

## **THE PERSONAL IS POLITICAL FEMINIST PERFORMANCE**

M/W 3-4:15pm

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Office Hours:

Wednesdays 2-3pm and by appointment



### **COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

Is feminism a set of personal experiences, political ideas, or the ideology that women and men are equal? How has feminism been represented in the public sphere? How does feminist performance contribute to our understandings of identity, power, and community? Grounded in a study of dramatic literature and theatrical spectacles, this course discusses how women in theater contribute to and challenge prevalent understandings of history, gender identity, and masculinist ideas of power. With an emphasis on in-class discussions and peer editing, this class will foster and enhance each student's ability to produce coherent, concise, persuasive prose in the form of critical arguments. Students will analyze examples of performance through critical texts from fields of performance studies, gender and sexuality studies, and critical race theory.

### **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 workshopping, 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.

This syllabus is a living document that we will be building together.  
Reading due dates, presentations, and grades will be discussed in-class on September 7<sup>th</sup>.

You will be asked to view two performances outside of class, participate in presentations, and weekly discussion posts.

## **SCHEDULE**

### **Week 1**

WELCOME! What is feminism? What kind of class do we want to create?

In-Class: Theatrical Jazz Exercise

- 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)

### **WHAT DO YOU CARE ABOUT?**

**Assignment:** Manifesto (Due 9/18)

#### **Readings:**

- Elizabeth Cady Stanton et al., *1848 Declaration of Sentiment* (1848)
- Radicalesbians, "The Woman Identified Woman" (1970)
- Combahee River Collective, "A Black Feminist Statement" (1977)
- Cherríe Moraga and Gloria E. Anzaldúa, *This Bridge Called My Back* (choose 2) (1981) (CORNELL LIBRARY ONLINE)

Ciara Diane, *When the Students Have Notes for the Teachers* (2020) (Read 2-3 statements listed at the bottom) Required: Chisom Awachie's *An Open Letter to Cornell's Department of Performing and Media Arts*: <https://www.americantheatre.org/2020/08/05/when-the-students-have-notes-for-the-teachers/>

### **Week 2**

September 7: Discuss the type of classroom we want to make together  
(Make a class list, distribute readings)

September 9: Discuss readings (Presentations: Stanton, Radicalesbians, Combahee)  
(Annotation guide, writing workshop: dissecting the manifesto)

### **Week 3**

September 14: Discuss readings (Outline: Awachie + Moraga + Anzaldúa)

September 16: Speaker: Chisom Awachie (bio distributed)

<https://www.horizontheatre.com/people/4485/>

\*\*\*Manifesto Due September 18<sup>th</sup> at midnight

### **WHAT EXPERIENCES SHAPE YOU?**

**Assignment:** Story of Self or Solo Performance (Due 10/2, 10/9)

#### **Readings:**

- Rhodessa Jones, *Big Butt Girls Hard-Headed Women* (1991)
- Holly Hughes, *Clit Notes* (1996)
- Denise Uyehara, *Hello (Sex) Kitty: Mad Asian Bitch on Wheels* (1998)
- Kate Bornstein, *Virtually Yours* (1994)
- E. Patrick Johnson, *Sweet Tea: Black Gay Men of the South—An Oral History* (2008)

### **Week 4**

Sept 21: Housekeeping (course policies, readings, presentations, assignment)

Sept 23: 2 Reading Discussions

### **Week 5**

Sept 28: Dramatic Structure lesson (go thru one reading to dissect structure), 2 Reading Discussions

Sept 30: Fred Muratori Research Instruction

\*\*Story/Solo first draft due Friday, October 2nd

### **Week 6**

Oct 5: Catch-Up/Looking Forward Day

Oct 7: Story of Self Share

\*\*\*Friday, October 9th Final story/solo due

### **RESISTING INEQUALITY**

**Assignment:** Analytical Paper

Readings for October 12

-Manjula Padmanabha, *Harvest* (1998) (primary source)

-Jodi Kim, "Debt, the Precarious Grammar of Life, and Manjula Padmanabhan's 'Harvest'" (2014)

(secondary source)

Sujatha Moni, "'In bits and pieces': bodies in movement, liminality and subaltern resistance in Manjula Padmanabhan's *Harvest*." (2014) (secondary source)

### **Week 7**

Oct 12: Analyses discussion of *Harvest* and making an argument workshop

Oct 14: NO CLASS

### **Week 8**

Readings for Oct 19:

-It's Alright to be Woman Theatre (primary source)

Oct 19: What are you interested in (Hemispheric Look-Around) + Media Brainstorm

Ques: What are you interested in? What do you want to investigate?

