PERFORMANCE STUDIES

communication.northwestern.edu/departments/performancestudies

The Department of Performance Studies integrates artistic and analytical approaches to a wide range of performance texts, events, and processes. The courses explore an interdisciplinary range of literary, cultural, and personal texts in performance. The department has particular strengths in the study of literature through solo performance; the ensemble adaptation and staging of poetic, narrative, and nonfictional texts; intercultural performance; performance art; cultural studies and the ethnography of performance; and performance theory and criticism. Internships and field study for performance studies majors extend and deepen their classroom work with experiential learning. Extracurricular work provides students with a variety of opportunities to perform, adapt, and direct, enabling their creative work to reach an audience outside the classroom.

Performance studies majors have been successful in many professions that require intelligence and imagination as well as critical and creative skills. In addition to pursuing careers in professional theatre and arts development, many graduates teach literature, theatre, humanities, and performance studies. Majors have found performance studies an excellent preparation for law school and complementary to their interests in creative writing, communication, new media, anthropology, dance, literature, or social work. Performance studies can be thought of as a major that bridges artistic expression and conceptual analysis, theory and practice. Performance, in its manifold forms, is the subject and the method of study.

Programs of Study

- Performance Studies Major (https://catalogs.northwestern.edu/undergraduate/communication/performance-studies/performance-studies-major/)
- Performance Studies Minor (https://catalogs.northwestern.edu/undergraduate/communication/performance-studies/performance-studies-minor/)

PERF_ST 101-0 Modes of Performance (1 Unit) Introduction to performance as a concept, embodied practice, and as a critical methodology. We will cover the various ways performance has been conceived over time; various approaches to acting; various performance styles; and various ways of using performance to analyze literary and non-literary texts. Students will do both solo and group performances each week and write critical essays on performance.

PERF_ST 103-0 Analysis & Performance of Literature (1 Unit) Critical reading, written analysis, and performance of literary texts; general introduction to performance studies. Literature Fine Arts Distro Area

PERF_ST 119-0 Production Laboratory (0 Unit) Registration for performance studies majors fulfilling production crew requirements. Students perform duties for run crews and house crews in connection with department-sponsored productions in the Krause Performance Lab of Annie May Swift Hall.

PERF_ST 200-0 Introduction to Performance Studies (1 Unit) Explores fundamental themes and debates that animate the field, introducing a range of ways of theorizing, conceptualizing, studying, and making performance. Literature Fine Arts Distro Area

PERF_ST 203-0 Performance Culture and Communication (1 Unit) Explores how live performance and dramatic forms of communication are methods used to examine social behavior and cultural expressions.

PERF_ST 210-1 Performance of Poetry (1 Unit) Introduction to the analysis and performance of poetry. Prerequisite: PERF_ST 103-0 or equivalent.

PERF_ST 210-2 Performance of Narrative Fiction (1 Unit) Introduction to the study of narrative performance. Prerequisite: PERF_ST 103-0 or equivalent.

PERF_ST 220-0 Sound Cultures (1 Unit) Introduction to ways of thinking culturally and historically about sound and listening. Students learn to describe, contrast, and analyze sound cultures over a wide geographical and chronological range.

PERF_ST 224-0 Adapting Narrative for Group Performance (1 Unit) Introduction to theories and methods of adapting narrative for the stage, with special emphasis on chamber theatre. Prerequisite: PERF_ST 103-0 or equivalent.

PERF_ST 230-0 Food and Performance (1 Unit) A critical engagement with food as a performance medium. This course explores food in its embodied, material, symbolic and evocative potential in historical, fictional, ethnographic and journalistic writings, as well as poetry, memoirs, cookbooks, selected films, plays, performances, music, visual and performance art.

PERF_ST 300-0 Movement Based Performance (1 Unit) Movement laboratory exploring theories and techniques of movement for performance, including dance, physical theatre, and framed quotidian action. Introduction to leading practitioners and practices in movement training, choreography, and composition.

PERF_ST 301-0 Performance and Activism in Digital Culture (1 Unit) Exploration of the intersection between performance and digital media as tools for activism. Includes practices of hacktivism, counter-surveillance, locative media activism, and networked protest. Literature Fine Arts Distro Area

PERF_ST 302-0 Performance in Asian America (1 Unit) Introduction to the performance of Asian America, including popular culture, performance art, theatre, and dance. Overview of current practices in Asian American aesthetic criticism.

