

# Theatre 2202G: Performance Beyond Theatres Winter 2018

T 12:30-2:30; Th 12:30-1:30, KB K208

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## 1. Course Description

Performance isn't just for actors at the theatre; we are all performing, all over the place, all the time. Not convinced? Just you wait! Since the 1960s, scholars and makers of theatre have been exploring a vast array of performances of "everyday life", from church services to hockey games to the way you flirt when you're out at the bar. "Performance Studies" is the discipline dedicated to thinking about how performance works outside the carefully stage-managed four walls of the theatre; Performance Beyond Theatres is the course that will introduce you to the many ways we might usefully conceive of performance as a part of our quotidian being in the world – and to the many socially and politically significant reasons *why* thinking about performance in this way can help us to become more active, engaged, community-minded citizens.

## 2. Meet your Teaching Team!

**Instructor:** Kim Solga ([ksolga@uwo.ca](mailto:ksolga@uwo.ca); 519-661-2111 x80118)

**Kim's office and hours:**

AHB 3G14; Skype = solgakim

Tuesday 11-12, Thursday 4:30-5:30, Wednesday 1-2\*

\*T and Th office hours are in Kim's campus office. Wednesday office hours are on Skype – please email Kim for an appointment no later than the day before.

**A NOTE ABOUT EMAIL:** Kim doesn't check her UWO email on weekends! Any messages received after 6pm on Friday will be addressed first thing Monday morning. This **ALSO** means that *nothing* for our class is so urgent that you need to worry about it over the weekend – weekends are for self-care. Enjoy them!

## 3. Our course on the web

We will use OWL, but only for the basics: written assignment submission; announcements and messages; returning assignments and logging grades.

For everything else, we will use <https://performancestudiesatwestern.wordpress.com> – ***you will want to find and bookmark this site now!***

Our Wordpress site is where Kim will post class notes and queries, where we can talk with one another about challenging ideas, and where we will post some of our class work. The site is public (that is, anyone can find it), but it's not coded using metadata (that is,

it's not easily searchable by strangers). It's important that we remember the public nature of the site whenever we post to it, but don't be too worried about being spammed or trolled. If that happens, Kim will step in to make sure we are all safe.

#### 4. Objectives and Outcomes

An outcome is a (sometimes abstract) thing we would like to take away from our course, at the end of the term. An objective is a (more concrete) thing we will do to make an outcome happen.

##### *Outcomes*

Students who take our course seriously and commit to our shared labour can expect to:

- be introduced to a host of contemporary performance theories and practices;
- develop the capacity to examine a piece of non-scripted, non-traditional performance critically;
- learn the value and power of collaborative teaching and learning;
- practice critical thinking using written text, video, and audio tools;
- continue to improve their research, writing, and editing skills;
- practice, develop, and improve public presentation skills;
- experiment with independent and/or team performance-making;
- take some risks, make some mistakes, and have fun!

##### *Objectives*

In order to achieve the above outcomes, students should expect to:

- read widely in performance studies, via our textbook and independently when possible;
- view a variety of performance events, both for class and independently;
- write regularly, in order to get comfortable with writing stuff that's *not* an essay: blog posts, position papers, in-class exercises, and peer feedback;
- practice speaking in front of the class regularly, including online;
- practice offering constructive criticism to peers (and also to Kim!);
- undertake regular performance-research exercises;
- screw up sometimes, and survive!

#### 5. Required Texts

***The Performance Studies Reader* (Edited by Henry Bial with Sarah Brady, 3rd ed.)**

This book isn't cheap, but it's the only book I'll ask you to buy. Anything else we might read will be available, free of charge, via OWL.

If you'd prefer to use the library's copy of the textbook, it's on reserve at Weldon. You can also get used copies of it all over the place for cheaper - though keep in mind we are using the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (2015). (It does matter - the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition is quite different.)

## 6. Assessment

### The Basics

Your grade in Theatre Studies 2202F will consist of the following parts:

- ✓ Position paper (10%; 1000 words)
- ✓ Video report from the field (10%; 5-7 minutes)
- ✓ Performance action (20%, in two parts; 5 and 15 minutes, live or video)
- ✓ Artist's statement (10%; 1000 words)
- ✓ Participation (10%)
- ✓ Do over! (10%)
- ✓ Final exam (30% – crowd-sourced and designed to be A Good Thing...)

