

**SCHOOL OF ENGLISH, FILM, THEATRE, AND MEDIA STUDIES:  
FILM PROGRAMME: 2009 COURSE OUTLINE**

**THFI 480: Performance and Stardom  
Trimesters 1 + 2 ((Monday 2 March – Friday 16 October 2009)**



**Teaching staff**

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*Matt Wagner*, Theatre Programme,

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**Class Times and Venue:**

3-hour seminar, Friday 10-1pm, in 77FT Fairlie Terrace, Room 305

### **Course Aims, Content and Objectives**

The course will explore stage and screen acting and stardom from an inter-disciplinary and comparative perspective. It will be organized around a set of interlinking and developmental questions: What is performance? What constitutes stage and film acting? What are its different forms? How has stage and film acting changed over time? What is live performance? What is a star? What is the relationship between stardom and acting? Is stardom an industry of desire and consumption? What pleasures do stars offer us? The course will examine specific actor and star case studies (including Marlon Brando, Tom Cruise, Sophie Loren and Demi Moore), and it will seek to map a range of historical and cross cultural traditions in relation to the form and function of acting, and the cultural, ideological and phenomenological parameters of stardom. Students will address these issues through both an objective and inter-subjective perspective: we will *read* performance, and we will *feel* it. *THFI 480: Performance and Stardom* is organised into two (sometimes) overlapping areas of study: Part One: *Performance*, Part Two: *Stardom*. However, students will be shown the links and bridges between these two areas so that arguments, debates, and assessments are informed by the full weight of the course.

By the end of this course students should:

1. Be familiar with the prominent and predominantly Western theories of performance and stardom, including ideas espoused by Panofsky, Munsterberg, Sontag, Dyer, Turner, and Rojek.
2. Be familiar with a wide range of performance styles and methods in both theatre and film contexts.
3. Be able to critically analyse the mechanics/semiotics/senses of performance, and stardom, as they manifest in a variety of stage and screen forms.
4. Be able to critically articulate the similarities and distinctions between different types of theatre and film performance.
5. Be able to critically articulate the similarities and distinctions between live performance and filmed performance.
6. Have had experience in watching and viewing film performance, and star personas.
7. Be able to examine the cultural and ideological issues that stardom raises or explores.
8. Be able to answer the question: What is performance? What is stardom?

### **Set texts**

*Student Notes*, available from the University bookshop.

### **Workload**

The university anticipates that you should be able to devote at least 12 hours per week to a two-trimester 30-point course at Honours level. Therefore you should probably expect to spend, on average, about 9 hours per week (apart from class time) in reading, viewing films, essay writing and preparing seminars. At Honours level it is expected that students will attend every seminar; if you are going to miss a seminar through ill health or whatever, please contact me in advance if possible.

### **Assessment Schedule**

All assessment will be internal. Details of each assignment can be found below.

### **Assignment One: Reading the Actor in Theatre and/or Film**

**Presentation: 8-10 mins duration (15%)**

**Due Date: to be presented in the seminar, week 6, trimester 1**

#### **Either:**

A close, textual analysis of the performance of one film or theatre actor you are familiar with.

**Or**

A comparative and evaluative analysis of stage and screen acting.

**Or**

An investigation into the notion of liveness in relation to theatre and film acting.

**Or**

What is Method performance? Outline its strengths and weaknesses, drawing on illustrations and case studies as you go.

*Presentation notes should be handed in and full bibliography included.*

**Assignment Two: Sensing or Creating the Actor in Theatre and/or Film**

**Presentation: 8-10 mins duration (15%)**

**Due Date: to be presented in the seminar, week 12, trimester 1**

**Either:**

A phenomenological, sense based analysis of the performance of one film or theatre actor you are familiar with.

**Or**

Working with a popular script, direct an actor(s) to perform one dialogue scene (in the actual presentation slot, or in a recorded format), explaining, theorising the performative decisions you have made.

**Or**

Analyse one performance that you think is transgressive in some way.

*Presentation notes should be handed in and full bibliography included.*

**Assignment Three:**

**Written Assignment: 2,000 words (15%)**

**Due Date: Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> July**

Choose one film or theatre director you are familiar with and who employ improvisation in their working method. Critically evaluate the reasons they do this for, using examples wherever you can.

