

Spring 2012  
TD 387D Unique #26660  
WGS 393 Unique #47205  
**Feminist Theory and Performance**  
W 9-12  
WIN 2.136

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Instructor: Dr. Charlotte Canning  
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**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

This course examines feminist theory and performance through a predominantly historical lens. We will explore feminist theory and performance as it emerged in the US at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The body of work that comprises that category is far too large to be fully covered in fifteen weeks, so the course encourages students, through their own work, to bring in feminist theory and performance of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The emphasis is placed on in-class discussion and there are several opportunities for students to make formal presentations that expand the materials beyond those included in the syllabus.

**TEXTS** (available at the University Coop):

- Arrizon, Alicia. *Latina Performance: Traversing the Stage*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999.
- Bornstein, Kate. *Gender Outlaw*. New York: Vintage, 1995.
- Broyles-González, Yolanda. *El Teatro Campesino: Theater in the Chicano Movement*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994.
- Case, Sue-Ellen. *Feminism and Theatre*. London: Methuen, 1988.
- Chinoy, Helen and Linda Walsh Jenkins. *Women in American Theatre*. New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1987.
- Diamond, Elin. *Unmaking Mimesis: Essays on Feminism and Theatre*. London: Routledge, 1997.
- Dolan, Jill. *The Feminist Spectator as Critic*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1991.
- Hart, Lynda. *Making a Spectacle: Feminist Essays on Contemporary Women's Theatre*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1989.
- Juhl, Kathleen and Ann Elizabeth Armstrong. *Radical Acts: Theater and Feminist Pedagogies of Change*. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Press, 2007.
- Phelan, Peggy. *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*. London: Routledge, 1993.
- Schneider, Rebecca. *The Explicit Body in Performance*. London: Routledge, 1997.

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

### Be Fully Prepared to Discuss Each Day's Assigned Material in Detail

- Allow yourself enough time to read each selection several times. Many of these are quite challenging and in order for our discussion to be productive you will need to be prepared to be very specific about the work in question.
- Reading notes and the preparation of specific questions and topics for discussion are expected. It is also expected that you will pursue readings on your own outside the syllabus to broaden your knowledge of an area or topic in which you feel deficient.
- Your full and active participation is essential for the success of the class—both for yourself and for everyone else.

### Reading Ahead

- One important aspect of studying feminist performance theory is to understand how the field itself was shaped and developed over time. One way to do this is to look at key texts that influenced theorists and artists over the years since their initial publication.
- Each student must present on a particular text to the class. The presentation must offer a precis of the text that includes an overview of the text's argument, a review of its methodology and sources, and a sense of the text in its contemporary context. Then the presentation must offer thoughts on the impact of the text—how and why did the text become influential—and include a bibliography of representative works influenced by the text.
- The presentation should also offer the class a handout that summarizes the presentation and includes the bibliography. The handout should also be posted on Bb.
- Each presentation must be between 10-15 minutes on the days marked on the list of the available texts.
- If you are not presenting you should choose one of the day's texts and read it so that you may engage as fully as possible with the presentation.
- A ranked lists of your top five choices is due to the instructor by W 25 January.

### Artists Theorize

- Theory is not solely the province of scholars and critics. Feminist performance theory has the content, methods, and histories it does because of the work that feminist performance does and has done.
- In order to understand that mode of theorizing each student must present on a particular artist to the class.
- The presentation should include an overview of the artist's works, a discussion of the artist's style, approach, and mode of making/presenting work, and a characterization of how the artist's work has been received. Importantly, the presentation must also discuss what impact the artist has had on feminist performance theory.
- The presentation should also offer the class a handout that summarizes the presentation and includes the bibliography. The handout should also be posted on Bb.
- Each presentation must be between 10-15 minutes on the days marked on the list of the available performers. This includes viewing video of the artist's work if available. Every effort should be made to find a recording of the artist's work in performance.
- A ranked lists of your top five choices is due to the instructor by W 25 January.

### Final Paper

- This paper is the place to connect your own research to the course material. You may choose to write about the intersection of performance and feminism from any number of perspectives, but it must in some way take up the focus of the class.
- You are encouraged to make connections to your own research so that the work you do in this class might intersect with your thesis or dissertation, or perhaps even lead to a publication. You are expected to research beyond the materials used during the semester (readings, public talks, performances, etc).
- You will post a 500 word abstract of your paper on Bb F 10 February by 5PM, and hand in a paper copy to the instructor's box or through campus mail. We will discuss all the abstracts in class on W 15 February. An revised abstract based on the instructor's and the class' feedback is due on W 29 Feb (a paper copy to the instructor in class and posted on Bb by 5PM).
- Papers must be 17-25 pages in length and are due the last day of classes, F 4 May by 3PM.

