

Performativity and the Body: Staging Gender, Staging Race

TAPS1630-S01
Brown University
Fall 2014
Tuesday/Thursday 2:30-3:50
Lyman 211

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Office Hours: Wednesday 2:30-3:30, Thursday 4:00-5:00

Course Overview

This course examines how we develop and interrogate different meanings around our bodies through performance practices in everyday life and on stage. Specifically, we analyze how race and gender are regulated, reinforced, reworked, and subverted through embodied modes of performance. In Unit 1, “Race and Gender *as* Performance in Everyday Life,” we explore how raced and gendered bodies are constructed, reconstructed, and deconstructed through everyday performances of self from fashion to food to surgery. In Unit 2, “Staging Race and Gender *in* Performance,” we examine works by playwrights, visual artists, performance artists, and theatre artists who deploy performance practices to probe historical, social, and political understandings of our bodies as raced and gendered. In both units, we consider the critical implications of performances of race and gender that trouble the boundaries between representational practices and lived realities.

Course Requirements

This class is organized in a seminar format that will also include short introductory lectures on the course materials. Discussion is a key component of the course, so it is essential that you read and think about the materials carefully and thoroughly for each class. Students will take collective responsibility for the success of each discussion, meaning that (1) you must come to class having prepared questions, opinions, and reflections on the materials, and (2) you are expected to listen attentively and respond considerately to the ideas of your peers. Given the emphasis on engagement in discussion, it is essential that you regularly attend class and arrive on time. Finally, some of the materials for this course include nudity, profanity, explicit, and/or potentially offensive content. If you do not wish to engage with such materials, you should not enroll in the course.

A significant portion of your final grade reflects how you engage with the course content in the classroom, including regular attendance, active participation, and two in-class presentations on the day's materials. These presentations will also be accompanied by a 1-2 page outline that you will submit to me as a hardcopy at the beginning of class on the days you present. Students who want more feedback on their writing can submit this presentation outline in prose form. You are permitted **one unexcused absence**. Any additional absences will negatively impact your grade.

In addition to rigorous and regular engagement with the materials in class, you will have three written assignments. There is a 3-5 page mid-semester paper on race and gender *as* performance in everyday life. This is to be emailed to me on Monday October 13 by midnight. A 5-7 page paper that analyzes race and gender in live performance and/or in a playscript is to be emailed to me on Sunday November 16 by midnight. Both papers require that you both examine the content (i.e. describe the event itself and its context of production and reception) and draw on the critical concepts and theories that we have read to analyze this act, play, text, or event. The final project for the course must be approved through a preliminary proposal, to be submitted via email by midnight on Sunday November 23. This project can take the shape of a 9-11 page research paper that takes as its object race and gender *as* and/or *in* performance. For students who would prefer to do an art-based project such as writing a play, staging a performance, or making a work of visual art, you must also write a 4-6 page paper engaging with theories and concepts from the class in relation to your piece. The final paper is due by midnight on Tuesday December 16. If you are doing a performance piece, it must be staged no later than Sunday December 14.

Grade Breakdown

Attendance, punctuality, active participation	25%
Two presentations on course materials with written outline	15%
Written analysis of race/gender as performance in everyday life (3-5 pages)	10%
Written analysis of race/gender in live performance and/or playscript (5-7 pages)	15%
Final project proposal	5%
Final paper or project (9-11 pages)	25%

Required Texts

All books and plays **except *An Octoroon*** are available through Brown Bookstore. Texts will also be put on reserve at the Rockefeller Library.

- Don Kulick. 1998. *Travesti: Sex, Gender, and Culture among Brazilian Transgender Prostitutes*.
- Ellen Samuels. 2014. *Fantasies of Identification: Disability, Gender, Race*
- Suzan-Lori Parks. 1997. *Venus*
- David Henry Hwang. 2009. *Yellowface*
- Branden Jacobs-Jenkins. 2014. *An Octoroon* ***** Please purchase this directly through the following website: <http://sohorep.org/an-octoroon>.
- Young Jean Lee. 2009. *Songs of the Dragons Flying to Heaven*
- Sarah Ruhl. 2010. *In the Next Room (or the vibrator play)*

All other readings for the course will be made available as PDFs on canvas. Films and other materials that are not found online will be made available through OCRA (online course reserves).

Schedule of Readings and Assignments

Please note that the schedule is tentative and subject to change, depending on our collective progress in the course.

September 4 Introduction

How do we think about race and gender *as* performance?
How do we think about race and gender *in* performance?

