We are surrounded by performances: film, online video, television, theatre, sports, public rituals such as weddings, and the normal, quotidian events of everyday life such as shopping. The purpose of this course is to help you think in new and deeper ways about these performances. “Race, Gender, and Performance” introduces you to powerful theoretical tools that will enable you to look anew at familiar performances and see things that you never noticed or thought about before. The course also spotlights feminist, queer, and anti-racist performances that are less mainstream and therefore less familiar to most students. Thus the class makes the familiar strange and makes the strange familiar.

Throughout the semester, we examine race, gender, and sexuality in performance and as performance. In other words, we analyze the meanings produced through already-gendered, already-sexually-identified, and already-raced bodies on stage and in audiences, as well as the construction of gender, race, and sexuality through performances on stage and in everyday life. In the first week, titled “Introductions to Performance Studies,” we gain familiarity and dexterity with basic concepts in the field. After this introduction, we dig into three units of study. Unit 1, “Performing Preconstructed Race, Gender, and Sexuality” examines the assumption that bodies
are always already raced, gendered, and sexually identified. In Unit 2, “Constructing Race, Gender, and Sexuality through Performance,” we engage with major theorists—including Erving Goffman, Judith Butler, Diana Taylor, and Laura Mulvey—who offer different accounts of how performance constructs norms and makes race, gender, and sexuality real. We end the course with Unit 3, “Reconstructing and Deconstructing Race, Gender, and Sexuality through Performance,” in which we examine feminist, queer, and anti-racist efforts to use performance to create social change.

**Required Texts and Performances**

**Books** (all on reserve at Lamont and available for purchase at the Coop):
- Robin Bernstein, ed., *Cast Out: Queer Lives in Theater*
- Eve Ensler, *The Vagina Monologues*
- Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*
- David Henry Hwang, *M. Butterfly*
- Sourcebook ("SB")

**Films and videos** (all streaming and on reserve at Lamont)
- *Black Is. . . Black Ain’t*
- *Carmelita Tropicana: Your Kunst Is Your Waffen*
- *Chicago*
- *The Codes of Gender: Identity and Performance in Pop Culture*
- *The Couple in the Cage: A Guatinaui Odyssey*
- *Fight Back, Fight AIDS: 15 Years of ACT UP*
- *Fires in the Mirror*
- *Stop the Church*
- *The Vagina Monologues*
- *Venus Boyz*

**Live Performances**

Every student is required to attend a live theatrical performance and a Harvard Women’s or Men’s basketball game, for which you will receive free tickets.
- Our theatrical performance is *Fierce Love*, by the Pomo Afro Homos, at the Theater Offensive in Boston. *Fierce Love* runs the evenings of November 17, 18, and 19 and the afternoon of November 20. Each student will commit to attending on one of these dates. If you miss the live theatrical performance, you must use your own resources to attend the same show on another evening.
- Each student must attend one of the following basketball games:
  - Friday, November 11. Harvard Men’s Basketball game versus MIT, 7pm
  - Tuesday, November 22. Harvard Women’s Basketball game versus Rhode Island, 7pm
  - Sunday, November 27. Harvard Women’s Basketball game versus Holy Cross, 2pm

**Useful Information**

**Course Requirements and Grading**

| Performance Analysis #1 (3-5 pages, due in lecture Monday, Sept. 19) | 10% of final grade |
| Performance Analysis #2 (5-7 pages, due Friday, Oct. 21) | 10% of final grade |
| Performance Analysis #3 (5-7 pages, due Tuesday, Nov. 22 OR Tuesday, Nov. 29) | 15% of final grade |
Attendance at live theatrical performance (Nov. 17, 18, 19, OR 20) 5% of final grade
Attendance at Harvard men’s or women’s basketball game (Nov. 11, 22, OR 27) 5% of final grade
8 in-section writing exercises (graded credit/no credit) 10% of final grade
Final Exam OR Final Paper 25% of final grade
Productive participation, active listening, punctuality, and respectful citizenship in section and lecture 20% of final grade

Course Policies
Sections will meet on Wednesdays, Thursdays, or Fridays. Sectioning will occur during the second week of class, and sections will meet for the first time during the week of September 12. We will make every effort to place you in your first choice of section.

