

**ENGL 811 G100: Studies in Theory II**

**FPA 877 G100: Selected Topics in Fine and Performing Arts**

**SA 887 G300: Special Topics in Sociology & Anthropology**

**SA 474 E100: Cultures, Politics, Performance: Conversations with Perf. Studies**

## **Performance, Writing, Bodies, and Sensory Ethnography**

### Instructors:

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\*We have both set our office hours for Tuesdays, 1:30-3 pm; we are available to meet with students separately, sequentially, and with enough notice, simultaneously.

### Meeting Time:

Tuesdays, 4:30-8:20 pm, SECB 1013, Burnaby

### Course Description:

Performance, as an object of study and a method of critical research and analysis, has increasingly become a way to bridge scholarly inquiry across the arts, humanities, and social sciences. Often this happens at the level of writing itself, with many performance studies scholars seeking to foreground the performative dimensions of their own work and to read the work of others in their disciplines through a performative lens. A common set of questions in such approaches revolves around ways of embodied knowing—of thinking and writing through the body. This course, co-taught by performance studies scholars in anthropology and literary studies (who also share interests in theatre and dance), invites students to explore a range of contemporary works in these inter-disciplines that are exemplary of scholars' sensuous and often practice-based entanglements with the multiple and overlapping worlds they embody, including the scholarly, the artistic, the activist, and the community-engaged. Our specific focus will be on a selection of sensory studies (texts, films, material archives) that interrogate the boundaries between fact and fiction, theory and practice, mind and body, artist-scholars and the diverse audiences they address. Students will also be given an opportunity to develop a final project (independent or collaborative) that may address the concerns of the course through a range of practices, including writing, performances, images, exhibitions, etc.

### Texts:

Judith Hamera, *Dancing Communities: Performance, Difference and Connection in the Global City*. New York: Palgrave, 2007.

Tobias Hecht, *After Life: An Ethnographic Novel*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006. **(Also available as an e-book through SFU LIB.)**

Ben Spatz, *What a Body Can Do: Technique as Knowledge*. New York: Routledge, 2015.

Kathleen Stewart, *Ordinary Affects*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007. **(Also available as an e-book through SFU LIB.)**

Paul Stoller, *Sensuous Scholarship*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997.

Additional required and recommended reading will be made available on Canvas as online pdfs.

Course Requirements:

Ethnographic diary 15%

- Following the example of Kathleen Stewart and Michael Taussig, this assignment asks you to keep a diary of “ordinary affects” and recorded field notes over the course of the semester. The entries don’t have to be daily, nor do they have to be long. However, we are interested in your invested engagement with keeping a diary/field notebook as a method of embodied knowing. To that end, we will be giving you different weekly independent assignment exercises/prompts in sensory ethnography, the practice and outcomes of which we are asking you to record in your diaries and bring to class to share. **Details on this part of the diary are listed below in green.** Additionally, and unbidden by us, we would like you to diarize some of the pathways/routes/itineraries/associations/memories/sensational intensities that prompt attention to different “scenes” in your lives: from the overheard conversation on the bus to the sudden stab of despair in line at the coffee shop. How do you experience these scenes sensorially and how do they (or don’t they) affect your ongoing embodied research in technique. Ideally both parts of this exercise will be a complement to your final project. At the end of the course you will choose 1-2 entries from the second focus of the diary (i.e., not the weekly exercise prompts from us) for formal submission and grading.

Seminar reading summary and discussion facilitation 10%

- In addition to your weekly reading and seminar participation, during weeks 2-5 (Jan 12-Feb 2) each of you will be required to complete a 500-word written summary of/response to one of the core texts under discussion (Spatz, Hamera, Stewart). Assignments will be made in the first class, with the expectation that on the week your summary is due you will also take an active role in facilitating general seminar discussion.

Project proposal presentation, abstract, and schedule of work 25%

- By the fourth week of class (Jan 26), we are asking everyone to have formalized their plans for a final project. For some of you, this may involve a contribution to a planned course roundtable at the Society for Applied Anthropology conference in downtown Vancouver in late March (more details on this in the first class). Regardless, you will need to submit a project proposal that includes an abstract detailing your focus of study, the methods and form you will employ to undertake and present this study, any considerations regarding ethics approval, and a comprehensive schedule of how and when you will undertake your research. As all students will additionally benefit from direct initial feedback from their peers, this assignment also involves a brief oral presentation in class.