Discussion of Ferguson

View excerpts in class:

My Gimpy Life

If Asians said the stuff white people say

The Yes Men

Real Housewives

Unit 1: Race and Gender *as* Performance in Everyday Life

WEEK 1

Tuesday September 9

What Is Performance Studies? How Does It Relate to Everyday Life?

Richard Schechner. 1998. "What is Performance Studies Anyway?" in Peggy Phelan and Jill Lane, eds, *The Ends of Performance*, pp. 357-362

Marvin Carlson. 1997. "What is Performance?" in Carlson, *Performance: A Critical Introduction*, Second Edition, pp. 1-9

Irving Goffman. 1959. "Performances," in *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, pp. 17-76

Conquergood, Dwight. 2002. "Performance Studies: Interventions and Radical Research." *TDR: The Drama Review* 46(2): 145-156.

Thursday September 11

Acting, Doing, Being: Naturalizing Sex and Gender

Simone de Beauvoir, 1952, "Introduction." In *The Second Sex*, pages xxv-xlii

Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory"

Anne Fausto-Sterling, 2000, "Dueling Dualisms." In *Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality*.

WEEK 2

Tuesday September 16

Acting, Doing, Being: Gender, Sexuality, Race, and Class

bell hooks, "Performance Practice as a Site of Opposition," from *Let's Get it On: The Politics of Black Performance*, pp. 210-221

Audre Lorde. [1984] 2007. "Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference." *Sister Outsider Essays and Speeches*. Ed. Audre Lorde & Cheryl Clarke. Berkeley, CA: Crossing, pp. 114-123

Kobena Mercer. 1987. "Black Hair/Style Politics," from *Welcome to the Jungle: New Positions in Cultural Studies*, pp. 97-128

Ian Haney-Lopez. 1994. "The Social Construction of Race: Some Observations on Illusion, Fabrication, and Choice." *Harvard Civil Rights-Civil Liberties Law Review*, pp. 1-62

Thursday September 18 **Performing Race and Gender**

View at home: *Paris Is Burning*. 1992. Dir. Jennie Livingston.

bell hooks. 1992. "Is Paris Burning?" *Black Looks: Race and Representation*. Pp. 145-156.

Judith Butler. 1993. "Gender Is Burning: Questions of Appropriation and Subversion." *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex."* Pp. 121-140.

Halberstam "Mackdaddy, Superfly, Rapper: Gender, Race, and Masculinity in the Drag King Scene," in *Social Text* 52/53, nos 3 and 4 (Fall/Winter 1997), pp. 105-131

If time, view excerpts in class *Storme: The Lady in the Jewel Box Revue*

WEEK 3

Tuesday September 23 **Bodies and Selves in Practice: Transgendered Prostitutes in Brazil**

Don Kulick. 1998. "Introduction," "The Context of Travesti Life," and "Becoming Travesti." *Travesti: Sex, Gender, and Culture among Brazilian Transgender Prostitutes*.

Thursday September 25

Don Kulick. 1998. "Travesti Gendered Subjectivity." *Travesti: Sex, Gender, and Culture among Brazilian Transgender Prostitutes*.

Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Margaret Lock. 1987. "The Mindful Body: A Prolegomenon to Future Work in Medical Anthropology." *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 1, 1: 6-41.

WEEK 4

Tuesday September 30 **Disability and In/Authenticity**

Samuels, Ellen. 2014. "Introduction," "Ellen Craft's Masquerade," and "The Disability Con Onscreen." In *Fantasies of Identification: Disability, Race, Gender*.

Thursday October 2 **Making the Body Speak?**

Samuels, Ellen. 2014. "Proving Disability," "Revising Blood Quantum," and "Realms of Biocertification," and "DNA and the Readable Self." In *Fantasies of Identification: Disability, Race, Gender*.

Recommended:

Michael Taussig. 1993. "His Master's Voice." In *Mimesis and Alterity: A Particular History of the Senses*.

WEEK 5

Tuesday October 7 **Everyday Objects as a Site of Regulation and Resistance**

Robin Bernstein. 2011. "Scriptive Things" and "The Scripts of Black Dolls." *Racial Innocence: Performing American Childhood from Slavery to Civil Rights*.

Recommended:

Maurya Wickstrom. 2006. "Making Americans: The American Girl Doll and American Girl Place." *Performing Consumers: Global Capital and its Theatrical Seductions*

Thursday October 9 **Ethnography and/as Performance**

View: Anna Deavere Smith, *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992* (2000)

Della Pollack. 2006. "Marking New Directions in Performance Ethnography." *Text and Performance Quarterly* Vol. 26, No. 4: 325-329.

