

Performance and Politics

Critical Theory 200B-002 (CRN 44173)

Tuesday 12:10-3:00

822 Sproul

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How do words mobilize political action? How do acts of performance and display manage to be both theatrical and serious, and to what effect? What does performance say about performers' creativity? The anthropological study of performance and politics views creative activity as an important source of social and personal transformation, and in so doing highlights the importance of innovative action in political life. In addition to reading texts by Judith Butler, Pierre Bourdieu, Clifford Geertz, and Victor Turner, attention will be given to the insights of linguistic anthropology into the expressive contexts of political discourse. Discussions will center on symbolic and ritual practice, oratory, humor, poetic tropes, affect, and mass media. Evaluation will be based on class presentations and a term paper.



This ambivalent structure at the heart of performativity implies that, within political discourse, the very terms of resistance and insurgency are spawned in part by the powers they oppose.

Judith Butler, *Excitable Speech* (1997)

Never is domination more perfect than when the dominated people think like the dominators do.

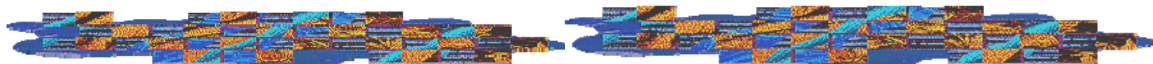
Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez, at the opening of the 12th annual G-15 Summit (2004)

There is no strong performance without a little fanaticism in the performer.

Ralph Waldo Emerson (1887)

"This is not a video game... this is a serious game."

Defense Department spokesmen on NPR after the launch of the Gulf War, 1991.



Expectations and Requirements Performance and Politics

Grades will be based on:

- Class Participation: 10%
- Weekly E-mail observations: So that all participants in the course play an active role in setting our agenda for discussion, you will be asked to e-mail observations about the readings to the whole class (see handout): 30%
- Paper project, including: (see handout)
 - Bibliography (of 15-25 texts) and prospectus (2-3 pages): 10% each
 - Class oral presentation: 10%
 - Paper: 30%

Attendance: Mandatory, as is your timely arrival to class and thoughtful class preparation. Students with two or more unexcused absences will fail the course. In the event of an absence, it is your responsibility to find out from a classmate what we have covered and to pick up/turn in assignments and papers.

Class Participation: This class involves some lecture and much discussion. Because discussion only works when everyone is alert, involved, and conscientious about participation, class participation significantly affects your grade. Good class participation not only means speaking up in class, it means demonstrating that you are listening well to your peers and the instructor.

Late Papers: Late papers inconvenience all of us. So to receive full credit for your work, it must be turned in at the appointed time. Late papers (*whatever* the reason for them) will be penalized 1/3 of a letter grade for each day late (e.g., a B paper would become a B-). Papers turned in within 2 hours of the deadline time will be lowered 1/3 of a letter grade; after that time, the paper will be considered a day late.

Schedule and Readings Performance and Politics

Required textbooks:

- J. Butler, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative*. New York: Routledge (1997).
A. Lemon, *Between Two Fires: Gypsy Performance and Romani Memory from Pushkin to Postsocialism*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press (2000).
Poems from Guantánamo: The Detainees Speak. (2007) Ed. M. Falkoff. Iowa City: The University of Iowa Press.
L. Wedeen, *Ambiguities of Domination: Politics, Rhetoric, and Symbols in Contemporary Syria*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press (1999).

Week One, 1/8: introduction

- J. Butler, *Excitable Speech*, "On Linguistic Vulnerability" (Introduction: 1-41), "Implicit Censorship and Discursive Agency," (Chapter Four: 127-63).
(For fun: Berger, L.R. "The President and the Poet Come to the Negotiating Table," in *Shock and Awe: War on Words*, Eds. B. Eekelen, J. González, B. Stötzer, A. Tsing. (pp.2-3.))

Optional Readings:

- M. Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language* (1972). Pantheon.
M. Foucault, "Two Lectures" in *Power/Knowledge* (1980). Pantheon.

