

**This is NOT the final syllabus. Final syllabus available May 2015.**

## **THEATER 118AC**

### **PERFORMANCE THEORY:**

**Performance, Television, and Social Media  
(Berkeley Summer Course: Online Version)**

**UC Berkeley**

**Summer 2015**

**4 units**

**Prof. Abigail De Kosnik**

**[adekosnik@berkeley.edu](mailto:adekosnik@berkeley.edu) (\*\*but please always email me using the bCourses/Inbox mail function\*\*)**

**415 975 1286 (text ONLY)**

**422 Sutardja Dai Hall**

#### **Office Hours/Meeting with the Instructor:**

- We can meet in Skype, Google Hangout, via phone, or (if you are on or near the Berkeley campus this summer) in person. Email me (\*\*using the bCourses/Inbox mail function\*\*) to make an appointment. When you send me a request to meet, please include days/times that you can meet, and your preferred medium for meeting.
- I will hold a weekly chat in a bCourses/Chat on Thursdays from 10 am - 12 noon. Students may visit that chat and ask questions about the course or about the topics discussed in the course.
- Graduate Student Instructors (GSIs) will also offer office hours, to be announced. We will ensure that GSIs are available at different dates/times than the instructor.

## Course Overview

This course examines the intersections of performance and media--specifically the media forms of television and social media in the U.S.--with a focus on how various types of difference (race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and socioeconomic class) are enacted, articulated, represented, and played on TV and social media platforms.

Units 1-4 of the course will be dedicated to learning “critical frameworks” for understanding and interpreting television. We will read texts that define television as a medium, and that explain the division between the eras of “network” and “post-network” television. We will then turn to texts that allow us to grasp the many intersections of performance theory and television, which include the TV industry’s roots in New York theater, the unique modes of acting required by television roles, and the numerous ways that television audiences “perform” for one another in response to the media they consume, for example by writing stories based on their favorite shows and sharing them online. The final set of critical frameworks will be theories borrowed from the fields of critical race studies, Marxist cultural studies, gender and women’s studies, and queer studies. These readings will help students build a foundation for perceiving and discussing how race, class, gender, and sexuality appear on, and are addressed by, television (or, how these features are suppressed and ignored).

In Units 5-9, we will concentrate on “Representations and Enactments” of specific minority groups in historical and contemporary television texts: African Americans, Asian Americans, Latino/as, indigenous people, and LGBT people. In this section of the course, students will be expected to become knowledgeable about the specific issues involved with the mass media representation of each group, and also will be expected to apply the critical lenses learned in Units 1-4, especially those from the field of performance studies, to the texts and groups that we discuss.

In Unit 10, we turn from television to social media, learning “Critical Frameworks” for comprehending how social media networks are sites of performance, and how all users adopt personas and identities when they participate in social media platforms. In Units 11-13, we will analyze how race and ethnicity, gender and sexuality, and socioeconomic class are expressed, defined, and performed on social media sites.

### **Some Points about the Intersection of Performance Studies and Media Studies:**

Students may ask, “Why is a course about television and social media being taught in a Theater, Dance, and Performance Studies department?” Or, “Why is an upper-division performance studies course dealing so heavily with media?” The instructor will lecture directly on these issues throughout the course, but here is a preview of how this course will treat the intersection of performance studies, television, and new media:

- Although some performance theorists think that “performance” and “media” are diametrically opposed, because a great deal of media is recorded (not “live”) and

performed at a distance from the audience (not “present”), many performance theorists argue that “performance” and “media” are not irreconcilable. For example, Richard Schechner argues that even though most media is recorded, all media *reception* is live and present -- because an audience member consuming a media text is always “live,” and every time they watch a media text, even if they watch the same recorded text over and over, it is a different and unique experience for them. Many theorists of social media argue that because social media does not strictly divide producers from consumers -- on social networks, consumers *are* producers of content, and all are called *users* -- every participant in social media performs for all other participants, through the text, images, video, animation, and other genres of material that they publicly share.

