

Performance and Play

Theater R1B (Section 1): Introduction to Dramatic Literature
Spring 2004

MWF 4-5 PM, 258 Dwinelle, 4 units, CC# 88003

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Office Hours: Wednesday 2:30 - 5 pm and by appointment

Course Web Site: <http://performanceandplay.blogspot.com>

CLASS DESCRIPTION

Members of this class will improve their research and analytic writing skills as we investigate the connections between contemporary performance and play. Early in the semester, you will select a research question of personal interest. You will then spend the rest of the course exploring, revising and digging up possible answers to this question. This individual research will culminate in a final 10-12 page paper and a “creative intervention” (performance, game or some combination) of your own design.

Questions we'll explore together include:

- How do actors, directors and audiences play in theatrical performances?
- How do we perform as players and spectators in games, sports and everyday life?
- What kinds of performance and play blur the line between theater and games?
- What are the best research tools and methods for investigating, documenting and analyzing live events like play and performance?
- How can we use game development and theatrical design to make a persuasive argument?
- Who else is trying to answer these questions, and how can we start conversations with them?

Our collective investigations will consist of research-oriented:

class readings, assigned by me (theories of play and drama, fundamentals of game design, recent writing in game and performance studies);

individual readings, chosen by you (theater history and criticism, actor and director training guides, game reviews, interviews, play scripts, design documentation, fan essays, and whatever else you dig up in the course of your research!);

playing (in the classroom, in theaters, at home, on the field, onstage, online, in the streets);

brainstorming (informal weekly discussions on our blog);

writing (several formal assignments in preparation for a final 10-page research paper on the play and performance topic of your choice); and

design (a 3-page creative document with detailed instructions for an original game or performance related to your research topic).

REQUIRED TEXTS

Course Reader. Available at Replica Copy, 2140 Oxford Street (near Ben & Jerry's just west of campus).

Online access to OR a hard-copy of to each of the following:

Harvey, Gordon. *Writing with Sources: A Guide for Students*. Cambridge: Hackett Pub Co., 1998. Full text available online at: <http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~expos/sources/>

Strunk, William, Jr., E.B. White and Roger Angell. *The Elements of Style*. 4th Edition recommended. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2000. Full text available online at: <http://www.bartleby.com/141/index.html>

MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers. 6th Edition recommended. New York: Modern Language Association of America, 2003. Citation guidelines adapted from the *MLA Handbook* (but not the complete text) are easily found online with a Google search; recommended online resources are linked from our course blog.

GRADING

Your final grade will be based on the following criteria:

Class participation (including in-class discussion, collective play and “minute papers”, see below): **15%**

Blog responses (informal weekly writing assignments, see below): **25%**

Research exercises (topic statement, annotated bibliography, paper outline, e.g.) **25%**

Final Research Paper: 25%

Final Creative Intervention: 10%

COURSE POLICIES

Attendance is crucial for succeeding in this course. As per department policy, I will allow TWO unexcused absences. Each additional unexcused absence will reduce your final grade by 1/3 of a letter grade. (An A becomes an A-, i.e.) Excused absences include documented medical appointments or emergencies, religious observances or other personal obligations cleared with me at least 24 hours in advance. NOTE: Because our class meetings are so short (50 minutes!), if you arrive more than 10 minutes late to class or leave class early, it may count as an unexcused absence. Please see me in either case. Repeated lateness of any kind will hurt your class participation grade.

Positive and consistent **class participation** is essential! I expect to hear everyone's voice every week during class discussions, no exceptions. When we play games together, you are expected to participate or observe with interest, enthusiasm and creativity. When we brainstorm together, you are expected to generate and accept useful feedback for and from your classmates.

Unless we are discussing and playing mobile games, please have (and keep) your **cell phones** turned off and put away when you enter the classroom. If your cell phone rings during class, I get to answer it. (And if my phone rings, you can answer it!)

You are responsible for completing all reading and play assignments, without exception, by the day they are discussed. Be prepared for regular “**minute papers**,” short and open-ended in-class writing assignments of 10 minutes or less that focus on the readings. Sometimes these minute papers will be written at the beginning of class, to evaluate your preparation; sometimes they will be written after class discussion, to gauge your participation and attention. If you are keeping up with the work, these minute papers should be a fun and non-stressful alternative to quizzes.

