

**Performative Theories**  
**Enikő Bollobás**

This course traces the development of the concept of the performative from its inception in the philosophy of language to the current transdisciplinary paradigms. Among these paradigms, we will discuss theories of subjectivity, intersubjectivity, autobiography, and theatre performance, all applying the concept of performativity in one way or another. While exploring these secondary paradigms, we will test each theoretical application in concrete textual analysis.

Topics include: primary paradigms (Austin's theory, the performative hypothesis, speech act theory), secondary paradigms, subjectivity (the Cartesian subject, the linguistic subject, the Lacanian subject, the social subject, social construction), performative subjectivity, agency, gender performativity, scripts, intersubjectivity, performative intersubjectivity, autobiography as performative, the narrative self, theatricality, performance in society.

Students are required to

- read the assignments for each class;
- give one presentation of a critical-theoretical text;
- do a short oral exam where we discuss the critical essays we read over the semester.

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**Schedule of topics and assignments**

**September 22**

**Orientation**

**September 29**

**The primary paradigms: the classic understanding**

Assignment for all:

J. L. Austin, *How To Do Things With Words*. Oxford: Clarendon P, 1962. (pdf)

**October 6**

**The performative hypothesis, speech act theory**

Assignment for all:

Jerrold M. Sadock, "Speech Acts" (pdf)

John Searle, "What Is a Speech Act" (pdf)

Barry Smith, "John Searle: From speech acts to social reality" (pdf)

Presentation (MA student):

*Centrum—Speech Acts and Literature* (print)

**October 13**

**Logos, episteme, word power, declarations, language games**

Assignment for all:

on the Logos, check Derrida: *Of Grammatology*. Trans. G. C. Spivak. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1976.

on the episteme, check Foucault, *The Order of Things* and *The Archeology of Knowledge*

The Declaration of Independence

Judith Butler, "Sovereign Performatives in the Contemporary Scene of Utterance." *Critical Inquiry* 23 (1997)/2. 350-377. (pdf)

Presentation (MA student):

Catharine A. MacKinnon, *Only Words*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1993. (pdf)

**October 20**

**Extending the performative—linguistic turn, postmodern episteme,  
the poststructuralist framework**

Assignment for all:

Bo Petterson, "On the Linguistic Turns in the Humanities and Their Effects on Literary Studies." *Turning Points: Concepts and Narratives of Change in Literature and Other Media*. Ed. Ansgar Nünning, Kai Marcel Sicks. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012. 407-423. (pdf)

Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory." *Writing on the Body. Female Embodiment and Feminist Theory*. Ed. Katie Conboy, Nadia Medina, Sarah Stanbury. New York: Columbia UP, 1997. 401–17. (pdf)

**October 27**

**Subjectivity: the Cartesian subject, the linguistic subject, the  
Lacanian subject, the social subject, social construction**

Assignment for all:

Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatus" (pdf)

Émile Benveniste, "Subjectivity in Language." *Problems in General Linguistics*. Trans. Mary Elizabeth Meek. Coral Gables: U of Miami P, 1971. 223-230. (pdf)

Presentation (MA student):

Jacques Lacan, "The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire in the Freudian Unconscious." Trans. Bruce Fink. *Écrits*. New York: Norton, 2005. 671-702. (pdf)

**November 3**

**No class (fall break)**

(please start reading the assignments for next class)

**November 10**

**No class (SEAS 130 conference)**

(please continue reading the assignments for next class)

**November 17**

**Performative subjectivity, agency**

Assignment for all:

Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge, 1990. (pdf)

Michel Foucault, "The Subject and Power." *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*. Ed. Hubert L. Dreyfus & Paul Rabinow. Chicago: The U of Chicago P, 1982. 208-226. (pdf)

Michel Foucault, "What Is Critique?" Ford. Lysa Hochroth. In: *The Politics of Truth*. Szerk. Sylvère Lotringer. *The Politics of Truth*. Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2007. 41–81. (pdf)

Judith Butler, "What Is Critique? An Essay on Foucault's Virtue." In: *The Judith Butler Reader*. Szerk. Sara Salih. Oxford: Blackwell, 2004. 302–322. (pdf)

Presentation (MA student):

Terry Lovell, "Resisting with Authority: Historical Specificity, Agency and the Performative Self." *Theory, Culture & Society* (London) 20 (2003)/1. 1-17. (pdf)

**November 24**

**Scripts of gender performativity**

script #1: woman as Other/object

Assignment for all:

Simone de Beauvoir, "Introduction—Woman as Other." *The Second Sex*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972. (pdf)

John Berger, *Ways of Seeing*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972. (pdf)

Laura Mulvey, *Visual and Other Pleasures*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1989. (pdf)

Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*. New York: Random House, 1995. (pdf)

script #2: the dress code

Assignment for all:

Virginia Woolf, *Orlando—A Biography* (pdf)

script #3: woman as constructed in the process of its becoming

Assignment for all:

Susan Bordo, *Unbearable Weight—Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1993. (pdf)

Presentations (MA students):

Annie Pettitt, "Performative Pastiche: Judith Butler on Gender Subversion." *Colloquy: Text-Theory—Critique. An Electronic Journal of Interdisciplinary Work by Australian Postgraduates*. (pdf)

Sarah Henstra, "Looking the Part: Performative Narration in Djuna Barnes' *Nightwood* and Katherine Mansfield's "Je Ne Parle Pas Francais." *Twentieth Century Literature* 46 (2000)/2. 125-149. (pdf)

