

Syllabus
Oral Interpretation of Literature
COMS 220
Tuesdays 6-10

Literature is the thought of thinking souls.— Sir Walter Scott

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Techniques of oral interpretation and development of adequate intellectual and emotional responsiveness to meaning of literature. This course is both critical and performance in orientation.

Required Texts:

Lee, C., & Gura, T. (2001). *Oral interpretation* (10th ed). Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company.

Workbook:

Wrench, J. S. (2004). *Oral interpretation of literature: A workbook and source manual*. OUE Copy Center.

Required Materials:

You will need a performance notebook and performance sheets. (available at OUE Bookstore)

Important Websites:

American Psychological Association's Style website - <http://www.apastyle.org>

National Communication Association – <http://www.natcom.org>

Eastern Communication Association – <http://www.ecasite.com>

International Communication Association – <http://www.icahdq.org/>

Interactive Statistical Calculation Page - <http://www.icahdq.org/>

Research Methods Knowledge Base - <http://trochim.human.cornell.edu/kb/>

OU School of Communication Studies - <http://www.coms.ohiou.edu/>

James C. McCroskey, Ed. D. - <http://www.jamesmccroskey.com/>

Virginia P. Richmond, Ph. D. - <http://www.virginiaprichmond-phd.com/>

Jason S. Wrench, Ed. D. - <http://www.roadspeakers.com/jwrench/>

Ohio University Eastern - <http://www.eastern.ohiou.edu/>

GRADING

Final grades in this course will be based on the following:

GRADE	PERCENTAGE
A	93-100
A-	90-92

B+	87-89
B	83-86
B-	80-82
C+	77-79
C	73-76
C-	70-72
D+	67-69
D	63-66
D-	60-62
F	59 and below

ASSIGNMENTS

- Presentations and Evaluations (80% of grade)

Children's Story (5) _____

Poetry

Critical Analysis (5) _____

Performance (10) _____

Prose

Critical Analysis (5) _____

Performance (10) _____

Dramatic Interpretation

Critical Analysis (5) _____

Performance (10) _____

Duet Interpretation

Critical Analysis (5) _____

Performance (10) _____

- Cutting Assignment (10% of grade) (10) _____

- Final Performance (20% of grade) (20) _____

- In class Participation (5) _____

- Extra Credit (x) _____

TOTAL _____

Grading Information

You should monitor your own grades. It is very helpful to know your standing in the course at any time during the quarter. Since the passing of the Buckley Amendment by Congress, I am not allowed to give grades over the phone or Internet. However, you may inquire about your grades at anytime in person. Additionally, you may inquire in person about your final exam grade after you have received your quarter grade reports through the mail from the university.

Course Procedures

Attendance

Punctual attendance is expected at all class sessions, *especially* on test days. If you participate in University sponsored activities (e.g., intercollegiate sports), you must inform your instructor ***before*** you are absent. Ohio University Eastern's policy regarding attendance will be followed. Students are responsible for all missed work.

In Class Participation

In-class learning activities must be submitted on time and **cannot** be made up at all.

Extra Credit is not guaranteed in this course, but if opportunities arise they will be announced in class.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Honesty and originality are expected in all the work you present in this class. Proper citation and documentation of others' work is required on all oral and written assignments. Plagiarism, cheating, or unethical behavior of any kind will not be tolerated.

AMERICAN WITH DISABILITIES ACT

Any student, who, because of a disability, may require some special arrangements as prescribed by Ohio University Eastern in order to meet course requirements should contact me as soon as possible to make necessary accommodations. Accommodations will be made, but I must be aware of your needs in order to make proper accommodations.

ASSIGNMENTS

To avoid repetition in selections, all pieces need to be approved prior to performance by the instructor.

Children's Story

This is an introductory assignment. The purpose of this assignment is just to make people comfortable in the classroom setting and the basic aspects of oral performance of literature. You will select a children's book (one that can be read in under 10 minutes) and read this book before the class.

