

SPCH 111/112 Oral Interpretation
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STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES please refer to the above website SLOs

Materials: 3 ring stiff-backed black binder
Mini-DV cassette

*"All was a shake and a shiver-glints and gleams and sparkles, rustle and swirl, chatter and bubble . . . the river, a babbling procession of the best stories in the world sent from the heart of the earth to be told at last to the insatiable sea."
—The Wind in the Willows.*

Oral interpretation, or the study of literature through performance, has long been taught and studied by lovers of language. An early reference to oral interpretation can be found in a Platonic dialogue featuring the wily Socrates and the young rhapsode Ion. Since Ion's day, oral interpretation has developed continually over a span of 2,500 years. It is presently a vibrant field of communication studies that possesses radical potential when situated in critical, cultural perspectives. I teach oral interpretation as a method of discursive study that can interrogate, subvert, and reconceive received traditions.

We will have many unique opportunities this semester. First, we will be working with a primary text, *Dead Man Walking*. Second, we will be using our practice and performance in order to learn something about the importance of service to our communities. You'll have an opportunity to be a teacher and facilitator, speaking from your own experience as well as reflecting critically on the act of giving. In addition, you'll note that, along with performance, there is a significant amount of writing in this class. At many universities, the performance of literature is designated as a "W" or a class with a significant writing component.

As your instructor, I bring to the classroom many years of study of rhetoric, persuasion, and communication in the academic, non-profit, and corporate worlds. If you are an anxious speaker, one who does not have much experience in public presentation or group work, or even one who has enjoyed many experiences in effective communication, you are warmly welcomed to join our community of learners. It is in your best interest, however, that you are prepared for success and have met the recommended preparation for the course (ENG 800).

The Most Important Housekeeping Rules

*"Learn your lines and don't bump into the furniture."
--Spencer Tracy*

1. Lab requirements (4 required modules/assignments) need to be met. Modules or lab assignments--usually rehearsals PRIOR to class performance--are closely tied to class material. Note the **due dates** that attach to the modules.
2. Speeches or presentations cannot be made up; if you are not there, you will not be able to participate in the assignment. If, somehow, there is one documented emergency, you may work on 3 additional modules in the Lab; the additional optional work applies only to one missed oral presentation assignment. The exam may be made up; however, you will need to contact me immediately about your circumstances.
3. Four absences are permissible for this class, following what is specified in the **CA State Education Code**. After this, your grade will be affected. Please come to class when it begins and stay until it ends. The final class meeting is mandatory; be sure you include it among your responsibilities.

4. Original work is expected on assignments, as specified in the **Student Handbook**.

Assignments

Analysis of poetry performance text 25 pts
Poetry performance 50 pts
Critique of poetry performance 15 pts
Analysis of prose fiction 2 characters & narration 25 pts
Prose fiction performance 75 pts
Critique of prose fiction performance 15 pts
Exam 50 pts
Analysis of *Dead Man Walking* 25 pts
Dead Man Walking performance 50 pts
Cast book of *Dead Man Walking* 25 pts
Lab assignments 40 pts possible

Grading Scale

355.5 - 395 = A
316 - 355 = B
276.5 - 315 = C
237 - 276 = D
Below 237 = F

I'd like to keep this class working together as a community. We'll begin the semester by doing little warm-ups, discussions, viewings of videotaped performances, and lots of activities to get to know and trust one another.

"The whole worth of a kind deed is in the love that inspires it." --The Talmud

Literary Analyses

Poetry performance

3 pages, double spaced

Due on the day of your performance

Choose a love poem(s) that, with introduction (or transitions, if needed), add up to a 4-5 minute solo performance. Poems must be published and intended for adult readers--not children or juvenile literature. Avoid poems with heavy scansion or, for the same reason, songs from popular culture. Poems need not rhyme in order to qualify as poetry—in other words, free verse is acceptable. The analysis of the text is to be a situational analysis using supporting textual evidence. If you are performing more than one poem, select the work that might yield the most fruitful analysis; you should not analyze more than one work.