- There are strong historical connections between television, the Internet, and traditional theater. The U.S. television industry started in the late 1940s in New York, and many playwrights, theater directors, and theater stars were heavily involved in launching the first generation of television shows. The vast majority of early television broadcasting was broadcast “live” (there were only a handful of pre-recorded shows), and networks and television manufacturers advertised TV as a medium by which the average American could access the best of theater and musical performance in their own homes. “Liveness” is still a highly privileged televisual mode, as Jérôme Bourdon and other media scholars have noted: “live” television genres, such as sports, awards shows, and breaking news reports, draw some of the largest audience numbers of any television broadcasts. The term “theater” was also applied to new media networks before these networks were even available for public use: famous media theorist Marshall McLuhan said in 1972 that worldwide telecommunications networks were forming a “global theater,” in which all would be actors, and none would be spectators.
- Obviously, there is a great deal of acting in television productions, and we will study how TV acting is similar to, and different from, theater acting. Also, insofar as social media is giving rise to new modes of performance, we will investigate how people “act” online, and what constitutes “good” performance technique versus “bad” performance technique on social networks.
- Media audiences have always “performed back” to media texts, through embodied fannish practices such as watching and/or discussing media events with friends or family members, forming various types of fan clubs and fan communities and gathering in groups, performing re-enactments, and wearing t-shirts or performing “cos-play” (costume play) based on favorite actors, sports players and sports teams, or media texts. A number of fan studies scholars also

argue that fan practices that are not embodied, or less obviously embodied, such as writing fan fiction, making and posting fan vids and fan films, writing online commentaries, and otherwise participating in online fandom (in sites such as Tumblr, Twitter, online fan archives, or fan discussion boards), are also forms of performance.

- Because many performances on both television and social media attract large audiences, it is crucial to think about how those performances engage and address (or fail to engage and address) race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and nationality. While “media effects” arguments often overstate the power that media has over audience members, it is undeniable that millions of people learn and think about difference, diversity, identity, and community from their engagements with, and uses of, media texts. However, it is also important to note that while the media industries may frame and enact difference in certain (limited) ways, media audiences have always sought out ways to appropriate, re-frame, re-enact, and otherwise “perform back” their ideas and critiques about difference, to the media industries and to one another. As Stuart Hall says, the “dominant” message of media is not always the one that is received; audience members can construct, produce, and perform “negotiated” and “resistant” interpretations of the media they consume.

This course will not regard either “performance” or “media” to be static, isolated concepts with clear definitions, but will consider performance and media to be inextricably intertwined in multiple ways, and will ask how both concepts have affected, and continue to change, one another in the U.S. over the last seven decades.

## Learning Objectives

- Become knowledgeable about the core scholarly literature and key concepts and theories of performance studies, media studies, new media studies, critical race studies, and gender studies, particularly theories pertinent to the cultural forms of television and social media.
- Gain a deep understanding of how mass media and social media have influenced widespread perceptions, stereotypes, and definitions of race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and socioeconomic class, and how minority groups have historically protested or otherwise sought to alter media (mis-)representations of them.
- Develop critical media literacies, i.e., the analytical tools and vocabularies for identifying and articulating how difference and diversity (especially race and ethnicity, gender and sexuality, and socioeconomic class) are depicted and enacted in television and social media.
- Learn to apply core concepts of Marxist cultural studies to analyze media phenomena.
- Be able to use course readings to critically think about media and new media.
- Be able to articulate thoughtful, informed insights and opinions about historical and contemporary television and social media both verbally and in writing.
- Become a well-educated observer and analyst of current trends and shifts in media and new media.
- Build the necessary foundational skills for careers in media research, scholarship, and teaching, and/or professions in the media and new media industries.

## Structure of Online Course

For each unit:

- The instructor will post materials (video lectures, powerpoint slides, etc.) to the bCourses site pertaining to the assigned readings and the major topics and themes of that unit.
- A number of students will also create blog entries on a WordPress site associated with the course (students will sign up at the beginning of the course for the particular unit for which they will write a blog entry).
- Every student in the course must read the assigned readings, watch or read the instructor posts, and read the student-authored blog entries.
- Every student in the course must write and post replies to *two* of the instructor posts and *two* of the student-authored blog entries (except for the unit for which the student is a “blogger”).

