

Performance: Writing and Research Methodologies

Come Again? Reenactments as Embodied Research

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Spring 2025, 90-minute class, twice a week, 17 students.

Course Description

Embodied reenactments in contemporary visual and performing arts have become a strategy for approaching the past while rehearsing a future. From Civil War reenactments to Marina Abramović's performance of *Seven Easy Pieces* (2005) and Joshua Oppenheimer's documentary *The Act of Killing* (2012), these repetitions of gestures to reiterate and reshape testimonies are research methods that deserve our critical attention.

Come Again? Reenactments as Embodied Research examines media, artworks, and performance theory that engage with this topic. In the first part of the course, students have the opportunity to manifest these strategies of embodied reenactment in an independent research project. We practice these methods through the collection of oral history interviews and subsequent work with these transcripts as a method of revisioning and rewriting. In the second part of the course, we develop these texts into a ten-page essay. The course reflects on the efficacy, potential, and limits of embodied research methodologies while considering their relationship to questions of representation and legacies of power within the academic institution.

This course supports students in developing college-level analysis and skills for approaching critical theory. We focus on embodied forms of research and documentation, including performance documentation and interview methods, and apply material gathered through these methods toward a final essay through a scaffolded writing process with consistent feedback from the instructor and fellow students.

Learning Objectives

- Understand the format, standards, and practices of academic writing in the humanities.
- Improve skills in reading, comprehending, and analyzing complex academic texts.
- Explore and integrate methods of embodied research and documentation into your projects.
- Develop strategies for sustained writing and research, supported by peer feedback and iterative revision.
- Collaborate with peers to foster a supportive learning environment and reflect on effective pedagogical practices.
- Cultivate the ability to transition between concrete examples and abstract concepts in your writing, building intellectual independence.

Reading List

- Agnew, Vanessa, Jonathan Lamb, and Julianne Tomann, editors. *The Routledge Handbook of Reenactment Studies: Key Terms in the Field*. Routledge, 2020.
- Bishop, Claire. "Delegated Performance: Outsourcing Authenticity." *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*, Verso, 2012, pp. 219–239.
- Bruzzi, Stella. "Documentary Re-enactment: The 'Model' Approximation." *Approximation: Documentary, History and the Staging of Reality*, Routledge, 2020.
- Jackson, Shannon. "Assemblies: Public Participation, Heteronomous Worlds." *Back Stages: Essays across Art, Performance, and Public Life*, Northwestern UP, 2022, pp. 341–367.
- Jones, Amelia. "The Artist Is Present: Artistic Re-enactments and the Impossibility of Presence." *TDR: The Drama Review*, vol. 55, no. 1, 2011, pp. 16–45.
- Lepecki, André. "The Body as Archive: Will to Re-enact and the Afterlives of Dances." *Dance Research Journal*, vol. 42, no. 2, 2010, pp. 28–48.
- Loo, Zihan. "For Words." *Archiving Cane*, edited by Zihan Loo and Louis Ho, The Substation, 2012.
- Muñoz, José Esteban. "Gesture, Ephemerality, and Queer Feeling: Approaching Kevin Aviance." *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*, NYU Press, 2009, pp. 65–82.
- Schneider, Rebecca. *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment*. Routledge, 2011.
- Taylor, Diana. "Acts of Transfer." *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*, Duke UP, 2003, pp. 1–52.
- Wong, Melissa Wansin. "Performing Singapore's Queer Quandary: Walking the Tightrope Between Sexual Illegality and Neoliberal-Enabled Subjectivity at Pink Dot and in Loo Zihan's Cane." *Queer Dramaturgies: International Perspectives on Where Performance Leads Queer*, edited by Alyson Campbell and Stephen Farrier, Palgrave Macmillan, 2016, pp. 66–80.
- Graff, Gerald, and Cathy Birkenstein. *They Say / I Say: The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing*. 4th ed., W.W. Norton & Company, 2018.

Films

- Oppenheimer, Joshua, director. *The Act of Killing*. 2012.
- Akers, Matthew, and Jeff Dupre, directors. *Marina Abramović: The Artist Is Present*. 2012.

Podcasts

- The Berkeley Remix*. Oral History Center podcast.

Grading Criteria

Attendance and Participation – 20%

Attendance – 5%; Participation – 3%; Weekly Discussion Posts – 9%; Critical Response to *The Act of Killing* – 3%.

Interview and Interpretation – 30%

These assignments involve gathering and interpreting research material for the final essay.

Critical Response to an episode of *The Berkeley Remix* – 3%; Oral History Interview and Transcription – 10%; Class Presentation and Reenactment Exercise – 9%; 3-page Summary of Reading – 8%.

Writing, Revision, and Composition – 50%

In the latter half of the semester, students develop an academic essay that draws from their interview and interpretation assignments while engaging with readings encountered throughout the course.

There will be several stages to this process: 300-word Abstract – 3%; 7–8 page Work-In-Progress Essay – 15%; Peer Review of Two Papers – 6%; In-class Symposium and Presentation – 4%; Office Hour Appointment – 2%; 10-page Final Essay – 20%

Shared Assessment Criteria

Across written assignments and presentations, work is evaluated for clear and sustained argument; close engagement with course readings, interviews, and other research materials; thoughtful use of evidence and citation; organization, development, and writing quality; attention to revision and the research process; and constructive participation in our shared pedagogical space. Completion-based assignments are assessed for timely, good-faith engagement.