Final project 50%

- For your final project, you are encouraged to apply the concepts and approaches we will have discussed in class to your own specialized areas of research (from

dance and theatre, to illness and healing processes, to practices of masculinity and food culture, to aging and activism, to research design, etc.). Regarding the outcomes of your research, you are likewise encouraged—though not required—to think beyond the parameters of the standard academic essay, and to explore an epistemological framework that might be more practice-based and/or embodied, including performances, installations, film or photographic works, sound art, etc. Please note, however, that this does not mean you can ignore the robust methodological literature on each of these frameworks! Indeed, following the example of Ben Spatz in *What a Body Can Do* (see especially his final chapter), we are interested in you using your final projects to explore, methodologically and practically, what embodied creative research in the university might look like, and especially how such research gets transmitted as new knowledge (e.g., the multi-media forms of documentation that Spatz discusses). Insofar as we are asking for a written text to accompany your final project, we are primarily envisioning this to be a reflection and commentary on your process, including any problems encountered, assumptions you may have had to revise, and discoveries that enriched your understanding of your topic. The paper should be a maximum of 10 double-spaced pages (longer if you're collaborating, which is also encouraged). The weighting for the presentation and paper will be split evenly (25% + 25%).

### Weekly Syllabus:

Week 1	Jan 5	Intro to Course and Its Themes: An Interdisciplinary Dialogue on Embodiment, Emplacement, Ethnography and Ethics.
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Required pre-reading: (1) Hecht, *After Life* (all); (2) Mark Westmoreland, "Making sense: affective research in postwar Lebanese art," *Critical Arts* 27.6 (2013): 717-36 (on Canvas)

**In class: Sensory Ethnography (embodiment, emplacement, entanglement) 1.**

**Focus: Introduction.**

This section will be taught/learned primarily through in class exercises that we will start classes with, and independent assignment exercises that students will take turns presenting and receiving in class. Course readings articulate generally and specifically with these methodological practices.

**Weekly Independent Assignment Exercises:**

These weekly sensory ethnography assignment exercises

will not be graded, and are designed to take approximately 1-2 hours to complete. Objectives are to offer “small tastes” of sensory experiential practice, attentive communication, and reception. You are all asked to conduct each weekly exercise, to record it in writing and (if you wish) another form, to be discussed in class. See detailed guidelines on pp. 9-10 of this syllabus.

Each assignment exercise follows this process:

- (1) Record a moment or moments of experience in an ethnographic diary entry of not more than 300 words, and not less than 200 words, in whatever form (prose, poetry, experimental genre) you wish.
- (2) You may—but are not required to—record and communicate these weekly exercise experiences using audio/visual tools, drawing, movement, oral/aural performance *in addition to written text*. A central challenge in sensory ethnography and in interdisciplinary arts/humanities work revolves around questions of representation and communication, textual and other forms. These exercises invite you to experiment with multiple forms of expression and communication.
- (3) Each week some students will present their diary entries, and others will serve as audience. Presentations will not exceed 5 minutes in length. In class feedback will also not exceed 5 minutes.

Week 2      Jan 12

Required reading: (1) Spatz, *What a Body Can Do* (intro); (2) Stoller, *Sensuous Scholarship* (intro); (3) Hamera, *Dancing Communities* (intro); (4) Stewart, *Ordinary Affects* (intro, pp. 1-7 + 1-2 stories); (5) Michael Taussig, chs. 1-3 from *I Swear I Saw This* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), pp. 1-32 (on Canvas)

Recommended reading: D.S. Madison, “Performing Theory/Embodied Writing,” *Text and Performance Quarterly* 19.2 (1999): 107-124 (on Canvas)

**Group 1: Summary and facilitation.**

**In class: Sensory Ethnography (embodiment, emplacement, entanglement) 2.**

**Focus:** Embodiment and Epistemology: sensation, experience, reflexivity, meaning, knowledge. Why and

how? Bring diary entries (Independent Assignment #1) to class.

Week 3 Jan 19

Required reading: (1) Spatz, ch 1; (2) Hamera, ch 1; (3) Stewart (at your own pace)

Recommended reading: D.S. Madison, "It's Time to Write: Writing as Performance," ch. 8 of *Critical Ethnography: Method, Ethics, and Performance* (New York: Sage, 2005), pp. 181-200 (on Canvas)

**Group 2: Reading and facilitation.**

**In class: Sensory ethnography (embodiment, emplacement, entanglement) 3.**

**Focus:** Entanglement: context, resistance, power and agency.

**Some class time will be devoted to final project proposal development.**

Week 4 Jan 26

Required reading: (1) Spatz, ch 2; (2) Hamera, ch 2; (3) Stewart (at your own pace)

