Performance Studies trains students to document, theorize, and analyze embodied practices and events. Areas of concentration include: contemporary performance, dance, movement analysis, folk and popular performance, postcolonial theory, feminist and queer theory and performance theory.

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Interested in a Double Major or Minor in Performance Studies?
Email Laura Fortes at lf65@nyu.edu for more information.

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Introduction to Performance Studies
A. Vazquez
PERF-UT 101.001 (15700) – Tuesdays, 11:00am to 12:45am
4 pts – 721 Broadway, Room 612

Recitation Sections
PERF-UT 101.002 (15829) – Thursdays, 10:00am – 11:15am, 611, Y. Stern
PERF-UT 101.003 (15830) – Thursdays, 10:00am – 11:15am, 612, L. Girino
PERF-UT 101.004 (16102) – Thursdays, 10:00am – 11:15am, 613, A. Katsof

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.

Performance Theory
S. Richter
PERF-UT 102.001 (15787) – Thursdays, 3:30pm to 6:15pm
4 pts – 721 Broadway, Room 612

In this introduction to Performance Theory, we will take a dual approach. On one hand, we will study key events in dance, theater, visual art, political action, and music to trace the development of performance art over time. On the other hand, we will study the difficulty of historicizing, contextualizing, and theorizing the so-called live arts, particularly when debates in “presence” and “liveness” come to define performance studies as a discipline. This course will review critical debates in performance studies around embodiment, subjectification, and ephemerality while also renewing performance as historiographic practice. Foregrounding black, queer, and feminist perspectives, combined with discipline-specific conversations in dance, theater, and visual art, we will ask both about the foundations of dominant history and the possibility of unorthodox counter-narratives using performance art and theory. Why is performance as medium or genre of art-making a mode of critical inquiry, and how can writing about and theorizing with performance help us live beyond the demands of the present?
Performance of the City: Madrid
Instructor TBA
PERF-UT 9103.M01 (21228) – Day & Time TBD
4 pts – TBA

This course takes place on the Madrid campus.

A founding tenet of the Performance Studies field is the significance of the site where performance takes place—including its metropolitan environment. This course serves to introduce students to the many performance cultures of Madrid and to the ways in which its unique urban environment, its many histories, cultures, sub-cultures, and multi-cultures are staged and performed by the city’s residents, migrants, and visitors. The class will take Madrid itself as its main “performance” to analyze – by exploring the city’s past and present, its significant live art venues, and the varied 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 all sorts of live events: from flamenco to skateboarding ramps, from public parades and religious processions to experimental theater and dance, from jazz to tourism performance, from small art galleries to its grand museums.

Performance Composition Workshop: Creating Documentary Performance
K. Holfueuer
PERF-UT 201.001 (15919) – Wednesdays, 3:30pm to 6:15pm
4 pts – 721 Broadway, Room 612

Theatre scholar Carol Martin would advise us to beware and keep tabs on documentary theatre, a slippery little devil which claims to present the truth. Yet, in truth, works of documentary art reveal cracks in the facade of journalistic objectivity. In this course, through our theoretical readings, performance viewings, and compositions, we will investigate the cracked terrain between observation, fact, and speculation. We will begin with observing a range of documentary performances (live, filmed, and archival). We will then integrate this heightened awareness into weekly in-class hybridized archival call-and-response creation workshops. Participants will engage in documentary writing techniques, performance techniques such as vocal duplication and movement vocabularies, creation of composition scores, and docu-fantasía (a method pioneered by Guy Maddin in his film “My Winnipeg” combining personal history, civic tragedy, and mystical hypothesizing), among others. The result of these searches will be cumulative and by the end of this course, students will have created several short-form documentaries.

Participants in this course will come from various performance backgrounds while others will arrive with no direct performance or media background whatsoever but with a desire to learn new performance practices and investigate the possibilities of live documentary.

Performance of Everyday Life
B. Browning
PERF-UT 206.001 (22264) – Tuesdays, 3:30pm to 6:15pm
4 pts – 721 Broadway, Room 612

Majors-only & limited seats. Please contact Laura Fortes at lf65@nyu.edu to register.

This course focuses on “everyday” versions of performance (as opposed to theatrical or formal performances). Drawing from anthropology, affect studies, sociology, psychoanalytic and queer theory, the course invites students to view seemingly non-theatrical social interaction as performance, and to consider the significance of the seemingly “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.
Theories of Movement
A. Hafez
PERF-UT 303.001 (18644) – Wednesdays, 12:30pm to 3:15pm
4 pts – 721 Broadway, Room 612

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?

Topics in Performance Studies: Neoliberalism & Performance
A. Lepecki
PERF-UT 305.001 (15915) – Wednesdays, 9:30am to 12:15pm
4 pts – 721 Broadway, Room 613

Majors-only & limited seats. Please contact Laura Fortes at lf65@nyu.edu to register.

In the early 2000s, Jon McKenzie identified how “performance” could be seen as operating at two simultaneous and parallel levels: on one hand, as an artistic practice of resistance, related to experimentation and orientated towards ongoing critiques of power; on the other hand, as an order-word expressing the single most important imperative uttered by capitalist power itself: its demand for the subject to constantly perform or else be rendered useless. Two decades after McKenzie’s diagnosis, we can see how the ongoing production of a relentless performing subjectivity has become a central feature of what political theorist Wendy Brown has recently called neoliberalism’s “stealth revolution.” This seminar will examine, interrogate, and critique the ways the concept and practices of “performance” is infused with this double nature: as resistant line of flight as well as neoliberalism’s life-line. Through series of close readings drawing heavily from political theory (Wendy Brown, Maurizio Lazzarato, David Harvey, Deleuze and Guattari), critical theory (Teresa Brennan, Fred Moten and Stefano Harney), speculative pragmatism (Brian Massumi, Patricia Clough) and performance and dance studies (Shannon Jackson, Randy Martin, Claire Bishop), we will examine the ways neoliberalism is much more than yet another economic doctrine but a modality of performance that aims at permeating molecularly the very basis of desire and of subject-formation. We will also look at ways performance (performance art, theater, dance, music, etc.) has worked to map neoliberalism's insidious colonization of life and living, and has created acts of significant critical and political resistance against neoliberalism's many fronts. We will look in particular at ways neo-liberalism creates a condition of permanent self-assessment, and therefore turns individuals into apparatuses of self-monitoring. We will work simultaneously in two approaches: heavy theoretical analysis (note, there will be a high volume of readings); and practical development of performative actions of resistance (note, we will aim at creating actions, not just interpreting them).

Topics in Performance Studies: Theater & Performance: Mise -en-scene
M. Casteñeda
PERF-UT 305.002 (22265) – Mondays, 3:30pm to 6:15pm
4 pts – 721 Broadway, Room 613

Majors-only & limited seats. Please contact Laura Fortes at lf65@nyu.edu to register.

Mise-en-scène (from the French: placed on stage) is the term used in theatrical and cinematic contexts to refer to the elements of what is visible to the spectator – whether through the frame of a proscenium stage or the cinematic lens. That frame, the set, costumes, and lighting, and the blocking of performers all potentially contribute as much to our perception of the performance as any speech acts involved in it. Of course, not only theatrical and cinematic performances are framed and staged. How do the elements of staging and framing affect our perceptions of court cases, presidential debates, or live-feed videos on social media? This course will ask students to consider ways in which various performances are set on stage for them, the ways in which they are placed and framed in those performances, and the ways in which they frame and stage their own performances.