
Writing 230K

Writing Performance across Cultures



Dates / contact hours: 300 minutes each week

Academic Credit: 1; Modes of Inquiry: W, CCI; Course format: Seminar

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Prerequisite(s), if applicable

For Duke Undergraduates, completion of Writing 101

Course Description

This course provides writing experience and training through theme based seminars on a topic selected by the instructor. The course component includes cross-cultural inquiry within writing, as well as an emphasis on making texts public.

Writing Performance across Cultures

*What do your culture's literature, arts and entertainments reveal about its values, its history, its hopes and fears for the future?

*How have your creative experiences with writing and performance shaped you, healed you, helped you?

*How can we, as writers and performers from many different backgrounds explore and celebrate our differences and commonalities?

*Can spoken words bridge cultural divides and overcome xenophobia?

This course examines our personal experiences with our cultures' writing and performance as a means to examine the cultures themselves. Looking at our own "performance autobiography" becomes a means of exploring how we have been shaped by our various cultures' performing arts. We will write and share our experiences with creative writing and live performance to investigate the layers of cultural meaning. We will engage with scholars who analyze artistic performances as expressions of a culture's political conflicts as well as its ideas about race, class, gender, and sexuality. Finally as a class, we will decide what social issues to address, what cultural conflicts to address with our words and performance. Several modes of writing will be practiced in this course:

autobiography, poetry/haiku, lyrics/rap, personal response essays, and evidence-based argument projects. For their larger research and writing project, students may choose any single performance or literary genre exploring how it might be used to address a particular social issue. Students will learn to workshop their writing and review peers' work in a supportive, encouraging environment and present their stories, performances, and research and as performance art for the larger DKU community. (You do not have to be a musician, actor, or dancer for this course. Any experience listening and watching will suffice.)

Course Goals / Objectives

The central goal of this course is to provide native English students as well as English language learners guided practice in rigorous reading and writing both within and beyond the university, whether in China or elsewhere.

- Developing the power of close reading, deep listening, and keen observation of everyday life.
- Question assumptions and traditions. Consider multiple cultural perspectives on complex issues.
- Develop original ideas and consider actual evidence to support your ideas.
- Explore your experience and perspectives in the context of other cultures, writers and thinkers.
- Express your ideas through writing and multi-media performance. Increase your confidence speaking publically.
- Learn to negotiate creative collaboration.

Required Text(s)/Resources

Readings: Articles, Essays, Book Excerpts, Poems, and Lyrics linked in Sakai Resources.

Sample: Health Theatre in a Hmong Refugee Camp: Performance, Communication, and Culture
Dwight Conquergood, *TDR (1988-)*, Vol. 32, No. 3 (Autumn, 1988), pp. 174-208. Published by: [The MIT Press](#) DOI: 10.2307/1145914 Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1145914> Page Count: 35

Excerpts from Paula Rothenberg's *Race, Class, and Gender in the United States*

Additional Materials (optional)

Access to a computer, our course website, and Duke Library resources.

Course Requirements / Key Evidences

This course begins with three **goals**: to help students begin to write rich descriptions of their personal experiences expressing themselves through writing and performing arts, to consider how these experiences have shaped their ideas about themselves in relation to others, and to

explore how creative expression might address some social conflict or issue. To achieve these goals students will consider a variety of performance and kinds of writing in class and on field trips, practice and participate in different writing and performance styles, and finally consider the ways a chosen performance or literary genre might inspire social change.

First **writing assignments** will include brief descriptions of a performance, a performance review, short summaries of various assigned scholarly readings that begin to identify the writing moves essential to effective creative and academic scholarship.

As students identify a particular area of cultural and performance that interests them, they will plan and execute their **larger drafted project: A Performance Autobiography** This assignment will begin with just three required elements: description, argument, and evidence, with the elements of scholarly and cultural context and imagined audience added in the second draft, and revised in the third draft.

Performance Autobiography

First Draft: Explain how your experience performing or consuming any form of writing, music, theater, and/or dance has shaped you, your family, and/or your broader culture.

Second Draft: Explore how this use of words or performance might bridge cultural differences, teach values, heal or help.

Third Draft: Research what other writers and scholars have said about your particular literary genre or performance, your ideas of how to apply that genre to social concerns, and use their ideas to frame your own ideas.

