Performance Studies

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 American, 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 racism. **Ethics Values Distro Area**

**PERF_ST 307-0 Performance in Latin America (1 Unit)** This course provides an overview of artistic, quotidian, and activist performance practices in Latin America. Students will engage performance practice as an object of study, analytic framework, and communication medium in order to develop their own work in dialogue with the course themes and contexts.

**PERF_ST 308-0 Contemporary Middle Eastern Performance (1 Unit)** This seminar examines embodied cultural practices across the Middle East and North Africa, with particular attention to music, dance, theater, and popular culture. Spanning the late nineteenth century to the Arab Spring, students will better understand a cultural history of the region, its role in shaping global modernity, and the politics of gender, sexuality, and ethnoreligious difference.

**PERF_ST 309-0 Black Performance (1 Unit)** Exploration of black performance traditions; introduction to various schools of thought regarding black performance.

**PERF_ST 310-0 Performance of Women of Color (1 Unit)** Literary expressions by native, Latina, African, and Asian American women reflecting intersections of gender, sexuality, ethnicity, class, and culture in the United States. Feminisms considered across race and culture. Includes poetry, fiction, autobiography, drama, and critical theory.

**PERF_ST 311-0 Performance in Everyday Life (1 Unit)** Conceptual view of human beings as actors. Dramatism and the perspective of life as theatre.

**PERF_ST 312-0 Yoga: Practice, History, and Politics (1 Unit)** This course combines yoga practice with critical inquiry to engage the global phenomenon of yoga as performance, industry, philosophy, and culturally contested zone. We will study the historical and social processes that shaped the historic transformation of yoga from a 5,000 year-old South Asian tradition into a modern cultural form.

**PERF_ST 313-0 Documentary Theater and Performance (1 Unit)** This practice-based course focuses on the historical and theoretical foundations of documentary theatre and performance. Through case studies we will explore the poetics and politics of the genre. Students will devise their own documentary pieces based on interviews, personal narratives, and archival records of their choosing.

**PERF_ST 314-0 Postcolonial Theory, Fiction, & Film (1 Unit)** Exploration of the dramatic impulse in nonfiction texts. Emphasis on autobiographical one-person shows.

**PERF_ST 315-0 Non-Fiction Studies (1 Unit)** Genres of oral literature and an introduction to the methods and aims of folklore research. The nature of verbal art as performance and the importance of cultural context.

**PERF_ST 317-0 Feminist Performance (1 Unit)** This seminar focuses on the analytics and practice of intersectional, queer, and trans-feminist performance through a selection of key scholarly, artistic, and activist works. Pursuing what a feminist performance practice is and what it does, we will develop critical readings and hands-on experiments that follow feminist strategies in response to issues like gender-based violence, dissident identities, and collective emancipation. **Ethics Values Distro Area**

**PERF_ST 318-0 Performing Masculinities (1 Unit)** This course will examine the ways in which masculinity is represented in popular culture, theoretical discourse, and live performance. Assuming that gender is 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 specifics 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 pursues 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 326-1 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.