## Materials

All students must have access to a computer with Internet connectivity, which will allow them to access course announcements, readings, and instructor-posted materials through the bCourses site, as well as student-authored blog entries on the WordPress site associated with the course. Students should also be able to watch television texts (via YouTube or other sites) and interact with (or simply observe) social media platforms on their computers. Students must also compose their exams on a computer and submit their completed exams electronically on bCourses--handwritten exams will not be accepted. For the final examination, which must be taken in-person (and cannot be completed online), students can bring a laptop computer to the testing location and write their exam in Microsoft Word or another word processing program, and submit their completed exams online, OR they can complete the exam by hand, using pen and exam books (which will be provided), in the presence of the exam proctor.

## **Requirements and Grading**

Each student enrolled in this course must complete two midterms and a final examination (all open-book exams), create one blog entry, and, *each week*, post replies to two instructor posts and two student blog entries.

The points for each requirement is as follows:

### **Midterm 1: 20 points**

The first midterm exam will consist of prompts for several short essays and one long essay covering the readings from the Units 1-4. The midterm will be a written exam (to be submitted online) and students will have one week to complete it. No late midterms will be accepted.

Midterms will be graded and returned to students one week after students submit them.

### **Midterm 2: 20 points**

The second midterm exam will consist of prompts for several short essays and one long essay covering the readings from the Units 5-9. The midterm will be a written exam (to be submitted online) and students will have one week to complete it. No late midterms will be accepted.

Midterms will be graded and returned to students one week after students submit them.

### **Final Exam: 30 points**

The final exam will consist of prompts for several short essays and two long essays covering the readings from the entire semester (30% of the prompts will address readings from Units 1-9, 70% of the prompts will address readings from Units 10-13). The final exam must be completed in-person, in the presence of an exam proctor, either on the Berkeley campus or at a pre-approved testing site. Students can either bring their own laptop computers and write their final exams on that device, using Microsoft Word or another word processing program, and submit their completed exams online, OR students can handwrite the exams, in the presence of the exam proctor.

Final exams will be graded and returned to students within two weeks of students submitting them.

## **Blog Entry: 10 points**

Every student in the class will sign up for one unit during the semester when they will write a blog post on the WordPress blog associated with the course.

Each blogger will be expected to embed a short clip (maximum 3 minutes) from a television program that pertains to the unit's readings (from YouTube or some other website) in their blog entry, and then write (in a 3-4 paragraphs) how one or more of the assigned readings for that unit pertain to the clip that they have selected.

Students will be notified of their grade on their blog entries within one week of posting them.

ABOVE YOUR EMBEDDED CLIP, PLEASE STATE TRIGGER WARNINGS IF NECESSARY (possible triggers include: violence, sex, abuse, death, etc. -- please consult with the instructor in advance if you are not sure if you need to warn for triggers, or you're not certain which triggers you should include warnings for).

## **Four Replies per Unit (Two to Instructor Posts, Two to Student Blog Posts): 20 points**

Students are expected to read all instructor posts and all student blog posts that accompany every unit. For each unit, students must post *substantive* replies to two instructor posts and two student blog posts. "Substantive" replies consist of more than a quick reaction phrase, e.g., "I agree" or "That's completely wrong." Students' replies must show some depth of consideration and thought given to the topics discussed in the instructor and student posts, e.g., "I agree with statement X because...", "I disagree with statement Y because...", "I have a question about statement Z, which is..." The instructor will privately message students whose replies do not meet her standard for "substantive" replies, and those students will have to post additional replies until the instructor is satisfied that they understand the nature of this assignment. (Students are exempted from posting replies for the unit for which they are a "blogger.")

*Students are encouraged to post more than four replies per week.* Contributions to lively online discussion will be very welcome, and will enhance everyone's learning. However, students are only *required* to post four.

Students will be notified of their grade on their weekly replies within one week of posting them.