Recommended:

Robin Bernstein. 2000. "Rodney King, Shifting Modes of Vision, and Anna Deavere Smith's *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992*." *Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism* Vol. 14, No. 2: 121-134.

****Race and Gender *as* Performance in Everyday Life Paper
Due Monday October 13 before midnight ****

Unit 2: Staging Race and Gender *in* Performance

WEEK 6

Tuesday October 14

Countering the Colonial Ethnographic Gaze

View Coco Fusco and Gomez-Pena, 1993 [Couple in Cage](#)

Caroline Vercoe. 2001. "Agency and Ambivalence: A Reading of Works by Coco Fusco," in Coco Fusco, *The Bodies That Were Not Ours and Other Writings*

Coco Fusco. 1994. "The Other History of Intercultural Performance," *TDR: The Drama Review* 38, 1: 143-167.

Diana Taylor. 1998. "A Savage Performance: Guillermo Gomez-Pena and Coco Fusco's 'Couple in the Cage,'" *TDR: The Drama Review* 42, 2: 160-175.

Thursday October 16

Staging Slavery

Dion Boucicault. 1859. *The Octoroon*

Saidiya Hartman. 1997. "Innocent Amusements: The Stage of Sufferance." *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth Century America*. 17-48.

Joseph Roach. 1992. "Slave Spectacles and Tragic Octoroons: A Cultural Genealogy of Antebellum Performance," *Theatre Survey* 33: 167-187

Harley Erdman. 1993. "Caught in the 'Eye of the Eternal:' Justice, Race, and the Camera, from *The Octoroon* to Rodney King," *Theatre Journal* 45: pp. 333-348.

Recommended

Winona L. Fletcher, "Who Put the 'Tragic' in the Tragic Mulatto?" from *Women in American Theatre*, pp. 262-268

WEEK 7

Tuesday October 21

Re/Visions of Race in the Afterlives of Slavery

An Octoroon, Branden Jacobs-Jenkins

Short Daphne Brooks [interview on satire and African American culture](#)

Eric Lott. 1993. "Introduction." *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class*.

Daphne Brooks. 2006. "Alien/Nation: Re-Imagining the Black Body (Politic) in Williams and Walker's *In Dahomey*." In *Bodies in Dissent: Spectacular Performances of Race and Freedom, 1850-1910*.

Thursday October 23

Staging Histories Across Raced and Gendered Bodies

Venus, Suzan Lori-Parks

Harvey Young. 2010. "Touching History: Staging Black Experience." *Embodying Black Experience: Stillness, Critical Memory, and the Black Body*.

Brandi Wilkins Catanese. 2011. "Transgressing Tradition: Suzan-Lori Parks and Black Performance (as) Theory." *The Problem of the [Color]Blind: Racial Transgression and the Politics of Black Performance*.

Discuss blackface *Venus* controversy at Brown University

Recommended:

Sander Gilman. 1985. "Black Bodies, White Bodies: Toward an Iconography of Female Sexuality in Late Nineteenth Century Art, Medicine, and Literature." *Critical Inquiry* Vol. 12, No. 1 on *Race, Writing and Difference*: 204-242.

Saidiya Hartman. 2008. "Venus in Two Acts." *Small Axe* Vol. 12, No. 2: 1-14.

WEEK 8

Tuesday October 28

Casting I

Richard Schechner. 1979. "Race-Free, Gender-Free, Body-Type Free, Age-Free Casting," *TDR*

August Wilson. 1996. "The Ground on which I Stand," *American Theatre*

Robert Brustein. 1996. "Subsidized Separatism." *American Theatre*

Various authors. "Beyond the Wilson-Brustein Debate." 1997. *Theater*

View online: *My Gimp Life* episodes 1-3

Recommended:

Brandi Wilkins Catanese. 2011. "The End of Race or the End of Blackness?: August Wilson, Robert Brustein, and Color-Blind Casting." *The Problem of the [Color]Blind: Racial Transgression and the Politics of Black Performance*.

Thursday October 30 Casting II

David Henry Hwang, *Yellowface*

View [play in two acts on youtube](#).

Discuss [2014 Providence Opera Mikado controversy](#)

Yen Le Espiritu. 2008. "Beyond Dualisms: Constructing an Imagined Community." *Asian American Women and Men: Labor, Laws, Love*.

WEEK 9

Tuesday November 4 Post- ____ ?

