

Performing America

History and Literature 90q
Harvard University, Fall 2009

Professor Robin Bernstein
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Office Hours: Thursdays 1:30-3 pm, Barker 147

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 3-4 pm

*We will meet each Tuesday in Barker 118 and each Thursday in a
Harvard archive (see individual dates for locations)*

Benedict Anderson famously argued that the modern nation was collectively “imagined” into existence, and that the technologies of the novel and the newspaper played a special role in that process. Scholars of U.S. theatre have expanded upon Anderson, arguing that performances—including plays, freak shows, minstrelsy, public lectures, world fairs, museum displays, “leg shows,” and other spectacles—served as key technologies by which people within and beyond the United States imagined “America.” This course examines a selection of performances that functioned as flashpoints in American cultural history, especially with regard to constructions of race, gender, and sexuality. Archival research will structure our investigations: in a typical week, we will meet once in the classroom to discuss course readings and once in an archive (the Harvard Theatre Collection, the Schlesinger Library, or the Peabody Museum) to work directly with primary materials.

ASSIGNMENTS

Percent of final grade

Brief argument based on assigned reading (due Monday, October 5)	10%
Consistent, productive, engaged participation and classroom citizenship	10%
Leadership of one archival session	10%
Prospectus and preliminary bibliography for the final paper (full credit/no credit; due Monday, October 12)	5%
Close reading of one piece of evidence that will figure in the final paper (due Monday, October 26)	10%
Revised prospectus and bibliography for the final paper (full credit/no credit, due Monday, November 9)	5%
Draft of final paper (full credit/no credit; due in class Tuesday, November 24)	5%
Oral Presentation based on final paper (December 1 and 3)	10%
Final Paper, due December 14.	35%

Students will take collective responsibility for the success of every discussion. This responsibility involves three components. First, you are required to arrive in class having read and *thought about* all the reading. In other words, merely gulping down the reading is inadequate. You should come to class having chewed and digested the material thoroughly. You are expected to prepare your own thoughts, opinions, and questions before every class. Second, you must listen actively to your classmates. Your contributions to our discussion should productively engage with your colleagues' ideas. Third, you must express your thoughts in a respectful manner that advances our conversation. Practices that disrespect your colleagues (for example, texting, checking email, interrupting, hogging the floor, launching personal attacks, or answering cell phones) will hinder conversation; such practices, therefore, are unacceptable.

Except for the draft of the final paper, all written assignments will be submitted to the History and Literature office 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 semester grade in excess of the stated percentage.

Each student will lead (or co-lead) one session at the Harvard Theatre Collection. This assignment entails working in advance with curators to select relevant primary documents for the class to examine, familiarizing yourself with the background knowledge that is necessary to understand the documents, sharing this knowledge formally with your colleagues, and leading the class's engagement with the materials.

REQUIRED BOOKS (all available at the Harvard Coop and on reserve at Lamont):

- Bluford Adams, *E Pluribus Barnum: The Great Showman and the Making of U.S. Popular Culture* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1997)
- Annemarie Bean, James V. Hatch, and Brooks McNamara, eds., *Inside the Minstrel Mask: Readings in Nineteenth-Century Blackface Minstrelsy* (Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 1996)
- Daphne A. Brooks, *Bodies in Dissent: Spectacular Performances of Race and Freedom, 1850-1910* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006)
- Jayna Brown, *Babylon Girls: Black Women Performers and the Shaping of the Modern* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008)
- Jay Fliegelman, *Declaring Independence: Jefferson, Natural Language, and the Culture of Performance* (Stanford University Press, 1993)
- Karen Halttunen, *Confidence Men and Painted Women: A Study of Middle-Class Culture in America, 1830-1870* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1982)
- Rosemarie Garland Thomson, ed. *Freakery: Cultural Spectacles of the Extraordinary Body* (New York: New York University Press, 1996)
- Don B. Wilmeth and Christopher Bigsby, eds. *The Cambridge History of the American Theatre, Volume I: Beginnings to 1870* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998)

Additional readings will be available online through Hollis or as posted PDFs.

SCHEDULE

Week 1. Performing the Early Republic

Thursday, September 3

- Read and discuss in class: “Performance,” by Susan Manning, from *Keywords for American Cultural Studies*, edited by Bruce Burgett and Glenn Hendler (New York: New York University Press, 2007), pp. 177-180.

