

## The Ethnography of Performance

English/CompStd 7350.02 Seminar in Folklore (29800, 30020, 30021)  
Fall 2013

Tuesday 4:10-7:25 PM  
Denney Hall 419

Prof. Dorothy Noyes  
[noyes.10@osu.edu](mailto:noyes.10@osu.edu)

Since the 1970s, the performance turn in folklore, anthropology, and related disciplines has illuminated our understanding of agency and efficacy in cultural production. In a major revision of the modern culture concept, it focuses on cultural forms as process and practice: not texts instantiating a static shared worldview but historically situated, conventional transactions among persons. As part of the philosophy of language's critique of reference, it looks at how language is used to construct reality; reacting to the focus on deep structure in most grand theory, it insists on the significance of material and interactional surfaces. Today, with its attention to bodies in motion, it is newly relevant as a corrective to the reification of values and identities in contemporary cultural politics.

This seminar will examine both programmatic texts and selected case studies in the ethnography of performance: that is, an approach based in "thick description" of instances. While theory in the field has tended to develop within genre specializations, we will examine verbal art, cultural performance (ritual, festival, spectacle) and the performance of self together in the attempt to illustrate common issues and a general paradigm. Students will share in preparing for discussion and write a research paper: literary and historical topics are welcome as well as field-based projects. This course fulfills the core theory requirement of the Graduate Interdisciplinary Specialization in Folklore. For more information, see <http://cfs.osu.edu/programs/grad-options/gis-and-graduate-curriculum>

### REQUIRED READINGS

The readings are diverse in origin and a few are forbidding. Don't panic, but plow forward. We will talk them through. Readings marked LIBRARY will be found online through the journal or book title in the OSU library catalogue. (Note that journals are sometimes in multiple repositories depending on the years of publication.) Other readings will be on Carmen under Content, then Table of Contents, as PDFs.

The following books have been ordered at SBX: (look under Comp Studies, not English):

- Bauman, Richard 1984 (2d ed.). *Verbal Art as Performance* Prospect Heights, Ill.: Waveland Press.
- Basso, Keith. 1979. *Portraits of "the Whiteman."* Cambridge: Cambridge UP.
- Caillois, Roger. 2001 (1958.). *Man, Play, and Games*. Tr. Meyer Barash. Urbana: University of Illinois (see also used copies published by Schocken in 1979).
- Scott, James C. 1990. *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

All assignments must be completed as described below for a passing grade.

1. General presence, **participation**, and engagement. 20%

2. Two days **opening** class discussion. 15%

One or two students per session will get us started on most days by offering two or three comments and questions on the readings. (First come first serve: send me an email to sign up for dates.) What is the author's agenda and context? To what kinds of purposes is his or her approach suited (or not), and how might we build on it or revise it usefully?

I ask that your remarks be relevant to the topic of the course and of the day (if the latter is unclear, please feel free to discuss it with me) and that they reflect a serious engagement with text and topic. In other words, don't pick a minor point with which to quibble unless you feel ready to demonstrate that it points to one of our major concerns. Read critically but also with consideration of the context and charity for human imperfection.

3. A two- to three-page **observation** of the 10/10 performance of the Jindo Folk Performing Arts Company, presented by OSU's Institute for Korean Studies (see schedule for further details). If you can't attend, you may request (prior to these dates) to observe an alternative event. Due 10/14. 15%

4. A **research paper**. 50% total. Post the first three steps on Carmen under Discussions to share with the class. All steps of the process will count in the final grade, and late delivery will mean late feedback. The paper should of course demonstrate engagement with course discussions and readings, but is primarily meant to give you an opportunity to try out the approaches on your own material.

- An **idea**. Due Monday 9/9.
- A two-page sg-space **close reading** of some primary representation. Due 9/30.
- An informal **discussion** of your project with the class. We will space these out over the course, trying to make them relevant to the day's topic. The class will read whatever you've already posted, and you'll have a chance to pose questions and get feedback on your project. Email me to sign up for a date.
- A one-page sg-space paper **abstract**. Due 11/18.
- **Final paper**. In Carmen dropdown. Due Monday 12/9. Ca. 12-15 doublespaced pages of well-shaped and stylish prose, plus bib and a one-page appendix discussing your research process, including roadblocks and what you'd like to have pursued if you'd had world enough and time.

