

Major Requirements

Core Curriculum

These courses are envisioned as serving two purposes: (1) as they may be taken in any order, each may serve as a “gateway” to performance studies, drawing students into the subject matter via different appeals/angles of approach; and (2) taken together (since all four are required for the major) they build a solid foundation for more specialized, advanced courses at the upper-division levels and give students the analytical, writing, and methodological tools necessary for more in-depth research on performance. (16 points required for [Minor](#))

Non-majors may enroll in the second sections of the following courses. If no second section is listed, the course is still open to non-majors:

PERF-UT 101: “Introduction to Performance Studies” (4 points)

To enter the field of Performance Studies is to proceed with a willingness to forgo strict definitions of art “objects” and “events.” The field encourages engagement with the enactments of everyday life, things inside and outside formal cultural institutions, and an expansive notion of performance space to reflect on how “objects” and “events” impact our sense of the world. While the question, “what is performance?” has mystified the minds of many, this course will move beyond this question by investigating: what does performance do? And how does performance help us to understand contemporary questions about aesthetics, politics, and the social world? To enter into the question “what does performance do?,” is to open the line between theory and practice; a line that falsely separates “performer” from “critic.” In addition to deepening an understanding of the field of Performance Studies, students will read texts that vitalize critical thinking in all curricular areas of the arts and sciences. The course will engage theories of the field as they emerge from performances themselves, especially from the robust creative repertoires of New York City.

(Students may also take PERF-UT 200 in lieu of this course if Majoring or Minor in Performance Studies)

PERF-UT 200: “Performance Studies: An Introduction” (4 points)

The course is taught using a blended learning approach. Guided online by Richard Schechner, a founder of the field of performance studies, and in person by Professor Erin Mee (who for years worked closely with Schechner), students explore the performances in the Americas, Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Europe, Australia, and the Pacific islands.

Students delve back in time to ask what kind of performances took place in the caves of paleolithic Europe? How do these ancient shamanic and initiatory practices relate to Burning Man, YouTube, and today's avant garde? How do people perform their professions, their genders, their races and nations, their identities, their social lives, and their daily rituals? For this course, Schechner filmed interviews with more than a dozen scholars, scientists, and artists. Embedded in the course are clips and images of many different kinds of performances.

Students engage each other directly in class and blog with each other during the week. Students form groups to devise performance projects. Performance Studies--An Introduction puts students in interactive dialogue with the most important events, people, theories, and questions of the dynamic, emerging field of performance studies.

PERF-UT 102: “Performance Theory” (4 points)

This course examines the diverse issues and methodological questions raised by different kinds of performance. Where “Introduction to Performance Studies” asks, “What is performance? What counts as performance, and what is its cultural significance?” this course asks, “How can we interpret and analyze performance? What is ‘theory’ in this context, and how do theory and practice inform each other?” Readings introduce students to key concepts in the field such as “ritual,” “performativity,” “liveness,” and “affect.” Material for the course (readings, videos, and other media) exemplify the interdisciplinary nature of performance studies by drawing from work in aesthetics, anthropology, architecture studies, ethnic/area studies, queer studies, religious studies, legal studies, literary studies, etc.

PERF-UT 103: “Performance of the City: New York” (4 points)

A founding tenet of our field is the significance of the site where performance takes place – including its metropolitan environment. This course serves to introduce students to the performance culture of a given city (whether New York or one of the other Global sites), and to the ways in which any urban environment is staged by its residents and visitors. The class will take the city itself as its “text,” exploring its history, its significant performance venues, and the public spaces where the population gathers in a collective spectacle of social relations. Readings in urban performance studies will be supplemented by class trips to performances, from the opera to skateboarding ramps to public parades.

PERF-UT 104: “Performance and Politics” (4 points)

This course focuses specifically on the political aspects of performance -- how it reflects, enacts, and shifts political discourse and practices. Beginning with a broad construction of “politics” -- that “the personal is political, and vice versa” -- the course encourages students to study events and practices that produce political effects. How can performance and performance theory be applied usefully to understand how, why, and where political dialogue takes place, and where it fails to do so?

Lower-Division Electives

These courses are focused (more narrowly than the “Core Curriculum” courses) on specific subjects and/or practices, though still aimed at lower-division students (i.e., they do not have course-prerequisites). Students may, though are not required to, explore various practice-based methods of research and analysis (“Performance Composition” and “Performative Writing”). (8 points required for the Major)

PERF-UT 201: “Performance Composition Workshop” (4 points)

This course focuses on performance as a mode of research/investigation: how can engaging in a performance or practice (rather than simply reading about/observing it) illuminate in ways that may be otherwise inaccessible to the researcher? What knowledges does the doing of performance produce? Students in this class will be asked to develop a research question (in consultation with the instructor), design and engage in a performance project aimed at answering (or at least investigating) that question, and then produce a final project (written or performed) that illustrates her/his research findings.

