

## **Speaking the Speech: Reimagining Writing as a Performative Process**

Monday/Wednesday—3:25 to 4:40 Rush Rhees Room G-108

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**Office:** Rush Rhees 304 G

**Office Hours:** Monday 5:30pm-6:30pm and Thursday 1pm-2pm RR 304-G (Also by Appointment)

### Course Description:

Poet David Morley has argued that “All writing is performance.” In this class, we will test Morley’s assertion on two levels. First, we will analyze a wide variety of texts, including speeches, blogs, letters, and scenes from such films as *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Shawshank Redemption*. Are all of these texts performative? Can a text not intended for performance carry performative subtext? We will also explore the uses of performance in our own writing. Using activities adapted from the Folger Shakespeare Library, we will question how our writing process can change when we treat it not as a wholly cognitive act, but as a performance text. To be clear—though this class *will* require you to perform your own writing, it is *not* an acting class. The act of preparing your writing for performance will be our primary concern, and we will use that approach in pre-writing, peer review, self-assessment and the revision process in order to create well-organized essays, culminating with an 8-10 page research paper.

### Objectives:

Regardless of your chosen major or profession, writing will be an important part of your academic and professional life. Becoming a *good* writer is not about mastering a particular pattern or technique. It isn’t about five-paragraph structures or the dutiful avoidance of the first person pronoun. Becoming a *good* writer is about understanding that your approach to writing must perpetually change depending on topic, audience and the ultimate impact that you want your writing to have. This notion of writing as a skill in constant flux is at the heart of our study of performance, as we will discuss and practice ways in which argumentative writing can be viewed as a performative process.

By the end of the course, you should be able to:

- Read deeply—It is impossible to create good writing without starting with good reading.
- Ask engaging questions about the texts that you read.
- Locate and synthesize professional discourse on a given topic, and find openings for you to participate in those conversations.

- Develop a debatable thesis about a text or issue that grows out of your questions and participates in the academic discourse.
- Support your ideas with multiple and various kinds of evidence.
- Identify different audiences for your thesis, and adapt your writing in order to more effectively convey your thoughts to those different audiences.

Primary Writing Requirement:

This course fulfills the University of Rochester's primary writing requirement. Please be aware that you must earn a grade of "C" or better in this course to successfully fulfill that requirement.

Grading:

Your final grade for the course will be determined as follows:

- **10%** Participation (including Peer Review and Self-Assessment)
- **15 %** Homework (Regular reading and short writing assignments)
- **10 %** Essay #1 (3-5 pages)
- **15 %** Essay #2 (3-5 pages)
- **35 %** Essay #3 (8-10 page research paper)
- **15 %** Essay #4 (3-5 pages)

Final drafts of formal essays will be assigned a letter grade (A, A-, B+, B, etc). Informal assignments will be graded with a check, check minus, or incomplete.

Required Reading/Viewing:

Required readings and film viewings are listed in the course schedule below. I reserve the right to alter this schedule as the course progresses, but I will only do so if absolutely necessary for our work. The majority of course readings will be available in digital format on Blackboard. Whether you print these readings or have an e-reader, I will expect everyone to have access to the readings during class meetings. If you bring a digital device (e-reader, laptop, etc), the **only** appropriate use for that device in class is accessing our readings. Surfing the web is not something that needs to be done during our class meetings.

Attendance and Class Participation:

Please be in class, on time, with your homework (readings and writings) completed. Attendance is crucial for success in this course. We need you here to offer your own unique observations and feedback. Further, we will be engaging in

an approach to writing, editing and revision that you have likely never encountered before. If you accrue too many absences, it will be very difficult for you to catch up with the rest of the class. **If you need to miss class for any reason, please talk to me beforehand.** Being in class is only half of the battle—please come prepared to work collaboratively. Performance is a collaborative activity. In order for our foray into performative composition to work, we will need everyone here and participating on a regular basis. On an almost daily basis, we will be engaging in both written and performance-based activities, all of which will factor into your final course grade. Nobody in this classroom is a professional actor, so leave all judgment and shyness at the door. We're here to learn from each other and (ideally) have some fun.

#### Late or Missed Homework/Classwork:

I do not accept late homework for any reason. Stick to the course calendar. If you need to miss class for any reason, consult the course calendar and continue on with the reading. Missing the previous class meeting is not a valid reason for being unprepared for the next course meeting. Take advantage of my office hours if you need help getting caught up.

