

Stockholm University
Department of Culture and Aesthetics Theatre Studies
Performance: Theories and Methodologies (Fall 2019, MA-level, 7.5 ECTS)

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Emails will normally be answered within 48 hours, except on weekends and holidays. Office hours by appointment.

Course description

The course will focus on contemporary theoretical and methodological debates as they relate to the discipline of theatre and performance studies. It will introduce and discuss key concepts in critical theory and performance, explore the intellectual origins of these concepts and ponder their relevance and modes of application. Particular emphasis will be devoted to the interrelation between the performing arts and social reality. In the process, students will significantly enhance their critical reading and writing skills.

Learning objectives and outcomes

Having completed this course, students will be able to:

identify and critically analyze some of the dominant concerns and debates in twenty-first century theatre and performance theory and display a sophisticated understanding of the history behind these concerns and debates; display a refined critical understanding of the myriad intersections and mutual impact of critical theory and performance; problematize and, in an independent and original way, apply key theoretical concepts and methodological tools from theatre and performance studies to their respective field of research; critically reflect on their own positionality when engaging in research.

Course requirements

active and qualitative participation in the seminars;
an oral presentation based on a course reading (non-graded);
a final essay (graded)

Active and qualitative participation in the seminars

Students are expected to take notes while preparing the readings and bring at least one considered thought or relevant example for possible discussion.

Oral presentation based on a course reading (non-graded)

For each session, an assigned group of readings will be prepared by a pair of students and presented in the class. The objective of the assignment is to critically engage with the article/chapter by:
presenting a concise overview of the major problems and objectives and offering critical feedback on the choice of theory and methodology as well as the credibility and validity of the arguments, sources and conclusions;
situating the text and its conclusion in relation to the broader landscape of academic discourse and/or artistic practice;
explaining and illustrating how the issues raised in the text potentially pertain to the course content and the student's own ongoing research project;
preparing two questions or examples to stimulate a critical discussion with the other members of the course at the end of the presentation.

Please observe that the presentations not exceed 20 minutes in order to leave plenty of time for critical discussions. It is therefore important that students rehearse their presentation and attempt to be as concise as possible by focusing on the most relevant arguments and theoretical/methodological concepts of the respective texts.

Final essay (graded)

The final assignment consists of a written essay, in which students are required to position themselves and their research in relation to scholarly discourses and artistic practices in the field of theatre and performance theory and methodology. They have to demonstrate a elaborated understanding of the course content and literature to convincingly articulate which theories and methodologies they find the most appealing, engage in additional research that demonstrates a critical engagement with the larger field and, in an independent and original way, apply the insights gained to a case study of their choice. The assignment will be submitted in paper or as an email attachment (only .dox, .docx or .pdf files will be accepted) no later than 4 January 2021 at 10am. Length: 9-10 pages; spacing: 1.5; font: Times New Roman or equivalent; size: 12 pt. References to the course literature, additional research and a bibliography are compulsory.

Guidelines: Pick one theoretical and/or methodological concept from the course literature that you have found particularly interesting, inspiring or even provocative.

In the first part of your paper, briefly define and explain in a concise way the chosen concept as it is discussed in the course literature. Tease out and discuss how this theoretical and/or methodological concept relates to Theatre and Performance Studies and what broader insights and implications it has generated.

In the second part of the paper, analyze how this theoretical and/or methodological concept has been developed, debated and applied by other scholars in Theatre and Performance Studies and/or beyond the discipline. Here you need to engage in additional research.

Finally, in the third part, apply this concept to a concrete performance (in the broadest sense) of your choice. Reflect on and illustrate how the concept might be useful in your own field/discipline and your (current or future) research area.

Students are welcome to schedule a meeting with their professor before the oral and written assignments in order to discuss the format and content of their work and presentation.

Evaluation criteria

- A All written essays have been fulfilled in a timely manner, reveal an excellent understanding of the field of Theatre and Performance Studies, offer proof of highly advanced critical thinking skills and display an impressive degree of intellectual independence and creativity. The student demonstrates an excellent ability to articulate and critically reflect upon key theoretical and methodological concerns in Theatre and Performance Studies that also problematizes their own positionality. Language and style are at an appropriate academic level.
- B All written essays have been fulfilled in a timely manner, reveal a very good understanding of the field of Theatre and Performance Studies, offer proof of advanced critical thinking skills and display a high degree of intellectual independence and creativity. The student demonstrates a very good ability to articulate and critically reflect upon key theoretical and methodological concerns in Theatre and Performance Studies that also problematizes their own positionality. Language and style are very good.
- C All written essays reveal a good understanding of the field of Theatre and Performance Studies, offer proof of critical thinking skills and display signs of intellectual independence and creativity. The student demonstrates a good ability to articulate and reflect upon key theoretical and methodological concerns in Theatre and Performance Studies that also attempts to problematize their own positionality. Most of the assignments were fulfilled in a timely manner.
- D All written essays reveal a satisfactory understanding of the field of Theatre and Performance Studies. The student demonstrates an adequate ability to articulate key theoretical and methodological concerns in Theatre and Performance Studies.
- E All written essays reveal a very basic understanding of the field of Theatre and Performance Studies. The student demonstrates an elementary ability to articulate some theoretical and methodological concerns in Theatre and Performance Studies.
- Fx The criteria under E were not fully met and some additional work is required to reach a passing grade.
- F The student failed to meet the criteria under E.

