

COM 4060: Performance Theory

Fall 2025: T/TH 2:00 – 3:20 PM

GAB 321 (Blackbox)

Instructor Information

Dr. Elizabeth Melton

Email: Elizabeth.melton@unt.edu (or via Canvas message)

Office: GAB 320A

In-Person Office Hours: T/W/Th 9:30 – 10:30 AM and by appointment

Virtual Office Hours: M-F by appointment (linked posted on Canvas)

Course Overview

What *is* performance and what does it mean to study something *as* performance? How do we articulate what happens in the often magical and occasionally transformative moments created between performers and an audience? Is everyone always performing?

Performance theories provide us entry points into answering these questions and more. Over the course of the semester, we will explore many of the foundational performance theories that shape the field of Performance Studies and its sister disciplines. Radically interdisciplinary since its inception, Performance Studies provides us with a range of conceptual tools and practices to make sense of what happens both onstage in artistic performance practices and in our everyday lives and experiences. Through engagement with our course textbook and supplemental readings, you will learn about the specific contexts in which performance theories emerged, how they have coalesced to form the ever-evolving field of performance studies, and explore the ongoing development and application of performance praxis.

Specifically, students will enter into collaborative performance praxis as an entry point for understanding texts, drama, culture, social roles, identity, resistance, and technology. The overarching goal of this course is to introduce and consider the ways performance studies functions as a dynamic and critical mode of inquiry in communication studies. By the end of the course students will be able to identify and explain how performance constitutes our social and political world.

Course Learning Objectives

1. Develop a foundational understanding of performance theories, the contexts in which they were developed, and how they can help us understand, interpret, and analyze everyday life.
2. Strengthen methodologies for comprehension, discussion, and application of theoretical texts.
3. Demonstrate deep engagement with key performance concepts through a combination of modalities, including academic writing and research, creative performance, and artistic practice.
4. Investigate the borders between theory and practice through embodied ways of knowing.

Required Materials

Bell, Elizabeth. *Theories of Performance*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2008. ISBN: 978-1412926386

You should bring each day's assigned readings with you to class. Additional readings will be available on Canvas as needed.

Tips & Tricks for Succeeding in this Class

1. Make an appointment with me. You are more than welcome to e-mail, to visit during office hours, or make an appointment. I can help resolve many issues & questions.
2. Come to class with questions and ideas related to the reading (which you have already done well before class).
3. Rehearse, rehearse, and rehearse some more!
4. Writing Lab. This is great place to talk about ideas, improve the organization of a paper, or work on your writing skills. Check the Writing Center website for more information about hours, request an appointment, or even find out how to receive feedback on your writing online. You can also contact them at 940-565-2563, e-mail: WritingLab@unt.edu, or go visit them in Sage Hall 150 (to set up an appointment) or during Walk-In hours at Willis 250.
5. Use our COMM Library (GAB 318) and Student Workspace (GAB 301)! Seriously — our student librarians and student workers are awesome! Drop by either space; you can also see our library holdings and hours online through the [COMM website](#).

How the University Can *Help You Succeed*

& official policies and resources

Academic Integrity Standards and Consequences

According to UNT Policy 06.003, Student Academic Integrity, academic dishonesty occurs when students engage in behaviors including, but not limited to cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, forgery, plagiarism, and sabotage. A finding of academic dishonesty may result in a range of academic penalties or sanctions ranging from admonition to expulsion from the University. **For more information about how this applies to this course visit Course Policies below.**

ADA accommodation statement:

The University of North Texas makes reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. To request accommodations, you must first register with the Office of Disability Access (ODA) by completing an application for services and providing documentation to verify your eligibility each semester. Once your eligibility is confirmed, you may request your letter of accommodation. ODA will then email your faculty a letter of reasonable accommodation, initiating a private discussion about your specific needs in the course. You can request accommodations at any time, **but it's important to provide ODA notice to your faculty as early as possible in the semester to avoid delays in implementation. Keep in mind that you must obtain a new letter of accommodation for each semester and meet with each faculty member before accommodations can be implemented in each class.** You are strongly encouraged to meet with faculty regarding your accommodations during office hours or by appointment. Faculty have the authority to ask you to discuss your letter during their designated office hours to protect your privacy. For more information and to access resources that can support your needs, refer to the [Office of Disability Access](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/office-disability-access) website (<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/office-disability-access>).