Tuesday, September 8

- Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Revised Edition. (London and New York: Verso, 1991), “Introduction” and “Cultural Roots,” pp. 1-36 (PDF online)
- Thomas Jefferson, The Declaration of Independence (online at <<http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/declaration.html>>)
- Jay Fliegelman, *Declaring Independence: Jefferson, Natural Language, and the Culture of Performance* (all EXCEPT pp. 63-79, 150-189). The full text of this book is available online through Hollis at <http://quod.lib.umich.edu.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=acls;idno=heb01354>

Thursday, September 10

- Jason Shaffer, “‘Great Cato’s Descendants’: A Genealogy of Colonial Performance,” *Theatre Survey* Vol. 44 no. 1 (May 2003), pp. 5-28 (access online through Literature Online [LION])
- Christopher Bigsby and Don B. Wilmeth, “Introduction,” *The Cambridge History of the American Theatre, Volume I: Beginnings to 1870* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 1-19.
- *Recommended*: Edward L. Schwarzchild, “Death-Defying/Defining Spectacles: Charles Wilson Peale as Early American Freak Showman,” chap in Thomson, ed. *Freakery: Cultural Spectacles of the Extraordinary Body*, pp. 82-96

Week 2. Performing the Early Republic, continued

Tuesday, September 15

- Susanna Rowson, *Slaves in Algiers, or A Struggle for Freedom*, 1794 (access online through Literature Online [LION])
- Elizabeth Maddock Dillon, “*Slaves in Algiers*: Race, Republican Genealogies, and the Global Stage,” *American Literary History* 16.2 (2004), 407-436 (access online through Project Muse)

Thursday, September 17

- *Meet at the Harvard Theatre Collection!*
- Annette Fern, “What have They Done to the Evidence?” *Theatre Survey* 45.2 (November 2004), pp.195-201 (access through Literature Online [LION])
- Tracy Davis, “The Context Problem,” *Theatre Survey* 45.2 (November 2004), pp.203-209 (access through Literature Online [LION])
- Bruce A. McConachie, “New Historicism and American Theater History: Toward an Interdisciplinary Paradigm for Scholarship,” in Sue-Ellen Case and Janelle

- Reinelt, eds., *The Performance of Power: Theatrical Discourse and Politics* (Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Press, 1991), pp. 265-271 (PDF online)
- Don B. Wilmeth and Jonathan Curley, compilers, "Timeline: Beginning to 1870," *The Cambridge History of the American Theatre, Volume I: Beginnings to 1870* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 20-110. *Please note that you will refer to this timeline many times throughout the semester.*

Week 3. Edwin Forrest, *Metamora*, and Indian Removal

Tuesday, September 22

- Bruce McConachie, "American Theatre in Context, From the Beginnings to 1870," in *The Cambridge History of the American Theatre, Volume I: Beginnings to 1870* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 111-181. *Please note that you will refer to this essay, which connects theatre history to a broader US history, many times throughout the semester.*
- John Augustus Stone, *Metamora, Or, The Last of the Wampanoags* (access through Literature Online [LION])
- Scott C. Martin, Interpreting "Metamora": Nationalism, Theater, and Jacksonian Indian Policy, *Journal of the Early Republic*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (Spring, 1999), pp. 73-101 (Access online through JSTOR)

Thursday, September 24

- *Meet at the Harvard Theatre Collection!*
- Jill Lepore, "The Curse of Metamora," chapter in *The Name of War: King Philip's War and the Origins of American Identity* (New York: Vintage Books, 1999), pp. 191-226 (PDF online)
- Ginger Strand, "'My Noble Spartacus': Edwin Forrest and Masculinity on the Nineteenth-Century Stage," in Robert A. Schanke and Kim Marra, eds., *Passing Performances: Queer Readings of Leading Players in American Theater History* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1998), pp. 19-40 (PDF online).
- *Recommended:* Essays by Simon Williams and Joseph Roach in *The Cambridge History of the American Theatre*

Week 4. Minstrelsy

Tuesday, September 29

- *Inside the Minstrel Mask: Readings in Nineteenth-Century Blackface Minstrelsy*, edited by Annemarie Bean, James V. Hatch, and Brooks McNamara (Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 1996). Read Foreword and Preface and essays by Eric Lott, Alexander Saxton, Robert C. Toll, William J. Mahar, Annemarie Bean, and W.T. Lhamon, Jr.
- Peter G. Buckley, "Paratheatricals and Popular Stage Entertainment," in *The Cambridge History of the American Theatre, Volume I: Beginnings to 1870* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 424-482.

Thursday, October 1

- *Meet at the Harvard Theatre Collection!*
- *Inside the Minstrel Mask*: read section titled “The Show,” pages 111-140.

