

Strike a Pose!

Performance Culture and the Constitution of Postmodern Identity

Lecturer: PD Dr. Stefan L. Brandt, Guest Professor

Room and time: AR-A 1009, Tuesdays 14-16

Course type: B.A./Lehramts-Seminar

Modules: Bachelor LKM M 6.1 Literaturtheorien / Lehramt Gym M 7.3 Intra- und interkulturell kodierte Texte / Lehramt BK M 6.2 Intra- und interkulturell kodierte Texte

First session: April 5, 2011

Course description: Since the early 1990s, the concept of »performance« has become a chief concern of American cultural studies. Like no other term, »performance« stands for the instability of social, cultural, and individual identity. If the illusion of a stability of the old ideals of truth, reason and universality had dominated the hegemonic imagination before this paradigm change, performance theory cultivates a belief in the unreliability and inconsistency of cultural texts. Today, reality seems to be a colorful patchwork whose materiality has to be constituted anew time and time again. In postmodernity, the self seems to be deprived of any 'essence,' functioning more and more as a »performative« entity which expresses itself *through* the body but lacks a stable core. The seminar will deal with the interdependences between these individual »performances« and the media in which they are located. Feature films, sitcoms and video clips will be discussed in the seminar along with documentaries, photography, and performance art. Among other artists, we will look at Madonna and Lady Gaga and their usage of 'performance' in their clips and public appearances. Attention will also be paid to the Hollywood star cult (Marilyn Monroe and James Dean) and the attempts to create performative texts in film, literature, and television (e.g., *Borat*, *8 Mile*, *American Psycho*, and *Will & Grace*).

Grading: For 5 or 7 CP: regular attendance, participation in discussions, at least nine entries in the discussion forum (1/3), oral presentation as part of an expert group OR short presentation of a keyword (1/3), and final paper (8-10/ 13-15 pages) (1/3). For 2 CP: attendance, participation in discussions, at least eight entries in the discussion forum (50%), oral presentation as part of an expert group OR short presentation of a keyword (50%).

Deadline for Final Papers: Friday, August 31 (Wednesday), 2011. Note: There is no extension of this deadline! Please throw papers into my box (2nd floor of the AR-H building) or send them in postal form. Do not send papers via email!

Syllabus

- April 5** **Introduction – Performativity and Performance Culture**
Basic texts (strongly recommended):
Marvin Carlson, "What Is Performance?" From: *Performance* (1996), 1-7. ¹
Richard Schechner, "What Is Performance?" (2002), 22-44.
Philip Auslander, "Just Be Your Self!" (1997), 28-38.
- April 12** **Music I – "Strike a Pose!" Madonna's Multiple Personalities**
Main example (required):
Madonna, "Express Yourself" (1989) & "Vogue" (1990).
Additional texts (optional):
Robert Miklitsch, "The Case of 'Madonna Studies'." *From Hegel to Madonna* (1998), 99-140.
Gregor Schuhen, "Hybride Pop-Welten: Madonna und die Avant-Garde(n)" (2006), 123-151.
- April 19** **Film I – Performance and Gender**
Main example (required):
Morocco (1930, dir. Josef v. Sternberg). Check out overnight at Sekretariat (Room AR-K 222/1).
Main text (strongly recommended):
Judith Butler, "Bodily Inscriptions, Performative Subversions." *Gender Trouble* (1990), 128-141.
- April 26** **Easter Holiday (Ostern)**
Relax and enjoy!
- May 3** **Photography I – The Aura of the Film Star**
Main text (required):
F. Jacobowitz and R. Lippe, "Performance and the Still Photograph: Marilyn Monroe" (1997), 12-19.
Additional text (optional):
Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Mechanical Reproduction" (2005 [1936]).

¹ All main texts for this course are available at Moodle: <https://moodle.uni-siegen.de>. All these texts are also available in the form of a course reader (for those who like to have everything printed out already). Copy write, Weidenauer Str. 248 (behind the police station), phone: 0271-45416.