Attendance

Attendance is mandatory. Each student may miss one seminar, but each additional absence needs to be compensated with a 4-page written essay that critically discusses the literature assigned for that session. If a student has missed three or more classes, a final grade cannot be assigned.

Required readings

The majority of the readings are essays or book chapters which students can access and retrieve electronically via the Stockholm University Library. All other essays or book chapters will be made available on the Athena course site.

Course schedule and readings

Please observe the reading guidelines for each seminar on Athena.

Session 1 Tuesday, 10 November, 14:00-17:00

Introduction to critical theory and performance

Session 2 Wednesday, 11 November, 13:00-16:00

The performative turn: Beyond disciplinary boundaries

- Jackson, Shannon, "Resist Singularity", *Theatre Survey* vol. 45, no. 2 (2004): 241-246 (e-journal)
- Schechner, Richard, "A New Paradigm for Theatre in the Academy", *TDR: The Drama Review* vol. 36, no. 4 (1992): 7-10 (e-journal)
- Schechner, Richard, "Invasions Friendly and Unfriendly", *South African Theatre Journal* vol. 6, no. 1 (1992): 4- 24 (e-journal)
- Taylor, Diana & Marcos Steuernagel (eds), *What is Performance Studies?*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2015, <http://scalar.usc.edu/nehvectors/wips> (open access)
- *What is Performance Studies? Interview Series*
<http://scalar.usc.edu/nehvectors/wips/interviews-eng> (open access)

Session 3 Wednesday, 18 November, 13:00-16:00

Liveness & presence in twenty-first-century performance

- Benjamin, Walter, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt, transl. Harry Zohn, New York: Schocken, 1969, pp. 217-252 (on Athena)
- Auslander, Philip, *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture*, London & New York: Routledge, 1999, Chapter 1 and 2, pp. 1-60. (SUB)
- Jones, Amelia. "'The Artist is Present': Artistic Re-enactments and the Impossibility of Presence", *TDR: The Drama Review* vol. 55, no. 1 (2011): 16-45 (e-ressource)
- Phelan, Peggy. "Marina Abramovic: Witnessing Shadows", *Theatre Journal* vol. 56, no. 4 (2004): 569-577 (e-ressource)

Session 4 Tuesday, 24 November, 14:00-17:00

Intercultural performance and the hemispheric turn

- Cabranes-Grant, Leo, "From Scenarios to Networks: Performing the Intercultural in Colonial Mexico", *Theatre Journal* vol. 63, no. 4 (2011): 499-520 (e-ressource)
- Taylor, Diana, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2003 (excerpts: "Scenarios of Discovery: Reflections on Performance and Ethnography", pp. 53-78) (e-ressource)

Session 5 Wednesday, 2 December, 13:00-16:00

Guest Lecture Dr Kim Skjoldager-Nielsen: Affect and performance

- Ahmed, Sara, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014², 1-19 (on Athena)

- Dolan, Jill, "Performance, Utopia, and the 'Utopian Performative'", *Theatre Journal* vol. 53, no. 3 (2001): 455-479 (e-journal)
- Knowles, Scott C., *Dystopian Performatives: Negative Affect/Emotion in the Work of Sarah Kane*. University of Kansas: Lawrence, KS, 2016, 1-30 (e-ressource)
- Massumi, Brian, "The Autonomy of Affect", in: *Cultural Critique*. No. 31, autumn 1995: 83-109. (e-resource)
- Skjoldager-Nielsen, Kim, "Who Am I Here, Who Am I Now", in Petlevski, Sibilija & Pavlic, Goran (Eds.). *Spaces of Identity in the Performing Sphere*. Zagreb: Fraktura 2011: 65-90 (e-ressource)
- Skjoldager-Nielsen, Kim and Skjoldager-Nielsen, Daria "Para-Athropo(s)cene Aesthetics Between Despair and Beauty: A Matter of Response-Ability", in *Nordic Theatre Studies* Vol. 32, No. 1. 2020, 44-65 (e-resource)