## **Academic Integrity**

You are a member of an academic community at one of the world's leading research universities. Universities like Berkeley create knowledge that has a lasting impact in the world of ideas and on the lives of others; such knowledge can come from an undergraduate paper as well as the lab of an internationally known professor. One of the most important values of an academic community is the balance between the free flow of ideas and the respect for the intellectual property of others. Researchers don't use one another's research without permission; scholars and students always use proper citations in papers; professors may not circulate or publish student papers without the writer's permission; and students may not circulate or post materials (handouts, exams, syllabi--any class materials) from their classes without the written permission of the instructor.

Any test, paper or report submitted by you and that bears your name is presumed to be your own original work that has not previously been submitted for credit in another course unless you obtain prior written approval to do so from your instructor. In all of your assignments, including your homework or drafts of papers, you may use words or ideas written by other individuals in publications, web sites, or other sources, but only with proper attribution. If you are not clear about the expectations for completing an assignment or taking a test or examination, be sure to seek clarification from your instructor beforehand. Finally, you should keep in mind that as a member of the campus community, you are expected to demonstrate integrity in all of your academic endeavors and will be evaluated on your own merits. The consequences of cheating and academic dishonesty—including a formal discipline file, possible loss of future internship, scholarship, or employment opportunities, and denial of admission to graduate school—are simply not worth it.

## **Accommodations for Students with Disabilities**

Please contact me as soon as possible if you need particular accommodations, and we will work out the necessary arrangements.

## **Scheduling Conflicts**

Please notify me in writing by the second week of the term about any known or potential extracurricular conflicts (such as religious observances, graduate or medical school interviews, or team activities). I will try my best to help you with making accommodations, but cannot promise them in all cases. In the event there is no mutually-workable solution, you may be dropped from the class.

# Schedule

All readings are available as PDFs at bCourses/Files except where indicated (i.e., where a hyperlink is given to a website).

## Unit 1

### Introduction

## Unit 2

### Critical Frameworks: Television as Culture and Industry

#### READINGS:

1. Marshall McLuhan, "The Medium Is the Message"
2. Raymond Williams, *Television*: Chapter 4, "Programming, Distribution, and Flow"
3. Jérôme Bourdon, "Live Television is Still Alive"
4. Amanda D. Lotz, *The Television Will Be Revolutionized*: Chapter 1, "Understanding Television at the Beginning of the Post-Network Era" (pp. 27-48)
5. Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture*: Chapter 3, "Searching for the Origami Unicorn"

## Unit 3

### Critical Frameworks: Performance Studies and Television

1. Lynn Spigel, *Make Room for TV*: Chapter 5, "The People in the Theater Next Door"
2. Kim Durham, "Methodology and Praxis of the Actor within the Television Production Process"
3. Abigail De Kosnik, "Drama Is the Cure for Gossip"
4. Nick Couldry, "Reality TV, or The Secret Theater of Neoliberalism"
5. Francesca Coppa, "Writing Bodies in Space"
6. Richard Schechner, *Performance Studies: An Introduction* (brief excerpt)

## **Unit 4**

### **Critical Frameworks: Class, Race, Gender, and Television**

1. John Storey, *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture*: Chapter 4, “Marxisms”
2. Stuart Hall, “Encoding/Decoding”
3. bell hooks, “Eating the Other”
4. Mary Beltran, “Meaningful Diversity: Exploring Questions of Equitable Representation on Diverse Ensemble Cast Shows” (available at <http://flowtv.org/2010/08/meaningful-diversity/>)
5. Rachael, “How to Be a Fan of Problematic Things” (available at: <http://www.socialjusticeleague.net/2011/09/how-to-be-a-fan-of-problematic-things/>)
6. The Ralph J. Bunche Center for African American Studies at UCLA, *The Hollywood Diversity Report*
7. Jennifer Kesler, “Remember When I Said They Teach You Not to Write Screenplays with Women as Leads?” (available at: <http://thehathorlegacy.com/remember-when-i-said-they-teach-you-not-to-write-screenplays-with-women-as-leads/>)
8. Jennifer Kesler, “Why Film Schools Teach Screenwriters Not to Pass the Bechdel Test” (available at: <http://thehathorlegacy.com/why-film-schools-teach-screenwriters-not-to-pass-the-bechdel-test/>)

