

CRITICAL DRAG



Tufts University Drama & Dance, and Women's, Gender, & Sexuality Studies
Spring 2018 | Monday & Wednesday, 10:30-11:45am

Dr. Khubchandani

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Description

Understanding drag as a performance practice that aestheticizes gender for a variety of purposes such as entertainment, socio-political critique, and labor, each student will produce their own drag persona and performances. To develop drag personas, we will read critical texts about the intersections of gender, nationality, race, class, and disability to understand the implications of putting gender on the body, on stage and in everyday life. The semester will feature workshops, short performances, rehearsals, and critiques that curate our performance resources, and

cultivate our performance techniques, culminating in a live public performance at the end of the semester.

Objectives and Outcomes

- * learn about a variety of styles of drag
- * investigate the political nature of drag on stage and in the everyday
- * explore the histories and politics of embodied practices
- * develop a drag persona for performance
- * rehearse lipsync as an art
- * understand the relationship between research, rehearsal, and performance

Communication

If you have problems concerning the course, if there are particular topics you are excited by and want to talk more about, if you want to better prepare for assignments, or for any other issues related to this class, please don't hesitate to come by our office hours, or reach out to us to set up a meeting. We want to make sure you get the most out of this class! Also, if you decide to drop this course at any point, please have a conversation with us before you do, or at least notify us when you do. We will send emails concerning class via Trunk, and we expect that you will check your email at least 12 hours prior to the class for any important updates.

Required Readings / Viewings

All required readings are in the Trunk folder labeled "Resources" as PDFs. Viewings will be available as links on the Trunk syllabus. Please complete all readings the day before class so that you have time to think about the connections between the texts and come prepared to discuss them. Scholarly readings are assigned only up to week four; after that you will be expected to read, view, and listen to each other's uploaded works in preparation for the remaining classes.

Performance Expectations

Although no prior performance experience is required for this class, you are expected to perform several times during the class. We will work toward building a well-rounded, captivating, rehearsed presentation. You will be evaluated on: the progress you make as a performer over the semester; the research, rehearsal, and effort you put into developing your performances; the clarity of your intention, and of the choices you make to achieve that intention. All audio for in-class performances are due to Teri before 5pm the Sunday before your performance in MP3 format.

Attendance, Participation, Technology

Attendance is mandatory at all classes; please let me know in advance if you plan to be absent; otherwise your absence will affect your overall grade. Laptops are permitted in the classroom only for the purposes of referencing assigned materials, and taking notes. Please do not use phones while in class.

Classroom Environment

Drag, as a performance style, is not without controversy. It is constantly subject to critiques of appropriation, sexism, and transphobia. While we will discuss these histories, tendencies, and aesthetics in class prior to creating performances, it is also likely that some of our performances will replicate hierarchies and binaries that are difficult to dismantle in the short space of an hour and fifteen minutes, or even a semester. I ask that we leave ourselves open to critique and feedback, and that we extend each other the grace to make mistakes and therefore learn from and with each other. There will always be time for feedback after performances. I also ask us to be aware of how we take up space and time in the class; be sure to share airtime and to direct your comments and questions to your peers.

Academic Integrity

Your writing should consist of *your* own ideas, words, and information you have collated. When you are quoting or referencing a resource other than your own work, please make this is evident using citations. You are expected to be familiar with the Tufts University academic integrity guidelines:

<https://students.tufts.edu/student-affairs/student-life-policies/academic-integrity-policy>

Academic Support

If the reading or writing assignments prove to be challenging (and they should be!) I want to encourage you to seek help. There's always room to grow and for skills to be learned, and there should be no stigma attached to getting support. You're always welcome to talk to me about these things, and also know that there is an Academic Resource Center available to you: <https://students.tufts.edu/academic-advice-and-support/academic-resource-center/> In addition, the library has a research librarian who specializes in Drama and Dance. Her name is Chao Chen. If you need help accessing research materials, databases, or other sources through Tisch, you can contact Chao at Chao.Chen@tufts.edu.