Session 6 Wednesday, 9 December, 13:00-16:00

Research methodologies: Critical Race Theory

- Ahmed, Sara, "A Phenomenology of Whiteness", *Feminist Theory* vol. 8, no. 2 (2007): 149-168
- Dyer, Richard, *White: Essays on Race and Culture*, New York & London: Routledge, 1997 (excerpts: "As a White Man", pp. 12-35) (on Athena)
- Elam, Henry, "Reality ✓", in *Critical Theory and Performance*, ed. by Janelle Reinelt and Joseph R. Roach, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007, 173-190. (on Athena)
- hooks, bell, "Choosing the Margin as a Space of Radical Openness", *Framework. Journal of Cinema and Media* No. 36 (1989): 15-23 (on Athena)

Session 7 Wednesday, 16 December, 13:00-16:00

Research methodologies: Historiography & Archives

- Chakrabarty, Dipesh, *Provincializing Europe. Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, Princeton 2000 (excerpts: "Introduction", pp. 3-23 (e-book)
- Foucault, Michel, *The Archaeology of Language*, London 1989 (excerpts: "Introduction", "Unities of Discourse", "Discursive Formations", pp. 3-39) (SUB)
- Jenkins, Keith: *Re-thinking History*, London 2003 (excerpts: "Introduction", "What History is", pp.1-77) (SUB)

Deadline for final paper: Friday, 10 January 2020, 10am (to be submitted via email)

Additional selected reference literature

- Ahmed, Sara, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004
- Bharucha, Rustom, *Theatre and the World: Performance and the Politics of Culture*, London & New York: Routledge, 1993
- Carlson, Marvin, *Performance: A Critical Introduction*, 2nd ed., New York: Routledge, 2003
- Carlson, Marvin, *The Haunted Stage: The Theatre as Memory Machine*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001
- Case, Sue-Ellen (ed.), *Performing Feminisms: Feminist Critical Theory and Theatre*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990
- Chakrabarty, Dipesh, *Provincializing Europe. Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, Princeton 2000
- Conquergood, Dwight, "Performance Studies: Interventions and Radical Research", *TDR: The Drama Review*, vol. 46, nr. 2 (2002): 145-156 (SUB elektronisk resurs)
- Dixon, Steve, *Digital Performance: A History of New Media in Theater, Dance, Performance Art, and Installation*, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT, 2007
- Dolan, Jill, *Utopia in Performance: Finding Hope at the Theater*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005
- Fraser, Mariam & Monica Greco (eds.), *The Body: A Reader*, Routledge, London, 2005

- Fusco, Coco, *The Bodies That Were Not Ours and Other Writings*, London & New York: Routledge, 2001
- Gómez-Peña, Guillermo, *Dangerous Border Crossers: The Artist Talks Back*, London & New York: Routledge, 2000
- Haraway, Donna J., "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Knowledge", *Feminist Studies* vol. 14, no. 3 (1988): 575-599
- Hurley, Erin (ed.), *Theatres of Affect*, Toronto: Playwrights Canada Press, 2014
- *Intermediality in Theatre and Performance*, ed. by Freda Chapple and Chiel Kattenbelt, Amsterdam: Brill/Rodopi, 2006
- Jones, Amelia, *Body Art/Performing the Subject*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1998
- Jones, Amelia, & Adrian Heathfield (eds.), *Perform, Repeat, Record: Live Art in History*, Bristol & Chicago: Intellect, 2014
- Kershaw, Baz & Helen Nicholson (eds), *Research Methods in Theatre and Performance*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011
- McKenzie, Jon, *Perform or Else: From Discipline to Performance*, London & New York, Routledge, 2005
- *Modern Drama: Defining the Field*. Edited by Ric Knowles, Joanne Tompkins, and W. B. Worthen, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003
- Muñoz, José Esteban, *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999.
- Nolan, Yvette, *Medicine Shows: Indigenous Performance Culture*, Toronto: Playwrights Canada Press, 2015
- Phelan, Peggy. *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*, London & New York: Routledge, 1993
- Roach, Joseph R., *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1996
- Reinelt, Janelle G. & Joseph R. Roach (eds.), *Critical Theory and Performance*, revised & enlarged ed., Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007.
- Rushdie, Salman, "The Location of Brazil", *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981-1991*, New York & London: Penguin, 1991, pp. 118-125
- Sauter, Willmar, *The Theatrical Event: Dynamics of Performance and Perception*, Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2000
- Schechner, Richard, *Performance Studies: An Introduction*, London & New York: Routledge, 2002 or later
- Schneider, Rebecca, *The Explicit Body in Performance*, London & New York: Routledge, 1997
- Schneider, Rebecca, *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment*, London & New York: Routledge, 2011
- Parker, Robert Dale, *Critical Theory: A Reader for Literary and Cultural Studies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012
- Welton, Donn (ed.), *The Body: Classic and Contemporary Readings*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1999
- Theatre Journal, vol. 64, no. 4 (2012): *Queer Performance*
- Theatre Journal, vol. 63, no. 4 (2011): *Rethinking Intercultural Performance*
- Theatre Survey, vol. 45, no. 2 (2004): *Theatre History in the New Millenium: A Forum*