- An explanation of the performance's personal and cultural significance.
- An argument that is clear, concise, and compelling. Your argument or claim should be threaded through your project giving it direction and cohesion.
- Evidence that supports your claim, gathered directly from your performance and its cultural significance.
- The use of at least one other scholar's work to support your argument.
- An effective introduction and conclusion to pull the reader in and leave them with a clear sense of your argument's significance.
- Word choice, grammar, and sentence structure that result in project clarity and fluidity.

As we **workshop and learn to effectively peer review** each project, the class will choose excerpts of their writing to pull together in a one hour multi-media presentation for the DKU

and Kunshan community. Students will collaborate on decisions that consider when is the spoken word more effective than a projected image, when does an image, music, sound, or movement enhance or add another layer of meaning to the words, when do multiple speakers enhance a writer's message, and how can we organize different works to best compare and contrast them.

Technology Considerations, if applicable

The IT staff will assist us with preparing images to be projected and recorded music if needed for our presentation.

Assessment Information / Grading Procedures

- 20% - Intellectual Participation
- 20% - Short Writing Assignments
- 40% - Larger Written Project
- 20% - Collaborative Presentation

Unless I have approved a deadline extension at least a week in advance, late submission of a graded assignment will be lowered by a full letter grade per 24-hour period. Late penalties begin immediately. No credit is granted for short assignments turned in late. No credit is granted if you fail to hand in the preliminary steps leading up to the final version of an assignment.

Diversity and Intercultural Learning (see Principles of DKU Liberal Arts Education)

Performing across Cultures is structured around analyzing, appreciating, critiquing and celebrating the cultural diversity of artistic performances around the globe. The course mines students' personal experiences with their own cultures' arts, challenging students to transcend the surface entertainment values to think critically about each genre's historical and present day cultural significance. Using writing as a vehicle, the course then asks students to explore the values of other cultures through these culture's popular performances, identifying both difference and commonality.

Course Policies and Guidelines

Attendance and Participation

This course is structured as a workshop seminar, therefore your attendance and active participation are *crucial* to the functioning of our learning community. It is required that you print out Sakai texts before class and bring them to class with you. Not bringing hard copies of the text

we will be discussing constitutes an absence. Also please bring loose leaf paper to class for short in-class writing exercises.

Plan to attend every class meeting. Situations may arise that necessitate missing class. You are permitted to miss a total of two class meetings – due to illness or other emergencies – without incurring penalties. In such cases send me a short explanatory email the day before class. It will be your responsibility to catch up, including getting notes and assignments from a classmate. Any absences beyond the two class limit will result in your grade being lowered a full letter grade for each day missed.

Assignments

All work is due on the specified deadlines. It is important for you to complete and submit your work punctually so the course moves forward as intended. If at any point you have difficulty meeting a deadline, contact me *beforehand* to discuss the situation. Late work will be handled according to the following guidelines: Writing projects and response papers, excepting emergencies, are subject to late penalties of one letter grade per day late (i.e., A (one day late) → A-; B+ (two days late) → B-.) Any work more than 5 days late will not be accepted. In addition to **conferences** that I will hold during the semester I encourage you to come by my office to discuss particular writing projects, your writing in general, and/or your progress in the course. Feel free to email me any time to set up an appointment.

The Duke Community Standard and Plagiarism

Just as you will trust me to structure an intellectually exciting course and supportive creative environment, I also place my trust in you to be honest and uphold what is referred to as **The Duke Community Standard**: “I will not lie, cheat, or steal in my academic endeavors; I will conduct myself honorably in all my endeavors; and I will act if the Standard is compromised.” **Avoid Plagiarism**: To knowingly present someone else’s work as your own is to plagiarize. When you draw on, quote, or respond to the work of others in your writing—as you will surely do in this course—you need to acknowledge that you are doing so. This is the case whether your sources are published authors, fellow students, teachers, parents, or friends. The penalty for plagiarism is failure of the course in addition to whatever sanctions are determined by the Undergraduate Judicial Board. We will devote an entire class to discussing citation, but since the rules of citation can often be tricky, play it safe and **be sure to ask me** if you have any questions about how or if to document a certain source, phrase, excerpt, or idea. Here are some websites that may be helpful: <http://library.duke.edu/research/citing/> & <http://library.duke.edu/research/plagiarism/>