Week 5. *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*

Monday, October 5: BRIEF ARGUMENT DUE 3 PM

Tuesday, October 6

- Excerpts from Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (1852) (PDF online)
- Scripts for dramatizations of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* by George L. Aiken (1852), H.C. Conway (1852), and Charles Townsend (1889) (access online at <http://www.iath.virginia.edu/utc/onstage/scripts/schp.html>)
- Karen Halttunen, “Sentimental Culture and the Problem of Fashion” and “Sentimental Culture and the Problem of Etiquette,” chaps in Halttunen, *Confidence Men and Painted Women: A Study of Middle-Class Culture in America, 1830-1870* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1982), pp. 56-123.

Thursday, October 8

- *Meet at the Harvard Theatre Collection!*
- Excerpts from the 1869 and 1876 Promptbooks for the Howard Family productions of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (<http://www.iath.virginia.edu/utc/onstage/scripts/schp.html>)
- Listen to the following songs at (<http://www.iath.virginia.edu/utc/onstage/performin/ossongshp.html>): To Little Eva in Heaven, Uncle Tom’s Religion, Our Home is Surely the Sweetest, Early in de Morning, Poor Uncle Tom, Old Folks at Home, I’s So Wicked, Eva to her Papa, Wait for the Wagon, Camptown Races, Old Dan Tucker, My Old Kentucky Home, Who’s Dat Knocking, Topsy’s Song, Massa in de Cold Ground, Uncle Tom’s Gone to Rest, Eva’s Song, Bekase My Name Am Topsey, and Duett
- Listen to “The Flogging Scene” and “Talking Uncle Tom’s Cabin” at (<http://www.iath.virginia.edu/utc/onstage/sound/soundf.html>)

Week 6. The Abolitionist Lecture Circuit

Monday, October 12. PROSPECTUS AND PRELIMINARY BIBLIOGRAPHY due by 3 PM

Tuesday, October 13

- William Wells Brown, *The Escape; or, A Leap for Freedom* (1858) (Access through Literature Online or the Black Drama database)
- John Ernst, “The Reconstruction of Whiteness: William Wells Brown’s *The Escape; or, A Leap for Freedom*, from *PMLA* 113 (1998), pp. 1108-1121

Thursday, October 15

- *Meet in the Schlesinger Library!*

- Harriet Beecher Stowe, *The Christian Slave* (1855) (<http://www.iath.virginia.edu/utc/uncletom/xianslav/xshp.html>)
- Articles on Mary E. Webb's performance of *The Christian Slave* (online at <http://www.iath.virginia.edu/utc/uncletom/xianslav/xsesfjwat.html>, <http://www.iath.virginia.edu/utc/uncletom/xianslav/xsreb01at.html>, <http://www.iath.virginia.edu/utc/uncletom/xianslav/xsre02at.html>, <http://www.iath.virginia.edu/utc/uncletom/xianslav/xsno05at.html>, and <http://www.iath.virginia.edu/utc/uncletom/xianslav/xsno08ot.html>,

Week 7. Barnum, Confidence Men, and Mass Culture

Tuesday, October 20

- Neil Harris, "The Operational Aesthetic," chap. in *Humbug: The Art of P.T. Barnum* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973) (PDF online).
- Karen Halttunen, "The Era of the Confidence Man" and "Hypocrisy and Sincerity in the World of Strangers," chaps in Halttunen, *Confidence Men and Painted Women: A Study of Middle-Class Culture in America, 1830-1870* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1982), pp. 1-55.
- Bluford Adams, *E Pluribus Barnum: The Great Showman and the Making of U.S. Popular Culture* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), Introduction and chapters 1, 2, and 3.

Thursday, October 22

- *Meet at the Harvard Theatre Collection!*
- P.T. Barnum, *Struggles and Triumphs, or, Forty Years' Recollections of P.T. Barnum, Written By Himself* (1872). Excerpts (pages TBA). Access online at <http://www.archive.org/details/strugglestriumph00barnrich>
- Peruse <http://www.lostmuseum.cuny.edu/barnum.html>
- Bluford Adams, *E Pluribus Barnum: The Great Showman and the Making of U.S. Popular Culture*, chapter 4.
- Lori Merish, "Cuteness and Commodity Aesthetics: Tom Thumb and Shirley Temple," chap in Thomson, ed. *Freakery: Cultural Spectacles of the Extraordinary Body*, pp. 185-203.
- Linda Frost, "The Circassian Beauty and the Circassian Slave: Gender, Imperialism, and American Popular Entertainment," chap in Thomson, ed. *Freakery: Cultural Spectacles of the Extraordinary Body*, pp.248-262.

Week 8. Freak Shows

Monday, October 26: CLOSE READING OF ONE PIECE OF EVIDENCE THAT WILL FIGURE IN YOUR FINAL PAPER due by 3 PM

Tuesday, October 27

- Christopher Bigsby and Don B. Wilmeth, "Introduction" to *The Cambridge History of the American Theatre, Volume II: Post-Civil War to 1945* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 1-23.