**Group 3: Reading and facilitation.**

**In class: Sensory ethnography (embodiment, emplacement, entanglement) 4.**

**Focus:** Entanglements: inscription, politics, power and sensory regimes.

**Project proposals/abstracts due**

Week 5 Feb 2

Required reading: (1) Spatz, ch 4; (2) Hamera, conclusion; (3) Stewart (at your own pace); (4) a revisiting of Hecht; (5) Iris Young, "Throwing Like a Girl," ch. 2 of *On Female Body Experience* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 37-45 (on Canvas); (6) Michael Ventura, "White Boys Dancing," from *Shadow Dancing in the USA* (New York: St. Martin's, 1985), pp. 43-51 (on Canvas)

**Group 4: Reading and facilitation.**

**In class: Sensory ethnography (embodiment,**

emplacement, entanglement) 5.

**Focus:** experience and theory and experience, sedimented practices/techniques of bodies and agency.

**Project proposal reviews and feedback.**

Feb 9

**READING BREAK**

Week 6

Feb 16

Storytelling, Part 1: Reflecting on a Foundational Embodied Technique of the Course

Screening and discussion: *The Arbor* (2010; dir. Clio Barnard)

Required reading: (1) Michael Jackson, "Preamble," in *Wherewithal of Life: Ethics, Migration, and the Question of Well-Being* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), pp. 1-13 (on Canvas); (2) Devika Chawla, "Between Stories and Theories: Embodiments, Disembodiments and Other Struggles," *Storytelling, Self and Society* 3.1 (2007): 16-30 (on Canvas); (3) Dian Million, "Felt Theory: An Indigenous Feminist Approach to Affect and History," *Wicazo Sa Review* 24.2 (2009): 53-76 (on Canvas)

**In class: Sensory ethnography (embodiment, emplacement, entanglement) 6.**

**Focus:** Polysensory relational storytelling (co-performing bodies speaking and listening).

Week 7

Feb 23

Storytelling, Part 2: Reflecting on *your stories* AND on those of Spatz and Hamera and Stewart

Screening and discussion (continued): *The Arbor* (2010; dir. Clio Barnard)

Required reading: (1) Diana Taylor, "Acts of Transfer," ch. 1 from *The Archive and the Repertoire* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), pp. 1-51 (on Canvas); (2) Saba Mahmood, "Feminist Theory, Embodiment, and the Docile Agent: Some Reflections on the Egyptian Islamic Revival," *Cultural Anthropology* 16.2 (2001): 202-237 (on Canvas)

**In class: Sensory ethnography (embodiment, emplacement, entanglement) 7.**

**Focus:** Relationality, intersubjectivity, entanglements.

Week 8      Mar 1

Case Study 1: Ethnography and Embodied Extremity:  
Hunger Strikes and Suicide Bombers

Pre-screening: *Hunger* (2009; dir. Steve McQueen);  
available on iTunes

Required reading: (1) T.M Wilson and H. Doonan,  
“Chapter 3: Controlling Bodies,” in *Anthropology of  
Ireland* (London: Berg, 2006), pp. 43-81 (on Canvas); (2)  
Maria Power, “Second Class Republicans? Sinn Féin,  
Feminism, and the Women’s Hunger Strike,” *Irish Times*,  
December 17, 2015 (on Canvas); (3) Claudia Brunner,  
“Female suicide bombers—Male suicide bombing?  
Looking for gender in reporting the suicide bombings of  
the Israeli-Palestinian conflict,” *Global Society* 19.1  
(2005): 29-48 (on Canvas)

Recommended reading: Saba Mahmood, “Religious  
Freedom, the Minority Question, and Geopolitics in the  
Middle East,” *Comparative Studies in Society & History*  
54.2 (2012): 418-446 (on Canvas)

**In class: Sensory ethnography (embodiment,  
emplacement, entanglement) 8.**

**Focus:** Polysensory film viewing.

**Week 8-9 Independent Assignment:** To be designed by  
students.

**Workshopping final projects**

Week 9      Mar 8

Case Study 2: Sensory Ethnography on Film

Pre-screening: *Leviathan* (2012; dirs. Lucien Castaing-  
Taylor and Véréna Paravel); available on iTunes

Class Guest: Chris Pavsek

Required reading: (1) Mark Westmoreland and Brent  
Luvaas, “Introduction: *Leviathan* and the Entangled Lives  
of Species” (on Canvas); (2) Christopher Pavsek,  
“*Leviathan* and the Experience of Sensory Ethnography”  
(on Canvas); (3) and one other article of your choosing

from special dossier on *Leviathan* in the *Visual Anthropology Review* 31.1 (Spring 2015)