Week Two, 1/15: performative discourse

- J. Searle, "A Classification of Illocutionary Acts," (1976) in *Cultural Communication and Intercultural Contact*. Ed. D. Carbaugh. (pp.349-72)
M. Rosaldo, "The Things We Do with Words: Illogot Speech Acts and Speech Act Theory in Philosophy," (1990) in *Cultural Communication and Intercultural Contact*. Ed. Carbaugh. (pp.373-408)
S. Tambiah, "The Magical Power of Words," in *Culture, Thought, and Social Action* (1985). (pp.17-40 *only* (the rest of the article is optional))
F. Miller, "*Al-Qa'ida* as a 'Pragmatic Base': Contributions of Area Studies to Sociolinguistics," *Language and Communication*, forthcoming in 2008.
(For fun, with this piece: Freccero, Carla. "Nomads" in *Shock and Awe: War on Words*, Eds. B. Eekelen, J. González, B. Stötzer, A. Tsing. (pp.104-107.))

Optional Readings:

- J. Austin, Lectures 1,2,8,9 in *How to Do Things with Words*, (pp.1-24,94-119)
Chapters 1 & 2 (pp.16-65) in B. Lee's *Talking Heads: Language, Metalanguage, and the Semiotics of Subjectivity* (on Austin, Frege, Searle, and Derrida)
M. Sbisà, "Speech Acts in Context," *Journal of Language and Communication*, (2002) v.22(4) (pp. 421-436)
F. Cooren, *The Organizing Property of Communication*. (1999) Philadelphia: John Benjamins Press.
J. Irvine, "Shadow Conversations: The Indeterminacy of Participant Roles," (1996) in *Natural Histories of Discourse*. Eds. M. Silverstein and G. Urban. (pp.131-59)
P. Carpiagnano et. al., "Chatter in the Age of Electronic Reproduction: Talk Television and the 'Public Mind'," (1993) in *The Phantom Public Sphere*. Ed. B. Robbins. (pp.93-120)

Week Three, 1/22: symbolic forms

Part I: Rituals and Roles

- M. Gluckman, "Les Rites de Passage" in *Essays on the Ritual of Social Relations* (1963)
Ed. Daryll Forde. (pp.1-52)
- V. Turner, "Symbols in Ndembu Ritual," (1967) in *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual*. (pp.19-47)
- S. Gal, "Bartók's Funeral: Representations of Europe in Hungarian Political Rhetoric," (1991) in *American Ethnologist*, v.18(3) (pp.440-58)
- Part II: Frames and Texts
- G. Bateson, "A Theory of Fantasy and Play" (1972) in *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* (pp.177-93)
- E. Goffman, "Keys and Keying" (1974) in *Frame Analysis* (pp.40-82)
- C. Geertz, "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight" in *The Interpretation of Cultures* (1973), (pp.412-53)
- (Optional: C. Geertz, "Religion as a Cultural System" in *The Interpretation of Cultures* (1973), (pp.87-125).)

Optional Readings:

- H. Hubert and M. Mauss, *Sacrifice: Its Nature and Function*. (1967) Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- R. Hertz, *Death and the Right Hand: The Collective Representation of Death*. (1960) Aberdeen: Cohen and West.
- V. Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*. (1969) Chicago: Aldine Publishers.
- A. Cohen, "Political Anthropology: Analysis of the Symbolism of Power Relations," (1969) *Man*, v.4(2) (pp.215-35)

Week Four, 1/29: framing race

- A. Lemon, *Between Two Fires: Gypsy Performance and Romani Memory from Pushkin to Postsocialism*. (2000)

Week Five, 2/5: the structuring of responsibility

Part I:

- R. Bauman, "Disclaimers of Performance," (1993) in *Responsibility and Evidence in Oral Discourse*. Eds. J. Hill and J. Irvine. (pp.182-96)
- A. Duranti, "Politics and Grammar: Agency in Samoan Political Discourse" (1990) in *American Ethnologist*, v.17(4): (pp. 646-66)

Part II:

- J. Hill, "The Voices of Don Gabriel: Responsibility and Self in a Modern Mexicano Narrative," (1995) in *The Dialogic Emergence of Culture* (pp.97-147)
- B. McElhinny, "Challenging Hegemonic Masculinities: Female and Male Police Officers Handling Domestic Violence" (1995) in *Gender Articulated* (pp.217-44)

Bibliography due in class

Optional Readings:

- J. Hill, *Responsibility and Evidence in Oral Discourse*. (1993) CUP.
- J. Hill, "Mrs. Patricio's Trouble: The Distribution of Responsibility in an Account of Personal Experience," (1997) in *Rethinking Context: Language as an Interactive Phenomenon*. Eds C. Goodwin and A. Duranti. (pp.197-225)
- J. Gumperz "Contextualization and Understanding," (1997), *ibid.* (pp.229-52)
- J. Irvine, "Insult and Responsibility: Verbal Abuse in a Wolof Village" (1997), *ibid.* (105-34)