#### Short Written Work:

There will be regular writing assignments in this class including short prompts in class (such as journals and self-evaluative writing) as well as writing to be completed for homework (such as short research-related assignments). These assignments will be assessed in a variety of ways, and they should ultimately help you in both constructing and revising your larger, more formal written work.

#### Essays:

Final drafts of all essays should be submitted both in hard copy and via e-mail. These final drafts should follow standard MLA formatting requirements (1 inch margins, double spaced, 12 point Times New Roman font, etc). Late papers will lose one third of a letter grade for every day that they are late—(this policy refers to calendar days, including weekends and holidays); if you are having trouble completing your paper before deadline, please speak to me **before** the paper is due.

#### Peer Review, Self-Assessment, and Revision:

Peer Review, Self-Assessment and Revision will be built into the structure of the course. We will use activities adapted from the Folger Shakespeare Library to guide our work as we prepare “performance drafts” of our papers (both excerpts

and whole essays). All of our work should be done in the spirit of constant revision—You should always be thinking about how new information and opinions will influence your overall argument. Accordingly, our final essay assignment will be a significant revision of an earlier essay.

### The Writing Center:

The Writing Center (located on the ground floor of Rush Rhees Library, near Connections) is an invaluable resource available to you. I encourage you to visit the writing center at least once for this course to get support at any stage of your writing process—from choosing a topic to revising your final draft. Nobody writes in a vacuum. My colleagues and I frequently get together to offer feedback on each other's writing and professional writers have been doing the same thing for hundreds of years. The Writing Center provides you with just such an outlet. Use it.

From the Writing Center's website: *"At the University of Rochester, we are all writers, and every writer needs a reader. The College Writing Center is a place where you can find readers who can provide critical feedback at any stage of the writing process, from brainstorming for a topic to polishing a final draft. To learn more about the College Writing Center services and/or to find a tutor, please visit <http://writing.rochester.edu>*

### Academic Honesty:

Academic honesty should never be an issue in this course. Early in the semester, we will discuss the reasons and methods for avoiding plagiarism. After that point, this course will have a zero-tolerance policy regarding plagiarism, up to and including receiving a zero for the assignment and a referral to the Academic Honesty Board. Please read, internalize and be aware of the following statement (this statement is official university policy, and can be found in your student handbook):

*"As members of an academic community, students and faculty assume certain responsibilities, one of which is to engage in honest communication. Academic dishonesty is a serious violation of the trust upon which an academic community depends. A common form of academic dishonesty is plagiarism. The representation of another person's work as one's own, or the attempt "to blur the line between one's own ideas or words and those borrowed from another source." (Council of Writing Program Administrators, January 2003, <http://wpacouncil.org/node/9> ). More specifically, the use of an idea, phrase, or other materials from a written or spoken source without acknowledgment in a work for which the student claims authorship.*

*Examples include: the misrepresentation of sources used in a work for which the student claims authorship; the improper use of course materials in a work for which*

*the student claims authorship; the use of papers purchased online and turned in as one's own work; submission of written work such as laboratory reports, computer programs, or papers, which have been copied from the work of other students, with or without their knowledge and consent.*

*A student can avoid the risk of plagiarism in written work or oral presentations by clearly indicating, either in footnotes or in the paper or presentation itself, the source of any idea or wording that he or she did not produce. Sources must be given regardless of whether the idea, phrase or other material is quoted directly, paraphrased or summarized in the student-writer's own words.*

*In cases where plagiarism is evident, the University's rules governing academic dishonesty will be followed. The typical penalty for a first event of plagiarism in a first year writing course is a "0" for the assignment. This pertains to rough drafts as well as final drafts, and informal writing assignments. As required by College policy, all instances of plagiarism are reported to the College Board of Academic Honesty.*

*For the complete College honesty policy, see  
<http://www.rochester.edu/college/honesty/index>."*