Each section will begin with a brief writing exercise based on that week’s reading and/or lectures. Your TF will give you a prompt—a provocative question, for example, or an invitation to put two ideas into conversation—and you’ll write freely for 5-10 minutes. These exercises give you an opportunity to practice writing about performance, and you will brainstorm ideas that you may later expand in your papers. Your TF will collect and read these exercises, but she or he will not grade them. You will receive credit simply for completing 8 exercises over the course of the semester.

Students will take collective responsibility for the success of every section discussion. You are expected not only to complete the required reading and viewings, but also to think about them before class and to arrive in section with thoughts and questions. In section, all students will listen actively to and engage productively with their classmates, and all will express thoughts in a respectful manner that advances the conversation. Practices that disrespect one’s colleagues (for example, texting, interrupting, hogging the floor, launching personal attacks, surfing the web, or answering cell phones) will hinder conversation; such practices, therefore, are unacceptable.

Professor Bernstein and both TFs want to get to know you! Toward that goal, we will have lunch every Monday immediately after class in Kirkland House. You are invited to join us! If you are not on the meal plan, please speak to Scott Poulson-Bryant, who will arrange for you to receive a free meal ticket. These lunches have no agenda: we might talk about the course, or a performance you’ve recently seen or participated in, or we might just chat about subjects of no direct relevance to race, gender, sexuality, or performance. We hope that every student will drop by for lunch at least once or twice during the semester!

Professor Bernstein holds office hours from 9-10:30 am on Wednesdays. You are welcome to drop in, but students with appointments receive priority. You may reserve time online at http://wgs.fas.harvard.edu/icb/icb.do?keyword=k53419&pageid=icb.page449095. If you have class during office hours, please email Professor Bernstein at <rbernst@fas> to make alternative arrangements.

If you need reasonable accommodation for a disability, please let your TF know as soon as possible. We will work with you and the appropriate Harvard offices to make this class accessible to all.

All books (including the Sourcebook) and all films are on reserve at Lamont Library. You may view the films in Lamont or on streaming video (your TF will explain how to access this resource).

Some of the required readings and viewings include nudity and/or explicit sexual content. If you do not wish to engage with such materials, you should not enroll in this course.

Students must arrive on time for lectures and sections, all of which start seven minutes after the hour. If you miss lecture or section for a Harvard-recognized religious holiday or for a documented illness, you will be excused. To be excused for any other absence, you must submit a dean’s note. Extracurricular activities, including those relevant to this course, are not acceptable reasons for missing lecture or section.
Each student will either take a final exam or write a 12-15 page final paper. Most students will take the exam, which is the default option. You should write a paper only if you are burning to work on a specific, relevant project. If you wish to write a paper in lieu of taking the exam, you must submit a proposal to your TF by Wednesday, October 26. If your TF and professor decline your proposal, you must take the exam.

Unless otherwise specified, all papers are due in the office of the Department of African and African American Studies in the Barker Center by 3 pm of the due date. Late papers will be penalized one third of a letter grade for each day overdue. Failure to complete any assignment can lower your grade in excess of the stated percentage.

If you are involved in extracurricular activities related to race, gender, sexuality, and/or performance, you may want to publicize relevant events among your classmates. The course website has a special section titled “Student Announcements” for this purpose. If you wish to publicize an event, please send the information to your TF, who can post the announcement online. Your TF reserves the right to decline to post any announcement.

Introductions to Performance Studies

Wednesday, August 31. What is performance? What does it mean to say that gender, race, or sexuality is performed?

Monday, September 5. LABOR DAY. No classes.

Wednesday, September 7. What is performance studies? How does it relate to the study of race, gender, and sexuality?

- Assignment for Performance Analysis #1 distributed in class

Unit 1:
Performing Preconstructed Race, Gender, and Sexuality

The texts are listed in a recommended order for reading or viewing. The italicized questions may guide your reading if you wish. You are welcome to ignore the italicized questions.

Monday, September 12. Race, Gender, and Sexuality in Performance

- View Black Is. . . Black Ain’t (directed by Marlon Riggs, 1994)
  What does the film suggest blackness is or isn’t? Where is blackness? In bodies? In culture? In history? Somewhere else entirely? How does the film show blackness intersecting with gender and sexuality? What is the importance of AIDS in the film? Why do you think Marlon Riggs shows himself running naked through the woods? How would the film have been different if those scenes were excluded?
Wednesday, September 14. I’m Ready for My Close-Up: Sexed Bodies in Performance

