

## **Department of Communication Studies**

### *CMST 3040-1: PERFORMANCE COMPOSITION*

Spring 2019

T & Th 1:30-2:45, 137 Coates Hall INSTRUCTOR: Dr. David Terry OFFICE: 229 Coates; EMAIL: davidterry@lsu.edu OFFICE HOURS: T & Th 12:20-1:20 & by appointment

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:** CMST 3040 is an intermediate-level performance studies course.

It builds on the knowledge of analyzing and performing literature you acquired in CMST 2040 and prepares you for more advanced performance and communication studies courses, should you decide to continue in our curriculum. The course provides you with opportunities to develop skills in reading, writing, analyzing, and performing a broad range of texts and to become better acquainted with how texts, particularly performance texts, are composed.

This course can be used to satisfy baccalaureate degree requirements for those who major or minor in Communication Studies and as a Humanities elective for other students in the University. The rationale for courses such as this one derives from the philosophy of Humanism, which holds that:

1. Language is what distinguishes us (humans) from other creatures.
2. Literature and performance are the highest forms of written and spoken language use.
3. The more we learn to appreciate literature and performance and to master the tools of written and spoken language use, the more fully we realize our humanity.

Training in the language arts is thus considered beneficial in all disciplines and divisions of knowledge in the University (which was founded on humanistic principles) as well as in most domains of social life outside the University. You should leave this course with enhanced analytical skills, a greater appreciation for the aesthetic dimensions of communication, and a better mastery of the tools of language, both written and spoken.

**PREREQUISITE:** *CMST 2040*. I will assume that you have some knowledge of analyzing literary texts and some experience with solo performance from having taken our 2040 course (or some equivalent). I will assume further that, because this is not a required course for anyone, you are taking it because you have some interest in reading, writing, and performing. If you have not taken 2040 and have no interest in those subjects, then you should not take this course.

**REQUIRED TEXTS:**

Scholes, Comley, and Ulmer, *Text Book: Writing through Literature*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (New York:

Bedford/St. Martin's Press, 2002). (excerpts will be made available to you at no charge on Moodle)

Bowman and Bowman, “Handbook for Performance Composition.” (Will be made available to you in installments at no charge on Moodle.)

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

Each student is expected to attend all regularly scheduled class meetings; participate in class discussions, exercises, and workshop activities; and read all assigned materials. Beyond these minimum requirements, each student will be responsible for three (3) performance projects, seven (7) creative writing exercises, and two (2) exams.

**NOTES ON POLICIES, ASSIGNMENTS, & RESPONSIBILITIES:**

*The Americans with Disabilities Act and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973:* If you have a disability that may have some impact on your work in this class and for which you may require accommodations, please see a Coordinator in the Office for Disability Services (112 Johnson Hall) so that such accommodations may be arranged. After you receive your accommodation letters, please meet with me to discuss the provisions of those accommodations as soon as possible.

*Participation:* (10%)--Your enrollment in any class, but especially one that relies heavily on group discussion and student performances as this course does, entails certain social responsibilities. Attendance, punctuality, and preparedness are obvious social responsibilities in a small class such as this. More subtle manifestations of your responsibility would include helpful, timely, informed contributions to class discussions, exercises, or workshop activities, and interpersonal sensitivity to others in the class. Particularly when we discuss your performances, we must strive to be honest and critical, without being cruel.

Obviously, you cannot begin to meet these responsibilities unless you come to class. But merely showing up for class is not enough to meet the responsibilities. The success of the course depends heavily on your willingness to “keep up” with the work we do in here by preparing for and participating in the day-to-day assignments, discussions and exercises. Lastly, you are expected to contribute to the general upkeep of the Black Box by picking-up after yourself.

If you do not like to attend class, do not like to have regular assignments given to you, or do not like to have “participation” required of you, then you have two options: (a.) Drop the class, or (b.) Be prepared to receive a lower grade for the course than your work on the other assignments might warrant.

While grading “participation” is inevitably somewhat subjective, the various exercises and “homework problems” I’ll give you will be clear

and straightforward enough in most cases that you should have a good idea of what is expected of you each day. If you do miss class, for whatever reason, it is your responsibility to keep up with the class by doing any work that was assigned during your absence and being prepared when you do return to class.