WHO is the speaking voice in the poem (characterize the voice, focusing on any demographic factors you are able to ascertain);

TO WHOM is he or she speaking (describe the features of the listener being spoken to or are the words addressed to a generalized audience);

WHERE and WHEN are the words being spoken (again, working from the speaker and listener that emerge from the text, describe if possible the location, date in history, time of day, or time in the speaker and listener's lives that these words are being exchanged);

WHAT is being said (give a brief synopsis of the meaning of the lines);

HOW is it being said (with what emotions are the lines being said; make note of nuance or major shifts in emotion, being sure to document your inferences with textual evidence);

WHY is it being said (discuss the reason that these words are being spoken)

Finally, how will these decisions affect your performance of the poem?

Prose fiction performance

3 pages, double spaced

Due on the day of your performance

Read all three short stories: Ernest Hemingway, "Hills Like White Elephants"

<http://plato.acadiu.ca/courses/engl/lawson/acadia03/texts/HillsLikeWE.html>

Raymond Carver, "Cathedral"

<http://www.ndsu.nodak.edu/instruct/cinichol/GovSchool/Cathedral2>

Toni Cade Bambara, "The Lesson"

<http://cai.ucdavis.edu/gender/thelesson.html>

Choose one of these stories and select an excerpt from one story (or excerpts from one story) that, with introduction, movement, and/or transitions, add up to 5 minutes of solo performance. For the performance, be sure you have the opportunity to show us how you can bring to life the narrator and the dialogue of at least two characters, using open and closed performing situations and angles of address.

Identify the features of the narrator (first, second, third person; limited, selective omniscient, omniscient; reliable, unreliable; objective, intrusive) and how the narrator interacts with the characters. Be sure you use textual citation to document your inferences. In addition, discuss how the narrator is regarded by the reader (you or, if your perceptions tend to be idiosyncratic, how the general readership might take to the narrator).

What performance choices would you enact to make the narrator come to life? Discuss facial expressions and physical characterization, including posture and gestures (describe the gestures); vocal mannerisms, including volume, fluency, accent, cadence, pauses, silence, dysfluencies; use of space (expansive, constricted) and movement (active, passive, quick, slow, measured, spontaneous). Be sure you justify your choices using synopses and textual evidence.

Drama performance
3 pages, double spaced
Due when announced

The *Dead Man Walking* performance will earn you a group grade; however, the grade may be modified due to absence and attitude.

For the analysis, write an entry from the diary of one of the major characters. Assume his or her identity, diction, and views of others and his or her world. Stay close to the character that has emerged from the words of the author, but comment, in character, upon recent events in the world.

As with the assignment on prose fiction, what performance choices would you enact to make the character come to life? Discuss facial expressions and physical characterization, including posture and gestures (describe the gestures); vocal mannerisms, including volume, fluency, accent, cadence, pauses, silence, dysfluencies; use of space (expansive, constricted) and movement (active, passive, quick, slow, measured, spontaneous). Be sure you justify your choices using synopses and textual evidence.

Do you like or dislike this character? How is the character like or unlike you? Given that we perform characters without critiquing them, how do you plan to allow the character to emerge as him or herself? What techniques will you use to enable the character's authenticity?

Critiques
2 pages, single paced
Due when announced

Cast Book
Due on date of final meeting

Compile each classmate's profile to make a final cast book that documents our work on *The Laramie Project*. This assignment receives a group grade.

The Three Types of Assignments for class: lab, speeches & presentations, tests

1. Lab Assignments: 60 pts total: your total

Lab assignments must be typed.

Mandatory lab assignments: complete all three

- View and analyze video of paper bag speech
- Practice, videotape, and discuss interview rehearsal
 - View and analyze video of interview

Optional lab assignments: complete any three

- Read and analyze SPCH 120 students' letters to future students
- View and analyze sample CD-ROM/video of introductory speech
 - Practice, videotape, and discuss paper bag speech
 - Self concept: building a resume
 - Family group project: your research question
 - Listening: staying present
 - Nonverbal: chronemics AND kinesics
 - Analysis of journal article
- Practice, videotape, and discuss family group presentation
 - View and analyze video of family group presentation

2. Speeches and presentations

Paper bag speech/50 pts max: your pts ____

Interview project/80 pts max: your pts ____

Family group assignment/85 pts max: your pts ____

3. Tests

Exam 1/60 pts max: your pts ____

Exam 2/60 pts max: your pts ____

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