Performance surrounds us. We see performances online, in movies and on TV, on the sports field, and in theatre, activism, and our minute-to-minute interactions. The purpose of this course is to help you analyze these performances from a variety of critical perspectives. “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 ask, how do diverse performances produce or disrupt formations of race, gender, and sexuality?

In Unit 1, titled “Foundational Concepts in the Performance of Race, Gender, and Sexuality,” we gain familiarity and dexterity with basic concepts in performance theory. 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, “Deconstructing and Reconstructing 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 Performance**

**Books** (all on reserve at Lamont and available for purchase at the Coop):
- Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*
- David Henry Hwang, *M. Butterfly* (this title is also available online through Hollis)
- Taylor Mac, *Hir: A Play*
- Marsha Norman, *'night, Mother* (this title is also available online through Hollis)
- Coursepack

**Live Performance**
- Claudia Rankine, *The White Card*

**Course Requirements and Grading**

Productive participation, active listening, punctuality, and respectful citizenship in section and lecture 20% of final grade
8 in-section writing exercises (each graded credit/no credit) 24% of final grade
Attendance at *The White Card*, March 2, 7:30pm (credit/no credit) 6% of final grade
Midterm Exam, February 27 10% of final grade
Performance Analysis #1, due Thursday, March 8 10% of final grade
Performance Analysis #2, due Thursday, April 12 10% of final grade
Final Exam OR Final Paper 20% of final grade

**Useful Information**

All books (including the course pack) and all films are on reserve at Lamont Library.

Every student will attend a performance on March 2, 2018, at 7:30 of Claudia Rankine’s play, *The White Card*, at ArtsEmerson (a joint venture with Harvard’s American Repertory Theater). Each student will receive a free ticket to the performance, and attendance is mandatory. If you know in advance that you will be unable to attend the performance on March 2, you must inform your TF immediately, and a ticket for a different date will be provided for you. If you do not inform your TF of a conflict by February 1, you will need to purchase a ticket for an alternate night at your own expense. **Please note that this performance is in Boston, not Cambridge.** We will gather at the Harvard T stop on March 2 at 6:30pm to travel together.
Some of our required readings and viewings include nudity and/or explicit sexual content. We will also view and read about some anti-racist performances that critically stage racist imagery. If you do not wish to engage with such materials, you should not enroll in this course.

Professor Bernstein holds office hours every week, but the times vary. Please reserve time online at <http://wgs.fas.harvard.edu/hours> (you will be prompted for your Harvard ID). Prof. Bernstein’s office is Boylston Hall, Room G31 (ground floor).

With a student’s consent, meetings during office hours will be “walking meetings.” The professor and student will talk while strolling around campus. Any student may opt for a traditional, “sitting meeting” instead. If you opt for a sitting meeting, you need not offer any explanation, and no questions will be asked. We will of course stay inside during inclement weather. For more information about the intellectual and health benefits of walking meetings, see Nilofer Merchant, “Sitting is the Smoking of Our Generation,” Harvard Business Review 14 January 2013 <http://blogs.hbr.org/cs/2013/01/sitting_is_the_smoking_of_our_generation.html>.

Sections will meet on Thursdays or Fridays. In the second week of the semester, each student will be assigned to a section. Sections will meet for the first time in the third week of class. 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 TFs will collect and read these exercises, but they will not grade them, nor will they comment on them extensively. 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.

Laptops are not permitted in lecture except by permission of the instructor. If you wish to use a laptop, please speak with Professor Bernstein. Laptop use in sections is at the discretion of the Teaching Fellow. Recording of sound or images in lecture or section is strictly prohibited.

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 activities relevant to this course, are not acceptable reasons for missing lecture or section.

Each undergraduate 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 March 27. If your TF and professor decline your proposal, you must take the exam.

Graduate students will have a different set of writing requirements and may have expanded reading assignments. Grad students will meet with the professor in the second week of the semester to co-create a set of writing and reading assignments that will best meet grad students’ needs. Each graduate student must write a final paper of 20-25 pages in lieu of taking the exam.

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.

Any student needing academic adjustments or accommodations should present a letter from the Accessible Education Office (AEO) as soon as possible. All discussions will remain confidential, although the AEO may be consulted to discuss appropriate implementation.

This course adheres to Harvard University policy on permitted collaboration, which reads as follows:

Discussion and the exchange of ideas are essential to academic work. For assignments in this course, you are encouraged to consult with your classmates on the choice of paper topics and to share sources. You may find it useful to discuss your chosen topic with your peers, particularly if you are working on the same topic as a classmate. However, you should ensure that any written work you submit for evaluation is the result of your own research and writing and that it reflects your own approach to the topic. You must also adhere to standard citation practices in this discipline and properly cite any books, articles, websites, lectures, etc. that have helped you with your work. If you received any help with your writing (feedback on drafts, etc), you must also acknowledge this assistance.
Course Schedule

The assigned 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.

Unit 1:
Foundational Concepts
in the Performance of Race, Gender, and Sexuality

Tuesday, January 23. What is performance? What does it mean to say that gender, race, or sexuality is performed?