Week Six, 2/12: authority and poetic tropes

Part I:

M. Bloch, "Introduction" (1975) in *Political Language and Oratory in Traditional Society* (pp.1-28)

E. Keenan, "A Sliding Sense of Obligatoriness: The Polystructure of Malagasy Oratory" (1975) in *Political Language and Oratory in Traditional Society* (pp.93-112)

Part II:

P. Friedrich, "Polytropy" (1991) in *Beyond Metaphor: The Theory of Tropes in Anthropology* (pp.17-55)

J. Fernandez, "Creative Arguments of Images in Culture, and the Charnel House of Conventionality," (2001) in *Locating Cultural Creativity*, Ed. John Liep (pp.17-30).

P. Friedrich, "Language, Ideology, and Political Economy," (1989) *American Anthropologist*, v.2 (pp.295-312)

Prospectus due in class

Optional readings:

J. Fernandez, "The Performance of Ritual Metaphors," (1977) in *The Social Use of Metaphor*, Eds. J. David Sapir and J. Christopher Crocker. (pp.100-31)

J. Fernandez, *Persuasions and Performances: The Play of Tropes in Culture*. (1986) Bloomington: Indiana UP.

S. Jansen, S. and D. Sabo, "The Sport/War Metaphor: Hegemonic Masculinity, the Persian Gulf War, and the New World Order" (1994) in *Sociology of Sport Journal*, v.11 (1-17).

A. Agha, "Tropic Aggression in the Clinton-Dole Presidential Debate," (1997) *Pragmatics*, v.7 (461-97) (#99)

Week Seven, 2/19: linguistic markets and the politics of affect

Part I:

P. Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital," (1986) in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, New York: Greenwood Press. (pp.241-58).

C. LaDousa, "Disparate Markets: Language, Nation, and Education in North India," (2005) *American Ethnologist*, v.32(3) (pp.460-78)

J. Irvine, "When Talk Isn't Cheap: Language and Political Economy," (1989) *American Ethnologist* v.16(2) (pp.248-67)

Part II:

C. Lutz and L. Abu-Lughod, "Introduction," in *Language and the Politics of Emotion*. (1990) (pp.1-23)

F. Miller, "Metaphors of Commerce: Trans-valuing Tribalism in Yemeni Audiocassette Poetry," (2002) *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 34(1) (pp.29-57)

Optional Readings:

P. Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*. (1984) (pp.9-96,262) (#102)

N. Besnier, "Language and Affect," (1990) *Annual Reviews of Anthropology* v.19 (pp.419-51)

N. Besnier, "Reported Speech and Affect on Nukalaetae Atoll," (1993) in *Responsibility and Evidence in Oral Discourse*. Eds. J. Hill and J. Irvine (pp.161-81)

R. Williams, "Structures of Feeling," (1977) in *Marxism and Literature*. (pp.128-35)

D. Brennaiss and F. Myers, *Dangerous Words: Language and Politics in the Pacific*, (1984) NYU Press.

N. Haeri, "The Reproduction of Symbolic Capital: Language, State, and Class in Egypt," (1997) *Current Anthropology*, v.38(5) (pp.795-805)

Week Eight, 2/26: critical voices in the "war on terror": the case of the Guantánamo poets

Poems from Guantánamo: The Detainees Speak. (2007) Ed. Mark Falkoff.

Additional readings on the book and its reception:

