



Kent Monkman, *They Walk Softly on This Earth* (2022)

Queer Drama: Race and the Performance of Sexuality

ETHN 189

Prof. Roy Pérez (he/him/his)

roypererez@ucsd.edu

Class Time and Location:

Tues. & Thurs. 2:00-3:20pm

Mandeville (MANDE) B153

Office Hours:

Wednesdays by appointment via calendly.com/roypererez

Please email if available times don't work for you.

Course Description:

This course provides an introduction to the theories and methods of performance studies, with a focus queer-of-color artistic practices. As a field that asks questions about identity and culture, performance studies offers methods for analyzing how social formations like gender, race, sexuality, nationality, belief, and ability are constructed, normalized, and reimagined. Performance studies examines not what art represents, but what it does—what possibilities for queer-of-color life do texts create, how are normative ways of being naturalized and de-naturalized through different kinds of performance, what does performance allow us to see that we couldn't see before? What does it mean to “do” queerness rather than “be” queer? We will examine queer-of-color literature, visual art, theatre, popular media, and other forms of cultural production through which queer artists enact political resistance, find pleasure, and create possibility.

Content Advisory:

The material in this class is designed to provoke meaningful conversations about issues of sex, racial difference, gender, and other sociopolitical dilemmas. At times, we may read or view material, like performance art, that is explicit, including profanity and nudity. These artistic strategies are important for understanding the work, and we should engage them frankly and analytically, with respect for the emotional reactions we might have. In doing so I ask that you keep an open mind and help foster an intellectually rigorous and respectful level of conversation with these socially complex themes. I will provide content notices whenever possible, and I am open to discussing alternative assignments for you if you are concerned about the content of a text. Additionally, many of the topics we'll discuss in this class directly affect the lives of students present—including issues of sexual violence, citizenship, disability—and I ask that you be sensitive to this and to each other's differences.

Assigned Books (other readings posted on Canvas):

Performance Studies: An Introduction (4th or 3rd edition), Richard Schechner and Sara Brady
Available at the UCSD bookstore or online [here](#).

Grading:

40 points	Interrogation Papers (four total, ten points each)
25 points	Analysis: Everyday Performance in a Public Space
25 points	Analysis: Staged Performance
<u>10 points</u>	Self-Report (Attendance, Participation, Intellectual Reflection)
100 points total toward final grade.	

Assignments and Guidelines in order of date due:

Interrogation Papers (10 points each, 40 points total)

These short papers (one and a half to two single-spaced pages) are to help you process and interrogate theoretical readings, or practice formal analysis of a performance using the week's reading. You must complete four throughout the semester and they are due on Canvas on the day of the reading you're engaging. On the days you submit an Interrogation Paper you're asked to offer some ideas and questions to the class for discussion.

Due before class on the day of the reading you select under "Assignments" on Canvas:

<https://canvas.ucsd.edu/courses/46786/assignments>.

Analysis: Everyday Performance in a Public Space (25 points)

For this assignment, you will position yourself in a public space for at least one hour and observe. Take notes that help you engage some of the following questions: Who uses this space (notice things like race, gender, ability, age, class signifiers, cultural signifiers like fashion)? How do people use the space? Does this space have "rules," official or unofficial? How do people navigate these rules? What are some performative elements of the space, including the "stage" and the way people enact their role there (per Goffman, "twice-behaved behaviors," or repetitions of behavior such that they appear natural)? Finally, in what ways do you find *yourself* performing in this space? Write a five-page, double-spaced paper in which you employ at least two theorists in your examination of this space.

Due Friday, May 5, by 11:59pm under "Assignments" on Canvas:

<https://canvas.ucsd.edu/courses/46786/assignments/639643>.

Self-Report (Attendance, Participation, Intellectual Reflection) (10 points)

Your self-report will include the following components (I will provide more thorough guidelines, plus readings from the book *Ugrading*, before the assignment is due):

1. Record of your attendance this quarter.
2. Record of the days you submitted your assignments.
3. A reflection on your participation and comportment in class.
4. An reflection on at least two texts that impacted you intellectually and how you might apply the ideas in the future.

Due Friday, June 2, by 11:59pm, under "Assignments" on Canvas:

<https://canvas.ucsd.edu/courses/46786/assignments/639676>.

