

Propaganda, Protests, and Performance

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Course Description: In the U.S. political climate, where do we draw the line between politics and performance? How have Americans historically used performance to advance political propaganda? In what ways does performance facilitate real social change? This course moves in time from the suffragettes, to the depression, to our current media fueled political landscape. Using historical texts, articles, plays, and online news journals, students will explore a broad range of political theater while examining how performance shapes American culture and identities. The writing in this course is a mix of short essays, creative writing, and a research paper. Each assignment builds off the next, offering students lessons in summary, analyses, research, and finding their own voice.

Course Objectives:

During the semester, we will emphasize writing and its fundamental relationship to reading, thinking, and learning. You will learn how to read perceptively, think critically, and respond appropriately and coherently to college-level reading by writing a variety of essays ranging from short response papers to more complex argument papers and evaluations of the claims and evidence in multiple readings. The best writing takes time and effort, so your essays for this class will be developed in stages with peer review, in-class workshoping, and 'progress' assignments.

Learning Outcomes:

As this course is also a theatre course, you will be learning how to read, talk about, and understand plays. Approaching a play text analytically is a key part of dramaturgy, but in addition we will also be focusing on placing plays in the context of performance and discussing their political implications. By the end of the course you should have a basic understanding of dramaturgical analysis and a broader knowledge of the issues associated with the representation of culture and identity on stage.

By the end of the semester you will demonstrate growing competency in:

- Designing and implementing a viable writing plan
- Crafting a persuasive argument
- Composing an effective thesis
- Organizing a coherent and well-developed essay
- Synthesizing and integrating source material
- Applying appropriate citation conventions
- Creating grammatically correct, stylized, and rhetorically effective sentences
- Revising writing appropriate for diverse audiences and purposes.

Course Texts: All texts will be posted on blackboard under the "Content" tab.

Course Calendar

Week 1

FIRST DAY OF CLASS!

How can we build this class together?

- Ann Elizabeth Armstrong and Kathleen Juhl, *Radical Acts* (2007)
- bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress, Introduction and Engaged Pedagogy* (1994)
- Gloria E. Anzaldúa, *A Letter to Third World Women Writers* (1980)

Week 2

BIAS AND POWER

- Mark Edelman Boren, *Student Resistance: a History of the Unruly Subject* (2019)
 - Robin DiAngelo and Michael Eric Dyson, *White Fragility* (2018) (video excerpt)
 - Beverly Daniel Tatum, *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria: And Other Conversations About Race* (1997) (excerpts)
 - Harvard Implicit Association Test (online)
- Lecture: Hidden Biases of Good People
Mahzarin Banaji, Richard Clark Cabot Professor of Social Ethics and Chair in the Department of Psychology at Harvard University

Week 3

SUFFRAGE

Due: Cornell Protest Paper

- Sarah J. Moore, "Making a Spectacle: The National Woman Suffrage Pageant 1913" (1997)
- Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *Something to Vote For* (1911)
- Elizabeth Cady Stanton et al., *1848 Declaration of Sentiment* (1848)
- Visuals: Anti-Suffrage Propaganda

Week 4

THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

Due: Women's March Mini-Research Outline

- Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider* (1984) (selected)
- Cherríe Moraga and Gloria E. Anzaldúa, *This Bridge Called My Back* (1981) (selected)
- Combahee River Collective, "A Black Feminist Statement" (1977)
- Radicalesbians, "The Woman Identified Woman" (1970)

Week 5

COMMUNITY

Due: Women's March Mini-Research First Draft

- Beth Bagby and Luis Valdez, "El Teatro Campesino Interviews with Luis Valdez" (1967)
 - El Teatro Campesino Works (on Hemispheric Institute)
- <https://hemisphericinstitute.org/en/hidvl-collections/itemlist/category/128-etc.html>

Week 6

COMMUNITY

Due: Women's March Mini-Research Final Draft

- Sharrell D. Lockett and Tia M. Shaffer, *Black Acting Methods* (2016) (excerpts)
- Rhodessa Jones, *Big Butt Girls Hard-Headed Women* (1991)

Week 7

THE PERSONAL IS POLITICAL

- E. Patrick Johnson, *Sweet Tea: Black Gay Men of the South—An Oral History* (2008)
- Holly Hughes, *Clit Notes* (1996)
- Denise Uyehara, *Hello (Sex) Kitty: Mad Asian Bitch on Wheels* (1998)
- Kate Bornstein, *Virtually Yours* (1994)