- **On political discourse about Guantánamo, Torture, and the “War on Terror”**
 - R. Jackson, “Language, Policy and the Construction of a Torture Culture in the War on Terrorism,” *Review of International Studies*, (2007) v.33 (pp.353-71).
 - A. Lazar and M. Lazar, “Enforcing Justice, Justifying Force: America's Justification of Violence in the New World Order,” in *Discourse, War and Terrorism*. (2007) Eds. A. Hodges and C. Nilep. Philadelphia: John Benjamins (pp.45-65)
 - C. Hodges, “The Narrative Construction of Identity: The Adequation of Saddam Hussein and Osama bin Laden in the ‘War on Terror’,” in *Discourse, War and Terrorism*. (2007) Eds. A. Hodges and C. Nilep. Philadelphia: John Benjamins (pp.67-88)
 - Cheney, R. (Extract from a speech in February, 2008 at the Pennsylvania State Victory Committee, in Harrisburg, PA.) (*optional*)
 - Bush, G. (Extract from a speech in January, 2008 at the Nevada Policy Research Institute in Las Vegas, NV.) (*optional*)
- **Reviews of the book (in chronological order)**
 - Y. Dreazen, “The Prison Poets of Guantanamo Find a Publisher,” *The Wall Street Journal*, June 20, 2007.
 - D. Chiasson, “Notes on Prison Camp,” *The New York Times*, Sunday, August 19, 2007.
 - M. O'Rourke, “Shall I Compare Thee to an Evil Tyrant?: The Poetry of Guantanamo,” *Slate Magazine*, August 20, 2007.
 - S. Leary, “Book Review: *Poems from Guantanamo*,” from the blog “The Reflective Librarian,” January 14, 2008.
 - A. Worthington, “Poetry and politics at Guantánamo”, from the on-line magazine *Nth Position* (<http://nthposition.com/poetryandpoliticsat.php>). (Interview with the editor M. Falkoff)
- **On poetry and poetics**
 - M. Damon, “The Ultimate Challenge to Kantian Aesthetics,” *Cross-Cultural Poetics*, 2008.
 - A. Rich, “Someone is Writing a Poem,” in *What is Found There: Notebooks on Poetry and Politics*. (2003) (pp.84-90)
----- Excerpts from *Poetry and Commitment*, New York: W.W. Norton and Company. (pp.21-39) (*handout*)
 - D. Chirot, “Waterboarding and Poetry: François Villon and the New Extreme Experimental American Poetry,” posted on the on-line magazine *ZSWound*, February 11, 2008.
Images accompanying the essay at:
<http://davidbaptistechirot.blogspot.com/2007/12/waterboarding-and-poetry-15th-century.html>

Oral presentations in class

Week Nine, 3/4: transgressive humor and its capitulations

Part I:

- S. Seizer, “Jokes, Gender, and Discursive Distance on the Tamil Popular Stage,” (1997) *American Ethnologist*, v.24(1) (pp.62-90)
- G. Holt, “‘Inversion’ in Black Communication,” (1972) in *Rappin' and Stylin' Out*. Ed. T. Kochman. (pp.152-9)
- A. Krims, “The Musical Poetics of a “Revolutionary” Identity,” (2000) in *Rap Music and the Poetics of Identity*. Cambridge (pp.93-122)

Part II:

- A. Yurchak, "The Cynical Reason of Late Socialism: Power, Pretense, and the Anekdot," (1997) *Public Culture*, v.9 (pp.161-88)
- R. Sánchez, "Intimate Publicities: Retreating the Theologico-Political in the Chávez Regime?" (2006) in *Political Theologies: Public Religions in a Post-Secular World*. Eds. H. de Vries and L. Sullivan. Fordham UP (pp.401-26) (*handout*)

Optional Readings:

- M. Bakhtin. *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. (1994) U. of Minnesota Press.
- J. Limon, "History, Chicago Joking, and the Varieties of Higher Education: Tradition and Performance as Critical Symbolic Action," *Journal of the Folklore Institute*, v.19 (2/3) (pp.141-66).
- J. Limon, "Carne, Carnales, and the Carnivalesque: Bakhtinian *Batos*, Disorder, and Narrative Discourses," (1989) *American Ethnologist*, v.16(3) (pp.471-86)
- R. Abrahams, "Joking: The Training of the Man of Words in Talking Broad," (1972) in *Rappin' and Stylin' Out: Communication in Urban Black America*. Ed. T. Kochman. (pp.215-40) (#88)
- H. Jonsson, "Serious Fun: Minority Cultural Dynamics and National Integration in Thailand," *American Ethnologist*, 28(1) (pp.151-78).
- C. Bardenstein, "Stirring Words: Traditions and Subversions in the Poetry of Muzaffar al-Nawwab," (1997) in *Arab Studies Quarterly*, v.19(4) (pp.37-63) (#98)

Week Ten, 3/11: the rhetorics of spectacle

- L. Wedeen, *Ambiguities of Domination: Politics, Rhetoric, and Symbols in Contemporary Syria* (1999)

Paper and Abstract due on Saturday, March 22 at 3 pm