Your due dates are as follows:

- ✓ Position paper (**Friday 9 February** before 11:55pm, via OWL)
- ✓ Video report from the field (**Friday 2 March** before 11:55pm, both via OWL and also uploaded to our Wordpress site)
- ✓ Performance action (Weeks 11 and 13 [**March 20 + 22, April 3 + 5**], in class)
- ✓ Artist's statement (**Friday 6 April** before 11:55pm, via OWL)
- ✓ Do over! (**Monday 16 April** before 11:55pm, via OWL)

**STUDENTS MUST PASS BOTH TERM WORK AND THE FINAL EXAMINATION IN ORDER TO PASS THE COURSE. STUDENTS WHO FAIL THE FINAL EXAMINATION (REGARDLESS OF THEIR TERM MARK) AUTOMATICALLY FAIL THE COURSE. (THIS IS A WESTERN U RULE)**

### The Specifics

#### **POSITION PAPER**

This paper asks you to select a text from the *Performance Studies Reader* that we have *not* looked at together in class, and to discuss that text in relation to one of the texts that we *have* looked at together. Are the authors in agreement? Do they offer differing claims about their related topics? Does a debate emerge between them, and if so, where do you stand?

*We will discuss strategies for this paper in class on Tuesday January 30.*

#### **VIDEO REPORT FROM THE FIELD**

This assignment asks you to conduct field research at a public and/or cultural event; you will then undertake a performance analysis of that event using ONE of our shared texts as a framework. *How does your chosen event exemplify, test, expand, or expose the limitations of the core argument articulated in the reading?* Your analysis should be scripted and delivered on video along with any field footage you'd like to include (please ask human subjects for written permission if you want to include video of them in your report). You may work in pairs if you wish; pairs will be graded as a unit.

*We will talk more about the video report task in class on Tuesday February 13.*

## PERFORMANCE ACTION

For this final project, you will work in teams of 3-4 to develop a public performance intervention somewhere at Western. *We will assign teams in class, and talk more about the assignment, on Tuesday February 27.*

Your piece must be 15 minutes long, should engage with a topical social or political issue that is important to our campus community (and also to you!), and should take inspiration from one or more of our class texts (readings or performances).

Your action might be for a large, ad-hoc audience; it might be “flash mob” style; or it might be an intimate performance that you create just for our class.

Your performance can be wholly live, or may use video or other media tools as you see fit. (If you plan to use media in a significant way, the tech staff in Arts & Humanities are your friends! Reach out to them for help, advice, or equipment rental.)

The Performance Action is graded in two parts:

- ✓ **PART ONE:** in Week 11 you will present **five minutes of work in progress**, and be prepared to discuss your influences, inspirations, and intentions with the class in an informal “crit” process. **This work in progress is worth 10% of your final performance action grade, and will be marked according to the level of effort and preparation you put into it, not according to its artistic “success” or merit.**
- ✓ **PART TWO:** in Week 13 you will present your full 15-minute action. **This final presentation is worth 10% of your final performance action grade, and will be marked according to criteria we develop together, as a class.**

## ARTIST’S STATEMENT

Your artist’s statement is designed to accompany your performance action; it is a 1000-word curatorial statement that 1) articulates your aims for the performance; 2) discusses your research for the performance, including how one or more of the course readings informed its conceptualization; 3) notes and explains any significant challenges you encountered in mounting your action, and how you dealt with them.

Your artist’s statement can be team-written or written individually; you choose. You do not need to clear your choice with Kim. The final document you submit should clearly note the author(s); **if you write as a team, you will all receive the same grade. Each team member should submit their artist’s statement to OWL individually, whether or not it is team-written.** In other words: everybody uploads or risks losing marks for lateness.

## PARTICIPATION

Each week, by Monday at lunch, Kim will post a prompt, based on our week’s readings, to our Wordpress site (<http://performancestudiesatwestern.wordpress.com>). You will have a think about that prompt **before class on Tuesday**, and respond to it on the website

**before class on Tuesday.** You can respond in writing, or by uploading video, or by linking to a bunch of relevant stuff, and so on. *Engage with the prompt meaningfully.* Kim will use that engagement to help frame our discussions in class!

Every time you respond to a prompt, on time (that is, **before class on Tuesday!** – no exceptions here), you earn an automatic 2%. Do that FIVE times over the term, and your 10% online participation mark *is guaranteed*....

*...well, ALMOST guaranteed.* Being part of the class doesn't just mean ticking boxes; it also means being part of our in-person conversations, which will be rich and provocative, and which will *only* be possible if we all participate! Kim knows stuff happens sometimes, and that absences are inevitable, but they cannot become a habit – not if you want to succeed in our class.

**You may be absent, without accommodation, UP TO THREE TIMES this term. A fourth absence without accommodation, means you will forfeit your 10% participation mark, regardless of how often you post online.**

#### **DO OVER!**

Did something go wrong – not as well as planned? Maybe you half-arsed that position paper, or the artist's statement went badly... not to worry! Here's your shot to do it again.

For this assignment you may a) re-write or re-record your position paper, artist's statement, or video report from the field, taking fully into account Kim's feedback and recommendations for improvement; or b) create a totally new one, safe in the knowledge that you are equipped with the intel to do better this time!

