

The Performance of Race
Centre for the Study of Theory and Criticism: 9423a
Fall 2019-20

Instructor: Nigel Joseph

Course Date/Time: Monday 10.30 - 1.30 pm

Course Location: Seminar Room, 3165
Stevenson-Lawson Hall

Office hours: TBA

Antirequisites:

Prerequisites:

Course Description: The focus is on various kinds of performance, with a particular emphasis on the way racial difference accentuates or distorts performance. Major theoretical resources would include Jean-Paul Sartre and his discussions of “the gaze” and “bad faith” in *Being and Nothingness* and in *Anti-Semite and Jew*, Frantz Fanon’s discussions of the same topics in *Black Skins, White Masks*, and Irving Goffman’s theories of performance in *The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life* and *Stigma*. Sartre, Fanon, and Goffman discuss various types of performance, but from different angles. Sartre’s negative critique of bad faith encourages a type of scrupulous (and exhausting) pursuit of authenticity, Fanon surveys the bleak landscape of corporeal incoherence in the face of the racialized gaze, and Goffman describes both narcissistic “impression management” as well as “team” performances that are symbiotic and aid in the stabilizing of social networks. In addition, the Nigerian novelist Chimamanda Adichie opens up new avenues of performance for analysis, from the aggressively political verbal performance to the undertheorized female “performance” of hair and clothing choices. The theorists discussed encourage us to read everyday actions and dispositions, including those that apply to race, class and gender, not as inflexible and “given,” but as relatively freely chosen dramaturgical processes: this means they are amenable to editing, change, and re-orientation.

Course Materials

Required texts (available at Book Store)

Denis Diderot: *Rameau’s Nephew*

Jean-Paul Sartre: *Anti-Semite and Jew*

Chimamanda Adichie: *Americanah*

Extracts from Sartre’s *Being and Nothingness*, Philippe Rochat’s *Social Origins of Self-Consciousness*, Fanon’s *Black Skin, White Masks*, Goffman’s *Stigma*, Samuel Selvon’s *Lonely Londoners*, and other texts by Rousseau, Kristeva, and others will be available at the Theory Centre for photocopying.

Methods of Evaluation

Essay 1 (2000 words)	30%
Essay 2 (3000 words)	30%
Presentation: (approx. 20 minutes)	40%

Timetable

Sep 9	Sartre: “The Look” and “Bad Faith”; Philippe Roachat and “others in mind”; Rousseau and “the look” as marker of modernity Texts needed: Sartre (extracts from <i>Being and Nothingness</i>), Roachat (extracts from <i>Others in Mind</i>), Rousseau (extracts from <i>Discourse on the Origin of Inequality</i>)
Sep 16	Sartre, Roachat, Rousseau
Sep 23	Sartre: <i>Anti-Semite and Jew</i> Texts needed: Sartre (<i>Anti-Semite and Jew</i>)
Sep 30	Sartre’s “the look” and Fanon’s development of “the look” as an integral aspect of racism; parallels between Sartre’s Jew and Fanon’s black man; Fanon, recognition, and the Master-Slave dialectic; first essay due Texts needed: Fanon (extracts from <i>Black Skin, White Masks</i>)
Oct 7	Goffman: Stigma and the enforced performance of the stigmatized; Sartre’s Jew, Fanon’s black man, and Goffman’s stigmatized; Diderot’s uncanny anticipation of the “failed performance” of the stigmatized Texts needed: Goffman (extracts from <i>Stigma</i> and <i>Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life</i>), Sartre (<i>Anti-Semite</i>), Fanon (extracts from <i>Black Skin, White Masks</i>), Diderot (<i>Rameau’s Nephew</i>)
Oct 21	Goffman and Diderot
Oct 28	The performance of race in Samuel Selvon’s <i>Lonely Londoners</i> and Chimamanda Adichie’s <i>Americanah</i> : immigrants, refugees, precariously positioned citizens, assimilative performances and disruptive performances Texts needed: Selvon (extracts from <i>Lonely Londoners</i>), Adichie (<i>Americanah</i>)
	<i>Nov 4 – 10 Fall Reading Week</i>
Nov 11	Sartrean inauthenticity and assimilative performances in <i>Lonely Londoners</i> ; <i>Americanah</i> and disruptive performances; Kristeva and the failed performances of the raced other Texts needed: Sartre (<i>Anti-Semite and Jew</i> , extracts from <i>Being and Nothingness</i>), Selvon (extracts from <i>Lonely Londoners</i>), Adichie (<i>Americanah</i>), Kristeva (extracts from <i>Strangers to Ourselves</i>)
Nov 18	<i>Americanah</i> and the performance of observed embodiment: hair, skin, clothes, accents; performance on social media; second essay due
Nov 25	Student presentations
Dec 2	Student presentations and general review

Accommodation

Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments worth 10% or more of their final grade must apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Academic accommodation cannot be granted by the instructor or department. Documentation shall be submitted, as soon as possible, to the Office of the Dean of the student’s Faculty of registration, together with a request for relief specifying the

nature of the accommodation being requested. The UWO Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness and further information regarding this policy can be found at

http://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf.

Downloadable Student Medical Certificate (SMC):

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf

Academic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

Plagiarism:

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea or passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence.

Plagiarism Checking:

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com <http://www.turnitin.com>.

All instances of plagiarism will be reported to the Chair of Undergraduate Studies. Proven cases of plagiarism will result in a grade of zero for the assignment. Subsequent offences will result in failure for the course.

Support Services

Registrarial Services <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>

Student Support Services <https://student.uwo.ca/psp/heprdweb/?cmd=login>

Services provided by the USC <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

Student Development Centre <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/>

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to MentalHealth@Western:

<http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.