

Performance

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The Faculty Seminar in the Humanities for 1999-2000 will explore the status “performance” as both cultural figure and historical practice within primarily western, but also African, Asian, and other non-western societies. From a theoretical perspective, the seminar will consider such topics as: the impact of recent literary theory on performance genres, practices, and concepts; the impact of performance on recent literary theory; textuality and performance (language, silence, gesture, the *mise en scène*); performance and/as ideology (censorship, obscenity, the “laws” of theatrical representation, authority and resistance in drama); performance and the subject (gender-construction, agency, tyranny).

We will also consider how “performance” has operated as a category of scholarly and cultural production in such disciplines as sociology, linguistics, philosophy, anthropology, art history, and folklore, while probing relations among performance modes: stage, film, video, music, dance. Rubrics for possible study thus include:

- The sociology of performance (institutions, generic hierarchies, histories and rhetorics of stage convention).
- Performance and the body (pornography, scopophilia, cross-dressing, pain and pleasure).
- Performance and belief (religion, psychoanalysis, myth, ritual).
- Para-performative forms (graffiti, therapy, shamanism, politics, boxing).
- Intermedia (opera, performance “events,” masque, carnival).
- Performance and narration (autobiography, storytelling, translation, vernacular expression).
- Performance and perception (spectatorship, the optics of race, the phenomenology of performance).
- Anti-theatrical performance (agit-prop, cruelty, *Verfremdung*, chance).
- Romantic, modernist, and post-modernist performance.
- Modern appropriations of earlier drama and the neo-dramatic (mime, puppetry, ceremony, magic).