### Support Services (CETL)

Please know that this classroom respects and welcomes students of all backgrounds and abilities, and that I invite you to talk with me about any concern or situation that affects your ability to complete your academic work successfully. Further, I encourage you to make use of the resources available to you on campus, particularly the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning. The following information is from CETL's website: "CETL is a resource available to all students in the College. All kinds of students with all kinds of GPAs and academic records make use of our programs. We work with strong students who wish to become even better, as well as with students who have not yet tapped into the strategies needed to succeed in college, and everyone in between. We offer an extensive study group and Workshop program, individual study skills counseling, study skills workshops and a study skills course, and disability support. We are located in 107 Lattimore Hall on the River Campus. To make an appointment or to learn more, stop by our offices, call us at (585) 275-9049, or send an email: [cetl@rochester.edu](mailto:cetl@rochester.edu) "

Course Calendar:

<p>1/16</p>	<p><b>WRITE:</b> Diagnostic—Andy Warhol eating a hamburger</p> <p><b>DO:</b> Carding Esteem and Boasting</p> <p><b>THINK:</b> How does the confidence of a person’s language impact how much/little we trust that person?</p> <p><b>HW (Due next class):</b> Read “Chapter 9—Performing Writing” by David Morely. Also, write a Boast of your biography as a writer</p> <p><b>I NOTICED:</b></p>
<p>1/21</p>	<p><b>NO CLASS: Martin Luther King Jr. Day</b></p>
<p>1/23</p>	<p><b>WRITE:</b> What does “performance” even mean?</p> <p><b>DO:</b> Letter Jacket Diagnostics—(Objects as Identification Artifacts—Student examples), Self-Identification, Discussion of Morely, Reading and Writing About a Laboratory, Discussion of Paper #1</p> <p><b>THINK:</b> Beyond theatrical acting, what are the other ways people, words and things can “perform”?</p> <p><b>HW:</b> Read excerpt from Gorgias (on Blackboard). Complete 5 minute free-talk on Voxopop.</p> <p><b>I NOTICED:</b></p>
<p>1/28</p>	<p><b>WRITE:</b> What is writing? How can we incorporate notions of performance and identity into our definition of writing?</p> <p><b>DO:</b> Two-Line Scenes, Motivational/Inspirational Language, Discussion of Gorgias,</p> <p><b>THINK:</b> How does your spoken language change in different company? What would happen if you spoke to a parent the same way that you spoke to a close friend/peer?</p> <p><b>HW:</b> Find a movie preview for one of your favorite films. E-mail the link to me and everyone in your Peer Workshop group.</p>

<p>1/30</p> <p><b>Paper 1 first draft Due on voxopop</b></p>	<p><b>WRITE:</b> Journal entry—Tell me about Seth.</p> <p><b>DO:</b> Discussion of Diction and Performance (Galadriel and Canoodle), Writing Introduction paragraphs, Grammar pitfalls and logical fallacies (Monty Python). Overview of conference procedure.</p> <p><b>THINK:</b> What do people <i>need</i> to know at the beginning of a narrative/performance? How do skilled writers/performers keep this in mind?</p> <p><b>HW:</b> First draft of paper one due on Voxopop. First drafts have a rolling deadline—you may upload them at any point between this date and by midnight (at the latest) on Friday the 21<sup>st</sup>.</p> <p><b>I NOTICED:</b></p>
<p>2/4</p>	<p><b>NO FORMAL CLASS MEETING: Individual conferences to be scheduled.</b></p>
<p>2/6</p>	<p><b>Peer Workshop Day: Cutting a Scene</b></p> <p><b>-Intro to Library Day One</b></p>
<p>2/11</p>	<p><b>Library Day One (introduction to using the U of R library resources).</b></p> <p><b>We will meet in the entry hall of Rush Rhees Library.</b></p>
<p>2/13</p> <p><b>Paper 1 final draft due (E-mail AND hard copy)</b></p>	<p><b>WRITE:</b> What is this article about? (Wordle journal)</p> <p><b>DO:</b> Preview of Bakhtin, Reader vs. Writer-based prose. Discussion of Claude McKay’s “If We Must Die” and the value of context on the way a text performs.</p> <p><b>THINK:</b> If you say/write the same thing, in the same way, but in different places...does it mean the same thing?</p> <p><b>HW:</b> Read “The Problem of Speech Genres” by Mikhail Bakhtin (on Blackboard)—Highlight three short passages from the article that seem interesting, and write a 7-word summary.</p>