**Assignment Four: Stardom: Industry of Desire**

**Presentation: 8-10 mins duration (15%)**

**Due Date: to be presented in the seminar, week 6, Trimester 2**

**Either:**

What is stardom? What is celebrity?

**Or**

Critically explore the relationship between stardom and fashion, looking at one star and/or one film of your choice, plus ancillary media products and environments.

**Or**

Examine the relationship between stardom and religion

**Or**

Examine the relationship between one star or celebrity and the confessional mode of communication. Why do stars confess?

**Or**

Discuss the argument that fame can be an intimate form of social encounter

*Presentation notes should be handed in and full bibliography included.*

## **Assignment Four: Performance and Stardom**

**Written Assignment: 4,000 words (40%)**

**Due Date: Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> November**

Analyse the relationship between performance and stardom in relation one star/performer that you are familiar with, in either a film or theatre context, or a film and theatre context.

Assignments should be handed to the Administrator in 85 FT or placed in the drop box in 85 FT. You are strongly advised to keep a copy of your work. The Administrator will issue receipts on the day the essay is submitted or, if left in the drop box, the following day. It is the student's responsibility to ensure they are issued with a receipt.

Aegrotat provisions may apply if you are unable to submit your final assignment. In such a case you should contact the coordinator. There is a university policy on reasonable accommodation with respect to assessment procedures for students with disabilities.

### **Mandatory Course Requirements**

To be eligible to pass the course you must complete all assignments and attend at least 20 of the 24 seminars.

### **Penalties and Extensions:**

Work submitted late without an extension will be penalised two percent per working day. Except under exceptional circumstances, no work will be accepted more than two weeks after the due date unless specific prior arrangements have been made.

If you require an extension, you must complete an extension request form (available on your course Blackboard site) prior to the assignment due date. This must be accompanied by relevant documentation (e.g. a doctor's certificate) where appropriate. Extension requests must be submitted to the Course Co-ordinator. Tutors cannot grant extensions. If you are having problems meeting a deadline for an assignment, then you should contact your tutor before the due date. Your tutor will consider any reasonable request for an extension, but please note that applications for extensions should be made at least two days before the due date.

### **Presentation of Work**

All written work should be double spaced and printed on both sides of the paper. Each page should be numbered, and a full bibliography included at the end of the assignment

### **Academic Integrity and Plagiarism**

Academic integrity means that university staff and students, in their teaching and learning are expected to treat others honestly, fairly and with respect at all times. It is not acceptable to mistreat academic, intellectual or creative work that has been done by other people by representing it as your own original work.

Academic integrity is important because it is the core value on which the University's learning, teaching and research activities are based. Victoria University's reputation for academic integrity adds value to your qualification.

The University defines plagiarism as presenting someone else's work as if it were your own, whether you mean to or not. 'Someone else's work' means anything that is not your own idea. Even if it is presented in your own style, you must acknowledge your sources fully and appropriately. This includes:

- Material from books, journals or any other printed source
- The work of other students or staff

- Information from the internet
- Software programs and other electronic material
- Designs and ideas
- The organisation or structuring of any such MATERIAL.

Find out more about plagiarism, how to avoid it and penalties, on the University's website:  
<http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study/plagiarism.aspx>

### **School Facilities**

Students are encouraged to make full use of the Robert Lord Library at 77FT; however, please note that **library materials do not leave the building**.

There is a coin-operated photocopy machine on Level 3. The Green Room is also available to students working in the building. You are expected to clean up after yourself, including returning to the Green Room any mugs removed from there.

### **Award**

The Prize for Film Studies, arising from a fund established by the Wai-te-Ata Press, will be awarded to the best student of film history, criticism or production.

### **Communication**

Any additional information, or changes to the course, will be announced in class and posted on the course notice board 85 FT, and on Blackboard.

### **Acknowledgements:**

Assistance from the NZ Federation of Film Societies and the New Zealand Film Archive is gratefully acknowledged. Students are urged to join the Wellington Film Society. For more information, go to: [www.filmsociety.wellington.net.nz](http://www.filmsociety.wellington.net.nz)

### **General University policies and statutes**

A copy of the General University Statutes and Policies can be found on Blackboard.