- Read Eve Ensler, *The Vagina Monologues*
- View *The Vagina Monologues* (written and directed by Eve Ensler, 2002)
- Recommended: Read Kate Bornstein and Barbara Carrellas, “Queer Theater, Musicals to Masturbation: A Conversation with Too Tall Blondes,” in Bernstein, pp. 103-111

*What relationship does Ensler posit between a woman’s gendered identity and a vagina? How might feminist critiques of essentialism, as described in lecture, apply to Ensler’s work?*

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**Unit 2:**

**Constructing Race, Gender, and Sexuality Through Performance**

Monday, September 19. Gender, Race, and Sexuality as Performances in Everyday Life

- PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS #1 (3-5 pages) DUE IN CLASS

*What is Goffman’s concept of a “front”? What specific fronts does Kelley describe in his essay?*

Wednesday, September 21. Gender, Race, and Sexuality as Rituals


Monday, September 26. Gender as a “stylized repetition of acts”

Read Judith Halberstam, “Mackdaddy, Superfly, Rapper: Gender, Race, and Masculinity in the Drag King Scene,” in Social Text 52/53, nos 3 and 4 (Fall/Winter 1997), pp. 105-131 (Access online through JSTOR)

Read MilDréd Diyaa Gerestant, “Exposures of a Multispirited, Haitian-American, Gender-Harmonizing WoMan” in Bernstein, pp. 44-50


Assignment for Performance Analysis #2 distributed in class

As you read “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution,” try to paraphrase this sentence: Gender is “a stylized repetition of acts” that “sediment” on the body over time. You’ll know that you understand Butler when you can explain this idea confidently in your own words. Let Judith Halberstam’s essay help you. Halberstam interviews drag kings who have—they think—incorporated Butler’s theories into their on-stage performances. Halberstam argues that drag kings have misread Butler. You might choose to read Halberstam first so you can avoid the so-called “bad reading” of Butler. Alternatively, you might read Butler first and then use Halberstam to double-check your understanding of Butler. In either case, do not get stuck on any individual sentence in Butler (or Halberstam). Read with the overarching goal of figuring out what Butler means when she says that the gendered body is “the legacy of [stylized] sedimented acts.”

Wednesday, September 28. Physical Space and the Performance of Race, Gender, and Sexuality


Read Patricia Marx, “Do I Look Fat?” New Yorker, 23 April 2007, Vol. 83, Issue 9, pp. 27-28 (access online through Hollis)

Recommended: Read Kevin Winkler, “The Divine Mr. K: Reclaiming My ‘Unruly’ Past with Bette Midler and the Baths,” in Bernstein, pp. 60-76

How, according to Wickstrom, Preston, and Marx, do built environments construct gender, race, and sexuality?

Monday, October 3. The Persistence of Performance


How does Taylor distinguish “archive” from “repertoire”? What is the significance of this distinction for the performance of race, gender, and nation?

Wednesday, October 5. Looking and Being Looked At
● Read Michael R. Schiavi, “Professional Spectatorship’s Queer Stages,” in Bernstein, pp. 124-139

As you read Mulvey, try to define, in your own words, “to-be-looked-at-ness.” Read with the goal of understanding how this phrase fits into Mulvey’s general argument about how Hollywood narrative cinema structures the gaze in gendered ways. Do not get stuck on Mulvey’s use of Freud and Lacan, who are not central figures in this course. How does Schiavi affirm, contest, or complicate Mulvey?

Monday, October 10. COLUMBUS DAY; NO CLASS

Wednesday, October 12. Looking and Being Looked At: Nations
● Read David Henry Hwang, M. Butterfly
Think about Mulvey and M. Butterfly together. How does Mulvey enable us to analyze M. Butterfly? And how does M. Butterfly complicate or contest Mulvey?

Monday, October 17. Hiphop and Masculinity
● Guest lecture by Scott Poulson-Bryant. Reading and screenings TBA.

Wednesday, October 19. Joy
● Instructions for final paper option distributed in class
How, in Butler’s view, does still photography figure in athletic achievement? Why is this relationship important to gender and sexuality? Is it important to race? If so, how?