	<b>I NOTICED:</b>
2/18	<p><b>WRITE:</b> Journal Prompt: How can the notion of a speech genre alter our definitions of performance, writing and the self?</p> <p><b>DO:</b> Discussion of Bakhtin—<i>Kindergarten Cop</i>, <i>The Shawshank Redemption</i>, Claire Zulkey article (read/discuss in class). Introduce Paper number two.</p> <p><b>THINK:</b> What is the relationship between <i>what</i> we want to say, and <i>how</i> we decide to say it?</p> <p><b>HW:</b> Read “Subtexting” by Brandilyn Collins (on Blackboard). Complete 5-minute free-talk on Voxopop.</p>
2/20	<p><b>WRITE:</b> Journal Prompt—Is it possible to control the way that someone reads what you wrote?</p> <p><b>DO:</b> “O”, “I didn’t say he wet his bed”—re-writing for subtextual clarity. Discussion of Collins’ chapter.</p> <p><b>THINK:</b> Why is it important to keep subtext in mind when we write? What are the potential dangers of neglecting this skill?</p> <p><b>HW:</b> Read “What Good Writing Is: The Sense of Audience” by Jack Rawlins (on Blackboard).</p> <p><b>I NOTICED:</b></p>
2/25 <b>Paper 2 first draft due on Voxopop</b>	<p><b>WRITE:</b> Journal Prompt—Attempt to draw a diagram visually depicting two different people engaging with the same topic. How many different variations can you come up with in five minutes?</p> <p><b>DO:</b> Analyzing texts in conversation—Depression/R.E.M./Rise Against/Film clips/Etc. Discussion of Rawlins and the role of audience in writing.</p> <p><b>THINK:</b> How are audience, topic and the writer all inter-related?</p> <p><b>HW:</b> Read “Being a Man” by Paul Theroux and “‘Kicking Ass Is Comfort Food’: Buffy as Third Wave Feminist Icon” by Patricia Pender (both on Blackboard).</p>
2/27	<b>WRITE:</b> Journal prompt—What is the difference between sex and



	<p>gender? Can either of them be performed? Why/Why not?</p> <p><b>DO:</b> Discussion of gender-based articles. Sojourner Truth’s “Ain’t I a Woman” speech. Workshop—Writing performative conclusions.</p> <p><b>THINK:</b> What are the benefits in anticipating the ways in which other audiences will interpret a piece of writing?</p> <p><b>HW:</b> First draft of paper two due on Voxopop. First drafts have a rolling deadline—you may upload them at any point between this date and by midnight (at the latest) on Friday the 21<sup>st</sup>.</p> <p><b>I NOTICED:</b></p>
3/4	<p><b>Peer Workshop Day: Two-Line Scenes, Blocking for Subtext, and (time permitting) Cutting a Scene</b></p>
3/6	<p><b>Paper 2 final draft due (E-mail AND hard copy)</b></p> <p><b>WRITE:</b> Journal prompt—What are the traits of a letter? What do you expect when you read one? What do you think about when you write one? How does a written letter operate differently from more modern forms of correspondence (Facebook, Twitter, e-mail, etc)?</p> <p><b>DO:</b> Discussion of generic performance of texts—specifically letters/correspondence (“To My Old Master” and other selected letters will be read in class). Introduce Paper number 3.</p> <p><b>THINK:</b> What distinctive traits do various kinds of writing possess? What performative role do those traits play, particularly in regards to the reader and his/her expectations?</p> <p><b>HW:</b> Read Lincoln’s “A Nation Divided” speech (on Blackboard). Complete 5-minute free-talk on Voxopop.</p> <p><b>I NOTICED:</b></p>
3/11	<p><b>No Class (Spring Break)</b></p>
3/13	<p><b>No Class (Spring Break)</b></p>