A = 94 to 100%	A- = 90 to 93%	B+ = 87 to 89%	B = 83 to 86%
B- = 80 to 82%	C+ = 77 to 79%	C = 73 to 76%	C- = 70 to 72%
D+ = 67 to 69%	D = 63 to 66%	D- = 60 to 62%	F = 0 to 59%

Weekly Outline

Wk 1	Jan 21 - Tue	Introduction. Review of grading criteria, assignments, and course policies. Review <i>Annex A - Terms of Engagement</i>, <i>Annex B - Reading Theory</i> and <i>Annex C - Approaching Objects</i>.	
	Jan 23 - Thu and Jan 28 - Tue	Watch Joshua Oppenheimer's <i>The Act of Killing</i> (2 hours 39 minutes) and write a 2-page response. Film access provided through the course. For historical context read "The Murders of Gonzago" by executive producer and filmmaker Errol Morris after watching the film. <i>Content warning: Scenes of graphic reenactment of violence and genocide.</i>	<i>Asynchronous</i>
Wk 2	Jan 30 - Thu	Read: Excerpts from Bruzzi, Stella. "Documentary Re-enactment: The 'Model' Approximation." <i>Approximation: Documentary, History and the Staging of Reality</i>, Routledge, 2020.	2-page response due Jan 31
Wk 3	Feb 4 - Tue	Review <i>The Berkeley Remix</i> podcast and select one episode you would like to write about. In-class interview exercise and watch <i>Autopsy</i> (2008)	
	Feb 6 - Thu	Read: Selected excerpts (Introduction, Gesture, History of the Field, Performance and Performativity) from <i>The Routledge Handbook of Reenactment Studies: Key Terms in the Field</i>. Routledge, 2020.	2-page response to <i>The Berkeley Remix</i> episode due Feb 7
Unit A: Repertoire, Remains, Reenactments			
Wk 4	Feb 11 - Tue	Read: Wong, Melissa Wansin. "Performing Singapore's Queer Quandary: Walking the Tightrope Between Sexual Illegality and Neoliberal-Enabled Subjectivity at Pink Dot and in Loo Zihan's Cane." <i>Queer Dramaturgies</i>. Palgrave Macmillan, 2016, and Loo, Zihan. "For Words." <i>Archiving Cane</i>, 2012.	

	Feb 13 - Thu	Class visit to the Bancroft Library's oral history archive.	Meeting at a special collections library.
Wk 5	Feb 18 - Tue	Read: Taylor, Diana. "Acts of Transfer." <i>The Archive and the Repertoire</i> , Duke UP, 2003.	
	Feb 20 - Thu	Review Oral History Interview Guidelines	Sign up for Class Presentation.
Wk 6	Feb 25 - Tue	Read: Schneider, Rebecca. Excerpts from <i>Performing Remains</i> , Routledge, 2011. Page 1 to 7 and 94 to 110.	
	Feb 27 - Thu	Continue discussion on Schneider's critique of Taylor and the difference between the archive and the repertoire. Understand their critical positions in relation to each other.	Oral History Interview and Transcription due Feb 28
Unit B: The Artist Is (Not) Present			
Wk 7	Mar 4 - Tue	Watch: Jeff Dupre and Matthew Akers' <i>Marina Abramović: The Artist Is Present</i> (1 hour 46 minutes). Film access provided through the course.	
	Mar 6 - Thu	Group A Presentation	
Wk 8	Mar 11 - Tue	Read: Jones, Amelia. "The Artist Is Present: Artistic Re-enactments and the Impossibility of Presence." <i>TDR</i> , Spring 2011, vol. 55, no. 1. The MIT Press.	
	Mar 13 - Thu	Group B Presentation	
Wk 9	Mar 18 - Tue	Read: Bishop, Claire. "Delegated Performance: Outsourcing Authenticity." <i>Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship</i> , Verso, 2012, pp. 219–239.	
	Mar 20 - Thu	Guest Visit - Shu-Wen Lin, Time-Based Media Conservator from SFMOMA. Review Precarious Movements - resource guide for conservation of choreographic works in the museum (Australia)	300-word Abstract due Mar 21
SPRING BREAK			

Unit C: Being Out of Sync - Staging Utopias			
Wk 10	Apr 1 - Tue	Jackson, Shannon. "Assemblies: Public Participation, Heteronomous Worlds." <i>Back Stages</i> , Northwestern UP, 2022. Also review In Terms of Performance site.	
	Apr 3 - Thu	Group C Presentation	3-page Summary due Apr 4
Wk 11	Apr 8 - Tue	Read: Lepecki, André. "The Body as Archive: Will to Re-enact and the Afterlives of Dances." <i>Dance Research Journal</i> , vol. 42, no. 2, Winter 2010, pp. 28-48. Cambridge UP.	
	Apr 10 - Thu	Group D Presentation	
Wk 12	Apr 15 - Tue	Read: Muñoz, José Esteban. "Gesture, Ephemerality, and Queer Feeling: Approaching Kevin Aviance." <i>Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity</i> . NYU Press, 2009.	
	Apr 17 - Thu	Group E Presentation	7-8 pages Work-In-Progress of Essay due Apr 21
Peer-review, Consolidation, Presentation			
Wk 13	Apr 22 - Tue	In-class peer review essay workshop	Submit your 300-word comment for your two papers
	Apr 24 - Thu	Read: Graff, Gerald and Cathy Birkenstein. <i>They Say / I Say: The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing</i> . 4th ed., W.W. Norton & Company, 2018.	
Wk 14	Apr 29 - Tue	In-class symposium and presentation (9 people)	
	May 1 - Thu	In-class symposium and presentation (8 people)	
Final 10-page essay due May 9			

Assignment Briefs and Grading Breakdown

Attendance and Participation

Attendance is assessed as part of the shared pedagogical space. The course depends on sustained presence and engagement. Participation includes active listening, thoughtful engagement with course material, and respectful responses to peers. I value qualitative engagement over quantitative frequency. Participation is paying attention to the shared pedagogical space.