Friday, October 21: PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS #2 DUE to the AAAS office (Barker Center) by 3 pm

Unit 3: Reconstructing and Deconstructing Race, Gender, and Sexuality Through Performance

Wednesday, October 24. Feminism and Realism
● Read Marsha Norman, ’night, Mother online at http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:hul.ebookbatch.ASPWD_batch:ASPPPL010256wodr
● Assignment for Performance Analysis #3 distributed in class
What is realism? What characteristics of realism appear in ’night, Mother? What are Dolan’s critiques of realism?
Wednesday, October 26. Brecht’s Challenges to Realism and Expressionism
- **Proposals for final paper due for students who wish to pursue this option**
  As you read Brecht, aim to understand how he contrasts “Epic Theatre” (also known as Brechtian theatre) with “dramatic theatre” (which includes realism). What are Brecht’s critiques of realism (or dramatic theatre)? How does Epic Theatre respond to the problems Brecht sees in dramatic theatre?

Monday, October 31. “Gender” and other Quotations
- Read Elin Diamond, “Brechtian Theory/Feminist Theory: Toward a Gestic Feminist Criticism,” in TDR 32.1 (Spring 1988), pp. 82-94 (Access through JSTOR; please note that TDR is the full title of this journal)
- View Chicago (directed by Rob Marshall, starring Catherine Zeta-Jones, Renee Zellweger, Queen Latifah, and Richard Gere, 2002)
  What systems does Chicago critique? How do gender and race figure in those systems? How does the film implicate the audience in those systems?

Wednesday, November 2. Disidentification
- Read Alina Troyano, a.k.a. Carmelita Tropicana, “Author’s Introduction” and “Performance Art Manifesto,” in I, Carmelita Tropicana: Performing Between Cultures (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000), pp. xiii-xxv, 177-178 (SB)
- View in class: Carmelita Tropicana: Your Kunst Is Your Waffen (directed by Ela Troyano, starring Alina Troyano, 1994)
  What is disidentification?

Monday, November 7. Camp
- Guest lecture by Stephen Vider
  How do Sontag and Newton understand camp differently?
Wednesday, November 9. Butch/Femme Lesbian Performance
- Read Peggy Shaw, “How I Learned Theatre,” in Bernstein, pp. 25-29
- Recommended: Read Bree Coven, “There’s a Place for Us . . . Somewhere,” in Bernstein, pp. 140-149

How do practices of alienation and quotation figure in butch, femme, and butch/femme performance?

Friday, November 11. Harvard Men’s Basketball game versus MIT, 7pm, Harvard Stadium

- Read Michael Kearns, “Heaven and Home,” in Bernstein, pp. 205-209

How and why did ACT-UP use performance in activism during the 1980s and 90s?

Wednesday, November 16. Theatre and Social Change
- Guest lecture by Lizzy Cooper Davis. Readings and screenings TBA.

November 17, 18, 19, and 20. Fierce Love at the Theater Offensive!
Monday, November 21. Empathy

- View Anna Deavere Smith, *Fires in the Mirror*

According to Smith, what’s the value of identifying with the other? How do Smith’s performances of identification compare and contrast with Muñoz’s concept of disidentification?

Tuesday, November 22. PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS #3 DUE for students who write about *Fierce Love* or the Harvard Men’s Basketball Game. Please hand in your papers to the AAAS office (Barker Center) by 3 pm

Tuesday, November 22. Harvard Women’s Basketball game versus Rhode Island, 7pm

Wednesday, November 23. THANKSGIVING BREAK—NO CLASSES

Sunday, November 27. Harvard Women’s Basketball game versus Holy Cross, 2pm

Monday, November 28. Hope

- View CNN video of Nikki Giovanni’s performance at the convocation after the Virginia Tech massacre, April 2007 at [http://youtube.com/watch?v=0cSuidxE8os](http://youtube.com/watch?v=0cSuidxE8os)

What is Dolan’s definition of a “utopian performative”? How does a utopian performative differ from a depiction of utopia? How can ordinary people perform utopia?

Tuesday, November 29. PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS #3 DUE for students who write about the Harvard Women’s Basketball Game. Please hand in your papers to the AAAS office (Barker Center) by 3 pm

Wednesday, November 30. Ridiculous?

- View [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1vvPvaDkIUo&feature=fvw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1vvPvaDkIUo&feature=fvw)
- Read [http://www.nytimes-se.com/](http://www.nytimes-se.com/)
- View [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dO6Oi3XUYgg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dO6Oi3XUYgg)
- View [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R8I4fFLqfXg&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R8I4fFLqfXg&feature=related)

*Can performance change the world?*

Monday, December 12. Final papers in lieu of the final exam are due in the AAAS office, Barker Center, 3 pm

DATE TBD: Final Exam

*Have a good break!*