Week 8

THE PERSONAL IS POLITICAL

Due: Story of Self/Solo Performance (shared in class)

Attend: Feminist Directions: Performance, Power, and Leadership

Week 9

EMBODIED POLITICS

Embodied Pedagogy (workshop)

Sue Perlgut (*It's Alright to Be Woman Theater*) (class visit)

Week 10

POLITICS AND THEORY

Due: Nanette Paper First Draft

-Hannah Gadsby, *Nanette* (2018)

-Lauren Berlant, *Humorlessness (Three Monologues and a Hairpiece)* (2017)

-Sara Ahmed, "Feminist Killjoy" (2010) and "Feminist Snap" (2014)

-Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (1975)

Week 11

PROTEST!

Due: Nanette Paper Final Draft

Discuss Protest Plan Ideas (including relevant readings)

Week 12

Due: Protest Plan Outline

Week 13

Protest Presentations

Week 14

Protest Presentations

Week 15

WRAP UP!

*I reserve the right to add or change readings and assignments as necessary.

Assignments

Ongoing...

Blackboard: Blackboard prompts will be posted every week. Your blackboard responses will inform in-class discussions. Blackboard responses can be brief (1-2 paragraphs) and are part of your participation grade.

Website: As a class we will be creating a website about current protests and movements happening in the Ithaca area. You will work in groups to update the site.

Attending a Protest: You are required to attend a protest or political performance during the course of this class and write a reflection about it. You will also post pictures and information about the event on our shared website.

Presentations: Each week (in pairs) students will lead a discussion on current political movements.

Writing Assignments:

Cornell Protest Paper: Write a 2-3 page paper about a protest that occurred on Cornell's campus. Focus your paper primarily on the historical aspects of the protest. What were the student's protesting? Why? How did they execute their protest? What policy changes (if any) resulted from the protest? Use at least 3 different sources.

Women's March Mini-Research Paper: You will write a 5-6 page mini-research paper on a political movement and its use of performance. For example, you may choose to examine the 2016 Women's March and their use of Pussy Hats. Give a brief historical background on previous women's movements (this may mean including the suffrage movement, second-wave feminism, slutwalks, etc.). Discuss how the performance was mobilized and analyze its effectiveness. You may choose to write about other movements such as #metoo, immigration, black lives matter, the AIDS crisis, civil rights, worker's rights, occupy wall street, etc.

Story of Self: For this assignment you will write a 2-page story of self or one person show that discusses a significant personal event that shaped you. **These will be shared.**

Nanette Assignment: We will watch Hannah Gadsby's *Nanette* in class. You will write a 3-4 page argument about whether the routine is a protest, propaganda, or performance. You may only choose one categorization. Analyze specific moments from the film to inform your argument.

Protest Plan: You will choose a political movement to plan a performance-based protest for. You may choose the same movement you wrote about for your mini-research paper. You will give a historical review of the movement and an analyses of how your protest fits into the movement's mission. You will include a detailed plan for executing your protest. The protest can range from a zap action, zine, play, march, etc. You will present your plan to the class. The entire paper with protest plan should range from 8-10 pages. You are *strongly* encouraged to take a draft of this paper to the Writing Center.

Performance Review: Using the techniques in Jill Dolan's "How to Guide" in her book *Feminist Spectator as Critic*, you will write a review of either *An Evening at Caffè Cino* or *Spill*. The review should be thoughtful and critical and focus on one aspect of the play (political message, gender politics, etc). Your review should also incorporate a critique of the acting, directing and design work.

Grading Breakdown:

Participation: 40%

Written Work: 60%

I do not give written grades on any work. I do this to lessen student's fixation and anxiety on grades. I also believe your work should be examined holistically. I will always push you to do your best work. I will discuss your overall grade at our midterm and final conference. At any point in the semester if your grade drops below a B I will let you know.

Course Expectations¹

To meet course learning outcomes and earn academic credit this semester, you must:

- Attend class regularly—not missing more than 2 classes
- Meet due dates and writing criteria for all major assignments
- Participate in all in-class exercises and activities
- Complete all informal writing assignments
- Give thoughtful peer feedback during Writers' Workshops and work faithfully with peers on other collaborative tasks
- Sustain effort and investment on each draft of all papers
- Make substantive revisions to drafts—extending or changing the thinking or organization—not just editing or touching up
- Copy-edit all final revisions of main assignments until they conform to the conventions of edited, academic English
- Attend weekly writing consultations to discuss drafts
- Submit your final portfolio.