Accommodations

We each arrive to the classroom with different learning needs and it is my intention to create as supportive an environment as possible. If you do need accommodations based on disability, please meet with me as soon as possible. Also visit the Student Accessibility Services Office and website for further support: <https://students.tufts.edu/student-accessibility-services>

Evaluation

Techniques of the body pinterest page	10%
Technologies of the body essay	10%
Dramaturgy of an icon	10%
Performance of an icon	10%
Lipsync DIET.....	10%
Lipsync without music	10%
Final lipsync performance.....	10%
Final reflection paper	10%
Attendance, participation, peer feedback	20%

Assignments

Techniques of the body -- Pinterest page

During class, we will discuss the ways that performers use their bodies to communicate: duck lips, peace signs, snaps, eye rolls, clenched fists, pointed toes etc. This assignment asks you to assemble a Pinterest page that traces one specific technique of the body. This online assemblage is a chance to imagine how that technique has changed over time, what it does for different people / bodies, how it moves across geographies etc.

Technologies of the body – 4-page research essay

We will discuss the various technologies people use to make their bodies: clothes, tattoos, surgery, makeup, hair, etc. This essay asks you to choose one single technology and trace its gendered meanings over time and geographic space. You might choose to explore the history and meanings of “nude” leotards, stilettos, cargo pants, denim jeans, long fingernails, handlebar mustaches, chokers, cinched waists, plaid, girdles, contouring, gloves, veils, rouge, bras, bustles, shaving, “tribal” tattoos etc. How exactly do these technologies restructure the body? In what ways are they racialized, classed, gendered? Who popularized their circulation? How have they changed over time? Your essay should have an elegant introductory paragraph with a clear thesis statement that explains the primary focus of the essay, as well as a brief conclusion that reflects your (dis)investment in this technology. Please use in-text citations, with a full bibliography at the end (bibliography does not count toward page count); academic and popular sources are all welcome. Email to Teri in MS Word or equivalent format: yourname-technologies.doc

Dramaturgy of an icon – 4-page research / description essay

How does a celebrity become a celebrity? You will be assigned a celebrity to research. What were their beginnings? How did they achieve iconicity? What are their signature styles of dress, movement, hair, and makeup? How do/did they reinvent themselves? How have they been taken up by fans, politics, and as public symbols? What is most recognizable about them? In addition to the story you want to tell about them and their aesthetics, we'd also like you to spend one page describing a performance of theirs that you think captures their individual style. This essay does not need an introductory paragraph or a thesis statement, but it does require at least two scholarly sources. Please use in-text citations, with a full bibliography at the end (bibliography does not count toward page count); academic and popular sources are all welcome. Email to Teri in MS Word or equivalent format: yourname-icon.doc

Performance of an icon – 1.5 mins

This will be a one and a half minute long lipsync performance tribute to the icon you have been assigned. It does not need to replicate one performance of that icon, but should rather function as a tribute to their style. How can you best match their bodily style, hand gestures, facial expressions, the way they hold the mic, their dance moves, etc. Given that we may not be the same race as the person we're studying, it is necessary that we understand these performances as tributes, as an honoring of this icon and their individuality, as opposed to perhaps a generalized appropriation of racial difference. You will be graded on your physical embodiment of the icon; while you are welcome to use costume and makeup to enhance your performance, this will not count toward your grade. Email MP3 to Teri: yourname-iconclip.mp3 by 5pm the Sunday before your performance.

Lipsync-DIET – 4 page description

DIET: Describe. Interpret. Evaluate. Theorize. You will identify a drag lip sync performance that is available to watch online. You will break it down following the DIET plan (we will discuss in class) in order to explain how its structure, execution, and arc produce effects that are compelling to you. Be sure to include a link to the online clip in your essay. Email to Teri in MS Word or equivalent format: yourname-DIET.doc

Lipsync without music – 1 – 1.5 minutes

You must find about one minute worth of audio that you would like to lipsync to in class that is not music. This can be anything you like. You will be graded on the creative choices you make to embody the sound, the story you tell through performance, and the accuracy of execution. Email MP3 to Teri: yourname-iconclip.mp3 by 5pm the Sunday before your performance.

Final lipsync performance – 2 – 2.5 minutes

Your final performance will be a show at the library rotunda titled "The Library is Open!" featuring 1) a pageant-style entrance to pre-recorded introductions, 2) group choreography, and 3) individual performances by each of you between two and two and a half minutes (Groups of up to three are permissible, and time limit will adjust accordingly). This final lipsync performance should be whatever you want it to be; you will be graded on your in-class rehearsal / presentation, as well as the way you incorporate feedback prior to the final performance. You will not be graded on costume and makeup, although you are encouraged to do as much or as little as you'd

like for the final performance. You will be graded on the creative ways you produce and interpret the audio clip that you decide to perform through your physical embodiment (movement, gesture, etc.) Email MP3s to Teri by Sunday Mar 23, you will receive feedback: yourname-intro.mp3 + yourname-libraryisopen.mp3