Weekly Discussion Posts

Each week from Week 4 through Week 12 you are expected to post a short response to the assigned reading on Monday by 11:59 p.m. This is graded for completion. Each posting carries a weight of 1%.

These posts should highlight any questions you might have regarding the reading, or specific quotes or ideas that you find relevant. *Do not summarize the text.* I prefer to hear how you relate the text to discussions we have had in class, or other readings in the semester.

Critical Response to *The Act of Killing*

Write a 2-page critical response to Joshua Oppenheimer's *The Act of Killing* (2012), which the filmmaker describes as a "documentary of imagination." Your response should engage with the film's use of reenactment as a creative and political tool, reflecting on its implications for historical memory and representation.

Instructions: Watch *The Act of Killing*. Pay close attention to how the film stages reenactments and the ways the subjects respond to performing their actions. Read the following supplementary materials to inform your analysis:

- "[The Murders of Gonzago](#)" by Errol Morris, who is the executive producer but also an acclaimed filmmaker.
- Excerpts from Stella Bruzzi's chapter "Documentary Re-enactment" in *Approximation*, which covers *The Act of Killing* and also addresses larger concepts around reenactment.
- (optional) Jonathan Lamb's chapter on "Gesture" in the *Routledge Handbook of Reenactment Studies*.

In your response, address some (or all) the following questions:

- What is one moment in the film that stood out for you? Why did it stand out and how would you describe it?
- How does *The Act of Killing* use embodied **reenactment** to explore the psychological and physical dimensions of violence?
- What do the reenactments reveal about the power dynamics between the filmmaker, the subjects, and the historical narratives being retold?
- How does the process of reenactment blur the lines between performance and reality?

- What ethical considerations arise from the use of reenactment in this context? To what extent does the filmmaker or actors empower or exploit its subjects?
 - In what ways do these fantastical reenactments contribute to our understanding of how history is remembered, forgotten, or manipulated?
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Interview and Interpretation

Critical Response to an episode of *The Berkeley Remix*

Write a 2-page critical response to ONE episode of your choice from *The Berkeley Remix*, a podcast produced by UC Berkeley's Oral History Center. Your response should critically analyze the episode's use of oral history techniques, its creative approach to storytelling, and its engagement with memory and history. This assignment will help you think critically about oral history as a methodology and prepare you to conduct your own oral history interviews and reenactments later in the semester.

Instructions:

Select and listen to one episode of *The Berkeley Remix*. Pay close attention to the storytelling structure, the interview techniques used, and how the episode engages with historical or personal narratives. Refer to the Smithsonian Institution Guide on *How to Do Oral History* as a critical reference if necessary.

In your response, address some (or all) the following questions:

- What is one moment in the episode that stood out to you? How does this moment reflect the creative potential of oral history interviews?
- What role does editing and production play in how the story is presented? How does this compare to traditional historical writing in text form?
- How does the episode address the reliability of memory or the subjectivity of personal experience?
- What ethical considerations arise in oral history interviews? Is the episode reflexive about the construction of history and memory?
- How can oral history as presented in this episode inform your approach to conducting and reenacting oral histories?

Oral History Interview and Transcription

This assignment asks you to conduct your own oral history interview, applying the techniques and principles of oral history that we have explored in class and informed by guidance from the [Smithsonian Institution Archives' Oral History Resources](#). You will choose an interviewee whose life story interests you and whose experiences connect to a topic you plan to explore in your final 10-page essay.

The goal is to engage deeply with oral history methodologies as part of this class's focus on research methods, while gathering primary research material to inform your future assignments.

Instructions:

Step 1: Select an Interviewee

Choose someone whose story aligns with your academic interests and essay topic. Ensure the person is comfortable with being interviewed and understands the assignment's purpose. Obtain their informed consent to audio record the interview. *For the purposes of this class on embodiment and reenactment – it is important to conduct this oral history interview **in person**.*

Step 2: Prepare for the Interview

Review the Smithsonian Institution advice on interview preparation, particularly their tips on crafting open-ended, non-leading questions to elicit thoughtful and detailed responses. Create a question list but remain flexible to follow up on interesting or unexpected topics during the interview. Test your audio recording equipment in advance to ensure clear audio quality.

Step 3: Conduct the Interview

Begin with an introduction that includes the date, location, names of the interviewer and interviewee, and the purpose of the interview. Use active listening to guide the conversation while letting your interviewee lead with their narrative. Avoid interrupting or rushing responses. Ensure a comfortable and respectful environment throughout the session.

What to submit:

Statement of Intent (1 page)

- Explain why you selected this person for your interview.
- Describe the connection between your interviewee's life story and the topic you plan to explore in your final essay.
- Reflect on your preparation process, including the background research you conducted, the structure of your questions, and your approach to establishing rapport.

Abbreviated Transcript (4–6 pages)

- Audio record your interview and produce an abbreviated transcript.
- There are various free and paid audio transcription software out there (Otter.ai, Adobe Premiere, Riverside.fm etc.) that you can use for transcribing your interview, or you can also do it yourself.

- Include a brief table of contents, timecode, and include the most interesting portions of the interview.
- Focus on capturing key moments, significant quotes, and pivotal exchanges that convey the essence of your interviewee's narrative.

Reflection Statement (1 page)

- Reflect on the interview process and its outcomes.
 - What did you learn about your interviewee and your chosen topic?
 - How did the interview experience deepen your understanding of oral history methodologies?
 - Discuss any challenges you encountered (e.g., managing difficult topics, technical issues, or unanticipated responses) and how you addressed them.
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Class Presentation and Reenactment Exercise

In groups of 3-4, you will lead the class discussion on the weekly readings, incorporating a reenactment of a passage from your oral history transcript. This exercise is designed to deepen your engagement with the course material, practice re-embodying oral histories, and facilitate meaningful class discussions. This is a group project. Everyone in the group will receive the same feedback and grade.

