

FPA 826: Performance Studies

FPA 877W: Selected Topics in Fine and Performing Arts

FPA 412W: Advanced Seminar in Art and Culture Studies

Spring 2017

Performance and...

Instructor:

Dr. Peter Dickinson (peter.dickinson@sfu.ca)

Seminar Time and Location:

Wednesday 2:30-5:20 pm, GCA 4390

Office Hours:

Mondays, 1:30-3:30 pm, or by appointment: GCA 2380

Course Description:

Performance, as an object of study and a method of critical research and analysis, has increasingly become a way to bridge (inter)disciplinary inquiry across the arts, humanities, and social sciences. In this course we will survey recent trends in Performance Studies as they intersect with five topical sites of cognate scholarly investigation: performance and new materialisms; performance and practice-as-research; performance and precarity; performance and re-enactment; and performance and sensory ethnography. Additionally, we will apply our discussions to a range of performance texts (from works of theatre, dance, film, and visual art to everyday enactments and political interventions) that interrogate the borders between theory and practice, research and creation, fact and fiction, mind and body, art and activism. Students will also be given the opportunity to develop a final project (either independently or collaboratively) that may address the concerns of the course through a range of knowledge paradigms, including writing, performance, visual documentation, installation, etc.

Required Texts:

Sarah Pink, *Doing Sensory Ethnography*, 2nd edition (Sage, 2015)

Ben Spatz, *What a Body Can Do: Technique as Knowledge, Practice as Research* (Routledge, 2015)

A range of pdf articles that will be posted to Canvas.

Course Requirements:

Attendance and active participation

15%

- You are expected to carefully prepare each week's readings and come to class ready to discuss them; to post regular comments or notes or questions or thought bubbles related to the readings on the relevant Discussion Thread on the course Canvas site; and to listen and respond to your peers and me.

Ethnographic reading 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, I am interested in your invested engagement with keeping a diary/field notebook as a method of embodied and performative knowing. To that end, I will be giving you different weekly independent assignment exercises/prompts related to some of our readings and discussion topics, the practice and outcomes of which I am asking you to record in your diaries and bring to class to share. Additionally, and unbidden by me, I 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 or in line at the coffee shop; to your own breakthrough in the studio or classroom. How do you experience these scenes sensorially and materially, and how do they (or don’t they) affect and/or script your practice-based research? How does writing about them reenact them? And so on. 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 me) for formal submission and grading; these are due April 5, and can be submitted to me as email attachments, or in hard copy at the last class.

Seminar reading summary and discussion facilitation

15%

- This should be a simple 5-7 minute opening salvo to animate discussion on a given reading. What were the salient or most provocative/contentious points of the reading for you? What questions were you left with? How does the reading relate to your own research practice, or to broader interdisciplinary inquiry in the fine, performing and media arts? 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

15%

- By the fifth week of class (Feb 1), I am asking everyone to have formalized their plans for a final project (see below). As part of this assignment, you will need to submit an abstract detailing your focus of study, the methods and form you will employ to undertake and present this study, and a 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. Proposals should be sent to me via email as Word documents.

Final project and paper

40%

- 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. 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. Following the example of Ben Spatz in *What a Body Can Do* (see especially his final chapter), I am interested in you using your final projects to explore, theoretically and practically, what embodied and performance-based research on/in sensory ethnography, new materialisms, reenactment, and precarity in the university might look like, and especially how such research gets transmitted as new knowledge (e.g., via the multi-media forms of documentation that Spatz discusses). The presentation of this portion of your final project will take place during the last class, on April 5. In order to accommodate everyone, you will have a maximum of 10 minutes to make your presentation (though even then we may have to book more time); supplementary material and/or accompanying documentation that you wish me to see as part of your project can be longer and submitted along with your paper. As for that text, I am 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 8 double-spaced pages (it can be longer if you're collaborating, which is also encouraged), and should be sent to me via email as a Word document (along with any related links/files) by noon on Monday, April 10. The weighting for the presentation and paper will be split evenly (20% + 20%).

Syllabus:

Jan 4 Introduction

Readings: Kathleen Stewart, from *Ordinary Affects* (2007); and Michael Taussig, from *I Swear I Saw This* (2011)

Jan 11 Sensory ethnography 1

Readings: Sarah Pink, from *Doing Sensory Ethnography* (2015): Intro and Chs. 1, 2 and 3

Jan 18 Sensory ethnography 2

Readings: Sarah Pink, from *Doing Sensory Ethnography* (2015): Chs. 6, 7 and 8; and Tim Ingold, "Footprints through the weather-world: walking, breathing, knowing" (2010); and Andrew Irving, "Bridges: A New Sense of Scale" (2013)

Jan 25 New materialisms 1

Readings: Jane Bennett, "The Force of Things," from *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (2010); and Robin Bernstein, "Dances with Things: Material Culture and the Performance of Race" (2009)

Feb 1 New materialisms 2

Readings: Karen Barad, "Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter" (2003); and Amelia Jones, "Material Traces: Performativity, Artistic 'Work,' and New Concepts of Agency" (2015)

Project proposals due via email

Feb 8 Screening/Discussion of *Leviathan* (2012; dirs. Lucien Castaing-Taylor and V  rina Paravel) in relation to sensory ethnography and new materialisms

Readings: Mark Westmoreland and Brent Luvaas, "Introduction: *Leviathan* and the Entangled Lives of Species" (2015); Christopher Pavsek, "*Leviathan* and the Experience of Sensory Ethnography" (2015); and one other article of your choosing from special dossier on *Leviathan* in the *Visual Anthropology Review* 31.1 (Spring 2015; available on Canvas or through SFU Library)

Feb 15 READING BREAK

Feb 22 Reenactment 1

Readings: Rebecca Schneider, Foreword and Chapter 1 from *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment* (2011)

Mar 1 Reenactment 2

Readings: Ruth Erickson, "The Real Movie: Reenactment, Spectacle, and Recovery in Pierre Huyghe's *The Third Memory*" (2009); and Andr   Lepecki, "The Body as Archive: Will to Re-Enact and the Afterlives of Dances" (2010)

Mar 8 Precarity 1

Readings: Kathleen Millar, "The Precarious Present: Wageless Labor and Disrupted Life in Rio De Janeiro, Brazil" (2014); Judith Butler, "Bodies in Alliance and the Politics of the Street" (2011)

Mar 15 Precarity 2

Readings: Randy Martin, "A Precarious Dance, A Derivative Sociality" (2012); Louise Owen, "'Work That Body': Precarity and Femininity in the New Economy" (2012)

Mar 22 Practice 1

Readings: Ben Spatz, from *What a Body Can Do* (2015): Intro and Ch. 1

Mar 29	Practice 2
	<u>Readings</u> : Ben Spatz, from <i>What a Body Can Do</i> (2015): Chs. 2, 4 and 5
April 5	Presentation of final projects
	Ethnographic diary entries due
April 10	Final project papers due via email by noon