3/18	<p><b>WRITE:</b> Journal Prompt—What makes for a trustworthy politician? What can they say to make you believe them? What do they say that makes them seem untrustworthy?</p> <p><b>DO:</b> Discussion of political discourse, and the ways in which it attempts to perform for specific audiences (Victory/Concession speeches, clips from <i>Sliders</i>, <i>My Fellow Americans</i> and actual political speeches—both recent and historical). We MAY be having a guest speaker in class for today.</p> <p><b>THINK:</b> How would you go about trying to convince a large group of disparate people to see things your way? How do you speak to an audience that contains people whose views are polar opposites of each other?</p> <p><b>HW:</b> Read two of the five chapters posted to Blackboard (McCourt, O’Brien, Steele, Bryson and Moore). We will draw randomly in class to see who will read what.</p>
3/20	<p><b>WRITE:</b> The five selections on Blackboard were from five different genres—Comedy, Romance, Mystery, Memoir, and Literature (in fairness, these are just labels, and most of the selections overlap a bit generically). Which genre best suits the two passages that you read for homework? Why? What specific details made you label them as such?</p> <p><b>DO:</b> Discussion and definition of genre and performance—connecting back to Bakhtin, Rawlins, and some of our earlier readings.</p> <p><b>THINK:</b> Within a distinct literary genre, what traits unify texts? How do individual texts within that genre differ? How much difference can exist before a text is considered something different from that genre?</p> <p><b>HW:</b> Bring in three potential sources for paper number three. Skim and summarize each source.</p> <p><b>I NOTICED:</b></p>
3/25	<p><b>FILM:</b> <i>12 Angry Men</i></p> <p><b>DO:</b> Short discussion on sources for paper three.</p> <p><b>HW:</b> Bring in three more potential sources for paper number</p>

	three. Skim and summarize each source.
3/27  <b>Paper 3 first draft due on Voxopop (Must be posted by the night before your scheduled conference)</b>	<b>WRITE:</b> Journal Prompt—At this point in the film, which juror (aside from Henry Fonda), do you feel is making the most compelling argument? What about that juror’s style makes him so convincing?  <b>FILM:</b> <i>12 Angry Men</i>  <b>DO:</b> Short activity—Organizing/grouping sources for the purposes of a Lit Review.  <b>I NOTICED:</b>
4/1	<b>No Class (Conferences)</b>
4/3	<b>No Class (Conferences)</b>
4/8	<b>WRITE:</b> Journal Prompt—Besides Henry Fonda’s character, which juror made the least compelling argument to you? Why?  <b>DO:</b> As a class, we will use <i>12 Angry Men</i> in order to put together an outline for a mock/sample paper, modeling the structure for this kind of paper.  <b>THINK:</b> Where there are many voices speaking about the same topic, how do you decide where to jump in to the conversation? How is this similar or different to a social setting?
4/10	<b>Library Day Two (we will meet in the lobby of Rush Rhees Library—Our course librarian will help you to assess the sources you’ve already found for your paper, and point you in the direction of other sources).</b>  HW: First Draft of Paper Three due on Voxopop. First drafts have a rolling deadline—you may upload them at any point between this date and by midnight (at the latest) on Friday 11/16.  <b>I NOTICED:</b>

4/15	<b>Peer Workshop Day: Word Wardrobe and audience shift—RSC example.</b>
4/17	<b>Peer Workshop Day: Cutting it down and blocking out a 5-page presentation draft (signposting, pace, etc)</b>
4/22  <b>Paper 3 final draft due (E-mail AND hard copy)</b>	<b>DO:</b> Presentations/conference format. Group discussion about the rhetoric of the different majors.  <b>HW:</b> Reading on Code-Switching (on Blackboard)
4/24	<b>WRITE:</b> Journal prompt—Part 1: Identify as many different occasions wherein you “code-switch” your writing or speech. Part 2: Keeping that in mind, do you think it is possible to have a “true voice”?  <b>DO:</b> Discussion of code-switching article—workshopping a paragraph to adjust for a different audience. Introduce Paper Four. The performance of the transition (Act/Scene breaks).  <b>THINK:</b> If the idea is the primary focal point of your writing, how can we alter our writing to meet the expectations of different audiences?  <b>HW:</b> Complete a 5-minute free-talk on Voxopop.  <b>I NOTICED:</b>
4/29	<b>Peer Workshopping Day</b> —At this point in the semester, we will have an array of performance-based revision tools at our disposal. I will briefly recap them, and your groups may then begin using the ones that best suit your paper and writing process.
5/1  <b>Paper 4 final draft due (E-mail AND hard copy)</b>	<b>DO:</b> Return to Warhol’s hamburger. John Cage. MoMA—The self as both audience and artist/writer.  <b>THINK:</b> At the beginning of the semester, we defined writing, performance and the self. Would you change those definitions after our work this semester? Why/why not?  <b>(Final) I NOTICED:</b>

	<b>HW:</b> The rest, is silence.
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1/29: Last date to add/drop courses online

4/9: Last date students can withdraw