## SCHEDULE

### 8/27 Introduction: the performance turn in folklore, linguistics, and anthropology

Read Hymes, Dell. 1975. "Folklore's Nature and the Sun's Myth." *Journal of American Folklore* 88:345-69. LIBRARY

Fabian, Johannes. 1990. Chs. 1 and 2 of *Power and Performance: Ethnographic Explorations through Proverbial Wisdom and Theater in Shaba, Zaire*, 3-39. Madison: U. of Wisconsin Press. CARMEN

*And, over the next few weeks, browse the following for ideas and bibliography:*

Shuman, Amy and Galit Hasan-Rokem. 2012. "The Poetics of Folklore." In *A Companion to Folklore*, ed. Regina Bendix and Galit Hasan-Rokem. Oxford: Blackwell, 55-74. [LIBRARY](#)

Richard Bauman and Charles Briggs. 1990. "Poetics and Performance as Critical Perspectives on Language and Social Life." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 19:59-88. LIBRARY

Noyes, Dorothy. 2013 in press. "Aesthetic is the Opposite of Anaesthetic: On Tradition and Attention." *Journal of Folklore Research*. CARMEN.

### 9/3 Ideologies and ethics of performance

Read Hymes, Dell. 1981. "Breakthrough into Performance." In *In Vain I Tried to Tell You: Essays in Native American Ethnopoetics*, 79-141. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. CARMEN

Film *Jesus of Montreal*, dir. Denys Arcand. 1989.  
I'll order pizza.

9/9 Idea due

9/10 Special event on children's play (recommended, not required)  
Lecture by Anna Beresin, University of the Arts  
["What We Kids Do": Children's Folklore and the Study of the Schoolyard](#)  
260 Ramseyer Hall, 20 W. Woodruff  
10:30 AM-12:00 PM, followed by lunch

**9/10 Form, function, emergence, reflexivity**

**Read** Jakobson, Roman 1960. "Linguistics and Poetics. In *Style in Language*, ed. T. Sebeok, 350-377. Cambridge: MIT Press. CARMEN

Bauman et al., *Verbal Art as Performance*.

**9/17 Reading day**

**9/24 Frame and metacommunication**

**Read** Bateson, Gregory 1972 (1955). "A Theory of Play and Fantasy." In *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*, 177-193. New York: Ballantine. CARMEN

Basso, *Portraits of "the Whiteman."*

9/30 Close reading due

**10/1 Modelling, imitating, regulating**

**Read** Caillois, *Man, Play, and Games*.

**10/8 Transformation**

**Read** Turner, Victor 1969. "Liminality and Communitas." In *The Ritual Process*, 94-130. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. CARMEN

Turner, Victor 1974. "Religious Paradigms and Political Action." In *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors*, 60-97. Ithaca: Cornell. CARMEN

Schechner, Richard 1988, "From Ritual to Theatre and Back." In *Performance Theory* (rev.ed.), 106-152. New York: Routledge. CARMEN

10/10 Special event: Jindo Folk Performing Arts Company, sponsored by the Institute for Korean Studies. Conference Theater, Ohio Union, 6:00-9:00 PM.

10/14 Performance observation due

**10/15 Reading day** (American Folklore Society Annual Meeting)

**10/22 Trope, persuasion, representation**

Burke, Kenneth 1957. "Literature as Equipment for Living." *The Philosophy of Literary Form*, 253-262. New York: Vintage. CARMEN

\_\_\_\_ 1945. "The Five Key Terms of Dramatism" and "The Four Master Tropes." *A Grammar of Motives*, xv-xxii and 503-517. Berkeley and L.A.: University of California Press. CARMEN

Fernandez, James W. 1986 (1972), "Persuasions and Performances: Of the Beast in Every Body and the Metaphors of Everyman." In *Persuasions and Performances*, 3-27. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. CARMEN

\_\_\_\_ 1986. "Convivial (and Ironic) Attitudes: A Northern Spanish Kayak Festival in its Historical Moment." In *Persuasions and Performances*, 264-295. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. CARMEN

10/26 Special event (not required but highly recommended)  
Metropolitan Opera HD Broadcast of Shostakovich's *The Nose*, production by William Kentridge. 12:55 PM at the Lennox.

**10/29 Inversion and the Carnavalesque**

Read Geertz, Clifford 1973. "Deep Play." In *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 412-453. New York: Basic Books. CARMEN

Abrahams, Roger D. and Richard Bauman 1978. "Ranges of Festival Behavior." In Barbara Babcock, ed. *The Reversible World*, 193-208. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. CARMEN

da Matta, Roberto 1991. "Carnivals, Military Parades, and Processions." In *Carnivals, Rogues, and Heroes: An Interpretation of the Brazilian Dilemma*, 26-60. Notre Dame: U. of Notre Dame Press. CARMEN

Stallybrass, Peter, and Allon White 1986. "Introduction." *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression*, 1-26. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. CARMEN

Film *Strut*. Max L. Raab, 2001.