Poetry (5-10 minutes in length)

You will select a single poem or a collection of poems revolving around a specific theme. There are many modern poetry collections on reserve for you in the OUE library to help you with your selection. These poems can be of a traditional or modern poetic style. You will be graded on the following:

- Folder manipulation
- Poise
- Verbal expressiveness

- Nonverbal expressiveness

Prose (8-10 minutes in length)

You will select a single prose piece that can adequately be covered in the time allowed. Since most prose pieces are not 8-10 minutes in length, your specific cutting of the piece will be extremely important. There are many modern prose collections on reserve for you in the OUE library to help you with your selection. While the type of prose you chose can be of any prose style, the piece should adhere to conventional prose writing (beginning, movement, conflict, climax, and resolution). You will be graded on the following:

- Cutting of the piece
- Coherence of the piece
- Scope of the piece
- Folder manipulation
- Poise
- Verbal expressiveness
- Nonverbal expressiveness

Dramatic Interpretation (8-10 minutes in length)

You will select a piece from the theater that can be performed in an 8-10 minute period. Remember, this is oral interpretation, not acting. Since most theatrical events last between 1 ½ hours to 3 hours, your cutting of the piece will be extremely important. One source book that will be available in the OUE library for possible ideas is *Solo Exposure: An Anthology of Solo Performance Texts from the Twentieth Century* (on reserve). Each piece should contain multiple characterizations. While the piece you choose can be of any theatrical style, the piece should have the following elements: beginning, movement, conflict, climax, and resolution. You will be graded on the following:

- Cutting of the piece
- Coherence of the piece
- Scope of the piece
- Folder manipulation
- Poise
- Verbal expressiveness
- Nonverbal expressiveness
- Multiple Characterizations
- Believability of Characterizations

Duet Interpretation (8-10 minutes in length)

You and a partner will perform a theatrical piece that is 8-10 minutes in length. Remember, this is oral interpretation, not acting. Since most theatrical events last between 1 ½ hours to 3 hours, your cutting of the piece will be extremely important. There are many modern plays that are on reserve for you in the OUE library to help you with your selection. While the piece you choose can be of any theatrical style, the piece should have the following elements: beginning, movement, conflict, climax, and resolution. You will be graded on the following:

- Cutting of the piece
- Coherence of the piece
- Scope of the piece

- Folder manipulation
- Poise
- Verbal expressiveness
- Nonverbal expressiveness
- Integration of duet interpretation
- Flow of characterizations

Critical Appraisal

In addition to the 5 major oral interpretation experiences, you will also turn in a short (1-2 pages) critical analysis of each piece. Here is a list of possible questions to answer in your critical analysis of your pieces?

- Who is the main voice in the piece? To whom is the voice speaking?
- What is going on here, exactly?
- What sorts of people live in this piece?
- What are they saying to each other?
- Where is your piece taking place? What does the environment say about the piece?
- Are there any major characters that are never seen or heard from? If not, why not?
- Why did you choose this piece?
- How did you select your cut?
- Did your cut enhance or change the intended meaning of the piece?
- What do you think the original author would think of your interpretation of her or his piece?

Cutting Assignment

Prior to the Prose assignment, you will be taking a short story of the instructor’s choosing and cutting it down to an 8-10 minute performance piece. The purpose of this assignment is to prepare you for the arduous process of cutting a poem, prose, or theatrical piece for allotted time slots. Students will share their cuttings in class, and then we will compare and contrast how everyone cut the same piece in different ways.

Final Performance

Prior to end of the quarter we, as a class, will host an event and invite people to witness what you have accomplished throughout the quarter. You can opt to perform a piece that you have previously performed, one you have written, or an entirely new selection for this performance. You will be graded on all of the previously discussed points for each genre. Additionally, you will be evaluated on your ability to captivate and entertain the audience as well.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Please note the schedule given on the first day of class is a tentative schedule and changes can be made at the instructor’s/course administrator’s discretion. To keep on top of any possible changes in the course schedule, regular attendance in class is necessary.

Week and Topic	Readings	Assignments Due
1 – Introduction and History of Oral Interpretation and Criticism	Lee & Gura 1, 2, and Appendix B Readings:	
2 – Understanding and Analyzing Poetry	Lee & Gura 9, & 10 Readings: 1 through 7	Children’s Story
3 – Using Verbal and Nonverbal Communication in Interpretation	Lee & Gura 3 & 4 Readings:	Poetry

4 – Cutting and Narration	Lee & Gura 6 Readings: 8, 9, & 11	
5 – Interpretation of Prose	Lee & Gura 5 Readings: 10, 12, 13, & 15	Cutting Assignment
6 – Further Analysis of Prose	Lee & Gura Readings: 14, 16, & 17	
7 – Interpretation of Drama	Lee & Gura 7 Readings: 18 through 22	Prose
8 - Further Analysis of Drama	Lee & Gura 8 Readings: 18	
9 – Team Interpretation	Lee & Gura Readings: 23 through 25	Dramatic Interpretation
10 – Group Interpretation	Lee & Gura 11 Readings:	
Final Week	Lee & Gura Readings:	Duet Interpretation

