

DRAFT

Brandeis University
Department of Anthropology

ANTH 114b Verbal Art and Cultural Performance
Spring 2008

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Course Description: This course, designed for advanced undergraduates and graduate students, focuses on anthropological approaches to genres of verbal art and cultural performance. The readings explore the uses of poetic language in narratives, folklore and oratory, and the social contexts of complex cultural events such as festivals, dramas, dances, and spectacles. Of special concern is the presence of oral discourse within the context of cultures with full or restricted literacy. We explore the methodological difficulty of reconstructing “original” performance contexts in cases where eyewitnesses or ethnographic evidence (recording, film) are lacking.

Course requirements: There are five graded requirements for the class: (1) regular attendance and informed participation in class discussion (20%); (2) 6-page midterm essay on an assigned question (20%); in-class presentations based on reading assignments (20%); 4-5 page book review; and a take-home final examination covering the readings, discussions, and issues of the course (20%).

Special Note: If you are a student with a documented disability on record at Brandeis University and wish to have a reasonable accommodation made for you in this class, please see me immediately.

Required and Supplemental Readings: The readings for this course are available in PDFs, in books on reserve, and in e-journals.

Unit 1: Methodological Perspectives on the Performance and Verbal Art

Richard Bauman, “Verbal Art as Performance,” American Anthropologist 77 (1975): 290-311

Dell Hymes, “Breakthrough into Performance,” “In vain I tried to tell you”: Essays in Native American Ethnopoetics, pp. 79-141.

Deborah A. Kapchan, “Performance,” Journal of American Folklore 108 (1995): 479-484.

Edward Schieffelin, “Performance and the Cultural Construction of Reality,” American Ethnologist 12:4 (1985): 707-724.

Richard J. Parmentier, “The Semiotics of Ritual Performativity,” Signs in Society, pp. 128-134.

Richard Bauman, “Performance,” Folklore, Cultural Performances, and Popular Entertainment (ed. Richard Bauman), pp. 41-47.

Richard Schechner, “Magnitudes of Performance,” Performance Theory, pp. 251-288.

Richard Schechner, "Wrestling Against Time: The Performance Aspect of *Agni*," Journal of Asian Studies 45 (1986): 359-64.

John Myles Foley, "Word-Power, Performance, and Tradition." Journal of American Folklore 105 (1992).

Paul Zumthor, "Rite and Action," Oral Poetry: An Introduction, pp. 210-222.

Unit 2: Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Discourse Genres

M. M. Bakhtin, "The Problem of Speech Genres," The Problem of Speech Genres and Other Essays.

Irving Goffman, "The Lecture," Forms of Talk, pp. 160-196.

Steven C. Caton, "The Balah: Poem as Play," "Peaks of Yemen I Summon": Poetry as Cultural Practice in a North Yemeni Tribe, pp. 79-108.

Elizabeth Tonkin, "The Boundaries of History in Oral Performance," History in Africa 9 (1982): 273-284.

Richard Bauman, "Performance and Honor in Thirteenth-Century Iceland," Journal of American Folklore 99 (1986).

Unit 3: Native American Verbal Art

Dell Hymes, "Discovering Oral Performance and Measured Verse in American Indian Narrative," New Literary History 8 (1977).

Dennis Tedlock, "The Spoken Word and the Work of Interpretation in American Indian Religion," Traditional Literatures of the American Indian (ed. Karl Kroeber), pp. 68-7.

Joel Sherzer, "Strategies in Text and Context: The Hot Pepper Story," Recovering the Word (ed. Brian Swann and Arnold Krupat), pp. 151-197 [transcription omitted].

Jonathan Hill, "Myth, Music, and History: Poetic Transformations of Narrative Discourse," Journal of Folklore Research 27 (1-2): 115-32.

Anthony Seeger, "Oratory is Spoken, Myth is Told, and Song is Sung: But They Are All Music to My Ears," Native South American Discourse (ed. Joel Sherzer and Greg Urban), pp. 59-82.

Willard Gingerich, "Heidegger and the Aztecs: the Poetics of Knowing in Pre-Hispanic Nahuatl Poetry," Recovering the Word (ed. Brian Swann and Arnold Krupat), pp. 85-112.

James H. Merrell, "I desire all I have said ... may be taken down aright: Revisiting Teedyuscung's Treaty Council Speeches," William and Mary Quarterly 63:4 (2006).

N. Scott Momaday, "Man Made of Words," Symposium of the Whole (ed. Jerome Rothenberg), pp. 414-416.

Unit 4: Varieties of Verbal Art in Oceania

Andrew Strathern, "Veiled Speech in Mount Hagen," Political Language and Oratory in Traditional Society (ed. Maurice Bloch), pp. 185-203.

Michelle Z. Rosaldo, "Words That Are Moving: The Social Meaning of Ilongot Verbal Art," Dangerous Words: Language and Politics in the Pacific (ed. Donald Brenneis and Fred Myers), pp. 131-160.