Thursday, January 25. What is performance studies? How does it relate to the study of race, gender, and sexuality?
- Read pamphlet, “A Student’s Guide to Performance Studies”

Tuesday, January 30. Race, Gender, and Sexuality in Performance
  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?

Thursday, February 1. Why Study Public Bathrooms?

How have public restrooms been sites in which gender, race, and sexuality have been defined and policed? How are public bathrooms a site of power? How can performance studies help us to think about public bathrooms—and vice versa?

## Unit 2:

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

**Tuesday, February 6. Gender, Race, and Sexuality as Performances in Everyday Life**

- Assignment for Performance Analysis #1 distributed in class

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

**Thursday, February 8. Using Goffman to Analyze Race, Gender, and Sexuality**

- Spencer E. Cahill et al, “Meanwhile Backstage: Behavior in Public Bathrooms.” Online at [http://www.csun.edu/~tph53095/Meanwhile%20Backstage%20Reading.pdf](http://www.csun.edu/~tph53095/Meanwhile%20Backstage%20Reading.pdf). This essay is based on a longer journal article by Cahill et al that was published in 1985 in *Urban Life (The Journal of Contemporary Ethnography)*.

  How do Yoshino and Cahill et al use Goffman’s ideas to analyze race, gender, and sexuality?

**Tuesday, February 13. Gender as a “stylized repetition of acts”**

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. Do not get stuck on any individual sentence. 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.”

Thursday, February 15. Using Butler to Analyze Performance


How does Justus use Butler to analyze performance in men’s bathrooms? How might Goffman have enabled Justus to expand or complicate his argument?

Tuesday, February 20. Stylized Repetitions of Acts and the Historical 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?

Thursday, February 22. Looking and Being Looked At


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.

Tuesday, February 27. MIDTERM EXAM

Thursday, March 1. Looking and Being Looked At: Race, Gender, Sexuality, Nation

- 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?

Friday, March 2, 7:30pm: REQUIRED EVENT: Claudia Rankine, The White Card <https://americanrepertorytheater.org/events/show/white-card>. The performance is at the Emerson Paramount Center, 559 Washington St, Boston, MA 02111
What questions does The White Card raise about visibility and invisibility, looking and being looked at?

Tuesday, March 6. Physical Space and Performance, Part 1

*How did racial segregation rely on performance? How did some African Americans use performance to resist segregation?*

Thursday, March 8. Physical Space and Performance, Part II
- **PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS #1 DUE at the beginning of class!**

*How, according to Reynolds and Marx, do built environments arrange performances to construct gender and sexuality?*

Tuesday, March 13. NO CLASS. SPRING BREAK!
Thursday, March 15. NO CLASS. SPRING BREAK!

**Unit 3:**

*Deconstructing and Reconstructing Race, Gender, and Sexuality Through Performance*

Tuesday, March 20. Feminism and Realism
of Universality,” pp. 19-40. Access online through Hollis subscription to Project Muse.

- Read Marsha Norman, ‘night, Mother. Access online through Hollis.

**What is realism? What characteristics of realism appear in ’night, Mother? What are Dolan’s critiques of realism?**

**Thursday, March 22. Brecht’s Challenges to Realism and Expressionism**


  *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?*

**Tuesday, March 27. Can Realism be Anti-Normative?**

- Read Taylor Mac, *Hir: A Play*
- **Proposal for final paper due for students who wish to pursue this option.**

  *Hir attempts to use the conventions of realism to stage anti-normative gender. In your view, does it succeed? How do whiteness and disability factor into its reconfiguration of realism?*

**Thursday, March 29. “Gender” and other Quotations**

- View *Chicago* (directed by Rob Marshall, starring Catherine Zeta-Jones, Renee Zellweger, Queen Latifah, and Richard Gere, 2002). Access online through Hollis’s subscription to Kanopy.

  *What systems does Chicago critique? How do gender and race figure in those systems? How does the film implicate the audience in those systems?*

**Tuesday, April 3. Fugitivity and Freedom: The Crafts**

- Guest Lecture: Christofer Rodelo
- **Assignment TBD**

**Thursday, April 5. Historicizing Race and Gender in “The Little Mister”**

- Guest Lecture: Will Pruitt
- **Assignment TBD**

**Tuesday, April 10. Can Performance Save Lives? A Case Study: AIDS Activism**


How and why did ACT-UP use performance in activism during the 1980s and 90s? What were the effects of these performances?

Thursday, April 12. Restrooms and Resistance
• PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS #2 DUE at the beginning of class!
• NO READING ASSIGNMENT

Tuesday, 17. Hope

How does Dolan define a “utopian performative”? How does a utopian performative differ from a depiction of utopia? How can ordinary people perform utopia?

Thursday, April 19. Gaiety

What are acts of gaiety, and why are they politically useful? How have the performances we’ve seen this semester engaged feelings for political purposes?

Tuesday, April 24. Ridiculous?
• View http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1vvPvaDkIUo&feature=fvw
• Read http://www.nytimes-se.com/
• View http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dO6Oi3XUYgg

Can performance change the world? If so, how?

DATE TBD: Final Exam
Papers in lieu of final exam are due at the beginning of the exam.

Have a good summer!