Presentation Requirements:

- **Duration:** Your presentation should last between 30 and 40 minutes, and should be accompanied by 8 to 10 slides.
- **Group Work:** All group members will present their oral history projects, with each member reenacting a very brief excerpt from their own transcript as part of the presentation.
- **Reenactment Component:** Choose a passage from your oral history transcript and re-embody it with your group members. This reenactment should reflect the themes and ideas discussed in the readings.

A sign-up sheet will be circulated on week 5 for you to select the week for your presentation. Please do not think of this as an elaborate presentation – keep it simple. Please bring your own laptop / mobile device that you can connect to the projector to present slides.

The objectives of this responsibility are as follows:

- To get an understanding of some of the readings in this course, with the aim of preparing you for your essays.
- To be in conversation with each other and have the opportunity to learn from your presentation partner outside of class time.
- To have an opportunity to practice the re-embodiment of oral transcripts, and present your research findings to the class.
- To learn how to facilitate in-class conversations and how to form and ask questions.

- To ensure that everyone gets the opportunity to lead the class time.

Think of this as an opportunity to focus on one particular section of the text, or connections across various texts we have encountered throughout the semester. Provide biographical information on the author of the reading or historical context for the reading only if relevant to the discussion you are facilitating. Consider what are some key observations about these readings? How are these readings relevant to the key terms of this course – “archives”, “reenactment”, “repetition.”

Presentation Structure:

- Brief Summary: Provide a concise summary of the key ideas from the week’s readings.
 - Introduction of Oral History Projects: Each group member introduces their oral history project briefly.
 - Reenactment: Perform your re-embodied reenactment of an excerpt from your oral history transcript.
 - Application of Readings: Discuss how the readings inform your reenactment and approach to the oral history interview process.
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3-page Summary of Reading

Pick **one reading from the reading list below** that you would like to dissect and is relevant to your final essay. *Note: If you would like to select a reading for your summary that aligns with your research topic and the themes of performance and reenactment but is not on this list, please seek my approval before proceeding.*

- Agnew, Vanessa, et al., editors. *Excerpts from The Routledge Handbook of Reenactment Studies: Key Terms in the Field*. Routledge, 2020.
- Bishop, Claire. “Delegated Performance: Outsourcing Authenticity.” *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*, Verso, 2012, pp. 219–239.
- Bruzzi, Stella. Excerpts from “Documentary Re-enactment: The ‘Model’ Approximation.” *Approximation: Documentary, History and the Staging of Reality*, Routledge, 2020.
- Jackson, Shannon. “Assemblies: Public Participation, Heteronomous Worlds.” *Back Stages: Essays across Art, Performance, and Public Life*, Northwestern UP, 2022, pp. 341–367.
- Jones, Amelia. “The Artist Is Present: Artistic Re-enactments and the Impossibility of Presence.” *TDR*, Spring 2011, vol. 55, no. 1. The MIT Press.
- Lepecki, André. “The Body as Archive: Will to Re-enact and the Afterlives of Dances.” *Dance Research Journal*, vol. 42, no. 2, Winter 2010, pp. 28–48. Cambridge UP.
- Muñoz, José Esteban. “Gesture, Ephemera, and Queer Feeling: Approaching Kevin Aviance.” *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*. NYU Press, 2009.
- Schneider, Rebecca. Excerpts from *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment*. Routledge, 2011.
- Taylor, Diana. “Acts of Transfer.” *The Archive and the Repertoire*, Duke UP, 2003.

Write a summary of the reading that clarifies the central claim (what), the stakes of the scholarship (why), and the method of analysis (how). Your summary should map the arc of the reading and answer these questions:

- What are the central research questions of this text?
What is the author interested in? What are they trying to explore or figure out?
What arguments are being made? (The claim)
- Why did they write this in the first place?
What are their personal or professional reasons for writing? (The stakes)
- How does the author attempt to answer these questions?
What new contributions are they making to the broader field? (The method)
- Through what evidence?
What specific examples does the author look at to substantiate these arguments? (The supporting evidence / object of study)
- What key terms and ideas emerge through these questions, arguments, and evidence?
- How is this reading relevant to keywords in our course?
e.g. “reenactment,” “archives,” “remains,” “repertoire,” “repetition,” “performance” etc.
- How is this reading relevant to other readings or materials we have encountered in our course? What potential conversations or contradictions does this reading have with other readings?

Your summary should also **include a quote or passage** from the reading that you would like to elaborate. Choose a quote from the reading that you would like to engage with. Include this quote in your summary, and provide a brief explication of the quote and how it relates to the reading and the questions above. Think of this as an opportunity to focus on one particular section of the text. Consider this text in relation to the rest of the text (intra) and how it relates to other ideas that have been introduced in the course through other readings and objects (inter). You should refer to Chapter 2 (Summary) and Chapter 3 (Quoting) of Graff and Birkenstein’s *They Say / I Say* as you write for further advice.

Writing, Revision, and Composition

300-word Abstract

An “abstract” is a term in academia used to refer to a short paragraph that provides a summary of the paper. Some journals include abstracts at the beginning of the paper, some writers use this abstract as the first paragraph of their essay.

In brief, this is the “pitch” for your paper. It also refers to the other commonly known definition of “abstract” – something that exists in thought, but has yet to take on a concrete form. This abstract should be a proposal that promises the potential of your final paper, but can be subject to change and shifts as it is concretized in writing.