Oct 21: Approaches to Introduction

Oct 23: Annotated Bibliography

### **Midterm Conferences (Oct 26-30) (Sign Up Required by Oct 22)**

### **Week 9**

Oct 26: NO CLASS

Oct 28: Aoise Stratford Playwriting Workshop

Oct 30: Outline of Analytical Paper

\*\*\**Virtual Vibrance Performances October 29-31 (REQUIRED)*

Thursday, October 29: *Exhibit Noir* devised by Faith Parris

Friday, October 20: *The Space Between* a collaboration led by Julie Phan

Saturday, October 31: *In the Parlour* by Judy Tate directed by Carley Robinson

### **Week 10**

Nov 2: Sue Perlgut Talk (45 minutes)

Discuss Virtual Vibrance

Nov 4: NO CLASS | Jayme available 2-5pm for office hours

Nov 6: First Draft of Analytical Paper

### **Week 11**

Nov 9: Camille Andrews (Makerspace/Zine)

Nov 11: Analytical Paper Workshop

Nov 13: Second Draft of Analytical Paper (peer reviewed)

Knight Institute Recommended: <https://knight.as.cornell.edu/wc>

\*\*\*2-3 peers will read second draft (guided with form) over break

## MIDTERMS/MOVE OUT

### **Week 12**

Nov 30: Theory Lab

Dec 2: MLA Workshop

Dec 4: Analytical Final Draft Due

### **CALL TO ACTION**

**Assignment:** You Choose! Creative Assignment: 10-minute play, protest proposal, zine, other

### **Week 13**

Dec 7: Embodied Pedagogy

Dec 9: Creative Peer Share

### **Week 14**

Dec 14: Creative Project Presentations

Dec 16: Creative Project Presentations

### **Assignments:**

#### **Ongoing...**

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

#### **Performances and Lectures:**

Working from our shared list of campus events, choose one performance/lecture that you would like to attend on your own. After you attend the event, journal your experience in the discussion post and be prepared to share your experience in-class. In addition, we will attend one performance together as a class.

#### **Writing Assignments:**

**Manifesto (1-2 pages):** The dictionary describes a manifesto as “a written statement declaring publicly the intentions, motives, or views of its issuer.” Feminism has a long history of using manifestos to advocate for women’s rights. What do you care about? What do you want to see changed? How do your experiences shape your political beliefs? Using the templates provided for you, write your own manifesto or letter demanding change. There are no requirements for this assignment besides a willingness to be thoughtful and speak truth to power. These manifestos will be shared with your peers in Canvas.  
Due: September 18.

**Story of Self (2-3 pages):** For this project I would like you to tell me your story of self. What does this mean? You tell me! This project is open to interpretation and there are few limits on what you can do. Your essay can either take the shape of a “story of self” or a solo performance.

**Keep in mind, these will be shared.**

First Draft Due: October 2

Final Draft Due: October 9

**Analytical Assignment (5-7 pages):** For this assignment, you will write a 5-7 page analytical paper on a performance of your choosing. The goal of this paper is to work more rigorously on critical analyses. Using 3-4 academic articles about the text (or themes regarding the text), you will create an argument about the performance. **Please limit yourself to 3-4 articles.** In order to write an effective analytical paper, you need to have a strong sense of the thing you are examining. Since you only have the theoretical essays to support your argument, use them to make connections to what you view as happening in the performance. There are many ways to frame this essay. The most important aspect of the essay is that you

put at least one article in conversation with the performance and deeply analyze your topic. You will discuss your ideas with me during your midterm conference.

Friday, October 23: Annotated Bibliography

Friday, October 30th: Outline

Friday, November 6: First Draft

Friday, November 13: Second Draft (Peer Reviewed)

Wednesday, December 2: Final Draft

**Final Creative Assignment:** For your final project, you will create a performance or embodied act based on the political performance techniques studied in this class. What do you care about politically? What are you itching to say? What performer and/or collective inspired you most? How can you adapt their techniques and style for your own purposes? Creativity is encouraged! You can write a 10-minute play or stage a political “zap” action. Perhaps you are more interested in film or creating a zine? Any and all performance avenues are open to you! In addition, you will engage the class in a brief talkback of your performance. A 3-5 page process paper of your creative offering is due one week after the last day of class. The final paper is an opportunity for you to explain your performance’s significance in theoretical terms and position it in a larger body of scholarship. Please include a copy of your performance (text, visual aid, etc.) with the process paper.

### **Grading Breakdown:**

Participation: 40%

Written Work: 60%

### **Grading – Completion-Based Rubric**

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 through detailed written comments. I will discuss your overall grade at our midterm and final conference. In short, if you do the work, you will get an A!

### **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
- 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

- Keep all of your work for this class. Date and save all informal and formal texts, including notes, free writes, brainstorming and drafts. Number your drafts don’t copy over them.

### **Course Expectations**

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

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).

### **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.

### **Conferences**

Each student will have two required, individual conferences with the instructor to discuss their writing. The conferences will be held virtually.

### **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/>.