## **Course Programme: Trimester 1: Part 1: Performance**

<b><u>Week 1:</u></b>	<b>All the Worlds A Stage and A Screen</b> Everyday performance – the social actor; the meaning of performance; the power of performance; what is acting?
<b>Suggested Screenings:</b>	<i>(people watching; reading performativity in the social world)</i>
<b>Reading:</b>	Friedman, Dan, ‘Performance as revolutionary activity...’ 6-15 Naremore, James, ‘Protocols’ 16-28

<b><u>Week 2:</u></b>	<b>Living Performance and the Death Mask of Film</b> Comparison of stage and screen performance. What is live performance?
<b>Screening:</b>	<i>Dogville</i> (Von Trier, 2003)
<b>Reading:</b>	Musnterberg, Hugo, ‘The Means of the Photoplay’ 29-33 Kraucauer, Siegfried, ‘Remarks on the Actor’ 34-38 Sontag, Susan, ‘Film and Theatre’ 39-46

<b><u>Week 3:</u></b>	<b>The Face of Gish</b> Reading Early Film Performance Theatrically
<b>Screening:</b>	<i>True Heart Susie</i> (Griffith, 1919)
<b>Reading:</b>	James Naremore, ‘Lillian Gish in <i>True Heart Susie</i> ’ 58-65 Balazs, Bela, ‘The Close-up’ 66-71

<b><u>Week 4:</u></b>	<b>The Method of Theatre Performance</b>
<b>Screening:</b>	(Guest Actor – workshop)
<b>Reading:</b>	Strasberg, Lee, ‘The American Laboratory Theatre’ 47-57

<b><u>Week 5:</u></b>	<b>I Coulda been a Contender</b> The Method in Film Performance
<b>Screening:</b>	<i>On The Waterfront</i> (Kazan, 1954)
<b>Readings:</b>	Maltby, Richard, ‘Performance 2’ 72-82 Carnicke, Sharon Marie, ‘Lee Strasberg’s Paradox of the Actor’ 83-89 Naremore, James, ‘Marlon Brando in <i>On the Waterfront</i> ’ 90-98

<b><u>Week 6:</u></b>	<b>Presentations</b>
<b>Screening:</b>	
<b>Reading:</b>	

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<b><u>Week 7:</u></b>	<b>Sensing the Performance</b> A Phenomenological Approach
<b>Screening:</b>	<i>Ace Ventura: Pet Detective</i> (Shadyack, 1994)
<b>Reading:</b>	Machon, Josephine, ‘(Syn)aesthetics and Disturbance’ 99-111 Sobchack, Vivian, ‘Thinking Through Jim Carrey’ 112-123

<b><u>Week 8:</u></b>	<b>Shhh! Modernist Acting</b>
<b>Screening:</b>	<i>Blow-Up</i> (Antonioni, 1966)
<b>Reading:</b>	Tomasulo, Frank P. ‘The Sounds of Silence...’ 124-139

<b>Week 9:</b>	<b>Interpretation and translation</b> Directing the Actor
<b>Screening:</b>	(we will work on a small number of film scripts and plays in the session)
<b>Reading:</b>	Pre-selected scripts and plays available on blackboard

<b>Week 10:</b>	<b>In the Moment: Improvisation in Performance</b>
<b>Screening:</b>	<i>Secret and Lies</i> (Leigh, 1996)
<b>Reading:</b>	McDonald, Paul, 'Secrets and Lies: Acting for Mike Leigh' 140-146

<b>Week 11:</b>	<b>Transgressive Performance</b>
<b>Screening:</b>	<i>Hamlet</i> (Olivier, 1948)
<b>Readings:</b>	Claycomb, Ryan, 'Staging Psychic Excess...' 147-170

<b>Week 12:</b>	<b>Presentations</b>
<b>Screening:</b>	
<b>Readings:</b>	(bring with you your favourite performance moment)

