

**EL 680: The Theatrical Body: From Ritual to Performance**  
Wednesdays, 10-1:00 pm, TB 480

**Fall 2016**

Emine Fişek  
Office Hours: TB 475, TBA  
[emine.fisek@boun.edu.tr](mailto:emine.fisek@boun.edu.tr)

### **Course Description:**

Theatre is an art form whose central medium is the human body. Yet throughout theatre history, references to corporeality have been as conceptual as they have been physical, tangled as they are with broader questions regarding human sensory capacity and experience, spectatorship, relationality, virtuosity and violence. In this course, we will trace the different ways that theatrical corporeality has been understood in a variety of theatre and performance traditions, with case studies ranging from Western Europe to the Middle East. Throughout, we will endeavor to historicize the unique ways in which these traditions have separated the conceptual and the physical (or the mind and the body), and place these discussions in conversation with what has been called a “turn to the body” in humanities and social science scholarship: an increased interest in the human body as a central location of experience and affect. Drawing on key historical, anthropological and philosophical texts on sexuality and propriety, ritual and exchange, religious experience and embodiment, the senses and pain, we will ask: what does the performing body reveal to us about the complex relationship between embodiment, experience and representation?

### **Course Requirements:**

Active Participation	%10
Critical Presentation	%20
Play Presentation	%20
Undergraduate Syllabus	%20
Final Paper	%30

*Active Participation:* In-class discussion is central to realizing the goals of this course, so students’ presence and active participation is crucial. Please read the course materials before coming to class and be ready to ask questions and respond to those of your peers.

*Critical Presentation:* Each course participant will pick a week when they will be responsible for producing a 15-minute presentation on that unit’s critical and theoretical readings. The goals of these presentations will be to 1) discuss the overall theoretical trajectory and claims of the readings, with a particular focus on how they form a conversation amongst themselves and 2) identify the key terms and concepts with which they approach the study of the body. These critical presentations will conclude with a series of discussion questions.

*Play Presentation:* Each course participant will pick a week when they will be responsible for producing a 15-minute presentation that explores that week’s designated play or performance in light of the attached critical readings. Since these play presentations are meant to be exercises in “applying” critical/theoretical frameworks to literary texts, special attention must be paid to methodological consciousness, an issue that we will discuss throughout the semester.

*Undergraduate Syllabus:* This course is designed to provide students with a sense for how a certain theoretical claim, issue or concept develops and what it takes to then consider specific texts or performances in light of that development. The goal of the undergraduate syllabus exercise, which asks students to design a lower-level undergraduate theatre and/or performance studies course, will be to come up with a coherent approach to a course topic of their choice, and outline a semesterly plan for breaking down that topic's constituent parts.

*Final Paper:* Ideally, the 20-page final research paper in this course could grow out of one of the earlier presentations or the undergraduate syllabus exercise, and contribute to the development of students' eventual dissertation proposals. We will discuss the specific contours of the final paper over the course of the semester.

**Course Schedule:\***

**Please note that the schedule below is a draft and will likely change (and possibly be slightly diminished) by the start of the semester.**

**Sept. 21**      **Week 1:** Introduction

*The Body: Key Concepts*

**Sept. 28**      **Week 2:** Bodies and Rituals  
Mauss, "Techniques of the Body"  
Douglas, "Two Bodies"  
Asad, "Towards a Genealogy of the Concept of Ritual"  
Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (Excerpts)  
Carlson, "Semiotics and Its Heritage"

**Oct. 5**          **Week 3:** Phenomenology & Embodiment  
Merleau-Ponty, "The Experience of the Body and Classical Psychology"  
Grosz, "Lived Bodies: Phenomenology and the Flesh"  
Fanon, "The Fact of Blackness"  
Csordas, "Embodiment as a Paradigm for Anthropology"  
Garner, *Bodied Spaces* (Ch.1)  
**Performance/Play:** Jean Genet's *The Blacks*

**Oct. 12**        **Week 4:** Discipline, Practice and Kinaesthetics  
Foucault, "Docile Bodies"  
Bourdieu, "Structures, *Habitus*, Practices", "Belief and the Body"  
Connerton, "Bodily Practices"  
Roach, "History, Memory, Performance"  
**Performance/Play:** Sophie Treadwell's *Machinal*

*The Theatrical Body: Key Issues*

**Oct. 19**        **Week 5:** Presence  
Derrida, *Of Grammatology* (Excerpts)  
Derrida, "The Theatre of Cruelty and the Closure of Representation"  
Phelan, "The Ontology of Performance"  
Auslander, "Live Performance in a Mediatized Culture"  
**Performance/Play:** Karagöz and Hacivat's *Aptal Bekçi*

- Oct. 26**      **Week 6: Performativity and Theatricality**  
 Austin, Lectures I-III, X from *How to do things with Words*  
 Derrida, "Signature, Event, Context"  
 Butler, *Bodies that Matter* (Introduction)  
 Worthen, "Dramatic Performativity and the Force of Performance"  
**Performance/Play:** Timberlake Wertenbaker's *Our Country's Good*
- Nov. 2**      **Week 7: Affect and Empathy**  
 Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual* (Introduction + Ch.1)  
 Leys, "The Turn to Affect: A Critique"  
 Krasner, "Empathy and Theater"  
 Foster, "Kinesthetic Empathies and the Politics of Compassion"  
 Roach, *The Player's Passion* (Excerpts)  
**Performance/Play:** Berthold Brecht's *Mother Courage and Her Children*
- Nov. 9**      **Week 8: Suffering and the Senses**  
 Seremetakis, *The Senses Still* (Chapters 1-3)  
 Scarry, *The Body in Pain* (Excerpts)  
 Asad, "Thinking about Agency and Pain"  
 Jones, "Working the Flesh"  
 Koppers, "Bodies, Hysteria, Pain: Staging the Invisible"  
**Performance/Play:** Jalal Toufic's *Ashura: This Blood Spilled in my Veins*

*The Theatrical Body and the Question of Identity*

- Nov. 16**      **Week 9: Mimesis**  
 Worthen, "Chekhov's Camera"  
 Diamond, *Unmaking Mimesis* (Excerpts)  
 Schechner, "Restoration of Behavior"  
 Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man"  
 Schneider, "Hello Dolly"  
**Performance/Play:** David Henry Hwang's *M. Butterfly*
- Nov. 23**      **Week 10: Spectacle**  
 DeBord, *Society of the Spectacle* (Excerpts)  
 Baudrillard, "The Precession of Simulacra"  
 Crary, "Modernity and the Problem of Attention"  
 Hartman, "Innocent Amusements"  
**Performance/Play:** Suzan Lori Parks' *Venus*

*The Theatrical Body and the Question of Culture*

- Nov. 30**      **Week 11: Interculturalism**  
 Pavis, "Towards a Theory of Culture and Mise en Scene"  
 Bharucha, *Theatre and the World* (Excerpts)  
 Lo and Gilbert, "Towards a Topography of Cross-Cultural Theatre Praxis"  
 Lei, "Interruption, Intervention, Interculturalism"  
**Performance/Play:** Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* + Miller's *Salesman in Beijing* (Excerpts)

- Dec. 7**      **Week 12:** Authenticity, Appropriation and Casting  
Johnson, ““Blackness” and Authenticity”  
Chatard Carpenter, “Introduction: Dramaturgies of Whiteness”  
Pao, “Beyond Type”  
Catanese, “Bad Manners: Talking about Race”  
**Performance/Play:** Anna Deavere Smith’s *Fires in the Mirror*
- Dec. 14**      **Week 13:** Concluding Exercise  
Discussion of Undergraduate Syllabi