Your abstract should answer these questions:

- What is the main thesis or claim of your paper? What are the stakes of your scholarship? Why does this paper need to exist? Why are you writing this paper?
- What objects are you engaging with? What evidence are you using to support your argument / claim? Consider incorporating materials from the Oral History Center or primary research you have gathered during your oral history interview.
- How are you going to argue your paper? Who are you in conversation with? What writers are you referencing and how are you extending their existing research? What key ideas are you taking and applying to your paper?

You should consider engaging with **two or more** readings that are assigned in this class and clarify what key ideas you are putting in conversation with each other. This is a **300-word** piece of writing that should adhere to the [MLA format](#) (double-spaced, Times New Roman 12-point font, 1-inch margins etc.). Submit in PDF format with the file title in this format – *LastName_Abstract.pdf*

Office Hour Appointment

This 2% is graded for completion. Please send any material you would like me to review during the appointment in advance when possible. Please try to meet with me earlier in the semester, as appointment slots might fill up as the final submission deadline approaches.

7-8 pages Work-In-Progress of Essay

Now that you have written your abstract (the central idea of your paper), it is time to draft the body of your paper. This draft should be about 75% complete and ready for peer review during class. Here is what your submission should include at this stage:

1. **Introduction and Conclusion:** Write a clear introduction that presents your thesis or central claim. Your introduction should also address the key questions you posed in your abstract. Similarly, write a clear conclusion that ties everything together.
2. **Thesis, Evidence, and Method:** Ensure your paper has a clear thesis, backed by evidence and analysis. Explain why your argument matters (the stakes) and describe how you are supporting it (your method of analysis). This should incorporate feedback given to your abstract.
3. **Works Cited Page:** Include a “Works Cited” page that lists all the sources you are engaging with in your paper. Be sure to follow MLA format for your citations.
4. **Developed Content:** Most of your paper should be written in full sentences and paragraphs. It is acceptable if you have one or two sections that are not fully written yet, just include bullet points in those sections that outline the main ideas and structure. This will help your peer reviewers understand the flow of your argument.
5. **Using Course Materials:** You should incorporate ideas from at least two readings from this course. Make sure you engage with these readings clearly – summarize key ideas, quote where appropriate, and explain how these ideas relate to your argument. Show how the readings are in conversation with each other and with your topic.
6. **Thick Description of Object:** In your paper, incorporate materials from the Oral History Center or primary research you have gathered during your oral history interview and transcription exercise. Use these resources to develop a detailed “thick description” of your chosen object. Reflect on how this description supports and connects to your broader argument.
7. **Formatting:** Your draft should be 7–8 pages (or longer, if necessary). Follow [MLA format](#): double-spaced, Times New Roman 12-point font, 1-inch margins. Submit your paper as a PDF with the file name format: *LastName_DraftEssay.pdf*.

To avoid last-minute stress, start working on your draft early. Break your writing into manageable pieces. Set a timer and aim to write for 30 minutes each day. You can also team up with a classmate for a writing session to keep yourself accountable.

Peer Review of Two Papers

This exercise will be initiated in class but completed in your own time if you are unable to finish writing feedback during class time. In brief, you are expected to provide detailed and considered feedback to at least two of your peers. Each feedback should include in-paper comments and a 300-word comment that will help your classmate develop their paper. Each feedback is worth 3% of your grade.

You will be graded on the quality of the feedback and your 300-word comment to your classmate. Both your comments should adhere to the MLA format (double-spaced, Times New Roman 12-point font, 1-inch margins etc.). Submit your 300-word comment in PDF format with the file titles in this format - *YourName_PeerReviewforTheirName.pdf*

Follow these steps accordingly:

- Read the paper carefully once through before making any comments / annotations.
- On the second read, start adding annotations in the document and highlight or comment in the margins, these annotations will not be assessed, and are for you and your peer's reference. Take this opportunity to point out any spelling and/or grammatical mistakes, and highlight / underline key ideas and sentences.
- After you have completed the above two steps, you can begin answering the questions in the worksheet below.
- After you have typed out your report, save the document as a PDF and upload it with the file title in this format - *YourName_PeerReviewforTheirName.pdf*
- Repeat these steps for the second paper.
- **Contact the person whose papers you are reviewing DIRECTLY - ensure they receive both your feedback and your annotated document.** (This can be in soft copy or if you see them in person in class - in a physical hard copy).

Reviewers should produce a type-written report that answers all of the following questions. This report should be a minimum of 300 words. This is not an argumentative paper, but an overview of what you are reading to assist in the editing process as we work towards the final paper.¹

There are 6 main sections to this worksheet, you are to type at least one sentence in response to each section. Out of respect to your peers, please refrain from using Gen AI for this peer review exercise.

Section A: In your own words, state what you think is the central research question or claim of the paper succinctly. Name the object of analysis, the two readings that the paper was engaging with and the key concepts of these two readings.

- Name the stakes of the paper.
 - Were these stakes clear?
 - Why does this paper matter to the author?
 - What is the overarching purpose of this paper?

Section B: Introduction and Conclusion

- If the paper has a title, did the paper satisfy the expectations raised in the title?

¹ The questions are drawn from many other sources, including similar worksheets by Dale Carrico, Karen Feldman, Sarah Harris, and Thiti Jamkajornkeiat.

- Did the opening sentence help transition you into the paper's claim, or did it seem unrelated?
- Did the paper have a clear introduction and did it set you up for the structure of the paper?
- Is there a proper conclusion at this stage? If yes, is it effective? If not, what will you expect from this conclusion?
- Did the author restate and sharpen their argument in the conclusion?