Academic Success Resources:

UNT strives to offer a high-quality education in a supportive environment where you can learn, grow, and thrive. As a faculty member, I am committed to supporting you, and I want to remind you that UNT offers a range of mental health and wellness services to help maintain balance and well-being. Utilizing these resources is a proactive way to support your academic and personal success. To explore campus resources designed to support

you, check out [mental health services](https://clear.unt.edu/student-support-services-policies) (<https://clear.unt.edu/student-support-services-policies>), visit unt.edu/success, and explore unt.edu/wellness. To get all your enrollment and student financial-related questions answered, go to scrappysays.unt.edu.

Attendance

There is a specific attendance policy for this course listed under Course Policies. For general information about UNT's attendance policy including religious observances, active military service, parenting, or official university events please review the following link:

<https://policy.unt.edu/sites/policy.unt.edu/files/06.039%20Student%20Attendance%20and%20Authorized%20Absences.pdf>

Basic Needs Policy

Any student who faces challenges securing their food or housing and believes this may affect their academic performance is urged to contact the Dean of Students for support (940-565-2648). UNT has both a Food Pantry and a "Seeking Options & Solutions" (SOS) team who work to help students navigate diverse concerns, including identifying resources for personal, academic, financial, and social issues.

Emergency Notification & Procedures

UNT uses a system called Eagle Alert to quickly notify students with critical information in the event of an emergency (i.e., severe weather, campus closing, and health and public safety emergencies like chemical spills, fires, or violence). In the event of a university closure, please check your email and Canvas for contingency plans for covering course materials.

Food Insecurity & Other Well-being Challenges

Please note the Dean of Students office is available when students are struggling to meet basic needs and looking for resources that will help them face a range of challenges (food/clothing/housing insecurity, illness, parenting, military service, etc.). You can always speak with me if you are comfortable sharing your situation and I will help you connect with the appropriate university resources. For more information visit:

<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/dean-of-students/programs-and-services/index.html>

Title IX Support

The University of North Texas (University) prohibits discrimination and harassment on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, or any other characteristic protected under applicable federal or state law in its application and admission processes; educational programs and activities; employment policies, procedures, and processes; and University facilities. The University takes active measures to prevent such conduct and investigates and takes remedial action when appropriate. The University also prohibits and takes actions to prevent retaliation against individuals who report or file a charge of discrimination, harassment, or sexual misconduct; participate in an investigation, or oppose any form of discrimination, harassment, or sexual misconduct. For more information or support: <https://titleixeo.unt.edu/index.html>

Course Policies

Attendance

You cannot pass this course with regular absences. You should plan to meet with me and discuss your performance in the class if you miss more than three full days of instruction. **Each student is allowed three unexcused absences as long as they are NOT performance days. Students will lose 100 points from their FINAL grade for each unexcused absence beyond their three freebies.**

Miss 0 -2 Days : possible extra credit for good attendance

Miss 3 Days: no penalty

Miss 4 Days: -100 points (highest possible grade 900)

Miss 5 Days: -200 points (highest possible grade 800)

Miss 6 Days: -300 points (highest possible grade 700)

Miss 7 Days: -400 points (highest possible grade 600)

Miss 8 Days: Fail. Point of No Return.

Because this course involves collaboration, participation is essential to learning. Our performance-based activities require you to be actively engaged in discussions and group work. I understand tardiness and absences may occur. If you are late to class, please drop me an email to let me know the circumstances. If you must miss class, please let me know prior to your absence.

Please arrive before class begins to find a seat, prepare your materials, and connect with your peers. **The beginning of class is especially critical**—just like the beginning of a movie or book. Being late to class is sometimes inevitable. If you are late, know that you are welcome to join the class, but please do so without distracting others. If it is a performance day, wait until you hear applause to attempt entering the classroom. More than two instances of tardiness will result in an absence from class.