COURSE BLOG

www.performanceandplay.blogspot.com

You will be asked to comment at least once a week on our **course web log ('blog)**. After each class meeting, I will post something new: my thoughts on our readings and discussions, links to related gaming and performance news, suggestions for at-home play experiments, or other questions for you to consider. You can choose which day each week to post your responses, but you are responsible for keeping track of your posts so that you do not get behind or accidentally miss a week.

Your blog grade will be based primarily on how well you engage your fellow posters (including me) -- do you raise thoughtful or provocative points, challenge each others' perspectives, offer advice, or answer questions that are raised? Because these are informal writing assignments, you are encouraged to be personal, relaxed and creative in your responses. As always, good faith efforts at proper spelling and punctuation are important, but this is secondary to the exchange and flow of ideas.

You are encouraged to aim for a substantial paragraph's worth of writing each time you post, and to read as many of your classmates' posts as possible. While you are only required to post once a week, you will probably find it helpful to check the blog two or more times a week to see if anyone (including myself) has responded to what you wrote, or if anyone has posted a comment asking for your help or advice.

Note: In previous classes, students who earned an A for their Blog grade never missed a week, often posted more than once a week, frequently expressed strong opinions, shared personal knowledge and/or experiences of the topic, and regularly responded to other students' posts. Students who earned a B missed no more than two weeks of blogging, posted thoughtful and personal responses at least once a week, and occasionally responded to others' comments. Students who earned lower than a B missed more than 2 weeks of blogging, usually ignored other students' comments, and/or failed to express strong opinions or share personal knowledge or experiences.

WRITING and RESEARCH ASSIGNMENTS

You will be asked to complete a 10-12 page research paper on the performance and play subject of your choice. "Performance and play" means that you can write about topic related to any kind of game, sport, dramatic literature or theater. You can also write about anything that you think would be interesting to examine "as performance" or "as play", i.e. medical practice or political activism as a kind of performance, or architecture or reality television as play. You will begin with a broad topic area of your own choosing that you will repeatedly refine and revise over the course of the semester until you are ready to make a persuasive argument about, and focused analysis of, some more specific aspect of your topic. Whatever starting topic you choose, we will work together to figure out the right scope, angle and resources you will need to turn your initial idea into a feasible, original and interesting research question. **The final paper is due May 17.**

In preparation for the final paper, you will be asked to complete the following writing and research assignments: (*detailed instructions will be given out as the deadlines approach*)

FEBRUARY 25: Preliminary topic statement and research plan

MARCH 10: Formal research update, revised topic statement and working bibliography

MARCH 19: Close reading of a primary source

APRIL 2: Annotated bibliography

APRIL 14: Paper outline

APRIL 26: First draft

MAY 3: Creative Intervention

MAY 17: FINAL DRAFT

Please keep in mind: All assignments must be turned in at the *beginning* of class on the day they are due, or they will be considered late. Assignments drop half a letter grade for each day they are late. Assignments more than one week late will not be accepted unless prior special permission has been granted. The final paper will not be accepted late, period.

Please note: FULL OR PARTIAL PLAGIARISM (1 or more paragraphs) WILL RESULT IN AN F ON THE ASSIGNMENT. If you're really struggling with an assignment, see me; we can always work out an option better than plagiarism. Additionally, the equally bad idea of ACADEMIC DISHONESTY in the form of fabrication of facts, quotations, or other evidence, or significant misrepresentation or alteration of source material, also results in an F on the assignment. You can find more information about UC Berkeley's policies on plagiarism and academic dishonesty at: <http://uga.berkeley.edu/sas/rights.shtml>.

And finally, some advice that I follow often:

“Anything will give up its secrets if you love it enough.” - *George Washington Carver*

SCHEDULE

WEDNESDAY JANUARY 21: Introduction to the class.

FRIDAY JANUARY 23: Introduction to research brainstorming.