Course Readings

Poetry

- 1) Sista to Sista - by Georgia Me
- 2) Full Figure potential: A Fat Girl's Blues – by Georgia Me
- 3) Krispy Kreme – by Poetri
- 4) Money – by Poetri
- 5) I Wanna Hear a Poem – by Steve Colman
- 6) How to Write a Political Poem – Taylor Mali
- 7) Television – by Todd Alcott

Prose

- 8) Love and Other Catastrophes: A Mix Tape – by Amanda Holzer
- 9) The Littlest Hitler – by Ryan Boundinot
- 10) Visiting Hours – by Judy Budnitz
- 11) Rooster at the Hitchin' Post – by David Sedaris
- 12) Baby Wilson – by E. L. Doctorow
- 13) Compassion – by Dorothy Allison
- 14) Cheaper by the Dozen – by Thomas Michael Ford

15) He's at the Office – by Allan Gurganus

16) The Pickpocket – by Christopher Cook

17) Familiar Strangers – by Gautam Chopra

Dramatic Interpretation

18) Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992 – by Anna Deavere Smith

19) Fontaine; Girl with the Long Blond Hair – by Whoopi Goldberg

20) Freak – by John Leguizamo

21) A Line Around the Block; Jaywalker – by Marga Gomez

22) Thirteen 'n' Bleeding – by Dael Orlandersmith

Duet Interpretation

23) The Problem – by A. R. Gurney

24) Prelude and Liebestod – Terrence McNally

25) Tender Off – Wendy Wasserstein

Material On reserve in the Library

You are in NO way limited to these sources.

POETRY

Eleveld, M. (2003). *The spoken word revolution: Slam, hip hop & the poetry of a new generation*. Naperville, IL: Sourcebooks mediaFusion.

Simmons, D. (2003). *Russell Simmons Def Poetry Jam on Broadway . . . and more*. New York: Atria.

PROSE

Connelly, M. (2003). *The best American mystery stories*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.

Doctorow, E. L. (2000). *The best American short stories*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.

Eggers, D. (2003). *The best American non-required reading*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.

Mosley, W. (2003). *The best American short stories*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.

Canfield, J., Hansen, M. V., & Adams, M. E. (2002). *Chicken soup for the soul of America: Stories to heal the heart of a nation*. Deerfield Beach, FL: Health Communications.

Dramatic Interpretation

Bogosian, E. (1994). *Pounding nails in the floor with my forehead*. New York: Theatre Communications Group.

Bonney, J. (2000). *Extreme exposure: An anthology of solo performance texts from the twentieth century*. New York: Theatre Communications Group.

Ensler, E. (1998). *The vagina monologues*. New York: Villard.

Essman, J. (1993). *Artificial Reality*. New York: Dramatists Play Service.

Leguizamo, J., & Katz, D. B. (1997). *Freak*. New York: River Head.

Shawn, W. (1992). *The Fever*. New York: Dramatists Play Service.

Wagner, J. (2000). *The search for signs of intelligent life in the universe* (3rd ed.). New York: Perennial.

Duet Interpretation

Auburn, D. (2001). *Proof*. New York: Dramatists Play Service.

Edson, M. (1999). *W;t*. New York: Faber & Faber.

Frayn, M. (1998). *Copenhagen*. New York: Anchor books.

- Gaffney, M., & Najimy, K. (1992). *Parallel lives*. New York: Dramatists Play Service.
- Greenberg, R. (2003). *Take me out*. New York: Faber & Faber.
- Gurney, A. R. (1989). *Love letters*. New York: Dramatists Play Service.
- Halpen, D. (1991). *Plays in one act*. Hopewell, NJ: Ecco Press.
- Kushner, T. (2002). *Homebody / Kabul*. New York: Theatre Communications Group.
- Margulies, D. (2000). *Dinner with friends*. New York: Theatre Communications Group.
- McNally, T. (1991). *Frankie & Johnny in the Clair de Lune*. New York: Plume.
- Norman, M. (1983). *'night, mother*. New York: Noonday Press.
- Shange, N. (1997). *For colored girls who have considered suicide when the rainbow is enuf: A choreopoem* by Ntozake Shange (4th ed.). New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Williams, J., Sears, J., & Howard, E. (1995). *A tuna Christmas* (2nd ed.). New York: Samuel French.
- Williams, J., Sears, J., & Howard, E. (1983). *Greater Tuna* (2nd ed.). New York: Samuel French.