Young Jean Lee, *Songs of the dragon flying to heaven*

View online: *Prologue (hitting video)*

Jeffrey Jones. "What's Wrong with These Plays?" Afterword in *Songs of the dragon flying to heaven and other plays*. 183-201.

Karen Shimakawa. 2007. "Young Jean Lee's Ugly Feelings about Race and Gender: Stuplime Animation in Songs of the Dragons Flying to Heaven." *Women and Performance* Vol. 17, No. 1: 89-102.

Ryan Anthony Hatch. 2013. "First as Minstrelsy, Then as Farce: On the Spectacle of Race in the Theater of Young Jean Lee." *CR: The New Centennial Review* Vol. 13, No. 3: 89-114.

**Thursday November 6:
Eating and Performance**

Kyla Wazana Tompkins. 2012. "Introduction: Eating Bodies in the 19th Century" and "Everything 'Cept Us: The Mouth as Political Organ in the Antebellum Novel." *Racial Indigestion: Eating Bodies in the 19th Century*.

View and discuss in class: Kara Walker's "A Subtlety" and Robbie McCauley's, *Sugar*

Check out Buzzfeed: "[If White People Were Described Like People of Color in Literature.](#)"

WEEK 10

****We may need to reduce reading load this week****

**Tuesday November 11
Hysteria, Mimesis, Realism**

Sarah Ruhl, 2010, *In the Next Room (or the vibrator play)**** This play is being staged at Brown in early December****

Michel Foucault, 1978, "We Other Victorians," "The Perverse Implantation," and "Domain." In *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1*

Catherine Craft-Fairchild. "Eliza Haywood and the Masquerade of Femininity." In *Masquerade and Gender: Disguise in Female Identity in Eighteenth-Century*.

**Thursday November 13
Self as Other?**

View the works of Nikki S. Lee, Cindy Sherman, and Yasumasa Morimura

Homi Bhabha. 1994. "Of Mimicry and Man." *The Location of Culture*.

Cherise Smith. 2011. "Nikki S. Lee's *Projects* and the Repackaging of the Politics of Identity." In *Enacting Others: Politics of Identity in Eleanor Antin, Nikki S. Lee, Adrian Piper, and Anna Deavere Smith*.

Rebecca Schneider. 2011. "Still Living." *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment*. Pp. 138-168

*******Race and Gender in Performance Paper
Due Sunday November 16 before midnight ******

WEEK 11

Tuesday November 18 Our Bodies, Our Selves?

View online: Mendi and Keith Obadike, "Blackness for Sale" and Damali Ayo, "Rent-a-Negro"

Coco Fusco interview with Keith Townsend Obadike "[All Too Real: The Tale of an On-Line Black Sale](#)"

Brandi Wilkins Catanese. 2005. "How do I Rent a Negro?": Racialized Subjectivity and Digital Performance Art." *Theater Journal* 57: 699-714

Wendy Chun. 2012. "Race and/as Technology, or How to Do Things to Race." *Race After the Internet*, Eds. Lisa Nakamura and Peter Chow-White. Pp. 38-60.

Recommended

Wendy Chun. 2006. "Scenes of Empowerment." *Control and Freedom: Power and Paranoia in the Age of Fiber Optics*.

Stephen Best. 2004. "The Slave's Two Bodies." *The Fugitive's Properties: Law and the Poetics of Possession*.

Alexander Weheliye. 2014. "Law: Property." In *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human*.

Thursday November 20 No Class - Professor at Conference

****Work on final project proposals****

WEEK 12

*****[Final Project Proposals](#)

[Due Sunday November 23rd before midnight](#) ****

November 25 BioFutures and Technoscience

View artworks of [subRosa](#), [Critical Art Ensemble](#), [Micha Cardenas](#), BITELABS, and [Institute for Figuring](#)

Octavia Butler interview "['Devil Girl from Mars': Why I Write Science Fiction](#)."

Donna Haraway. 1991. "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century." *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. Pp. 149-181.

Karen Barad, 2003, "Posthuman Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter." *Signs* 28(3): 801-831.

November 27
No Class
Have a Happy Thanksgiving!!

WEEK 13

December 2
The Ends of the Body? Material Ecologies

Mel Chen. 2012. "Animating Animacy," "Lead's Racial Matters" and "Following Mercurial Affect." In *Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, and Queer Affect*.

December 4
Dance, Autism, and Bodily Ecologies

Erin Manning, 2013, "Always More Than One," "Fiery, Luminous, Scary," and "An Ethics of Language in the Making." In *Always More Than One: The Dance of Individuation*.

*******Final Projects**
Due Tuesday December 16 before midnight *****