Examine closely for today: www.themacguffinproject.com. Bring to class: Brainstorming notes on possible research clues, questions, contexts and strategies related to The MacGuffin Project. In class: Discussion and brainstorming.

INTRODUCING DRAMA

MONDAY JANUARY 26: Why do we love drama?

Read for today: “Wind-Chill Factor” from *Three Uses of the Knife* by David Mamet. (28 pages) In class: Discussion.

WEDNESDAY JANUARY 28: What makes for good drama?

Read for today: “3 Ideals of Drama” from *Pause & Effect: The Art of Interactive Narrative* by Mark Stephen Meadows. (2 pages) In class: Discussion.

FRIDAY JANUARY 30: Are games dramatic?

Read for today: Thunderstorm rules. In class: Play Thunderstorm, brainstorm and discuss.

INTRODUCTION TO PERFORMANCE

MONDAY FEBRUARY 2: What is performance?

Read for today: “The Broad Spectrum of Performing”, and “Performing in Everyday Life” from *Performance Studies: An Introduction* by Richard Schechner. (6 pages) In class: Discussion. *Optional after-class: (5 – 6 PM) Idea Party.* (Brainstorming research topics.)

WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 4: What is performance? Continued

Read for today: “Is Performance”, “As Performance” “Make Believe Versus Make Belief” from *Performance Studies: An Introduction* by Richard Schechner (6 pages). In class: Discussion. *Optional after-class: (5 – 6 PM) Idea Party.* (Brainstorming research topics.)

LAUNCHING YOUR RESEARCH PROJECT

FRIDAY FEBRUARY 6: Researching play and performance ONLINE CLASS

Read for today: Hand-outs on play and performance research strategies. NO REGULAR CLASS MEETING. Due for today: BLOG online assignment by 5 PM.

INTRODUCTION TO GAMES AND PLAY

MONDAY FEBRUARY 9: What is a game?

Read for today: “Defining Games” from *Rules of the Game* by Eric Zimmerman and Katie Salen. (13 pages) In class: Discussion.

WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 11 *Gamers*: Documentary filmmaking as research

No reading for today. In class: Screen a segment of *Gamers: A documentary*, discuss with *Gamers* director documentary filmmaking research strategies.

FRIDAY FEBRUARY 13: What is a game? Continued.

Read for today: “The Magic Circle” from *Rules of the Game* by Eric Zimmerman and Katie Salen. (6 pages) In class: Discussion. *Optional before-class: (3 – 4 PM) Idea Party.* (Brainstorming research topics.)

MONDAY FEBRUARY 16: NO CLASS! (PRESIDENT’S WEEKEND)

RESEARCH AS PUZZLE-SOLVING

WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 18: The first puzzle

Read for today: *The Cryptogram* by David Mamet. (100 pages). In class: Discussion.

FRIDAY FEBRUARY 20: The clues

Read for today: “Three Uses of the Knife” from *Three Uses of the Knife* by David Mamet. (17 pages) In class: Discussion.

MONDAY FEBRUARY 23: More clues

Read for today: Reviews of and directors’ notes from productions of *The Cryptogram*. In class: Discussion.

RESEARCH INTERLUDE I

WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 25: Research topics

DUE TODAY: Preliminary topic statement and research plan. IN CLASS: Share and brainstorm. Schedule an individual meeting to discuss topic statement and research plan.

INTERACTION AS PLAY

FRIDAY FEBRUARY 27: What is interaction?

“Interaction” from *Pause & Effect: The Art of Interactive Narrative* by Mark Stephen Meadows. (12)

RESEARCH AS PUZZLE-SOLVING #2

MONDAY MARCH 1: The second puzzle

Read for today: *Hapgood* by Tom Stoppard. (78 pages). In class: Discussion.

WEDNESDAY MARCH 3: Hypotheses.

No reading for today. In class: Continued discussion.

FRIDAY MARCH 5: Clues

Read for today: “The science and physics are a phase: An interview with Tom Stoppard” from *Conversations with Stoppard*. (9 pages) In class: Discussion.

MONDAY MARCH 8: More clues.

Read for today: Read for today: “Philosophies of Play” from *Performance Studies: An Introduction* by Richard Schechner. (6 pages). In class: Discussion.