Excused absences will not affect a student's final grade. For questions concerning what counts as an excused absence please refer to the following university information:

<https://policy.unt.edu/sites/policy.unt.edu/files/06.039%20Student%20Attendance%20and%20Authorized%20Absences.pdf>

This policy explains that there is a significant gray area concerning sick days, emergencies, and other extenuating circumstances. Generally, excused absences are those that are verifiable as well as documented. I will use my best judgment when assessing a potential absence as excused. As the instructor of this course, I have the final say on what counts as an excused absence. Do not assume that your absence is excused simply because you inform me of the reason for your absence.

Performance Days

Attendance is required for both performers and audience members (that means everyone)! Performances will be given on the dates assigned so plan accordingly. Failure to perform the assignments on the day assigned results with a maximum grade of a D...as in Don't! The maximum grade of a D is applied to the live performance portion of your grade.

Class Dress

You should come to class with the expectation that we *may* engage in full-body performance practice. This means you should wear clothes that allow for free-flowing movement. You should feel comfortable bending down to

touch the floor, squatting or sitting on the floor, and raising your hands above your head. If your clothes inhibit these movements they are not suitable for this class.

Communicating with Dr. Melton

The most effective way to contact me is via e-mail/Canvas or to see me before or after class. I am new to Canvas, so there may be some growing pains as I learn the platform. You are always welcome during office hours and have the option to schedule an appointment with me outside of official office hours. Typically, I will be on-campus and available Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursdays

Emailing me:

My goal is to respond to your emails within 24 hours, but do not expect an immediate response. I cannot guarantee that I will see time sensitive emails, particularly if you email me very late/early in the day or right before class. I am not on call 24/7 to respond to emails and may not respond as quickly to emails sent over the weekend. If you have questions about this, please see me in person. During busy times, my inbox becomes rather full, so if you contact me and do not receive a response within two business days, please send a follow up email. A gentle nudge is always appreciated.

Grade Disputes & Questions

Discussions regarding grades must take place face-to-face. No grades will be discussed within 24 hours after the graded assignment is returned; no grades will be discussed more than two weeks after the graded assignment is returned. If you ask me to re-grade an assignment you should know that I will approach the assignment with fresh eyes, but re-grading could result in a lower grade or you could retain the same original grade.

It is your responsibility to follow-up with me if you are absent when assignments are passed back to students. You should approach me before or after class if you think I may have feedback that you have not yet received.

Inclusive Learning Environment

Learning about, exploring, and applying performance theories means reflecting on and engaging with the real world and its local and global contexts. Complex and contentious issues appear in our course materials.

This means we may discuss a range of difficult topics as they pertain to key themes covered in the course. With this in mind, we will enter into conversation with one another and develop a collective performance praxis that requires a shared foundation of respect and courtesy. We will develop a class contract early in the semester that will serve as a living document on how we choose to proceed over the course of the semester. I also encourage you to review UNT's student code of conduct so that we can all start with the same baseline civility understanding ([Code of Student Conduct](https://policy.unt.edu/policy/07-012)) (<https://policy.unt.edu/policy/07-012>). Failure to adhere to the class's code of conduct could result in removal from the course.

In my role as the instructor I will work to provide the following: 1) a positive, inclusive learning environment that fosters the open and honest sharing of ideas; 2) a safe and creative space where you can workshop ideas and performances; 3) the timely sharing of assignments, due dates, and grading rubrics; 4) assignment feedback that helps you meet the requirements of the course.

Discussing issues related to Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion in Texas

Texas Senate Bill 17, the recent law that outlaws diversity, equity, and inclusion programs at public colleges and universities in Texas, does not in any way affect content, instruction or discussion in a course at public colleges and universities in Texas. Expectations and academic freedom for teaching and class discussion have not been

altered post-SB 17, and students should not feel the need to censor their speech pertaining to topics including race and racism, structural inequality, LGBTQ+ issues, or diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Missed Work & Incomplete Grades

I am in no way shape or form responsible for your missed work. You are responsible for keeping up with the course and course changes. Be sure to keep up with your readings and contact me for clarity regarding our course conversation. If you have concerns about missed content please visit me during office hours. I will not respond to “What did I miss?” emails.

Per university policy, I will award grades of “Incomplete” only in cases where a student has completed 75% of the coursework AND they have a documented and approved reason for requesting the incomplete. Inability to complete coursework in a timely fashion does not constitute an acceptable reason for requesting or receiving an incomplete.