- Don B. Wilmeth and Jonathan Curley, compilers, “Timeline: Post-Civil War to 1945,” *The Cambridge History of the American Theatre, Volume II: Post-Civil War to 1945* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 24-106. *Please note that you will refer to this timeline frequently throughout the remainder of this semester.*
- Rosemarie Garland Thomson, ed. *Freakery: Cultural Spectacles of the Extraordinary Body* (New York: New York University Press, 1996), Foreword, Chapters 1, 2, 3, and 4.

Thursday, October 29

- *Meet at the Harvard Theatre Collection!*
- Thomson, *Freakery*, chapters 7 and 10

Week 9. Legs and Other Spectacles

Tuesday, November 3

- Thomas Postlewait, “The Hieroglyphic Stage: American Theatre and Society, Post-Civil War to 1945,” in *The Cambridge History of the American Theatre, Volume II: Post-Civil War to 1945* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 107-195.
- Robert C. Allen, *Horrible Prettiness: Burlesque and American Culture* (selections in PDF online)
- Olive Logan, “About Us,” “About Woman as a Helpmeet,” “About Voting,” “About Bonnets,” “About Getting Photographed,” “About the Leg Business,” and “About Nudity in Theatres” in Logan, *Apropos of Women and Theatres* (New York: Carleton, 1870) <http://pds.lib.harvard.edu/pds/view/2575324>

Thursday, November 5

- *Meet at the Harvard Theatre Collection!*
- Brooks McNamara, “Popular Entertainment,” in *The Cambridge History of the American Theatre, Volume II: Post-Civil War to 1945* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 378-410.
- Karen Halttunen, “Disguises, Masks, and Parlor Theatricals: The Decline of Sentimental Culture in the 1850s,” chap in Halttunen, *Confidence Men and Painted Women: A Study of Middle-Class Culture in America, 1830-1870* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1982), pp. 153-190.
- Daphne A. Brooks, “‘The Deeds Done in My Body’: Performance, Black(ened) Women, and Adah Isaacs Menken in the Racial Imaginary,” in Brooks, *Bodies in Dissent: Spectacular Performances of Race and Freedom, 1850-1910* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), pp. 131-206

Week 10. World Fairs, Museums, and the Politics of Display

Monday, November 9: REVISED PROSPECTUS AND BIBLIOGRAPHY due by 3 PM

Tuesday, November 10. World Fairs

- Robert W. Rydell, "'Darkest Africa': African Shows at America's World's Fairs, 1893-1940," in Bernth Lindfors, ed., *Africans on Stage: Studies in Ethnological Show Business* (Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 1999) (PDF online)
- Christopher A. Vaughan, "Ogling Igorots: The Politics and Commerce of Exhibiting Cultural Otherness, 1898-1913." Chap in Thomson, ed., *Freakery: Cultural Spectacles of the Extraordinary Body*, pp. 219-233.
- Harvey Blume, "Ota Benga and the Barnum Perplex," in Bernth Lindfors, ed., *Africans on Stage: Studies in Ethnological Show Business* (Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 1999) (PDF online)

Thursday, November 12. Museums

- *Meet at the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology!*
- Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Introduction and chapter 1, "Objects of Ethnography" in *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums, and Heritage* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998) (PDF online)
- Donna Haraway, "Teddy Bear Patriarchy: Taxidermy in the Garden of Eden, New York City, 1908-1936," *Social Text* 11 (Winter 1984-1985): 20-64 (access online through JSTOR)

Week 11. Cosmopolitan Performances

Tuesday, November 17

- Jayna Brown, *Babylon Girls: Black Women Performers and the Shaping of the Modern* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008)

Thursday, November 19

- *Meet at the Harvard Theatre Collection!*
- Daphne A. Brooks, "Divas and Diasporic Consciousness: Song, Dance, and New Negro Womanhood" and "Epilogue: Theatre, Black Women, and Change" in Brooks, *Bodies in Dissent: Spectacular Performances of Race and Freedom, 1850-1910* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006)

Weeks 12 and 13. Sharing Our Research

Tuesday, November 24

- DRAFT OF FINAL PAPER DUE. Please bring three hard copies of your draft.
- In-class workshop in which students read and critique each other's drafts

Thursday, November 26: NO CLASS; Thanksgiving Break

Tuesday, December 1

- Oral Presentations

Thursday, December 3

- Oral Presentations

Monday, December 14, 3 pm: Final paper due to Prof. Bernstein's mailbox in the History and Literature Office