*Creative Writing Exercises: (30%)*—One of the main goals of this course is to help you develop mastery of different language and thinking skills through the use of models. These models will include various examples of different kinds of texts and textual processes. What that means is that when we read and discuss various texts in this class, we'll be trying to read them not only to understand what they might be saying, but also to try to figure out how they were made or composed. The creative writing exercises are designed to enhance your understanding of texts and textual processes by asking you to imitate or apply whatever principles of composition we discover in our examples.

In many cases, I'll ask you to try your hand at these exercises in preparation for some discussion or exercise we do in class, and then you will be expected to use the material you compose in your creative writing exercises as the basis of your performances.

I'll assign creative writing exercises approximately every other week. Specifics about each exercise can be found in the "Handbook" and on the course Calendar, but for now I will say that

there will be seven (7) creative writing exercises assigned in total; in determining your grade for this portion of your requirements, I'll use your top 6 scores out of the 7 possible exercises (6 @ 5% ea. = 30%).

*Performance Projects: (40%)*—Specifics regarding the performances will be distributed as we proceed. However, some general notes follow.

**Performance #1 (10%) Narrative, drama, and defamiliarization:**

The first performance assignment draws on the most common ways we represent and compose our experiences in everyday life and more formal texts and performances—narrative and drama. You'll have several options as regards the material you perform and how you perform it. However, common across options is the requirement that you compose and perform the material in at least two different ways. In all cases, I'll expect the performance to run approx. 5 minutes (per person) and be well memorized and rehearsed.

**Performance #2 (10%) Image, action, and metaphor:** The second performance assignment concentrates on the less well-recognized ways we might compose our experiences in written and performance texts. In brief, the assignment stresses action and image-making over (though not necessarily to the exclusion of) character and plot. Poetic models will serve as the source materials for the performance and I will ask that it include both verbal and non-verbal components. I'll expect the performance to run around 5 minutes and, again, be well memorized and well rehearsed.

**Performance #3 (20%) Writing and performing a 'mystory':** All your work for this course is designed to contribute toward the completion of a substantive solo performance to be given at the end of the semester. The project will ask you to integrate the various forms, styles, genres, and models of composition that we study during the semester into a new hybrid work, what the authors of *Text Book* call a "mystory." Because the course as a whole is designed to give you a "tool kit" for putting together your mystory in stages or increments, I won't burden you here with details about the assignment or how to do it. But this performance should be approx. 10 minutes in length, and it should demonstrate your mastery of the various compositional and performance skills we (will) have worked on all semester.

*Exams (2 @ 10% each):* The midterm exam will consist of several objective questions (i.e., True/False, Multiple-Choice, Matching) designed to quiz you on various terms, concepts, and principles

emphasized in the first half of the course. The final exam will consist of short answer and/or essay questions designed to quiz you on similar kinds of materials covered between midterm and the end of the semester, as well as on larger issues related to the final project and the course as a whole. In grading the final exams, I'll evaluate your answers for their cogency, clarity, concision, and comprehensiveness in relation to those of your peers.

**GRADING:** On each assignment, you'll receive an evaluation expressed as a letter-grade: e.g., A, B-, C+, etc. Such grades will have the following numerical values: A+ = 98 (nobody's perfect), A = 95, A- = 92, A-/B+ = 90, B+ = 88, B = 85, B- = 82, etc.

At the end of the semester, the percentage earned on each assignment will be multiplied by that assignment's percent of the whole, and those numbers will be tallied to yield your final average in the course. The grading scale for the final averages is: 90 or above = A; 80 to 89 = B, 70 to 79 = C; 60 to 69 = D; 59 or below = F

*A Final Word:* During the semester, the Department will offer several performance hours and productions here in the HopKins Black Box directed by faculty and graduate students. Several of these will hold open auditions. As students in a 3000-level performance class, you are encouraged to take advantage of these opportunities to see and participate in these productions. Check the bulletin board outside the Black Box for announcements of upcoming events and visit our web pages at [www.lsu.edu/hbb](http://www.lsu.edu/hbb) or on Facebook. Students may earn credit (CMST 4200) for working on productions in the HopKins Black Box. If you are interested in that, please come

and talk to me or get in touch with the HBB Manager, Eda Ercin.