- May 10** **Film II – Affective Memory and Spontaneous Acting**
 Main example (required):
East of Eden (1954, dir. Elia Kazan). Please check out at Sekretariat overnight and watch the movie.
 Additional text (optional):
 Johanne Larue & Carole Zucker, “James Dean: The Pose of Reality?” (1990), 295-324.
 Constantin Stanislavski, “When Acting Is an Art” (1991 [1936]), 18-33.
- May 17** **Photography II – Art and the Performativity of the Photograph**
 Main text (required):
 Henry M. Sayre, “The Rhetoric of the Pose: Photography and the Portrait as Performance.” *The Object of Performance* (1989), 35-65.
 Additional text (optional):
 Patricia Pace, “Staging Childhood: Lewis Hine’s Photographs of Child Labor” (2002), 324-352.
- May 24** **Feminist Performance Art – Staging Images / Performing Identity**
 Main texts (required):
 Annie Sprinkle, “Anatomy of a Pin-Up Photo” (1991 [1981]). One page.
 Amelia Jones, “Experiencing Performance as Documentation” (1997), 11-18.
 Additional text (optional):
 Linda Williams, “The Pornography and Performance Art of Annie Sprinkle” (1993), 117-133.
- May 31** **Television I – The Talk Show as a Modern Opera**
 Main text (required):
 Debbie Epstein, “Life in the Beep-Cycle: Inventing Id-TV on the Jerry Springer Show” (2003), 90-114.
 Additional text (optional):
 Wayne Munson, “The Sense of the Talkshow”, from *All Talk* (1993), 1-18.
- June 7** **Television II – Stand-Up Comedy and the Sitcom**
 Main example (required):
 Will & Grace, “Mega-News (The Buying Game)” (1999). Check out overnight and watch the episode.
 Additional text (optional):
 Christopher Castiglia, “Memory and Queer Culture in *Will and Grace*” (2004), 158-188.
- June 14** **Pentecost Holiday (Pfingsten)**
Relax and enjoy!
- June 21** **Music II – HipHop and Fake Authenticity**
 Main example (required):
8 Mile (2002, dir. Curtis Hanson). Please check out at Sekretariat overnight and watch the movie.
 Additional texts (optional):
 Katja Lee, “Reconsidering Rap’s ‘I’: Eminem’s Autobiographical Postures and the Construction of Identity Authenticity” (2008), 351-373.
 Annette J. Saddik, “Rap’s Unruly Body: The Postmodern Performance of Black Male Identity on the American Stage” (2003), 110-127.
- June 28** **Literature – Empty Personalities and Consumerism**
 Main text (required):
 Bret Easton Ellis, chapters from *American Psycho*, “At Another New Restaurant” & “End of the 1980s”
 Additional text (optional):
 Carla Freccero, “Historical Violence, Censorship, and the Serial Killer. The Case of *American Psycho*” (1997), 44-58.
- July 5** **Film III – Enter the Schlemiel: Irony and Performance**
 Main example (required):
Borat (2006, dir. Larry Charles). Please check out at Sekretariat overnight and watch the movie.
 Additional text (optional):
 David Buchbinder, “Enter the Schlemiel: The Emergence of Inadequate or Incompetent Masculinity in Recent Film and Television” (2008), 227-245.
- July 12** **Music III – Performance Identity and the End of Authenticity**
 Main examples (required):
 Lady Gaga, “Telephone” (2009) & “Born This Way” (2011). Please watch online.
 Additional texts (optional):
 Derritt Mason, “Rah, Rah, Ah-Ah-Ah (Ro-Ma, Ro-Ma-Ma): Lady Gaga, Hysteria, Commodity Fetishism” (2010).
 Camille Paglia, “Lady Gaga and the Death of Sex”, *Sunday Times* (2010), 1-3.