**“MIDTERM 1: CRITICAL FRAMEWORKS” AVAILABLE ONLINE TODAY, DUE NEXT WEEK.**

## **Unit 5**

**MIDTERM 1 IS DUE TODAY (SUBMIT ON BCOURSES BY 5 PM PACIFIC TIME).**

### **Representations and Enactments: African Americans on Television**

1. Kimberly Springer, "Divas, Evil Black Bitches, and Bitter Black Women"
2. Nina Cartier, "Black Women On-Screen as Future Texts"
3. Stuart Hall, "What Is This 'Black' in Black Popular Culture?"
4. Herman Gray, "Television, Black Americans, and the American Dream"
5. Saturday Night Live, "How's He Doin'?" (available at: <http://www.hitfix.com/comedy/saturday-night-live-jokes-about-the-wire-in-this-political-talk-show-sketch>)

## **Unit 6**

### **Representations and Enactments: Asian Americans on Television**

1. Leigh Adams Wright, "Asian Objects in Space" (from *Finding Serenity*, ed. Jane Espenson)
2. Kent A. Ono and Vincent Pham, *Asian Americans and the Media*: Chapter 5, "Threatening Model Minorities: The Asian American Horatio Alger Story"
3. Virginia Mansfield-Richardson, *Asian Americans and the Mass Media*: Chapter 1, "Introduction"
4. Joann Faung Jean Lee, *Asian American Actors*: Part II, "Asian American Actors in San Francisco and Los Angeles"
5. Wajahat Ali, "'Minority Reports' Series: The Portrayal of Asian Men in Cinema" (available at <http://goatmilkblog.com/2009/08/19/minority-reports-series-the-portrayal-of-asian-men-in-cinema/>)

## **Unit 7**

### **Representations and Enactments: Latinos/as on Television**

1. Travis L. Dixon and Daniel Linz, "Overrepresentation and Underrepresentation of African Americans and Latinos as Lawbreakers on Television News"
2. Dana E. Mastro and Bradley S. Greenberg, "The Portrayal of Racial Minorities on Prime Time Television"
3. Angharad Valdivia, *Latinas/os and the Media*: "Introduction"
4. Dana E. Mastro et al., "Exposure to TV Portrayals of Latinos"
5. Anna Bahr, "Latinos Onscreen, Conspicuously Few" (available at: [http://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/19/upshot/latinos-onscreen-conspicuously-absent.html?\\_r=0&abt=0002&abg=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/19/upshot/latinos-onscreen-conspicuously-absent.html?_r=0&abt=0002&abg=0))

## **Unit 8**

### **Representations and Enactments: Indigenous People on Television**

1. Gretchen Bataille, *Native American Representations*: "Introduction"
2. Ward Churchill, *Fantasies of the Master Race* (excerpts)
3. S. Elizabeth Bird, "Gendered Construction of the American Indian in Popular Media"
4. Diana George, with Susan Sanders, "Reconstructing Tonto"
5. Eleanor Hersey, "World-healers and Code-talkers"
6. Terence Towles Canote, "The Invisible Minority: Native Americans on Television" (available at: [http://mercurie.blogspot.com/2009/07/invisible-minority-native-americans-on\\_28.html](http://mercurie.blogspot.com/2009/07/invisible-minority-native-americans-on_28.html))

## **Unit 9**

### **Representations and Enactments: Gender and Sexuality on Television**

1. Ron Becker, "Gay-Themed Television and the Slumpy Class"
2. Taylor Cole Miller, "Performing Glee: Gay Resistance to Gay Representations and a New Slumpy Class" (available at <http://flowtv.org/2011/07/performing-glee/>)
3. Lynne Joyrich, "Queer Television Studies: Currents, Flows, and (Main)streams"
4. Lynn Spigel, *Make Room for TV*, Chapter 3: "Women's Work"
5. Jane Arthurs, "*Sex and the City* and Consumer Culture: Remediating Postfeminist Drama"