### **ATTENDANCE**

- As outlined in this syllabus participation in discussions is crucial so it expected that each member of the class be present for all sessions. Your presence is obviously necessary to make this possible.
- It should be unnecessary to put information regarding attendance on a graduate syllabus but in the interests of clarity I will state that your attendance at every session is strictly required.
- The only exceptions are very severe illness, unavoidable personal emergencies, religious holidays (as outlined in the General Catalog), and professional obligations (conferences, for example) cleared in advance. Picking people up at the airport or other non-essential activities are not legitimate reasons for missing class. In order for the class to be productive for all we all must be there.
- Every unexcused absence after the first one will result in lowering your final grade by a full grade (B+ to a C+, for example).

### **GRADING (using +/- grades):**

Participation	20%
Reading Ahead	20%
Artists Theorize	20%
Final paper	40%

These percentages are intended to serve as guidelines—shoddy work or a lackluster class performance will reflect negatively on your final grade.

**ALL ASSIGNMENTS ARE DUE IN CLASS (except where noted).  
THERE ARE NO EXTENSIONS OR INCOMPLETES.**

## CLASS SESSIONS

### Week One

18 Jan Introductions

### Week Two

25 Jan *Theatre Journal* special issue “Contemporary Women Playwrights.” 62.4 (December 2010): 505-660 and editor’s introduction. (JSTOR)  
DUE: Ranked lists for Reading Ahead and Artists Theorize

### Week Three

1 Feb Juhl, Kathleen and Ann Elizabeth Armstrong. *Radical Acts: Theater and Feminist Pedagogies of Change*. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Press, 2007.  
Selections:  
Cherríe Moraga. “An Irrevocable Promise: Staging the Story Xicana.” 45-56  
Joni L. Jones/Omi Osun Olomo and Sharon Bridgforth et. al. “‘Making Language:’ The Jazz Aesthetic and Feminist Foundations.” 91-110  
Kathleen Juhl. “Feminism in the Acting Classroom: Playful Practice as Process.” 153-69.  
Stacy Wolf. “On the Gender Continuum.” 171-79.  
Paul K. Bryant Jackson et. al. “Performing Spelman: Theatre, Warrior Women, and A Dramaturgy of Liberation.” 223-46.  
Pryor, Jacklyn. “Passing / Out in Texas: The Challenges of Progressive Pedagogy in Conservative Climates.” *Theatre Topics*. 16.1 (March 2006): 65-84. (PDF)

### Week Four

8 Feb Diamond, Elin. “Refusing the Romanticism of Identity: Narrative Interventions in Churchill, Benmussa, Duras” *Theatre Journal*. 37.3 (Oct. 1985): 273-286. (JSTOR)  
Simone Benmussa, Simone and Hélène Cixous. “Albert Nobbs.” *Benmussa Directs*. London: John Calder Press, 1979.  
Sue-Ellen Case, “Gender as Play: Simone Benmussa's The Singular Life of Albert Nobbs,” *Women and Performance* 1.2 (Winter 1984): 21-24. (PDF)  
Presentation: Butler, Judith. “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory.” *Theatre Journal*, 40.4. (Dec., 1988): 519-531. (JSTOR)  
DUE: See movie *Albert Nobbs*. Dir. Rodrigo García, 2011.

10 Feb DUE: Abstracts (post on Bb and paper copy to instructor)

Week Five

15 Feb

Discuss abstracts

Presentations: Case, Sue-Ellen. *Feminism and Theatre*. London: Methuen, Chinoy, Helen and Linda Walsh Jenkins. *Women in American Theatre*. New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1987.

Dolan, Jill. *The Feminist Spectator as Critic*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1991.

Week Six

22 Feb

Diamond, Elin. *Unmaking Mimesis: Essays on Feminism and Theatre*. London: Routledge, 1997.

Presentations: Adrienne Kennedy and Ntozake Shange.

Week Seven

29 Feb

Phelan, Peggy. *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*. London: Routledge, 1993.

Presentations: Case, Sue-Ellen. "Toward a Butch-Femme Aesthetic." *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*. Eds. Henry Abelove, Michele Aina Barale, and David M. Halperin. London: Routledge, 1993. 294-306.

Cixous, Hélène. "Laugh of the Medusa." *Signs* 1.4 (1976): 875-93. (JSTOR)

-----"Aller à la Mer." *Modern Drama*. 27 (1984): 546-48. (Project Muse)

De Lauretis, Teresa. "Sexual Indifference and Lesbian Representation." *Theatre Journal*. 40.2 (May, 1988): 155-77. (JSTOR)

Mulvey, Laura. "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," *Screen* 16.3 (1975): 6-18. (OUP Journals or PDF)

DUE: Revised abstracts

Week Eight

7 March

Schneider, Rebecca. *The Explicit Body in Performance*. London: Routledge, 1997.