Respecting and Sharing the Blackbox

Visit the Communication Studies Dept. website (<https://communication.unt.edu/about/black-box.html>) for more information on how to reserve the space. This info is also listed on our canvas page.

- Do **NOT** touch or use any of the tech, lights, sound, or projection. At All. Ever.
- Do not put chalk/paint/glitter/oil on the floor, the walls, the ceiling, or the chairs.
- No food or drink (or anything else that might attract ants/bugs/critters) is allowed in the space.
- Do NOT drag boxes, flats, etc. on the Black Box floor.
- Return all chairs/boxes/tables to their proper location before you leave.
- Make sure all trash is picked up and disposed of correctly.
- Respect the space. We encourage fun, but please be careful. The space and its condition is precious. We need you to take care of it.
- You are responsible for any damage done to the space during your reservation. Failure to adhere to these policies will result in you/your group losing access to the space in the future.

Technology/AI

In-Class Tech

You are allowed to use your laptops in class when appropriate. If students are using technology in a way that is not directly related to that day’s course content you will be publicly called out, asked to put your technology away, and may be asked to leave class for the day.

Recording Class

This course will encourage open and robust discussions on issues and ideas without fear that any statements made will be used for inappropriate or retaliatory purposes. To ensure the comfort and protection of everyone in our classroom, recording of any kind is prohibited in this space (this includes audio recordings, live-streaming, photographs of course materials, etc.) unless a student has an approved accommodation from the Office of Disability Access (ODA). In such cases, all students in the course will be notified whenever recording will be taking place.

Prohibited AI Use

In this course, I want you to engage deeply with the materials and develop your own critical thinking and writing skills. For this reason, the use of Generative AI (GenAI) tools like Claude, ChatGPT, Gemini, and Grammarly is not permitted. While these tools can be helpful in some contexts, they do not align with our goal of fostering the development of your independent thinking. Using GenAI to complete any part of an assignment, exam, or coursework will be considered a violation of academic integrity, as it prevents the development of your own skills, and will be addressed according to the [Student Academic Integrity policy](https://policy.unt.edu/policy/06-003) (https://policy.unt.edu/policy/06-003).

You may request to use AI in a specific performance.

If you believe you have a legitimate reason to utilize any form of AI for a performance you MUST inform me and clear its use well in advance of the performance due date. We will discuss appropriate citational practices at that time.

Written Work

All written work submitted via Canvas must be typed and include your name at the top of the page. Other requirements will be listed on the individual assignment prompt. I will evaluate your written work on style as well as content. *The Publication Manual for the American Psychological Association* is the style guide utilized by faculty and students in the Department of Communication Studies. I also accept MLA. The department web site includes an abbreviated guide to address the most common errors made by student writers.

Writing in Class

I will expect you to complete several HANDWRITTEN assignments in class over the course of the semester. You should always bring paper and a writing utensil that allows you to write clearly and legibly (no orange, yellow, or hard-to-read colors; no crayons or thick markers; aim for a blue/black pen to be safe). If your handwriting is illegible your grade will reflect my inability to review the content of your answer. Please let me know if you may require ODA accommodations and we can brainstorm acceptable solutions.

Course Requirements

Assignment Values

Assignments	Points	Percentage
Class Preparation & Participation	250	25%
Micro Performance & Writing Workshops		
(10pts. x 15 wkshops = 150 pts.)		
Reading Precis	(12.5pts. x 8 precis = 100 pts.)	
Outside Performance Reflection Paper	50	5 %
Theorist Zine Entries & Exhibition	100	10%
Entry 1	(50 pts.)	
Entry 2	(50 pts.)	
Performance 1: Scriptive Things	250	25 %
Thing Research & Report (25 pts)		

Performance Script	(50 pts.)		
Live Performance	(100 pts.)		
Artist Reflection	(75 pts.)		
Performance 2: Embodied Theory		250	25%
Performance Script	(50 pts.)		
Artist Statement	(100 pts.)		
Live Performance	(100 Pts.)		
Critical Reflection Paper		100	10%
Total Possible		1000	100%

**Please remember to review the attendance policy for how it may affect your final grade.*

Assignment Descriptions

Students will find more detailed assignment information, including prompts, instructions, grading rubrics, and specific due dates on Canvas.