## 11/5 Formalization

Read Maurice Bloch 1989. "Symbols, Song, Dance, and Features of Articulation: Is Religion an Extreme Form of Traditional Authority?" In *Ritual, History, and Power: Selected Papers in Anthropology*, pp.19-45. London: Athlone. CARMEN

Briggs, Charles 1988. "Hymns and Prayers." *Competence and Performance*, pp. 289-340. Philadelphia: U. of Pennsylvania Press. CARMEN

Stewart, Susan 1995. "Lyric Possession." *Critical Inquiry* 22: 34-63. LIBRARY

Kapchan, Deborah. 2007. Ch. 2 of *Travelling Spirit Masters: Moroccan Gnawa Trance and Music in the Global Marketplace*. Middletown CT: Wesleyan University Press. CARMEN

## 11/12 Normal appearances and the self

Read DuBois, W.E.B. 1903. *The Souls of Black Folk*, ch. 1 "Of Our Spiritual Strivings." <http://www.bartleby.com/114/1.html>

Goffman, Erving 1967. "The Nature of Deference and Demeanor." *Interaction Ritual*, 5-95. New York: Pantheon. CARMEN

Milosz, Czeslaw 1981 (1953). "Ketman." *The Captive Mind*, 54-81. New York: Vintage. CARMEN

Garfinkel, Harold 1967. "Passing and the Managed Achievement of Sexual Status in an Intersexed Person." In *Studies in Ethnomethodology*, 116-185. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall. CARMEN

Butler, Judith 1988. "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory." *Theatre Journal* 40:519-531. LIBRARY

11/18 Paper abstract due

## 11/19 Style, reputation, rebellion

Read Bauman, Richard 1986. "Performance and Honor in 13th-Century Iceland." *Journal of American Folklore* 99:131-50. LIBRARY

Noyes, Dorothy 2000. "Authoring the Social Drama: Suicide and the Performance of Self in a French Political Scandal." *Narrative* 8:210-231. LIBRARY -->

Noyes, Dorothy 1998. "La maja vestida: Dress as Resistance to Enlightenment in Late 18th-Century Madrid." *Journal of American Folklore* 111: 197-217. LIBRARY

Mendoza-Denton, Norma 1996. "'Muy Macha': Gender and Ideology in Gang-Girls' Discourse About Makeup." *Ethnos* 61: 47-63. LIBRARY

### **11/26 Public order and hegemony**

Read Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*.

### **12/3 Exemplarity and scale**

Read Fiskesjö, Magnus. 2003. *The Thanksgiving Turkey Pardon, the Death of Teddy's Bear, and the Sovereign Exception of Guantánamo*. Chicago: Prickly Paradigm #11.  
[Download](#)

Noyes, Dorothy. 2013 in press. "From the Sublime Throne: Compassion, Scale, and Attention in the Theatre of Clemency." In *The Politics of Compassion*, ed. Michael Ure and Mervyn Frost. Routledge. Carmen.

TBD Virtuosity and connoisseurship  
Movie viewing and dinner chez moi, conjoined with CS 5957.02 (Cultures of Waste and Recycling) students

*Scratch*, dir. Doug Pray, 2001.

12/9 Final paper due

## **COURSE POLICIES**

**Getting in touch with me** Email is generally best, but to keep some hours for sleep and work I will not be checking it from 11 PM to 11 AM. In case of a morning emergency, please call my office number (292-8683).

**Hearing from me** Please make sure that my emails will not go into your spam folder. I will send individual messages to your OSU email address, but post general announcements on Carmen. See the Discussion page for session-by-session info, e.g. notes on updated readings; see the front Announcements page for emergencies such as class cancellation.

**Office hours** W 2:30-4:00, Th 2-4:30 at the **Mershon Center**, 104A, 1501 Neil Ave. (corner of 8<sup>th</sup> and Neil), 292-8683. Or by appointment. Note that I pay the interdisciplinarity tax by going to lots of meetings, so always check Carmen for the possibility of rescheduled office hours; it's also a good idea to let me know when you're coming if possible. But do come see me, and please come especially if you are feeling frustrated with the coursework or need accommodation for some kind of difficulty.

**Plagiarism.** Plagiarism is the representation of another's works or ideas as one's own: it includes the unacknowledged word for word use and/or paraphrasing of another person's work, and/or the inappropriate unacknowledged use of another person's ideas. All cases of suspected plagiarism, in accordance with university rules, will be reported to the Committee on Academic Misconduct. Especially when doing research on the Internet, be extremely careful to credit your sources appropriately (come to me if you are not certain how to do this). And bear in mind that it is much less work to do your own thinking than to plagiarize convincingly.

**Disability resources.** The Office for Disability Services, located in 150 Pomerene Hall, offers services for students with documented disabilities. Contact the ODS at 2-3307. If you require accommodation to do the work of the course, please let me know immediately.

**Class Cancellation.** In the unlikely event of class cancellation due to emergency, I will contact you via email and request that a note on department letterhead be placed on the door. In addition, I will contact you as soon as possible following the cancellation to let you know what will be expected of you for our next class meeting.