Final reflection paper – 4-page essay

This final reflection paper should discuss your experience of preparing, rehearsing, and staging your final performance. It should explain how you used the previous exercises, research, and readings from the class to inform your final performance. You will be graded on the clarity of your explanation and analysis, and the ways you interweave experiences and knowledge from earlier in the semester into the reflection on your final performance. Email to Teri in MS Word or equivalent format: yourname-finalreflection.doc

CALENDAR

[text in pink indicates something is due]

Mon Jan 22 – Start your engines

Cory Collins: Drag Race to the Bottom

Mitchell Morris: The Voice of Karen Carpenter (pages 129-135 only!)

Kareem Khubchandani: An Interview with LaWhore Vagistan

Weds Jan 24 – The politics of performing gender

Introduce your drag name.

Eve Sedgwick: Gosh Boy George, you must be awfully secure in your masculinity!

Matthew Goldmark: National Drag

Sarah Hankins: Drag Tipping

Paris is Burning

Optional:

Michelle Liu Carriger: The Unnatural History

Mon Jan 29 – Techniques and technologies of the body

Enter the room with your drag name and greeting / sign-off.

Deborah Vargas: Rita's Pants

Alana Kumbier: One Body, Some Genders

E. Patrick Johnson: SNAP! queens

Rashaad Newsome: Shade Symphony

Weds Jan 31 – Masculinities

Enter the room with your drag name, greeting/sign-off, and three words to describe yourself.

J. Halberstam: Mackdaddy, Superfly, Rapper

K Bradford: Grease Cowboy Fever

Venus Boyz

Mon Feb 5 – Femininities

Enter the room with your drag name, greeting/sign-off, three words, and hit three poses during this intro.

Kathryn Hansen: Making Women Visible (127 – 141)

Martin Manalansan: To Play With the World

Rupaul's Drag Race, Season 1 Episode 5

Weds Feb 7 – Race, class, and disability

Enter the room with your drag name, greeting/sign-off, three words AND/OR a personalized catch-phrase, and show off your signature 'technology of the body.'

Joshua Williams: Going Ape

José Esteban Muñoz: The White to be Angry

Eric Zhang: Memoirs of a Gay!Sha

Edward Ndobpu & Darnell Moore: On Ableism within Queer Spaces

Optional: Amanda Lock Swarr: Moffies, Artists, and Queens

Friday Feb 9 – Techniques of the body Pinterest page due

Mon Feb 12 – Techniques of the body discussion

Enter the room and introduce yourself however you'd like. This will (hopefully) be your signature entrance clip for the final performance.

Review your colleagues' Pinterest pages linked from Trunk.

Weds Feb 14 – Techniques of the body discussion

Deborah Paredez: Como La Flor reprised

Sunday Feb 18 – Technologies of the body due

Mon Feb 19 – Campus holiday

Weds Feb 21 – Technologies of the body discussion

Read you colleagues' essays uploaded to Trunk.

Thurs Feb 22 – Technologies of the body discussion

Mon Feb 26 – Performance workshop

Weds Feb 28 – Performance workshop

Fri Mar 2 – Dramaturgy of an icon due

Mon Mar 5 – Dramaturgy of an icon discussion

Read you colleagues' essays uploaded to Trunk.

Weds Mar 7 – Dramaturgy of an icon discussion

A definitive ranking of every 'Rupaul's Drag Race' Lip Sync For Your Life

Mon Mar 12 – Performance of an icon

Weds Mar 14 – Performance of an icon

Fri Mar 16 – Lipsync DIET due

SPRING BREAK

Fri Mar 23 – Recording for final performance (2 – 2.5mins) + signature entrance due.

Mon Mar 26 – Lipsync without music

Listen to your colleagues' sound clips uploaded to trunk

Weds Mar 28 – Lipsync without music

Mon Apr 2 – Group choreography

Weds Apr 4 – Group choreography

Thurs Apr 6 – Aymar Jean Christian talk

Mon Apr 9 – Rehearsal of final performance

Weds Apr 11 – Rehearsal of final performance

Mon Apr 16 – campus holiday

Weds Apr 18 – Rehearsal of final performance

Fri Apr 20 – The Library is Open!

Mon Apr 23 – Debrief

Weds Apr 25 – In class performances. 4 mins of whatever you want.

Mon Apr 30 – In class performances. 4 mins of whatever you want.