Section C: Body and Evidence

- Did the body paragraphs begin with a sentence that sets up the key idea of each paragraph?
- Did the author provide a thick description on the object of analysis that covered some aspects addressed in *Annex C - Approaching Objects*?
- Did the thick description of the object give you sufficient information and is it relevant to the central claim that the author is making?
- Were there supporting images / illustrations in the essay and were these properly attributed and necessary to the paper?
- When using quotes or evidence, were they clearly introduced and explained, contextualized into the flow of the paragraph? Is there proper attribution and citation of each quote? In your opinion, how can the author use quotes more effectively?

Section D: Structure and Construction

- Comment on the paper's structure. Did it have a logical, easy-to-follow progression? Did the structure align with the central claim of the paper?
- Did the author perform decent transitions between paragraphs? Were all the paragraphs meaningfully and clearly related to one another?
- Did the author remain focused on the central claim throughout the paper? Were there deviations and if so, were these deviations necessary and apparent? Where were these apparent deviations?
- Is the central argument / claim consistent throughout the paper?

Section E: Synthesis and Insight

- Is there a proper synthesis of the key ideas from the two readings with the object of analysis?
- Were the key ideas from each reading applied clearly and accurately to the object of analysis?
- What qualities did you like best about the paper? How do you think the author achieved these qualities and how can you apply them to your own paper?
- What is one quote from the paper that is the most convincing / is the most effective? Highlight this quote and state why it is so.
- Where in the paper were you least convinced by the author's claim and why? What can be done to improve this section?
- Were there potential counter-arguments that should have been addressed?

Section F: Method and Mechanics

- Were you able to identify a sentence that states clearly what is the method of approach to the author's argument?
 - If yes, what is this method **in your own words**?
 - If not, what do you think is the method?
- What were some critical aspects of the paper that the author should work on before submitting it?
- Is the paper written in an appropriate academic style and adheres to the MLA formatting requirements?
- Were the academic terms and keywords cited in the paper clearly explained?
- Were there errors in spelling, grammar or punctuation? Is their sentence construction effective?
- Did the paper have an accurate "Works Cited" page?

At the end, you are welcome to provide any other constructive feedback or suggestions that you might have for the author that are not covered by the questions above.

In-class Symposium and Presentation

In our final two classes you will have the opportunity to present your paper to the class. This is a performance of your research to an audience, and is part of the process of refining your paper before its final submission. This is common in most academic writing processes, where you present your ideas at conferences to colleagues and solicit feedback from them. Your presentation should be five minutes long followed by a short question and answer session. You should:

- Provide us with a brief overview of your essay, object of analysis, readings you are citing and stakes of your research.
- You are encouraged to show one or two images of your object of analysis if necessary, but no further slides are necessary. I will create a Google Drive folder where you are able to drop your images before your presentation date.
- Share any ongoing questions or concerns, and what kind of feedback you would require at this stage of your writing process.

10-page Final Essay

The final essay should reflect the progress made throughout the semester and build on feedback from previous assignments, peer reviews, office hours, and the symposium. *No extensions will be granted to ensure fairness to all students. A 2/20 deduction per day will apply for late submissions.* Your final essay should include the following components:

1. **Title**

Provide a clear and concise title for your paper on the first page.

2. **Introduction and Conclusion**

Begin with a clear introduction that presents your thesis or central claim, explains the stakes of your argument, and outlines your evidence and method of analysis. Your conclusion should succinctly reinforce your argument and provide a sense of closure. Ensure that the feedback received from your abstract is integrated, with clear articulation of your thesis, evidence, and method.

3. **Thick Description of Object**

Include a rich, detailed analysis of your object(s) of study, following the guidelines provided in Annex C. This section should offer in-depth engagement with your chosen object(s), demonstrating your critical analysis and reading skills honed in this course.

4. **Engagement with Readings**

Your essay should engage meaningfully with at least two readings from the course.

Consider how these texts are in conversation with each other and with your thesis.

Summarize relevant concepts and key terms, and clearly explain how the readings inform your analysis. Include quotes or citations, and ensure they are relevant and thoroughly explained in relation to your argument or contextually within your essay.

5. **Works Cited**

Include a properly formatted “Works Cited” page in MLA format. All sources referenced in your paper should be listed here, and MLA citation rules should be strictly followed.

6. **Incorporation of Feedback**

Demonstrate clear integration of feedback received throughout the semester from peer reviews of your draft, one-on-one office hour meetings, and the Q&A sessions during the symposium. The progression of your argument and the clarity of your ideas should reflect this revision process, and there should be adjustment and improvement where necessary compared to your 7-8 page draft.

7. **Writing Quality**

The final paper should be polished and free of spelling, grammatical, and formatting errors. Proofread your work carefully before submission. Do not use contractions in your final essay.

Your essay should be 10 pages (not including the “Works Cited” page). Follow MLA format: double-spaced, Times New Roman 12-point font, 1-inch margins. Submit your paper as a PDF with the file name format: *LastName_FinalEssay.pdf*.

Course Policies

Time Management

The reading load for this class is approximately 20 to 30 pages each week, alongside writing and research assignments. Some weeks will require a heavier workload than others. If you find yourself regularly struggling to manage the workload, please make an appointment to discuss strategies for planning and prioritizing your work. Unless otherwise specified, deadlines are at 11:59 p.m. Late work may affect the grade. If you are facing circumstances that will affect your ability to complete an assignment on time, please communicate with me as early as possible.

Format and Citation

Assignments should follow MLA format unless otherwise specified. Detailed requirements are provided with individual assignments.

Academic Dishonesty, Plagiarism, and Generative AI

Academic work should acknowledge the ideas, language, and materials of others through appropriate citation. Plagiarism and unauthorized circulation of course materials or the work of peers are not acceptable.