Analysis: Staged Performance (25 points)

Select a live staged, ("formal") performance of some kind to attend. This can include a play, performance art, an art installation in a gallery space, a sporting event, a literary reading, a sermon or other religious gathering, a wedding, a court proceeding, or any other event you can describe as intentionally staged (rather than "everyday"). Take notes that help you engage some of the following questions: How would you describe the event, and why did you choose it? Describe the event in some detail, beginning to end. Where are you situated—are you an observer or a participant? What are some elements that reveal this event to be staged, or formal, rather than everyday? What are the aesthetics of the space: that is, why kinds of formal choices have the artists or the organizers made that hold the event together? What are some sensations provoked by the event—what feelings does it prompt and how? What cultural behaviors does the event conform to or challenge? Write a five-page, double-spaced paper in which you employ at least two theorists in your examination of this space.

Due Friday, June 13, by 6:00pm (end of final exam period) under "Assignments" on Canvas:

<https://canvas.ucsd.edu/courses/46786/assignments/639644>.

Class Schedule:

PS = *Performance Studies: An Introduction*, Richard Schechner and Sara Brady

🎬 = Performance or Art Screening in Class

Tue 4/4 Class introductions.

Thu 4/6 PS: "What is Performance?" (28-51)

Due (required): Interrogation Paper 0: What is Performance?

Module 1

Tue 4/11 Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, "Introduction" and "Chapter 1: Performance"

Thu 4/13 J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, Lectures I-IV
In class: Perform # 2 (PS 169)

Module 2

Tue 4/18 Stephanie Nohelani Teves, "How to Do Things with Aloha" and "Aloha in Drag"

Thu 4/20 PS: "Performativity" (123-169)
Sarah Salih, "On Judith Butler and Performativity"

Module 3

Tue 4/25 🎬 Carmelita Tropicana, "Your Kunst is Your Wafen"
José Esteban Muñoz, "Performing Disidentifications"

Thu 4/27 🎬 *Paris is Burning*
bell hooks, "Performance Practice as Site of Opposition," and "Is Paris Burning?"

Module 4

Tue 5/2 "Sex," "Sex Work," and "Porn," *Keywords for Gender and Sexuality Studies*

Thu 5/4 Juana María Rodríguez, "Carnal Knowledge, Interpretive Practices: Authorizing Vanessa del Rio"

Fri 5/5 Due Friday by 11:59pm: Analysis: Everyday Performance in a Public Space

Module 5

Tue 5/9 "The Erotic," *Keywords for Gender and Sexuality Studies*
Mireille Miller-Young, "Brown Sugar Theorizing Black Women's Sexual Labor in Pornography"

Thu 5/11 🎬 *7 Steps to Sticky Heaven*
"Anal," *Keywords for Gender and Sexuality Studies*
Nguyen Tan Hoang, "The Politics of Starch"

Module 6

Tue 5/16 🎬 *Watermelon Woman*
Karin Wimbley, "Stereotypy, Mammy, and Recovery in Cheryl Dunye's *The Watermelon Woman*"

Thu 5/18 Uri McMillan, "Nicki-Aesthetics: The Camp Performance of Nicki Minaj"

Module 7

Tue 5/23 “Trans” and “Cis,” *Keywords for Gender and Sexuality Studies*
L. H. Stallings, “Black Trans Narratives, Sex Work, and the Illusive Flesh

Thu 5/25 No Class

Module 8

Tue 5/30 Micha Cardenas, “Trans Desire”

Thu 6/1 “Disability,” *Keywords for Gender and Sexuality Studies*
Leon Hilton, “Avonte's Law: Autism, Wandering, and the Racial Surveillance of Neurological Difference”

Fri 6/2 Due Friday by 11:59pm: Self-Report

Module 9

Tue 6/6 Caleb Luna, *Revenge Body*

Thu 6/8 “Fat,” *Keywords for Gender and Sexuality Studies*
Roy Pérez, “Mark Aguhar’s Critical Flippancy”
Roy Pérez, From *Trap Door: Trans Cultural Production and the Politics of Visibility*,
“Proximity: On the Work of Mark Aguhar”
📺 Selections by Mark Aguhar

Tues 6/13 Due Tuesday, 6/13, by 6pm: Analysis: Staged Performance

Course Resources and Policies

Class Accessibility and Inclusion:

I am committed to meeting the learning needs of all class participants. If, at any point in the term, you find yourself not able to fully access the technology, content, and experience of this course, you are welcome (and not required) to contact me by email or during office hours to discuss your specific needs. If you have a medical condition or disability, you may wish to contact the Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD), which is located in University Center 202 behind Center Hall: 858-534-4382; (TTY) – reserved for people who are deaf or hard of hearing; or email: osd@ucsd.edu. If you prefer to be called by a different name or referred to as a different gender than the one under which you are officially enrolled, please inform me so that we can adjust accordingly. If you are struggling, confused, or have fallen behind in class, it is always your right and responsibility as a student to meet with me so that we can strategize about how to address your concerns.