Presentations: Robbie McCauley, Carolee Schneeman, and Spiderwoman.

*Spring Break (12-16 March)*

Week Nine

21 March

Presentations: Broyles-González, Yolanda. *El Teatro Campesino: Theater in the Chicano Movement*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994.

Daly, Ann. "The Balanchine Woman: Of Hummingbirds and Channel Swimmers." *TDR*. 31.1 (Spring, 1987): 8-21. (Project Muse)

Yarbro-Bejarano, Yvonne. "The Female Subject in Chicano Theatre: Sexuality, 'Race,' and Class." *Theatre Journal*. 38.4 (Dec. 1986): 389-407. (JSTOR)

Presentations: Rachel Rosenthal and Alina Troyano

Week Ten

28 March

Presentations: Dickerson, Glenda. "The Cult of True Womanhood: Toward a Womanist Attitude in African American Theatre." *Theatre Journal*. 40.2 (May, 1988): 178-87. (JSTOR)

Hart, Lynda. *Making a Spectacle: Feminist Essays on Contemporary Women's Theatre*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1989.

Wilkerson, Margaret. "Introduction." *Nine Plays by Black Women*. New York: New American Library, 1986. Xiii-xxv. [PDF]

Presentations: Deb Margolin, Peggy Shaw, Lois Weaver, Split Britches,

and WOW.

Week Eleven

4 April

Arrizon, Alicia. *Latina Performance: Traversing the Stage*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999.

Presentations: Cherrie Moraga and Marga Gomez.

Week Twelve

11 April

Presentation: Bornstein, Kate. *Gender Outlaw*. New York: Vintage, 1995.

Presentations: 5 Lesbian Brothers and Annie Sprinkle.

Week Thirteen

18 April

TBA

Week Fourteen

25 April

Final Paper Presentations

Week Fifteen

2 May

Final Paper Presentations/Wrap-up

4 May

Final Paper due Winship front desk 3PM

## **Course Policies and Policies of the University of Texas:**

### University of Texas Honor Code

- The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the university is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community.

### Documented Disability Statement

- The University of Texas at Austin provides upon request appropriate academic accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. For more information, contact Services for Students with Disabilities at 471-6259 (voice) or 232-2937 (video phone).

### Blackboard

- In this class I use Blackboard—a Web-based course management system with password-protected access at <http://courses.utexas.edu>—to distribute course materials, to communicate and collaborate online, to post grades, to receive assignments.
- You can find support in using Blackboard at the ITS Help Desk at 475-9400, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., so plan accordingly.

### Use of E-Mail for Official Correspondence to Students

- Email is recognized as an official mode of university correspondence; therefore, you are responsible for reading your email for university and course-related information and announcements.
- You are responsible to keep the university informed about changes to your e-mail address. You should check your e-mail regularly and frequently—we recommend daily, but at minimum twice a week—to stay current with university-related communications, some of which may be time-critical.
- You can find UT Austin's policies and instructions for updating your e-mail address at <http://www.utexas.edu/its/policies/emailnotify.php>.

### Use of Electronic Devices During Class Sessions

- Classroom Laptop use is allowed for taking notes related to this course only. Laptop activities unrelated to this course will lead to dismissal from the class session (and marked as an absence for that day). This includes, but is not limited to: Facebook, email, or any internet use. Wireless must be turned off. *Repeat offenders will result in a filing of a report of academic problem.*
- Other Electronic Devices (Cell phone, Blackberry, I-Phone, etc.) must also be turned off and put away during class. Any use of these devices, including texting, websurfing, etc. will lead to dismissal from class session (and marked as an absence for that day). *Repeat offenders will result in a filing of a report of academic problems.*

### Religious Holy Days

- By UT Austin policy, you must notify me of your pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class, an

examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, I will give you an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

#### Behavior Concerns Advice Line (BCAL)

- If you are worried about someone who is acting unusually, you may use the Behavior Concerns Advice Line to discuss by phone your concerns about another individual's behavior.
- This service is provided through a partnership among the Office of the Dean of Students, the Counseling and Mental Health Center (CMHC), the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), and The University of Texas Police Department (UTPD). Call 512-232-5050 or visit <http://www.utexas.edu/safety/bcal>.

#### Emergency Evacuation Policy

- Occupants of buildings on the UT Austin campus are required to evacuate and assemble outside when a fire alarm is activated or an announcement is made. Please be aware of the following policies regarding evacuation:
- Familiarize yourself with all exit doors of the classroom and the building. Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when you entered the building.
- If you require assistance to evacuate, inform me in writing during the first week of class.
- In the event of an evacuation, follow my instructions or those of public safety officers..
- Do not re-enter a building unless you're given instructions by the Austin Fire Department, the UT Austin Police Department, or the Fire Prevention Services office.

#### Syllabus

- The instructor reserves the right to make changes to the course syllabus.