PERF-UT 204: “Performative Writing Workshop” (4 points)

Students in this workshop will study theories of linguistic performativity -- how words/writing *perform* functions in shaping the world (i.e., in law, science, fiction, etc.) -- and then explore that functionality in their own writing. How can the performative effects of writing be deployed purposefully, strategically, artistically, etc.? What do particular rhetorical/textual choices *do*? What is the relationship between the performativity of writing, on the one hand, and performance on the other? Students will be encouraged to experiment with their writing (both in terms of style and subject matter), and then to analyze the results of these experiments in order to hone their abilities to both observe, describe, and enact performance strategies in writing.

PERF-UT 205: “Performance Histories” (4 points)

Countering the “presentist” critique of performance studies as a field (i.e., that its emphasis on “liveness” limits it to analysis of contemporary practices), this course will examine both the long history of performance (and the specific research methodologies that are required for that examination), and the history of performance studies as a mode of social inquiry. How have performance, and the writing about performance, been deployed historically, and to what ends? How can contemporary researches access the archives that house answers to these questions, and how do archives in themselves constitute an historiographic “performance”? Students will consider the impact of performance in the contexts of (post-)colonial history, aesthetic genealogies, and other historiographic projects.

PERF-UT 206: “The Performance of Everyday Life” (4 points)

This course focuses in depth on “everyday” versions of performance (as opposed to theatrical or formal performances). Drawing from anthropology, affect studies, social psychology, sociology, architecture studies, etc. the course invites students to view seemingly non-theatrical social interaction as performance, and to consider the significance of the seeming “normal” and inconsequential nature of such performances. What happens when what is “second nature” becomes the focus of our attention? The course will also place particular emphasis on *writing* as a mode of illuminating and interrogating the “everyday,” as well as considering it as performance practice in and of itself.

Upper-Division Electives

These courses are designed as small, focused, research-based seminars. These courses may have restricted enrollment (pre-requisites or instructor approval) and are aimed at advanced undergraduate students. (12 points required for the Major)

PERF-UT 302: “Queer Politics & Performance” (4 points)

This course takes sexuality as its lens through which to consider performance, and vice versa. Much of the current vitality of the concept of “performance” has come through the study of gender and sexuality -- the political impact and social legibility of performances of gender and sexuality in daily life, art practices, and elsewhere -- and this course examines and applies these theories of gender/sexuality performance to a wide range of examples. Students will read both new and canonical work in field of gender studies with an eye toward the specific impact of performance in this work, as well as examine performance examples in order to analyze the ways gender and sexuality are produced within them.

PERF-UT 303: “Theories of Movement” (4 points)

This course will explore the rich history of experimental dance and movement-based performance, and the possibility of a movement-based analysis of performativity. While dominant theories of “performativity” (the *doing* that performance does) emerge from linguistic theories and/or text-based accounts (ethnographic descriptions of ritual, etc.), the direct impact of *movement* has garnered less scholarly attention (with the exception of dance studies). How does movement (not only in dance, but in performance more generally) enact social/aesthetic theory, and how might movement itself theorize social relations?

PERF-UT 304: “Performance and Technology” (4 points)

This course considers the concept of *technology* as a way of thinking about performance generally, and then focuses specifically on the role of various technologies in performance – historically as well as in contemporary practices. How do technical innovations, new knowledges, etc. make new forms of performance possible? The course will consider both technology in (aesthetic) performance *and* the performance of technology in extra-theatrical settings.

PERF-UT 305 Topics in Performance Studies (4 points)

“Topics in Performance Studies” is a course that allows for an in-depth exploration of a particular kind of performance practice. For example, in a given iteration, the subtitle might be “Voice and Performance.” In such a course, vocal technique could be examined in the context of a larger consideration of philosophical approaches to the significance of the voice. Or, in an iteration subtitled “Ritual Dance,” the use of movement and choreography for the purposes of worship could be explored from the perspective of diverse belief systems. Students in these “Topics” courses are not expected to be proficient performers themselves of the performance styles under consideration, although some instructors may choose to make practical work an option.

PERF-UT 306: Critical Approaches to Race and Ethnicity in Performance (4 points)

In this course students will consider both the ways race and ethnicity have been deployed historically in performances (theatrical and otherwise), as well as how “race” or “ethnicity” might be understood as a performative identity in itself.

Capstone

All majors will be required to complete a final project to be presented in a public symposium held in the spring of their final year that will serve as a culminating experience for graduating majors. (4 points required for major).

PERF-UT 400: Capstone Project (4 points)

Students in this course will build on a research paper/project that they originated in another PS course, with the goal of extending, refining, and further developing it in order to synthesize what they have learned, as well as further hone their research, analysis and writing skills. The course will be structured as a workshop in which students will review, critique, and help revise each other's work. A further goal of this course will be to teach students to organize and produce cogent, effective public presentations of their research; the course will culminate in a symposium (open to the rest of the department and to the public) in which students will give a precis of their research project, answer questions, query other students, etc.