Sexual Misconduct:

Experiencing sexual harassment or other forms of sexual misconduct during your studies, including online, can be a profoundly marginalizing experience. As a member of faculty, I am a mandated Title IX reporter: this means that if I am told of an incident of sexual misconduct, physical and/or psychological abuse I am required to report this to the university's Title IX coordinator. Should you want to speak to a confidential source, the following is an initial list of possible resources:

- You may contact the Counseling Center.
- The Office for the Prevention of Harassment & Discrimination (OPHD <http://ophd.ucsd.edu>) provides information and assistance to students, faculty, and staff regarding reports of bias, discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment, and sexual violence.
- Students may receive confidential assistance at CARE at the Sexual Assault Resource Center at (sarc@ucsd.edu or <http://care.ucsd.edu>) or Counseling and Psychological Services (CAP <http://caps.ucsd.edu>).

If you have other local resources to add to this list, and which may be useful to other students, please share them.

Email and Office Hours:

I am happy to answer shorter queries via email during normal working hours. I also encourage you to schedule time with me during office hours. You may wish to use this time to check in with me about your learning needs and to ask questions about course content and expectations. I am also available by appointment outside of my regular office hours.

Academic Integrity:

I expect the most rigorous and honest work from you. This means I am willing to meet you at your level of preparation and that I hope you will feel comfortable reaching out to me if you are having trouble writing and reading for this class. This also means that I expect you to adhere to the highest standards of academic integrity. See UCSD Policy on Integrity of Scholarship <https://students.ucsd.edu/academics/academic-integrity/policy.html>).

A Note On Reading “Theory”

This is a handout I created for undergraduates encountering theory for the first time. I’m including it here because they are useful reminders for all of us to be more humane to ourselves in our learning process. I’m also supplying it so that you can adapt it for your own syllabi if you wish.

Theory is an effort by scholars to make sense of phenomena for which we don’t yet have sufficient language. For this reason, reading theory can feel difficult, and the writing can seem unnecessarily complicated. However, the underlying premise of this class is that theory is worthwhile, so it is helpful to think about why and how we read theory. Below are some tips:

- **Be easy on yourself.** You might feel lost sometimes, and things might not make sense until class discussion (and still might not after). Grasping theory is an iterative process, which means ideas get stated over and over in different ways. Ideas evolve within an essay and from one essay to the next. For example, Judith Butler re-wrote many of her ideas from *Gender Trouble* in a later book, *Bodies that Matter*, because she felt many readers had misunderstood her thesis. She became a better writer and had new tools at her disposal, having established a conversation with the first book.
- **Theory is a poetic practice and an imaginative endeavor.** Theory is an imaginative endeavor. Style and language matter to theorists in ways that they might not to a scholar whose goal is to transmit data or information. Sometimes this gets in the way of clarity; or rather, in theoretical writing, clarity isn’t always immediate and may require effort. Moreover, some theory is translated (sometimes poorly), or is poorly written and yet important, or very well-written but the ideas are unremarkable. Gaining clarity is something we do with the writer as best we can.
- **Reading closely and actively is more important than reading completely.** When time and energy are tight, you can get more out of working closely with five pages than you might pushing through 50. Make the most with what you are able to read in the amount of time you have.
- **Reading actively includes the following:** marking passages that are extra confusing or extra clear; writing notes in margins or in a notebook; establishing a practice of jumping around the reading including to the footnotes and back to passages you’ve already read; capturing questions as they cross your mind (these are great for discussion because such questions are closer to the text—less abstract and general), and finally, *writing* (in complete sentences) about the reading is enormously helpful and useful for later assignments.
- **Theory is a cumulative process.** This means that language we have now didn’t exist when the authors were writing, and many of these authors gave us the language we have now. It also means that theory is a conversation, not a singular thesis: ideas move and change as writers take up each other’s work and mold ideas.
- **Find and follow pleasure where you can.** Some ideas will blow your mind, so track down those conversations and read more about those ideas. You won’t connect with all theory, but pay attention to your gut when you do connect. You’ll write better about stuff you like.