You may hand your do-over in anytime you wish during the term, but it will be officially due between the last day of class and the final exam. Breathe – take your time!

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#### **Submission rules for assignments handed in on OWL**

- **Late submissions are penalized at 2% per day.** For written assignments due on a Friday, take the weekend (up to Monday at 8am) for a flat “fee” of 3%. Sometimes it's worth it, and that's ok; no need to clear this with Kim. Your call.
- **Submissions more than seven (7) days late** will be accepted up to the final day of the semester, but will be eligible for a grade of no more than 50%.
- **Kim cannot grant you an extension without penalty.** If you have a medical or compassionate reason for requiring accommodation, please see your home faculty's academic counselors as soon as possible, and bring them documentation pertaining to your case. They will contact Kim to request accommodation on your behalf. If you want to talk to Kim about your situation, please do! She wants to help if she can. The extension rule is firm, however, and is there to ensure everyone is treated as fairly as possible.

- **All written, video, or performance material you pass in must be your own work, with all references clearly documented.** Plagiarism, defined as “The act or an instance of copying or stealing another’s words or ideas and attributing them as one’s own,” is a serious academic offense, and may be punishable with sanctions up to and including expulsion from the university. If you’re unsure whether or not you are citing your sources correctly, just ask Kim.

### **Course-specific assessment rubrics**

What does it take to get an A? Check the links for each assignment above in OWL; there you’ll find task-specific marking rubrics for each, along with their descriptions.

## 7. Week by week schedule

All readings come from *The Performance Studies Reader*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., unless otherwise noted.

### **Week 1 | 9 + 11 January**

The lay of the land. Names + faces. The syllabus. A surprise!

### **Week 2 | 16 + 18 January**

#### **Performance Studies as a Discipline**

READ: Richard Schechner, “Performance Studies: The Broad Spectrum Approach”; Barbara Kirschenblatt-Gimblett, “Performance Studies”

### **Week 3 | 23 + 25 January**

#### **Performance, Ritual, and Identity**

READ: Victor Turner, “Liminality and Communitas”; Erving Goffman, “Performances: Belief in the Part One is Playing”

### **Week 4 | 30 January + 1 February**

#### **Performing the City**

READ: Michel de Certeau, “Walking in the City” (Course reserves on OWL)

LISTEN: *And While London Burns* (Course reserves on OWL; note that you will want to download the file on the linked URL and listen through headphones)

### **Week 5 | 6 + 8 February**

#### **Performativity or Performance? Pt 1**

READ: J.L. Austin, “How To Do Things With Words”

VIEW: Barack Obama’s 2008 acceptance speech (Course reserves on OWL)

### **Week 6 | 13 + 15 February**

#### **Performativity or Performance? Pt 2**

READ: Judith Butler, “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution”

ATTEND: on Thursday we’ll hold a workshop (in our classroom) with Sexual Assault Awareness officer Danielle Carr; she’ll help us make more (and fun) sense of Butler

## **WEEK SEVEN IS READING WEEK! ENJOY!**

### **Week 8 | 27 February + 1 March**

#### **The Audience as Actor**

READ: Ranciere, “Excerpt from *The Emancipated Spectator*”; Dolan, “Excerpt from *Utopia in Performance*”

### **Week 9 | 6 + 8 March**

#### **Sport as Performance**

READ: Knowles, “A Pedagogical Trip to the Field of Dreams”; McKinnon, “The Rules of [Dis]Engagement”; Wai Ting, “Fake It Till You Make It” (all are very short!)

ATTEND: we’re going to a London Knights game on Wednesday, March 7!

**Week 10 | 13 + 15 March**

**Performing Across Cultures**

READ: Conquergood, “Interventions and Radical Research”; Knowles, from *Theatre & Interculturalism* (Course reserves on OWL)

VIEW: *The Couple in The Cage* (Course reserves on OWL)

**Week 11 | 20 + 22 March**

**Performance Action “Crit” Week**

This week, we will present our Performance Action work in progress, critique one another constructively and supportively, and spend time developing our emerging ideas.

On Thursday will also build our marking rubric for the performance action task, and we will decide on a topic and reading for next week.

**Week 12 | 27 + 29 March**

**Students’ Choice!**

We’ve been at it almost three months now. What have we *not* talked about that you’d like to talk about? What issue remains underexplored or not quite understood?

We’ll decide on a shared topic (broadly speaking) and reading (from the PS Reader) for the week, and Kim will add some light viewing to the package.

**Week 13 | 3 + 5 April**

**Performance Action Presentation Week**

It’s show time!

**Week 14 | 10 April**

Today we’ll craft our final exam together. What would be most productive for you? What kinds of questions, and what kinds of tasks, would you like to see on the final? Bring your thoughts – have your input counted. Kim will bring cake!

*Thanks for being part of TS2202!*