Generative AI writing tools can be useful as supplemental resources, but over-reliance on them can hinder the intellectual work this course is designed to cultivate. You may use generative AI sparingly to clarify dense theory, investigate unfamiliar terms, or refine writing during later stages of the process. I discourage using these tools during the initial stages of reading and writing, when you are developing your own understanding and voice. Treat AI tools as a supplemental resource rather than a substitute for reading, research, or composition. These tools can produce inaccuracies and fabricated information, so all generated material must be independently verified. Any use of generative AI in submitted work should be [acknowledged](#) according to the expectations provided for the assignment. Unacknowledged use that substantially replaces your own intellectual work may be treated as academic dishonesty.

Content Warnings

As we delve into practices of reenactment, memory, and testimony, we will encounter material that may be unsettling or challenging. I will provide warnings when possible and ask for generosity as we work through difficult material together. Please let me know if you have concerns about material shared in class.

Accessibility and Accommodations

If you anticipate or experience barriers to learning, please feel welcome to discuss your needs with me. I will work with you to identify reasonable ways of supporting your participation in the course. If you are new to academic writing, working in a language other than your first language, or struggling with the readings or assignments, please let me know early so we can identify useful resources and strategies.

Annex A – Terms of Engagement

On speaking up. In a discussion-based class, pay attention to the shape of the discussion and others in the room. Raise your hand before interjecting and wait for an appropriate moment to do so. Prepare brief notes when you pose a comment or question. Keep your comment or question succinct and note how it is affecting the shape of the discussion. (Optional, but good practice: Raise a hand with one finger if it is related to the ongoing conversation. Raise a hand with two fingers if your question is going to take the discussion in a completely different direction.)

On asking questions. You might initially be intimidated by asking your question out loud, but you will get better with practice. Make sure the question is specific. It helps to use the theory that we are engaging with collectively to ground your question. It would be even better if you can draw our attention to specific parts of the reading. Talk to the theory, not around it. Make sure your question is not relying on information that the class does not have. If absolutely necessary, provide the missing information as a brief preamble before posing your question.

On listening. Be sensitive and listen to what your peers are saying and sense the affective energy in the room. What sort of energy would you like to send into this shared pedagogical space? How can you be held accountable for the words and energy that you are sharing with the class? How much space are you taking up in the room? What structures are in place that prevent a more equitable distribution and investment in this pedagogical space?

On intellectual humility. To know ourselves, we have to begin by admitting what we do not know. It is brave to admit what you do not know in front of the class. I can assure you that if you encounter difficulties in approaching the text or gaps in information, you will not be alone. The way we can learn collectively is to share these struggles with each other. It is what this pedagogical space is for.

On critical generosity. Critical generosity is the ability for differing or opposing thoughts to be held together in the same space. You can have critical generosity for others but also for yourself. Give others and yourself the space to make mistakes. A classroom is the space to encounter differences and remake your opinions as a rehearsal for future encounters in life. A pedagogical space is different from a social media space. We are not performing our position solipsistically, but always in relation to others. This is time and space we have agreed to set aside for us to come together and engage critically and collectively.

What other terms of engagement would we like to draft collectively as a group? Are there points of concerns that you would like to establish and that we can be held accountable to?

Annex B – Reading Theory²

Theory takes time. If you are engaging with something outside your field of study, it can almost be akin to acquiring a completely different language. Give theory adequate time. Do not try to rush through your readings, always engage with them a couple of days in advance to allow the text to simmer. Not all readings require multiple reads. Skim through the reading before you start, decide on a time limit you would spend on the reading and adhere to it. Plan breaks in between if it is a particularly long reading.

Theory is a map. Start identifying patterns in order to decipher the code. Create a map of the reading by noting down the structure of the argument, section headings, and subheadings. Another approach is to create a list of all the writers being cited in the text. How is the text in dialogue with these writers? What are the stakes of this text? Why is it being written? Who is it being written for? You might want to consider creating a map in dialogue with your peers. If you can afford the time, discussing the readings collectively before coming to class always helps to clarify your relationship to the text.

Theory is hypertext. Engaging with a text is always engaging with it in relation. A text is a node within a larger citational network. In order to fully comprehend the stakes of the writing, it is important to review other points within this network of information. Get into the habit of using digital tools in aid of your understanding of theory. Google the author, search for what other writing has been produced in response to the text, listen to their voice in YouTube lectures or podcasts to get an understanding of their tone and cadence. If an object or artwork is mentioned try looking for visual documentation to support your understanding of the article. Situate this reading within the author's larger oeuvre. When was it written? What was the historical context and situation? If there is a group of readings assigned for the week, it is important to consider how they are in dialogue with each other, attend to their resonances and dissonances. How would you position yourself and your research interests in relation to these readings?

