Course Description:

The course will focus on an eclectic group of mostly contemporary, politically-directed writers and other artists primarily from various ethnic or racial minority backgrounds. We begin with performance proper, and then narrow our focus to discuss what elements of performance are incorporated into narrative text to produce “performative writing.” Does minority positioning affect the content, structure, and manner in which these artists perform or write, and in turn, how they are received? How might sexual/gender politics nuance that positioning? Rather than seeking division under the rubric of “national literature,” or the multicultural versions such as “African-American” or “Asian-American” writers/artists, the course will look for structural and contextual models that cross these categories - concern with oral histories and family-community genealogies, for example. We will also analyze how specific power politics inform these artists’ activities across their broadly diverse sociocultural, ethnic, and geopolitical contexts.

Class Requirements:

Attendance and participation: 20% *
2 papers, 30% each 60%
Presentations 10%
Additional writings 10%

** Participation is a vital part of this class, and therefore also your grade. If you have a very difficult time talking in class come to see me during office hours EARLY in the semester so we can talk about what we can do.

Required Books:

For sale at Shakespeare and Co., 716 Broadway, right across the street from Gallatin.


**Articles and excerpts on Blackboard**


6. Baraka, Amiri. “Somebody Blew up America,”


Schedule

1. Political Performance

1. Sept. 4: Introduction

2. Sept. 11: Toward a definition of performance and politics

   Readings: Young, “Introduction: Black Plays” (blackboard); Shange, *For Colored Girls* (book); Active Reading – Poetry (blackboard); Mullen, “Artistic Expression” (blackboard);
   (In class: iona or yamada or wright or a combination.)
   Assignment: 2 page active reading notes and analysis.
   Student Presentation 1: Introduction to Shange

4. Sept. 25: Amiri Baraka - In Class: Baraka Video
   Readings: Baraka, selections from *Funk Lore*, *Transbluesency* and “Somebody Blew up America,” Gwiazda, “Aesthetics of Politics” (all on blackboard)
   Assignment: 2 page active reading notes and analysis.
   Student Presentation 2: Introduction to Baraka


Paper One due: in my mailbox, Tuesday Oct. 16, by 6pm.

Oct. 16: no classes

2. Performative Writing

   Readings: Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (excerpt; blackboard); Derrida, “Signature Event Context,” (blackboard);
8. Oct. 30: Interrogating Blackness
   **Readings:** Kemp, “This Black Body in Question” in *The Ends of Performance*, 116-129; Pollock, “Performing Writing” in *The Ends of Performance*, 73-103 (book); Start reading *Absalom, Absalom!*
   **Assignment:** 1-2 page analysis of Kemp using Pollack’s terms

9. Nov. 6: Faulkner
   **Readings:** Finish reading *Absalom, Absalom!*; King James Bible: “2 Samuel” excerpt (blackboard)
   **Student Presentation 3 and 4:** Introduction to Faulkner and relation of Bible to Faulkner’s text.

10. Nov. 13: Morrison
    **Readings:** Morrison, *Beloved*; Wyatt, “Giving Body to the Word,”
    **Student Presentation 5 and 6:** Introduction to Morrison, Analysis of *Beloved*

11. Nov. 20: The Japanese Faulkner – in class video
    **Readings:** Cornyetz, “Dangerous Men,” (Blackboard); Nakagami, *The Cape.*
    **Student Presentation 7:** Introduction to Nakagami

12. Nov. 27: A Tenth Century Japanese Proto-Feminist 1
    **Student Presentation 8:** Introduction to Sei Shonagon

    **Readings:** Ozeki, *My Year of Meats.*
    **Student Presentation 9:** Analysis of *My Year of Meats*

14. Dec. 11: Between Body and Text
    **Second Paper Due in class**