Performance Seminar  
ANTH E502, Spring 2016 Monday 10:55 AM -1:10 PM, Student Building 060  

Prof. Susan Seizer (sseizer@indiana.edu) Office hours: Tuesday 2:00-4:00, and by appointment Office: Room 160 Office Phone: (812) 856-1986  

Course description:  
This course is a graduate-level introduction to performance-oriented perspectives on the study of social life. We will explore the principal conceptions of performance that shape performance studies in the humanities and social sciences, with attention to their intellectual history, their descriptive and analytic foci, and their potential for capturing what interests us in performance. Specifically, we will consider (1) performance as practice; (2) performance as performativity; (3) performance as theatricality; (4) performance as artful communication; and (5) performance as display event. We will balance our attention between the exploration of theoretical and analytical perspectives on the one hand, and ethnographic case-study examination of specific performance forms on the other. In attending to the latter, we will pay particular attention to how scholars represent their own relation to the material they present, and the interaction between observer and observed and whether this too might be seen as a performance.  

Books:  
There are four required books for this course.  


All additional readings for this course are available on Canvas in the Files section of our course site.  
Note: Readings marked with an asterisk (*) are also in journals that are available online through the IU Library.  

Required course work:  

1. Class attendance and participation. Regular attendance, preparation, and participation in a graduate seminar should go without saying, but just so that we’re clear: I expect you to be present in class, to come to each class meeting having read the assigned reading/s for the week, and to participate in class discussion. You are expected to take notes on the readings and have them available for reference in class. Any unexcused absences will negatively affect your final course grade.  
2. Web Postings. In preparation for each class session, each member of the seminar will formulate one salient question or synthesizing statement relating to the subject of the upcoming class session, keyed to one or more of the week’s assigned readings and framed in such a way as to elicit further discussion. Post these in the relevant Canvas Discussion 24 hours before our class meeting, so by noon on Sunday. I encourage you to read and comment on each others’ posts prior to our meeting. I will utilize this online discussion as a point of departure for our class discussions, aiming to bring out thematic interests and concerns that bear on the study of performance more broadly.  
3. Short Paper: The assignment for this short paper is under Canvas Assignments. This is a 3-5 page paper
semester to apply the themes of a set of weekly readings to the structure of a class session. A) In the first, each student will have the opportunity to apply the theoretical lens introduced in a given week’s readings to performance materials of his or her choosing. For the purposes of this exercise, your job is to demonstrate to the class how the key ideas of the text(s) encountered this week might usefully be applied to materials you select. Please provide an accompanying handout outlining some key points that connect our readings to the materials you’ve chosen. B) In the second, each student will have the opportunity to structure and lead the class in discussion of a given week’s reading/s. How you structure the class is up to you; you may choose to lead us in some sort of physical or theatrical exercise, or develop with us a Socratic dialogue, or lead us through the readings in a particular order and with a particular orienting question, etc. I leave the structure of a plan up to you but will be happy to discuss ideas with you in advance if you’d like a springboard (My Tuesday afternoon office hours are a good time for this!). Sign-ups for both these opportunities will take place at our second class meeting on Jan. 25.

5. **Outline for final paper:** an outline (1-2 pages) that sets out the problem(s), perspective(s), and data to be addressed in your final paper for the course (see #8 below), with a brief bibliography of relevant works. Schedule a planning discussion with Prof. Seizer by appointment and email me your outline at least 24 hours prior to our scheduled meeting time. Bring a hard-copy of the outline with you to our meeting. Appointments may be scheduled for a meeting during the weeks of March 21st – April 11th.

6. **Final Presentation:** On April 18th each student will have the opportunity to share with the class a sample of the data and approach to it that he or she is working with for the final paper/project, and to get our collegial input. Use this opportunity to try out modes of presentation and get feedback on what is working and what isn’t yet. You may steer discussion to what you are finding most interesting and exciting, and/or to that which you are finding most difficult or surprising in working on your topic. A one-page handout should accompany your presentation that provides us a succinct statement of your topic and approach, and points us to key ideas from scholars whose work you find useful in analyzing your material.

7. **Feedback provider:** One seminar member will be designated to provide written feedback on each presentation. Providers of feedback will email comments and suggestions to the presenter (cc’d to Prof. Seizer) on the day following the presentation. Such feedback may include bibliographic references, theoretical and analytical suggestions, recommendations concerning the framing and rhetoric of the argument, suggestions about the relative emphasis placed upon aspects of the argument, expressions of praise, etc. The feedback may be as brief or as long as you are inspired to offer. What is important is that you engage with the presentation and try to be as collegial and helpful as you can.