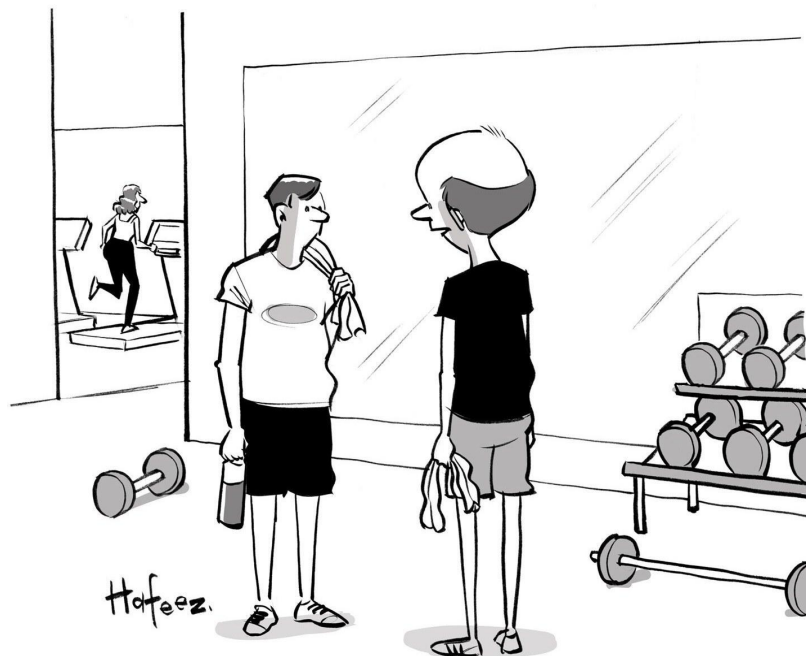
Theory in a tangible form. I find it helpful to print out denser readings because it gives me a concrete idea of how many pages of readings there are each week. It also allows me to read while commuting without being distracted by my digital devices, and allows my eyes to take a break from staring at the screen. I am also a visual learner, so it helps me to scribble in the margins and highlight key paragraphs. That being said, not all readings require printing. A brief interview or news article can be skimmed on the computer. Decide which reading you would like to give more weight and attention to, and if the way you are reading the text might complement the form or style of the writing.

² This annex is developed in reference to Hentyle Yapp's reading theory handout, and in conversation with materials prepared by Rebecca Struch, Crystal Song, and others.

Theory is worth a second chance. If possible, read each text at least twice, the second reading is often in conversation with the notes and highlights you made in the first reading. Note how you are viewing the text differently on repeated readings. I find it helpful to write a brief summary of key ideas after every reading on the first page beside the title for future reference. These notes, however brief, are important so that you will not be starting from scratch the next time you return to this reading, which might be several years down the road.

Theory is a performance. For particularly dense theory, I find it helpful to read the content aloud. It might take a lot more time to get through a reading, but it really helps to listen to how the words are being formed. Some texts are transcripts of lectures and reading them aloud helps to reassemble the cadence of ideas. It is also helpful to take note of translated texts – sometimes the convoluted language is a result of the translator wanting to adhere as closely as possible to the author's voice. If you are really struggling, try to find alternative translations of the text if they are available and do a comparative study of how and why these translations differ.

Theory is not everything. Be kind to yourself. If you are struggling with a particular text, put it aside and come back to it again when you are in a different frame of mind. It is easy to give up on theory, especially in a world that is constantly competing for your attention. It is helpful to keep in mind that reading theory is just like acquiring any other skill. The more you exercise and practice, the better you will eventually become at engaging critically with theory. Think of it as a gymnasium for the training of your mind. You might eventually learn to appreciate it.



"I've been working out for six months, but all my gains have been in cognitive function."

Annex C – Approaching Objects

What are objects? Theoretical objects of study refer to what we are analyzing within the text. It can be a performance, an art installation, a political cartoon, or an experience. Sometimes it is also referred to as evidence. Objects work hand-in-hand with theory to ground abstract ideas within our concrete world. It is a common tendency to use objects as a means to an end, instead of paying close attention to how they might reshape our position or theory. To do objects justice, it is important to examine them critically and closely. Listen to what they have to say.

How do I approach objects? I often start with a thick description. If it is a performance, free write to recall everything you have witnessed and experienced. If it is an installation or art object, try to engage with it physically as you write. Let yourself be surprised by the object. For art objects and performance, I approach them with this scaffold inspired by Feldman's method of art analysis. This scaffold can be applied in any order:

1. *Thickening the description.* Describe what you see before you. Through this description, you are forming a narrative about the object. Be conscious of how and what you describe in the object. A good exercise is to imagine describing the object to someone who has never witnessed it. How would you account for your experience to another? How is information made available about the object and how is access to this information restricted?
2. *Technicalities and its Parergon (Derrida).* How is the object supported in space both physically and conceptually? How is the object created? What is its material and the history of this material? What is the composition and form of the object? How is the object framed or edited? Technical aspects of the work can appear objective and factual, but challenge yourself to move beyond these observations to understand structural aspects of an object's technical components.
3. *Ideological context.* What socio-political-cultural framework does the object exist in relation to? What are the politics of this object? Are these politics covert or overt? Locate the object in the here and now while paying attention to the history of not just the object but also the object-producer (biographical approach). Note down not just what you see before you, but also what remains hidden from view. (e.g. What is cropped out of frame? Why are only performers of a certain gender featured? What labor supports the possibility of this object's existence? etc.)
4. *Inter-textual entanglements.* How is the object positioned in relation to other objects in space? How would you position the object in relation to other work you have seen before in the past? How is the object positioning itself in relation to theory? What theoretical framework can we use to analyze the object? What does it remind you of? What can the object be in conversation with?

5. Affective and kinesthetic sensing. Take note of the affective and emotional sensation that the object evokes. How does this affective relationship vary from individual to individual? What are the consequences of a shared affective energy that the object is sending out into the world? Does it produce any discomfort in the viewer, and is it possible to “stay with the trouble” (Haraway)?

As you must realize by now, all the above points are interrelated. You cannot approach an object examining the affective sensations without attending to the ideological implications of your response. Neither can you attempt to talk about inter-textual entanglements without overlapping with an analysis of the *parergon* or frame.

The purpose of the above scaffold is to allow you to break your analysis down into its constituent components, and to address what blind spots you might have when approaching your object. Are you examining the object from a limited angle, without allowing yourself to expand your perspective? Are you permitting your understanding of the object to be remade as you examine it closely?