Class Preparation & Participation (25%)

Performance & Writing Workshops (10 pts./workshop)

These will occur in-class I will keep your 15 highest workshop grades.

Reading Precis (12.5 points/precis)

These one-page (front & back) reading summaries are due the day we discuss a reading in class. You are expected to complete at least 8 precis over the course of the semester.

Outside Performance Reflection Paper (5 %)

You are required to attend one live performance outside of class and write a reflection on your experience of the performance. We will discuss appropriate performance options as a class. It is your responsibility to pick a performance that meets your schedule and the requirements of the course. See Canvas or speak to your instructor for more information.

Theorist Zine Entries & Exhibitions (10%)

Each student will complete two zine (as in magazine) entries over the course of the semester. Each zine entry will feature a different theorist covered during the semester. For each assignment, students will craft a single biographic zine page introducing their scholar, providing relevant background information, and explaining the scholar's theories in a way that broadens their classmates' understanding of a particular performance theory. Students will coordinate their individual efforts with a collective to curate a cohesive zine and situate their scholar amongst other performance theorists. Collectives will present their completed zines to the class during an in-class exhibition.

Performance 1: Scriptive Things (25%)

Research & Report (25 points)

A concise compilation of relevant library research and a written summary of the scriptive thing that will ground this performance.

Performance Script (50 points)

Scripts provide a detailed and thorough textual representation of the live performance presented to the class. Due at the beginning of class on the day you are scheduled to perform.

Live Performance (100 Points)

Students will create and share live performances based on assigned expectations and criteria. Due on the assigned day.

Artist Reflection (75 Points)

Students will write a reflection of their performance and articulate successes, challenges, and new questions. Due the following class after live performance.

Performance 2: Embodied Theory (25%)

Performance Script (50 Points)

Artist Statement (100 Points)

Live Performance 100 (Points)

Critical Reflection Paper (10%)

A written reflection on Performance 2 successes, challenges, and new inquiries. This paper will also include reflections on what you learned this semester.

Grading Scale

A	900-1000	Exceptional! Exceeded requirements with high degree of proficiency
B	800-899	Very good! Met requirements with a higher than average degree of proficiency
C	700-799	Good. Met requirements with an average degree of proficiency
D	600-699	Below average. Did not meet all requirements and/or did so with a lower than average degree of proficiency
F	0-599	Failed to meet requirements

Please review course policies for information on AI use and information regarding late work.

Tentative Course Schedule : Fall 2025

Dates and assignments are subject to change based on the needs of the students and/or semester disruptions. Students will be notified in-person and via canvas/email if any changes are required to the schedule or its contents.

Date	Topic
Aug. 19	Syllabus
Aug. 21	What is Performance Studies?
Aug. 26	Chapter 1
Aug. 28	Mimesis & <i>The Ion</i>
Sept. 2	Chapter 2
Sept. 4	Chapter 4 & Pentad +1
Sept. 9	Chapter 3
Sept. 11	Archive and Repertoire; Introduce Scriptive Things
Sept. 16	Scriptive Things
Sept. 18	Library Research Day – Meet in the Library
Sept. 23	Perf. 1 Workshop Day
Sept. 25	Perf. 1 Workshop Day
Sept. 30	Performance 1 Due
Oct. 2	Performance 1 Due
Oct. 7	Chapter 5, Pt. 1
Oct. 9	Chapter 5, Pt. 2
Oct. 14	Chapter 6
Oct. 16	Fashion Collection Day – Meet at the TX Fashion Collection
Oct. 21	Chapter 7
Oct. 23	Zine Exhibition Day 1
Oct. 28	Chapter 8 Pt. 1
Oct. 30	Brecht Workshop
Nov. 4	Chapter 8 Pt. 2
Nov. 6	Boal Workshop

<i>Date</i>	<i>Topic</i>
Nov. 11	Chapter 9
Nov. 13	Zine Exhibition 2
Nov. 18	Group Rehearsal
Nov. 20	Group Rehearsal
Nov. 24-28	THANKSGIVING - No Class
Dec. 2	Performance 2 Due
Dec. 4	Performance 2 Due
Dec. 9	Final Reflection Paper Due