8. **Final Paper:** Due by noon on Monday April 25th. The final paper for the course consists of an original research paper of 12-15 pp. in length in which you explore one or more of the problems and perspectives considered in the course in relation to empirical data. The core of the paper is to be an analysis of a corpus of primary data, taken from your own empirical research or from other available sources (e.g., published materials, archival collections, historical sources, media representations or documentations, etc.). In the process of developing and writing your paper, it is important that you contextualize your analysis by reference to the scholarly literature we discuss in the seminar. Relevance to the concerns of the course will be a major consideration in the evaluation of the paper; your paper should demonstrate that you took the course seriously and learned something in the process.
The paper will develop through the following stages:

1. A planning meeting and outline (detailed in #5 above)
2. The presentation to the class (as detailed in #6 above)
3. Receipt of feedback from another/other seminar members (#7 above)
4. The final paper itself due May 2 (as detailed in #8 above)

**Grading**

In evaluating your work for this course I will weigh the required components in the following percentages:

1. Class attendance, participation, and weekly posts: 35%
2. Application Opportunities: 15%
3. Short paper (due Feb. 15): 10%
4. Final presentation (due April 18): 10%
5. Final paper (due April 25): 30%

**Weekly schedule of class topics and readings:**

**Week 1. Jan 11: Intro lecture on analytic frameworks**

- Introduce the course: *This is a course on how we, as scholars and students of performance and ethnography, might learn to better see and appreciate the complexities of human performance, whether onstage or in everyday life. I have chosen (for the most part) to assign readings for this course that I consider to be primary texts rather than secondary sources. One thing this means is that we will not be using an “Introduction to Performance Studies” textbook (although some good ones exist! Let me know if you would like pointers to one of these). Such a claim of course raises the question: what is a primary text in this field? For example: What makes Clifford Geertz’s interpretation of the cultural texts of others “primary”? What makes Zora Neale Hurston’s collection of tall tales she heard in her hometown “primary”? What makes my analysis of the comedic performances of actors in south India “primary”? There will necessarily be much to do with history in any answer to such questions: When and in what historical context was this text written? What were the reactions to it, what were its disciplinary effects, and what other kinds of studies did it spawn? Had anyone written this way about a performance event, or floated an interpretation like this, previously? I hope our study raises such questions repeatedly throughout the semester and I look forward to our collective discussions about the materials we will read and consider throughout the semester in this course.*
• Review syllabus and assignments
• Introduce five notions of performance we find in contemporary social analysis

*** no class on Jan 18th: Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service ***

Week 2. Jan 25: Performance as a Continuum of Consciousness: Art, Reflexivity, & the Theatrical Metaphor


Week 3. Feb. 1st: Cultural Performance


Screen in class:
- Short film of Balinese cockfight (DVD)
- Short film by Mead & Bateson, “Bathing Babies in 3 Cultures” (youtube)

**Week 4. Feb. 8th: Verbal Art as Performance, Heteroglossia and Intertextuality**

DR. RICHARD BAUMAN will attend our class and discuss his work with us, including his involvement with the development of the ethnography of speaking and with the introduction of M. M. Bakhtin’s work in the United States.


**Week 5. Feb 15**: Performing Fieldwork: living the interaction between observers & observed
[*short paper due in class]*

Application: _______________________________________


Cotera, Maria Eugenia. 2008. “‘Lyin’ Up a Nation’: Zora Neale Hurston and the Literary Uses of the Folk.” Ch. 2 in *Native Speakers*, Austin: University of Texas Press, pp. 71101. (Canvas: Files)


**In-class screening:** example of breakthrough into performance, from Prof. Seizer’s fieldwork: interview with Tom Sobel, comedy club booker

**Week 6. Feb. 22**: Orientation in Performance (footing, stance, alignment)

Application: _______________________________________


+ Watch: Eddie Izzard’s “Flags” on youtube.com

**In-class screening:** footage of *The Buffoon’s Monolog* from Prof. Seizer’s fieldwork, www.stigmasofthetamilstage.com

**Week 8. Feb. 29**: Play, Creativity & Flow: the pleasures of performance

Application: _______________________________________


**In-class screenings:**
- example from Prof. Seizer’s fieldwork of Stewart Huff on the Wright Brothers (6 min; Huff is a stand-up comic who seems to channel Csikszenmihalyi!)
- “Nevelson in Process” (dir. Jill Godmilow, 1975, 29 min.)

**Week 9. MARCH 7: Performance and/as theater: liminality, social drama, embodiment**

Application: ____________________________


### *** SPRING BREAK MARCH 13-20*** (No class on March 14)

**Week 10. MARCH 21: Audiences and Publics**

Application opportunity: ____________________________


**Recommended:**


**Week 11. March 28:**

Application opportunity: ________________________________


In-class screening: “The Couple in the Cage” (dir. Coco Fusco, 1999, 33min.)

**Week 12. April 4th:** Recreated Performances: real what?

Application opportunity: ________________________________


**Week 13. April 11: Ethnography is more than description**

Application opportunity: ________________________________


Recommended:


**Week 14. April 18: Student presentations.** Presentations should be no longer than 15 minutes, leaving time for 10 minutes of productive class discussion after each presentation. A one-page handout should accompany each presentation.

1. ____________________ feedback provider: __________
2. ____________________ feedback provider: __________
3. ____________________ feedback provider: __________
4. ____________________ feedback provider: __________
5. ____________________ feedback provider: __________
Week 15. April 25th: Final papers due by noon on Canvas Assignments