**In class: Sensory ethnography (embodiment, emplacement, entanglement) 9.**

**Focus:** To be determined.

**Week 9-10 Independent Assignment:** To be designed by students.

**Workshopping final projects**

Week 10      Mar 15

Case Study 3: Precarity

Class Guest: Kathleen Millar

Required reading: (1) Kathleen Millar, “The Precarious Present: Wageless Labor and Disrupted Life in Rio De Janeiro, Brazil,” *Cultural Anthropology* 29.1 (2014): 32-53 (on Canvas); (2) Randy Martin, “A Precarious Dance, A Derivative Sociality,” *TDR* 56.4 (2012): 62-77 (on Canvas); (3) Judith Butler, “Bodies in Alliance and the Politics of the Street,” *#Occupy Los Angeles Reader* 1-3 (2011) (on Canvas); (4) Sanford F. Schram, “Occupy Precarity,” *Theory and Event* 16.1 (2013) (available through SFU Lib)

**In class: Sensory ethnography (embodiment, emplacement, entanglement) 10.**

**Focus:** To be determined.

**Week 10-11 Independent Assignment:** To be designed by students.

**Workshopping of final projects**

Week 11      Mar 22

Open week for workshopping SFAA papers/final projects

Required reading: (1) Spatz, ch.5

Week 12      Mar 29

SFAA Conference Week

Week 13      April 5

SFAA Follow-Up and Course Conclusion



## Final project presentations

### Ethnographic diary entries due

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#### Weekly Sensory Ethnography Diary Assignments:

- #1                      **Week 1-2 independent assignment exercise:** Repeat “Multisensory Experience” exercise conducted in class, week 1. Write a 200-300 word diary entry, and any other form of communication you choose, and bring these to class week 2.
- #2                      **Week 2-3 independent assignment exercise:** Carry out some kind of physical “doing” (taking a walk, making a meal, playing a game, participating in an event, attending a class, working a job); using the principles of sensory ethnography, and attending to questions of place and performance, take notes on the experience as a practical means of discovering—or reacquainting yourself with—practical techniques of the body you may or may not conduct additional research on over course of semester in aid of your final project.
- Complete diary entry of approximately 200-300 words in whatever form you choose, and any other form of recording/communication you wish to share with the class on week 3 (5 minutes max).
- #3                      **Week 3-4 independent assignment exercise:** Partake in something described as a “lifestyle technique” (shopping, coffee-going, walking on the seawall, getting a mani-pedi, etc.). We will discuss potential sites in class. Create diary entry and/or entries as you did previous week, and prepare to share an entry in class week 4.
- #4                      **Week 4-5 independent assignment exercise:** Choose a routine activity such as taking a bus, washing dishes, playing a video game, changing a diaper, buying a cup of coffee.... Paying particular attention to gender in whatever way you choose to, create an entry for your ethnographic diary in whatever form as with previous diary assignments. As you work through the assignment readings for next week (week 5), select a quotation that resonates with your diary entry. Bring this quotation and 300 word max diary entry and any other form of communication you are prepared to share with class in week 5.
- #5                      **Week 5-6 independent assignment:** Prepare a 5 minute

presentation about your project, in whatever form you choose and prepare to share it with the class.

#6

**Week 6-7 independent assignment:** As you work through the required readings for next week (week 7), select a quotation that challenges and/or inspires your work on your project. Bring this quotation and 200-300 word max diary entry and any other form of communication you are prepared to share (5 minutes max) with class week in 7. In class you will: (a) present your 5-minute selection about your selected quotation in relation to your project; (b) note your reflections on this communication experience; (c) listen/watch/sense others' presentations and note your responses to the following: (i) can you describe your embodied, sensory listening experience?; (ii) what is the project presented about?; (iii) how does this peer's work challenge and/or inspire my own project?

#7

**Week 7-8 independent assignment:** As you watch *Hunger*, note scenes that "grab" you. Write a 200-300 word diary entry (and any other form of communication you choose to include) that describes and communicates: (a) how your body experienced being "grabbed by a scene in a film"; and, (b) the particular scene(s). Note the time the scene(s) appear in the film. In class, week 8: (a) present your 5-minute selection about your project; and, (b) listen to others' and note your responses to the following: (i) can you describe your embodied, sensory listening experience?; (ii) what is the project presented about?; (iii) how does this peer's work challenge and/or inspire my own project?

# 8, 9, 10

To be determined, as designed by students.