RESEARCH INTERLUDE II

WEDNESDAY MARCH 10: Research updates and collective play

DUE TODAY: Formal research update, revised topic statement and working bibliography. In class: Collective play.

RESEARCH AS PUZZLE-SOLVING

FRIDAY MARCH 12: Acting as play

“Outside Looking In” and an excerpt from “Believing through Imagination” from *Acting is Believing* by Charles McGaw. (13 pages)

MONDAY MARCH 15: Acting as work

“Work” from *True and False: Heresy and Common Sense for the Actor* by David Mamet. (5 pages)

WEDNESDAY MARCH 17: Performing as game

“Confessions of an Apprehensive Performer” from *Writing Performance* by Ronald J. Pelias. (10 pages)

RESEARCH INTERLUDE III

FRIDAY MARCH 19: Close reading and collective play

DUE TODAY: Close reading of a primary source from your research project. In class: Collective play.

MONDAY MARCH 22 – FRIDAY MARCH 26: NO CLASS! SPRING BREAK

AUDIENCE PLAY

MONDAY MARCH 29: Theatrical audiences at play

Read for today: “My Theater and Its Audiences: Some Personal Experiences” from *The Audience and Actor as Character* by Sidney Holman. (9 pages) In class: Discussion.

RESEARCH INTERLUDE IV

WEDNESDAY MARCH 31: Catchup Day.

We’ll use this day to catch up on our discussions or tackle any research questions that emerge.

FRIDAY APRIL 2: Annotated bibliography and collective play

DUE TODAY: Annotated bibliography. IN CLASS: Collective play.

GAME DESIGN

MONDAY APRIL 5: Frank Lantz’s “Commissioned Game 2: Ironclad” and “Design Notes” from *Rules of Play* by Katie Salen and Eric Zimmerman. (12 pages)

WEDNESDAY APRIL 7: James Ernest’s “Commissioned Game 4: Caribbean Star and “Design Notes” from *Rules of Play* by Katie Salen and Eric Zimmerman. (14 pages)

BETWEEN PLAY AND PERFORMANCE

FRIDAY APRIL 9: Chance art

No reading for today. In class: Chance art workshop.

MONDAY APRIL 12: Happenings

No reading for today. In class: Happenings workshop..

WEDNESDAY APRIL 14: Invisible theatre

No reading for today. DUE TODAY: Paper outline. IN CLASS: Invisible theater workshop

BETWEEN THEATER AND GAMES

FRIDAY APRIL 16: Case study set #1: “La Noche de Santa Ines” and *House & Garden*

Evidence from: *Pause & Effect: The Art of Interactive Narrative* by Mark Stephen Meadows, various reviews. In class: Discussion.

MONDAY APRIL 19: Case study #2: *Eat the Runt, Lifegame, Game Show*.

Evidence from: Various reviews. In class: Discussion.

WEDNESDAY APRIL 21: Case study set #3: *Top Agent*

Evidence from: *Pause & Effect: The Art of Interactive Narrative* by Mark Stephen Meadows. In class: Discussion.

FRIDAY APRIL 23: Case study #5: Flash mobs

Evidence from: Various media coverage, flash mob scripts & top secret planning documents. In class: Discussion.

RESEARCH INTERLUDE V

MONDAY APRIL 26: First draft and collective play

DUE TODAY: First draft. In class: Collective play

CREATIVE INTERVENTIONS

WEDNESDAY APRIL 28: Creative Intervention Workshop Part I.

No assignment for today. In class: Workshop.

FRIDAY APRIL 30: Creative Intervention Workshop Part II.

No assignment for today. In class: Workshop.

MONDAY MAY 3: Creative intervention and collective play

DUE TODAY: Final creative intervention guidelines. In class: Collective play.

IMPROV

WEDNESDAY MAY 5: We'll improvise, depending on what we're interested in exploring further.

FRIDAY MAY 7: More improvisation.

GRAND FINALE

MONDAY MAY 10: LAST CLASS! Collective Play.

MONDAY MAY 17: FINAL DRAFT DUE by 5 PM. Absolutely no late papers will be accepted.