Steven Feld, "Wept Thoughts: The Voicing of Kaluli Memories." Oral Tradition .

James J. Fox, "Our Ancestors Spoke in Pairs: Rotinese Views of Language, Dialect, and Code," Explorations in the Ethnography of Speaking (ed. Richard Bauman and Joel Sherzer).

Richard J. Parmentier, "The Political Function of Reported Speech," Signs in Society: Studies in Semiotic Anthropology, pp. 70-79.

Unit 5: Orality and Performance in Ancient Greece

Homer, The Iliad, xxx.

John Myles Foley, "The Rhetorical Persistence of Traditional Forms," The Singer of Tales in Performance, pp. 60-98.

Albert B. Lord, "Homer's Originality: Oral Dictated Texts," Epic Singers and Oral Tradition, pp. 38-48.

Gregory Nagy, "Formula and Meter: The Oral Poetics of Homer," Greek Mythology and Poetics, pp. 18-35.

Gregory Nagy, "Homeric Questions," Transactions of the American Philological Association 122 (1992).

Gregory Nagy, Poetry as Performance: Homer and Beyond, pp. 153-206.

Richard Janko, "Homeric Poems as Dictated Texts," The Classical Quarterly 48:1 (1998): 1-13

Charles Segal, "Bard and Audience in Homer," Singers, Heroes, and Gods in the Odyssey, pp. 113-141.

Rosalind Thomas, "Poetry, Memory, and Performance," Literacy and Orality in Ancient Greece, pp. 113-127.

Unit 6: Oral Poetics in Medieval Culture

Beowulf, xxx.

Stephen J. Nichols, Jr., "The Medieval Lyric and Its Public," Medievalia et Humanistica 3 (1972): 133-153.

Mark Amodio, Writing the Oral Tradition: Oral Poetics and Literate Culture in Medieval England, pp. 32-46, 79-98.

John Miles Foley, "Beowulf and the Old English Poetic Tradition," Immanent Art, pp. 190-223.

John D. Niles, "Understanding Beowulf: Oral Poetry Acts," Journal of American Folklore 106 (1993).

John Miles Foley, "Thematic Structure in Beowulf and Old English Poetry," Traditional Oral Epic, pp. 329-358.

Unit 7: Music, Theatre, and Dance

Froma Zeitlin, "Playing the Other: Theater, Theatricality, and the Feminine in Greek Drama," Representations 11 (1985): 63-94.

Michelle Kisliuk, Seize the Dance! BaAka Musical Life and the Ethnography of Performance.

Johannes Fabian, Power and Performance: Ethnographic Explorations through Proverbial Wisdom and Theatre in Shaba, Zaire, ch.

Jane Belo, "Trance Experiences in Bali," Ritual, Play and Performance (ed. Richard Schechner and Made Schuman), pp. 150-161.

William O. Beeman, "Tadashi Suzuki's Universal Vision," Performing Arts Journal 17 (1982): 77-87.

Claire Sponsler, "Mischievous Governance: The Unruly Body of Morality Plays," Drama and Resistance, pp. 75-103.

William S. Sax, Dancing the Self: Personhood and Performance in Pandav Lila of Garhwal, pp. 20-38, 93-133.

Barbara Tedlock, "Zuni Sacred Theatre," American Indian Quarterly 7:3 (1983): 93-110.

Unit 8: Festivals and Spectacles as Cultural Performances

David M. Guss, The Festive State: Race, Ethnicity and Nationalism as Cultural Performance, pp. 60-89.

Victor Turner, "Frame, Flow and Reflection: Ritual and Drama as Public Liminality," Performance in Postmodern Culture (ed. Michel Benamou and Charles Caramello).

Richard Bauman, "Transformations of the Word in the Production of Mexican Festival Drama," Natural Histories of Discourse (ed. Michael Silverstein and Greg Urban), pp. 301-328.

James MacAloon, "Olympics," Rite, Drama, Festival, Spectacle: Rehearsals Toward a Theory of Cultural Performance, pp. 241-280.

Unit 9: Orality in the American Historical Context

Sandra M. Gustafson, Eloquence is Power: Oratory and Performance in Early America, pp. 140-170.

Michael Silverstein, Talking Politics.

Unit 10: Advanced Methodological Issues

Dell Hymes, "The Wife Who 'Goes Out' Like a Man: Reinterpreting a Clakamas Chinook Myth," In Vain I Tried to Tell You.

Richard Bauman, "'Go, My Reciter, Recite My Words': Mediation, Tradition, and Authority," A World of Others' Words: Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Intertextuality, pp. 128-158.

Nancy Felson, "Vicarious Transport: Fictive Deixis in Pindar's Pythian Four," Harvard Studies in Classical Philology 99 (2000): 1-33.

Michael Silverstein, "The Secret Life of Texts," Natural Histories of Discourse (ed. Michael Silverstein and Greg Urban), pp. 81-105.

Possible Books to Review

Jonathan D. Hill, Keepers of the Sacred Chants: The Poetics of Ritual Power in an Amazonian Society.