentation component and a performance component. For each project, one member of the pair will be primarily responsible for the presentation component and the other will be primarily responsible for the performance. Every member of the class must fulfill both functions over the course of the semester; specifically, the person in charge of the presentation component for the first project must assume responsibility for the performance component in the second project.

- Each pair will have 30 minutes to present their project (presentation, performance, discussion);
- Partners will receive the same grade for the project; consequently, it is in the best interest of both to work closely on both aspects of the project.

**Major Figure Reports**. You are individually responsible for reporting on a major figure that shaped the theory and practice of performance studies in the 20th century. These reports will involve a detailed handout that includes biographical/historical information about the individual, a bibliography of all her/his works (essays, books, etc.), and a short essay (3 page maximum) explaining her/his major contribution(s) to the theory and practice of performance studies in the 20th century.

**Volume Reports**. Each student will complete this assignment as follows: First, select a volume of *TPQ* between 2001-2014. Second, read the entire volume, paying attention to trends, approaches, methods, etc. Take careful notes during this task. Third, make an appointment and meet with me for one hour. We will discuss the volume, what it communicates about performance studies, what
characteristics seem unique to the particular editor of the volume, what your favorite essays are and why, etc.
Fourth, present the volume to the class. You will have approx. 30 minutes. Provide a handout that helps us understand the volume better.

Final Paper and Research Presentation: The final paper should apply ideas you’ve gained over the semester to your own research. Performance Studies embraces multiple approaches to communicative phenomena, so the possibilities are vast. Please come to see me about ideas for your paper. In addition, I may recommend a topic or approach based on your interests over the semester. The final paper is the beginning of a larger project. It should be 10-15 pages. It should be thoughtful, well written, and include a thorough bibliography. I should feel it is an excellent start to something you could submit to a conference or a journal. You will present your research project orally on the last week of class. Please be organized and rehearsed. You have 20 minutes for this presentation.

SOME POLICIES:

Attendance. As graduate students, you are expected to attend all class sessions. Missing class will affect your discussion grade adversely as described above. Absences will be considered valid only if they are officially authorized by the university or if they are supported with documentation from a physician. Also, please arrive to class on time.

Incompletes. In order to be awarded a grade of “Incomplete” for the course, students must meet all of the following requirements:

- Students must have completed at least 75% of the coursework.
- The request for an incomplete must result from an emergency situation (e.g., a medical emergency or military service). Incompletes will not be awarded simply because a student did not have time to complete the work.
- Students must sign a contract agreeing to complete the remaining coursework within a time frame specified by the instructor. Failure to complete the terms of the contract will result in a change of grade from “I” to the final average the student achieved for the work completed.

Late Work. One of the most important lessons anyone can learn in graduate school is time management. Students should submit all work by the deadlines specified. I will accept late work only in circumstances where I have been contacted in advance to discuss the situation and the request is warranted by issues other than time management difficulties. If I accept late work, the grade will be reduced.
Tentative Calendar

Week One: Surveying the Field

Monday 8/25: Introduction to the class and each other; sign-ups

Wednesday 8/27: Discuss (approx. 51 pages):


Week Two: Unstoried

Monday 9/1: NO CLASS/LABOR DAY

Wednesday 9/3: Discuss (147 pages):


Week Three: 1915-1936: The First Two Decades

Monday 9/8: Discuss Samples from 1915-1924 (approx. 88 pages):


**Wednesday 9/10: Discuss Samples from 1925-1936 (approx. 92 pages):**


Week Four: Performance Pedagogy in Practice -- Round 1

Monday 9/15 and Wednesday 9/17: Each pair will present a summary/review of a textbook as well as a performance illustrating its approach.

Week Five: From Aesthetic to Text-Centered Theory and Practice

Monday 9/22: Discuss (approx. 56 pages):


Wednesday 9/24: Begin Major Figure Reports

Week Six: Paradigm Shift

Monday 9/29: Complete Major Figure Reports

Wednesday 10/1: Discuss (approx. 29 pages):


Week Seven: Paradigm Shift Continued/Feminist Concerns

Monday 10/6: Discuss (approx. 38 pages):


Wednesday 10/8: Discuss (approx. 76 pages):


Week Eight: Ethnography

Monday 10/13: Discuss (approx. 56 pages):


Wednesday 10/15: Discuss (approx. 92 pages):


**Week Nine: Personal Narrative and Autoethnography**

**Monday 10/20: Discuss (approx. 71 pages):**


**Wednesday 10/22: Discuss (approx. 85 pages):**


**Week Ten: The Place of Literature/Begin Volume Reports**

**Monday 10/27: Discuss (approx. 34 pages):**


Wednesday 10/29: Volume Reports

Week Eleven: Volume Reports

Monday 11/3 and Wednesday 11/5: Continue Reports

Weeks Twelve and Thirteen: Performance Pedagogy in Practice -- Round 2

Monday 11/10, Wednesday 11/12, Monday 11/17: Each pair will present a summary/review of a contemporary essay focused on practice as well as a performance and/or workshop illustrating its approach.

Wednesday 11/19 NO CLASS/NCA

Week Fourteen: NO CLASS/RESEARCH/THANKSGIVING

Week Fifteen: Research Presentations

Monday 12/1 and Wednesday 12/3: Each student will present a 20-minute oral presentation on his or her research for the final paper.