PERF_ST 303-0 Transnational Flows of Performance (1 Unit) Exploration of how transnationalism and globalization challenge the concept of modern nation-states as bounded territories, identities, and cultures by considering how social actors negotiate these processes through performance as an embodied, in situ-cultural practice. Literature Fine Arts Distro Area

PERF_ST 304-0 Sonic Practices of the Middle East and North Africa (1 Unit) Sonic and musical practices and ritual in the Middle East and North Africa in relation to modernity, transnationalism, political economy, and performance. Literature Fine Arts Distro Area

PERF_ST 305-0 Performance Theory (1 Unit) Introduction to theoretical approaches that animate performance studies, including Marxism, psychoanalysis, deconstruction, postcolonial theory, critical race theory, feminist theory, and queer theory. Literature Fine Arts Distro Area

PERF_ST 306-0 Performance and Race (1 Unit) An exploration of the field of performance studies as it interrogates the relationship between race and performance. Anchoring each class in the work of artists who engages the medium of performance, we explore the ways in which race is performed and performative. Performance works by black, brown,
Asian, and indigenous artists will anchor understandings of race and 

PERF_ST 307-0 Performance in Latin America (1 Unit)  This course 

made and not given, the course will challenge the assumption that only 

"men" are creators, performers, and producers of masculinity. We will 

also examine the ways in which race, class, and sexuality alter tropes of 

masculinity. *Ethics Values Distro Area*

PERF_ST 319-0 Queer and Trans of Color Critique (1 Unit)  This class 

explores the development of queer of color and trans of color critique, 

their relationship to each other and to the realm of performance and 

performance studies. In addition to engaging with the traditions of queer 

and trans of color critique, the course will explore queer and trans of color 

performance practice as a site of theoretical praxis. *Ethics Values Distro 

Area*

PERF_ST 320-0 Blacktino Queer Performance (1 Unit)  This course 

stages a conversation among blackness, Latinidad and sexuality by 

examining the work of black and brown artists in the black diaspora. 

Using “blacktino” as the framing device, the course will highlight how 

these artists index the specificities of black and brown social and 

political relations, while also waging a broader queer-of-color critique of 

institutionalized racism and homophobia. *Ethics Values Distro Area*

PERF_ST 321-0 Performance, Sex, and Censorship (1 Unit)  This seminar 

expands the central issues that animated the “culture wars” in the United 

States since the 1980s, such as artistic expression, censorship, sex and 

sexuality, gender, race, reproductive choice, and religion. It focuses 

the history of performance, art, and censorship in the contemporary US, 

as well as the relevant first amendment law that accompanies much of this 

history. *Historical Studies Distro Area*

PERF_ST 322-0 Museums and Cultural Collections (1 Unit)  A look at 

museums as sites and practices of performance. This course focuses 

on how museums have historically collected, exhibited, and programmed 

around objects, images, plants, and, at times, human and non-human 

animals. We will explore the history of collections in libraries, cultural 

centers, museums and other archives. The course includes significant 

site visits to Chicago museums and collections.

PERF_ST 323-0 Performing Popular Music (1 Unit)  This course 

approaches the study of popular music practices, discourses, and 

worldmaking from the perspective of performance studies, with its 

attendant focus on the role of embodiment, social and cultural difference, 

and practice-based research.

PERF_ST 324-1 Presentational Aesthetics (1 Unit)  Theatrical 

convention, presentational mode, and conscious artifice in the 

performance of dramatic literature, poetry, and nonfiction.

PERF_ST 325-1 Performance Art (1 Unit)  History, development, and theories of performance art as a live-art genre 

from the modernist avant-garde to contemporary cross-cultural forms. 

Media in all forms, with emphasis on performance process and audience 

relationship.

PERF_ST 326-2 Performance Art (1 Unit)  Further theoretical and laboratory exploration of compositional processes 

and political strategies of performance, media, and event/audience 

contexts.

PERF_ST 327-0 Performance Ethnography (1 Unit)  Ethnographic approaches to the field of performance studies, 

including the theoretical foundations of performance ethnography and 

methodological approaches to its performance.

PERF_ST 330-0 Topics in Performance Studies (1 Unit)  Readings, discussion, and creative work in performance studies research 

and artistic practice. Topics vary. May be repeated for credit.

PERF_ST 331-0 Field Study/Internship in Performance Studies (1-4 

Units)
Intensive participation in off-campus production and/or field research experience. Departmental approval required.

**PERF_ST 332-0 Urban Festivity (1 Unit)**
Ethnographic study of festivals, parades, exhibitions, civic celebrations, and other genres of urban cultural performance. Multiethnic expressions of Chicago identity. Field research methods.

**PERF_ST 334-0 Human Rights & Performance (1 Unit)**
How social movements, local communities, and individual activists from specific regions around the world use performance to seek political empowerment and social justice. Performance as theory, method, and event in the arts of resistance; human rights as ideology and praxis within indigenous histories, imaginaries, and contexts.

**PERF_ST 335-0 Social Art Tactics (1 Unit)**
Exploration of historical and theoretical foundations of social art practice, including work focused on social change in such genres as performance, digital media, relational art, and photography. Performance/art workshops; development of performance-based interventions.

**PERF_ST 336-0 Latino/a Performance (1 Unit)**
Exploration of US Latina/o literature through narratives of migration, annexation, exile, and diaspora; focus on the arrival and development of Latina/o performance traditions in the United States.

**PERF_ST 338-0 Family Stories, Memoirs and Diaries (1 Unit)**
Use of performance to explore family stories, memoirs, diaries, and other biographical and autobiographical sources.

**PERF_ST 399-0 Independent Study (1 Unit)** Prerequisite: consent of undergraduate dean after submission of petition.