

ENGLISH 7222 TOPICS IN LITERACY STUDIES: VERBAL ART AS PERFORMANCE

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Course Description

The special topics title for this course is taken from a book by Richard Bauman. In it, he connects the field of performance studies to the specific contexts of folk narratives and other verbally-focused performance events. Similarly, in this course, we will look at a range of verbal arts and at how the performance register contributes to their construction and their meanings. To some extent, the readings in the course will reflect the professor's particular interests in poetry, hip-hop, and African American Studies, but students will be encouraged to bring their own research interests to the course project.

In order to contribute to the professionalization of seminar participants, we will spend the first 10-15 minutes of each class discussing issues related to academia, the graduate student experience, conferences, publishing, etc. So arrive on time and with questions!

Readings

All students are responsible for having the required readings in class each week. Please purchase the most recent edition of each book.

Books:

Abu-Lughod, *Veiled Sentiments: Honor and Poetry in a Bedouin Society*.
Bauman, *Verbal Art as Performance*.
Brown, *Performing the Word: African American Poetry as Vernacular Culture*.
Foley, *How to Read an Oral Poem*.
Gaunt, *The Games Black Girls Play: Learning the Ropes From Double-Dutch to Hip-Hop*.
Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*.
Wald, *The Dozens: A History of Rap's Mama*.

Articles will be posted on Moodle several weeks in advance of the date assigned.

Assignments

Reading responses: Each student should submit a 1-2 written reflection on the week's assigned reading. This is due at the beginning of each class meeting. (10 pts)

Reading Presentations: Each student will be responsible for a 10-15 minute presentation on an assigned reading. The presentation should include a handout and may include multiple modes (visual, aural, experiential, etc.). (15 pts)

Book groups: Groups of 2-4 will choose a book to read outside of class and will use an hour of class time to present and lead activities/discussion around the book. (15 pts)

Seminar Project Proposal: 3-4 page proposal detailing your topic; your reasons for picking the topic; how it fits into your larger research plan (if applicable) and into a larger critical conversation; a selected, annotated bibliography (no more than 1 page) and a work plan. (20 pts)

Seminar Paper: 15-20 page paper on a topic related to course content and to the student's areas of interest and developed in consultation with the professor. (40 pts)

Responsibilities and Expectations

My definition of a successful graduate seminar is one in which all members participate regularly, conversation flows freely and multi-directionally, everyone demonstrates intellectual and emotional engagement with the subject matter, all participants feel respected, and everyone finds connections between the course material and their own interests.

I commit to being prepared for each class meeting, facilitating class meetings so that everyone can confidently participate, returning assignments in a timely matter, and being available outside of class for discussion about your seminar projects and other course-related issues.

My request to participants is that you be prepared for each class, agree to be respectful of one another, recognize when it is time to be silent and when it is time to speak, attend every class meeting and to notify me if you must miss one, and to meet with me outside of class if you have any questions or want guidance on class work.

Many of you know that there are certain informal norms for graduate seminar grades. Please do not assume you are getting an A or B in this class simply because it's a seminar.

Course Schedule

Week 1	Introductions, review syllabus, discuss assignments, define terms, distribute book group suggestion sheet.
Week 2	Gee, "Meaning and Ideology," "The Literacy Myth and the History of Literacy" and "The New Literacy Studies" (in one PDF on Moodle) Schechner, "What is Performance Studies Anyway?"
Week 3	Bauman, <i>Verbal Art as Performance</i>
Week 4	Foley, <i>How to Read an Oral Poem</i>
Week 5	Abu-Lughod, <i>Veiled Sentiments: Honor and Poetry in a Bedouin Society</i>
Week 6	Scott, J. <i>Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts</i>
Week 7	Brown, <i>Performing the Word: African American Poetry as Vernacular Culture</i>
Week 8	Wald, <i>The Dozens: A History of Rap's Mama</i>
Week 9	Gaunt, <i>The Games Black Girls Play: Learning the Ropes From Double-Dutch to Hip-Hop</i> Group Presentation 1
Week 10	TBA Group Presentation 2
Week 11	TBA Group Presentation 3
Week 12	Project workshop
Week 13	TBA
Week 14	Project presentations
Week 15	Project presentations