**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./Lehramt-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!

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**Syllabus**

April 5

**Introduction – Performativity and Performance Culture**

Basic texts (strongly recommended):


April 12

**Music I – “Strike a Pose!” Madonna’s Multiple Personalities**

Main example (required):


Main text (strongly recommended):


April 19

**Film I – Performance and Gender**

Main example (required):


Main text (strongly recommended):


April 26

**Easter Holiday (Ostern)**

Relax and enjoy!

May 3

**Photography I – The Aura of the Film Star**

Main text (required):


Additional text (optional):


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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, Weidensauer Str. 248 (behind the police station), phone: 0271-45416.
May 10  
Film II – Affective Memory and Spontaneous Acting  
Main example (required):  
Additional text (optional):  

May 17  
Photography II – Art and the Performativity of the Photograph  
Main text (required):  
Additional text (optional):  

May 24  
Feminist Performance Art – Staging Images / Performing Identity  
Main text (required):  
Additional text (optional):  

May 31  
Television I – The Talk Show as a Modern Opera  
Main text (required):  
Additional text (optional):  

June 7  
Television II – Stand-Up Comedy and the Sitcom  
Main example (required):  
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):  
Additional texts (optional):  

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):  

July 5  
Film III – Enter the Schlemiel: Irony and Performance  
Main example (required):  
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):  
Additional texts (optional):  
Derritt Mason, “Rah, Rah, Ah-Ah-Ah (Ro-Ma, Ro-Ma-Ma): Lady Gaga, Hysteria, Commodity Fetishism” (2010).  