On writing specifically, you must:

- Seek perplexity in your writing, some genuine question or puzzlement
- Use your writing to do some figuring-out (An essay needs to move or go somewhere. It needs to have a progression of thinking.

Course Policies:

Citizenship

We cannot have rich, multi-layered discussions about your writing unless you attend and actively participate during class and scheduled appointments. You are expected to be a considerate citizen: arrive on time, treat others with respect, and be prepared to work. Free pass: two absences.

Deadlines

All work is due on the designated due date unless alternative arrangements have been made with me in advance. Poor attendance, weak participation, or homework cannot be made up. Should extenuating circumstances arise, please communicate clearly and promptly with me. Free pass: two late assignments (up to five days late).

Guidelines for Submission of Written Work

No hand-written work will be accepted all assignments should be typed and submitted in hard copy. All essays should be formatted as follows:

- Your name and the date at the top right or top left corner.
- Essay title centered below your name
- One-inch margins left-justified
- 12-pt Times New Roman font, double-spaced
- Page numbers
- Stapled

¹ Course Expectations developed by Peter Elbow and Jane Danielwicz as presented in: Elbow, Peter and Jane Danielewicz. "A Unilateral Grading Contract to Improve Learning and Teaching." College Composition and Communication 61.2 (December 2009)

- MLA citation style: if you use any source in your essay (even if it is a text or other object we have used in class), you should include a Works Cited list at the end of your paper.

Drafts

- Bring copies of all assignments to class for peer review.
- Keep all of your work for this class. Date and save all informal and formal texts, including notes, freewrites, brainstorm and drafts. Number your drafts don't copy over them.

Attendance Policy: Classes and Conferences

Because this is a seminar course, which relies on the consistent presence and participation of its members to sustain our ongoing discussion, you must attend class each day. If you miss more than two classes, your grade will be affected:

3 missed classes=1/3 overall grade penalty (A →A-)

4 missed classes=1 full letter grade penalty (A →B)

5 missed classes=Automatic F

Exceptions to the attendance policy include family emergencies, observance of religious holidays, and documented medical issues. Should you need to miss class for any of the aforementioned reasons, please email Jayme (jlk355@cornell.edu) in advance of class to explain your absence. Please note that excessive lateness will also result in a final grade penalty (three lates = one absence).

Conferences:

Each student will have two required, individual conferences with the instructor to discuss their writing. The conferences will be held in my office on the 4th floor of the Schwartz Center (Room 420). We will set the first conference schedule as soon as class enrollment solidifies: I will send out a schedule of available conference times. You are responsible for choosing an appointment during conference week(s). If you fail to select an appointment time or miss an appointment it will be marked as an absence. I am also available to meet with students outside of class during office hours or by appointment.

Grading Policy

You will get a grade in the B range (B-, B, or B+) in this class if you fulfill all the requirements and produce fully satisfactory writing. If your writing is outstanding, you'll receive some version of an A. If you do not fulfill the requirements or your work is inadequate, your grade will suffer. I will notify you if your work starts falling below the B range. Plagiarism on any one assignment may result in failing the course.

Academic Integrity

Each student is expected to abide by the Cornell University Code of Academic Integrity. Any work submitted by a student in this course for academic credit will be the student's own work. All outside assistance should be acknowledged, and the student's academic position truthfully reported at all times. Please refer to the Code of Academic Integrity and Acknowledging the Work of Others in the Policy Notebook for the Cornell Community, or online at: <http://cuinfo.cornell.edu/aic.cfm>

Accommodations

I respect and uphold Cornell University policies and regulations pertaining to the observation of religious holidays assistance available to physically, visually and hearing-impaired students sexual harassment and racial and ethnic discrimination. All students are advised to become familiar with these University regulations and are encouraged to bring any questions or concerns to my attention. In keeping with University policies, I am available to discuss appropriate academic accommodations that may be required for students with disabilities or special needs. Please see me during the first two weeks of the semester to discuss arrangements. In order for me to assist you, you must register with Student Disabilities Services: <http://sds.cornell.edu/>.