WS 320-4  Special Topics in Women’s Studies: Women and Performance

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Lecture: Monday 9:30 – 1:20
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Concepts of performance and performativity have recently gained currency as critical analytic tools in the humanities and social sciences to theorize diverse ways of knowing the world. There exists an adjacent movement in the performing arts in which researchers have drawn from the social sciences to link performance to social and cultural debates, viewing performance as not only a reflection of social life but also as significant in creating social life. Women artists, using a variety of means (such as performance art, dance, theatre, film, new media and song) have addressed the relationship between diverse areas such as women and technology, the body, surveillance, enactments of citizenship, capitalism and the legacy and continuation of colonialism.

This seminar will provide a critical feminist introduction into the interdisciplinary field of performance studies. Through case studies of various practices such as film, theatre, dance, writing, popular culture, sport, play and performance art, the course will examine both theory and practice to draw out gendered, racialized and other locational implications. Performance studies, then, is necessarily an interdisciplinary field that draws on approaches from dance, feminist studies, theatre, gender studies, psychoanalysis, visual arts, queer theory, semiotics, ethnography, media and cultural studies.

Readings:

Course package: Including authors:
Judith Butler, Jose Esteben Muñoz, Orlan, Kathy Davis, Susan Foster, Catherine Nash, Peggy Phelan, bell hooks, Coco Fusco; Anna Deavere Smith, Barbara Browning; and Richard Schechner.

Evaluation:
Participation 10%
Written Response (5 pages) 25%
Oral Presentation and Written Outline (2 pages) 25%
Term Paper/Performance 40%
Term paper (12 pages)
OR
Performance (i.e. a short film or play) accompanied by a paper (8 pages) explaining how the project responds to course material

The Department of Women’s Studies encourages clarity of thought and expression and good writing. Students will be evaluated on these skills in all courses given by the Department.