**"MIDTERM 2: REPRESENTATIONS AND ENACTMENTS" MADE AVAILABLE TODAY, DUE NEXT WEEK.**

## **Unit 10**

**MIDTERM 2 DUE TODAY (SUBMIT ON BCOURSES BY 5 PM PACIFIC TIME).**

### **Critical Frameworks: Performance Studies and Social Media**

1. Erving Goffmann, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (excerpt)
2. Marshall McLuhan and Barrington Nevitt, *Take Today* (excerpt)
3. Annette Markham, "Interaction in Digital Contexts"
3. Erika Pearson, "All the World Wide Web's a Stage"
4. J. Donath and d. boyd, "Public displays of connection"
5. Hugo Liu, "Social Networking Profiles as Taste Performances"

## **Unit 11**

### **Representations and Enactments: Race and Ethnicity on Social Media**

1. André Brock, "From the Blackhand Side: Twitter as a Cultural Conversation"
2. Sarah Florini, "Tweets, Tweeps, and Signifyin': Communication and Cultural Performance on 'Black Twitter'"
3. Sanjay Sharma, "Black Twitter?: Racial Hashtags, Networks and Contagion"
4. Jeff Yang, Stephen Colbert, Racism and the Weaponized Hashtag (available at: <http://online.wsj.com/articles/BL-SEB-80544?ref=/blogs/speakeasy>)
5. Suey Park and Eunsong Kim: Hashtags as Decolonial Projects with Radical Origins" (available at: <http://modelviewculture.com/pieces/hashtags-as-decolonial-projects-with-radical-origins>)
6. Bob Collins, "With New Social Media Power, Native Americans Take on Mascot Issue" (available at: <http://blogs.mprnews.org/newscut/2014/05/with-new-social-media-power-native-americans-take-on-mascot-issue/>)
7. Cordelia Hebblethwaite, "#BBC Trending: Native Americans reject 'super drunk' label": (available at: <http://www.bbc.com/news/blogs-trending-27423033>)
8. dyspropositos (Gwen), "Racefail Bingo" (available at: <http://dyspropositos.livejournal.com/976.html>)
9. kharmii (in The Right Fangirl), "Social Justice Warrior Bingo" (available at: <http://therightfangirl.livejournal.com/1625846.html>)



## **Unit 12**

### **Representations and Enactments: Gender and Sexuality on Social Media**

1. John Scalzi, "Straight White Male: The Lowest Difficulty Setting There Is" (available at: <http://whatever.scalzi.com/2012/05/15/straight-white-male-the-lowest-difficulty-setting-there-is/>)
2. Lisa Nakamura "Queer Female of Color: The Highest Difficulty Setting There Is?" (available at: <http://adanewmedia.org/2012/11/issue1-nakamura/>)
3. Kathy Sierra, "Trouble at the Coolaid Point" (available at: <http://seriouspony.com/trouble-at-the-koolaid-point/>)
4. Tod Van Der Werff, "#GamerGate: Here's Why Everybody in the Video Game World Is Fighting" (available at: <http://www.vox.com/2014/9/6/6111065/gamergate-explained-everybody-fighting>)
5. David Auerbach, "How to End Gamergate" (available at: [http://www.slate.com/articles/technology/bitwise/2014/10/how\\_to\\_end\\_gamergate\\_a\\_divide\\_and\\_conquer\\_plan.html](http://www.slate.com/articles/technology/bitwise/2014/10/how_to_end_gamergate_a_divide_and_conquer_plan.html))

## **Unit 13**

### **Representations and Enactments: #Occupy**

1. Rebecca Schneider, "It Seems As If...I Am Dead"
2. Manuel Castells, *Networks of Outrage and Hope* (excerpt)
3. We Are the 99 Percent (available at: <http://wearethe99percent.tumblr.com/>)
4. #occupy and related tags (#ows, #occupyhongkong, #occupycentral, etc.) on Twitter
5. @GSElevator on Twitter

## **Unit 14**

### **Discussion of Final Exam and Conclusion**