Please reread:

Henry James, *Daisy Miller*

Tennessee Williams, *A Streetcar Named Desire*

Flannery O'Connor, "A Good Man Is Hard to Find"

Herman Melville, "Billy Budd"

Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

**December 1****Intersubjectivity, performative intersubjectivity**Assignment for all:

Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*. Trans. Dorion Cairns. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1960/1982. (pdf)

Kathy Dow Magnus, "The Unaccountable Subject, Judith Butler and the Social Conditions of Intersubjective Agency." *Hypatia* 21 (2006)/2, 81–103. (pdf)

Mary Jacobus, "Is There a Woman in this Text?" *Reading Woman – Essays in Feminist Literary Criticism*. London: Methuen, 1986. 83-109. (pdf)

Please reread:

Carson McCullers, *The Ballad of the Sad Cafe*

**December 8****Autobiography as performative, the narrative self**Assignment for all:

Michael Bérubé, "Autobiography as Performative Utterance." *American Quarterly* 52 (2000)/2. 339-343. (pdf)

Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, "Autobiographical Subjects." *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives*. U of Minnesota P, 2001. 21-62. (pdf)

**December 15****Performance in society**Assignment for all:

Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. New York: Doubleday, 1959.

Joan Rivière, "Womanliness as a Masquerade." (pdf)

Eric Berne. *Games People Play*.

Presentations (MA students):

Josette Féral and Ronald P. Bermingham, "Theatricality: The Specificity of Theatrical Language." *SubStance* 31 (2002)/2-3. (pdf)

Jean-Pierre Sarrazac, "The Invention of "Theatricality": Rereading Bernard Dort and Roland Barthes." *SubStance* 31 (2002)/2-3. (pdf)

Virginie Magnat. "Theatricality from the Performative Perspective." *SubStance* 31 (2002)/2-3. (pdf)

## READINGS

1. Austin, J. L. *How To Do Things With Words*. Oxford: Clarendon P, 1962.\*
2. Sadock, Jerrold M. "Speech Acts"
3. Searle, John. "What Is a Speech Act"
4. Smith, Barry. "John Searle: From speech acts to social reality"
5. on the Logos, check Derrida: *Of Grammatology*. Trans. G. C. Spivak. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1976.
6. on the episteme, check Foucault: *The Order of Things* and *The Archeology of Knowledge*
7. Bollobás, Enikő. "Dangerous Liaisons: Politics and Epistemology in Post-Cold War American Studies." *American Quarterly* 54/4 (2002): 563–79.
8. The Declaration of Independence
9. Butler, Judith. "Sovereign Performatives in the Contemporary Scene of Utterance." *Critical Inquiry* 23 (1997)/2. 350-377.
10. Petterson, Bo. "On the Linguistic Turns in the Humanities and Their Effects on Literary Studies." *Turning Points: Concepts and Narratives of Change in Literature and Other Media*. Ed. Ansgar Nünning, Kai Marcel Sicks. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012. 407-423.
11. Butler, Judith. "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory." *Writing on the Body. Female Embodiment and Feminist Theory*. Ed. Katie Conboy, Nadia Medina, Sarah Stanbury. New York: Columbia UP, 1997. 401–17.
12. Althusser, Louis. "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatus."
13. Benveniste, Émile. "Subjectivity in Language." *Problems in General Linguistics*. Trans. Mary Elizabeth Meek. Coral Gables: U of Miami P, 1971. 223-230.
14. Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge, 1990.
15. Foucault, Michel. "The Subject and Power." *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*. Ed. Hubert L. Dreyfus & Paul Rabinow. Chicago: The U of Chicago P, 1982. 208-226.
16. Foucault, Michel. "What Is Critique?" Ford. Lysa Hochroth. In: *The Politics of Truth*. Szerk. Sylvère Lotringer. *The Politics of Truth*. Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2007. 41–81.
17. Butler, Judith. "What Is Critique? An Essay on Foucault's Virtue." In: *The Judith Butler Reader*. Szerk. Sara Salih. Oxford: Blackwell, 2004. 302–322.
18. Butler, Judith. *The Psychic Life of Power – Theories in Subjection*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997.
19. Beauvoir, Simone de. "Introduction—Woman as Other." *The Second Sex*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972.
20. Berger, John. *Ways of Seeing*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972.
21. Mulvey, Laura. *Visual and Other Pleasures*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1989.
22. Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish*. New York: Random House, 1995.
23. Woolf, Virginia. *Orlando—A Biography*
24. Bordo, Susan. *Unbearable Weight—Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1993.
25. Husserl, Edmund. *Cartesian Meditations*. Trans. Dorion Cairns. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1960/1982.

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\* Texts in **bold** print are available in pdf format.

26. Magnus, Kathy Dow. "The Unaccountable Subject, Judith Butler and the Social Conditions of Intersubjective Agency." *Hypatia* 21 (2006)/2, 81–103.
27. Jacobus, Mary. "Is There a Woman in this Text?" *Reading Woman – Essays in Feminist Literary Criticism*. London: Methuen, 1986. 83-109.
28. Michael Bérubé, "Autobiography as Performative Utterance." *American Quarterly* 52 (2000)/2. 339-343.
29. Smith Sidonie, and Julia Watson. "Autobiographical Subjects." *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives*. U of Minnesota P, 2001. 21-62.
30. Goffman, Erving. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. New York: Doubleday, 1959.
31. Rivière, Joan. "Womanliness as a Masquerade."
32. Berne, Eric. *Games People Play*.