

**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA  
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH  
SUMMER 2017 COURSE DESCRIPTION**

**ENGL 660: Studies in Genre: Performance Studies and Theatrical Time**

Professor Emily Anderson

Summer 2017: May 17-June 28, 2017 (6 weeks)

Section: 32800 session: 050 T/W/Th 1-3:50pm

“at the uttermost consummation of performance... *we are seeing what we have seen before*”

--Herbert Blau

Theatrical performance, as many scholars of the discipline have explored, bears a unique relationship to time. “Performance’s only life is in the present,” performance studies scholar Peggy Phelan asserts; “theater is...a function of remembrance,” contends the theorist Herbert Blau. On one hand, theatrical performance is of the moment—an experience of liveness, transience, and ephemerality. On the other hand, theatrical performance is of the past—a receptacle for history, memory, and tradition. Dramatic action thus involves actors and spectators alike in a temporal “telescoping,” as we oscillate constantly between an awareness of where we stand, where we have stood, and who else has stood there before.

Our six-week seminar will explore these temporal oscillations in theory and practice, and by doing so students will receive a thorough grounding in the academic field known as performance studies. Our primary text, and the backdrop for our theoretical readings, will be Shakespeare’s Hamlet. How, and why, do performance theorists from all scholarly backgrounds regularly choose this play to illustrate their claims about performance? Our theoretical readings on performance (work by Peggy Phelan, Marvin Carlson, Joseph Roach, Herbert Blau, among others) will be organized according to signal “keywords” in performance studies (re-enactment, ghosting, liveness, script). We will then be observing how these terms operate in our primary text (Hamlet), in our theoretical texts, and the course of our daily lives. As structured, this course should appeal to students interested in early modern studies, Shakespeare, and adaptation, but it should also speak to scholars with a broader interest in performance studies, and the relationship between literature and cultural memory, and time. While our class investigations will be guided by the general example of Shakespeare, students are invited for their final projects to explore the issues raised in our discussions via any text or performance event.

Assignments include four tiny papers (500 words) due in class on Thursdays in response to our keywords, in weeks one through four; participation in a class conference in the final week, preceded by the circulation and class workshop of your conference paper abstract; a final, seminar paper--typically an expanded version of your conference paper, due at the conclusion of the summer session.