## **Course Programme: Trimester 2: Part 2: Stardom**

<b>Week 1:</b>	<b>Stardom: Industry of Desire</b> What is stardom? What is celebrity?
<b>Screening:</b>	<i>Some Like it Hot</i> (Wilder, 1959)
<b>Reading:</b>	Decorda, Richard (2007) 'the emergence of...' 171-175 Dyer, Richard, 'Stars as Characters in Films' 176-178 Dyer, Richard, 'Stars', and 'Heavenly Bodies' 179-184 Dyer, Richard, 'Monroe and Sexuality' 185-187

<b>Week 2:</b>	<b>The Celebrity Commodity: Starring Brand</b>
<b>Screening:</b>	<i>Fifth Element</i> (Besson, 1997)
<b>Reading:</b>	Turner, Graeme, 'The Economy of Celebrity' 188-194 McLeod, Kembrew, 'The Private Ownership of People' 195-203

<b>Week 3:</b>	<b>(Un)Dressing the Star</b> Stardom and Fashion
<b>Screening:</b>	<i>Pretty Woman</i> (Marshall, 1990)
<b>Reading:</b>	Epstein, Rebecca L. 'Sharon Stone in s Gap Turtleneck' 204-210 Bruzzi, Stella, 'Cinema and Haute Couture' 211-227

<b>Week 4:</b>	<b>The New Gods, Religion, and Intimacy</b> Obamamania
<b>Screening:</b>	Material on Borak Obama
<b>Reading:</b>	Rojek, Chris, 'Celebrity and Religion' 228-233 Redmond, Sean, 'Intimate Fame Everywhere' 234-242

<b>Week 5:</b>	<b>The Star and Celebrity Confessional</b> Celebrity Art(ists) and confession
<b>Screening:</b>	Sam Taylor wood and Tracy Emin photographs and art work

	Tom Cruise on Oprah
<b>Reading:</b>	King, Barry, 'Stardom, Celebrity, and the Para-Confession' 243-251 Fanthome, Christine, 'Articulating Authenticity through Artifice' 252-259

<b>Week 6:</b>	<b>Presentations</b>
<b>Screening:</b>	
<b>Reading:</b>	

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<b>Week 7:</b>	<b>Madly Committed: Star Worship</b>
<b>Screening:</b>	<i>Happy Together</i> (Kar-wai, 1997)
<b>Reading:</b>	Harper, Stephen, 'Madly Famous...' 260-268 Wang, Yiman, 'A Star is Dead' 269-275 Maltby, John, 'Intense-personal celebrity worship...' 276-286 Lumby, Catharine, 'Doing it For Themselves' 287-293

<b>Week 8:</b>	<b>The Face of Garbo</b> <i>Sex, sexuality and the star</i>
<b>Screening:</b>	<i>Queen Christina</i> (Mamoulian, 1933)
<b>Reading:</b>	Weiss, Andrea, 'A Queer Feeling...' 294-302 Barthes, Roland, 'The face of Garbo' 303-304

<b>Week 9:</b>	<b>Italian-ness in the Curves of Sophia Loren</b> National Identity and the star
<b>Screening:</b>	<i>La Ciociara</i> (De Sica, 1960)
<b>Reading:</b>	Gundle, Stephen, 'Sophia Loren, Italian Icon' 305-315

<b>Week 10:</b>	<b>Muscular Demi</b> Star Action Bodies
<b>Screening:</b>	<i>G.I. Jane</i> (Scott, 1997)
<b>Readings:</b>	Williams, Linda Ruth, 'Ready For Action' 316-324

<b>Week 11:</b>	<b>Queering the Star</b> Queering Tom Cruise
<b>Screening:</b>	<i>Risky Business</i> (Brickman, 1983)
<b>Readings:</b>	Dargis, Manhola, 'Ghost in the Machine' 225-328 Rutsky, R.L. 'Being Keanu' 229-334

<b>Week 12:</b>	<b>The Trans-global Star</b> It's Real: The Dance in Jackie Chan...and Goodbyes...
<b>Screening:</b>	<i>Rumble in the Bronx</i> (Tong, 1995)
<b>Reading:</b>	Gallagher, Mark (1997) 'Masculinity in Translation...' 335-353

**Guinness and Potato productions 2009**