

Gender and Sexuality Studies 371/ Performance Studies 300
Trash!: Hoarding, Abject Object Orientations, and Performance

Winter 2020 | M/W 4-5:50 pm | Annie Mae Swift Hall Krause Studio (Room 103)
instructor: Benjamin Zender | e: brz@u.northwestern.edu | office hours by appointment

Buried Alive and Hoarders. Marie Kondo and the Minimalists. Big-screen TVs, fast fashion, and floating islands of plastic trash. The promises of decluttering, downsizing, and shrinking homes.

From fantastic depictions of people overwhelmed with their accumulation of things to popular self-help books that promise freedom and joy in the form of a clean home, this course is concerned with the judgments we make about people and their relationships to their stuff.

In this course we will begin to unpack "abject object orientations" by investigating the "hoarder" as a pathological figure that emerges within the 20th century. By looking to depictions of the hoarder and other "material deviants" across performance art, film, and memoir we will describe the cultural logics through which speaking of a person's orientation toward objects becomes a way of making ethical claims about them. Placing the abjectified figure of the hoarder alongside depictions of the collector, the archivist, and the artist, **we will theorize the ways that race, gender, class, and sexuality shape our judgments toward, and even help to produce, shared object orientations.**

COURSE POLICIES

Happenings: Performance is something that happens between bodies in specific places and times. Consider each day of class a “happening.” I will evaluate you for your role in each happening as part of your Performance Community grade (see more below). If you do not contribute to a specific happening, you won’t be able to “make up” what we all produced together. I won’t penalize you in final grades for absences due to disability, emergencies, or officially sanctioned NU events.

Performance Portfolio: You will keep a single Performance Portfolio for all generative writing (see more below) and course handouts. This should be a binder or folder. Bring this portfolio, including all generative writing assignments, to every happening.

Course Texts: All readings will be posted on Canvas or distributed in person in advance of each happening. Please prepare all readings scheduled for each happening in advance of that happening. For example, for 1/6 read “Notes on Camp” (Susan Sontag) and “Orientations: Toward a Queer Phenomenology” (Sara Ahmed).

Dis/ability: I am committed to making this course useful and accessible to the widest possible range of students. I will often need your help to make this commitment a reality. Please talk to me about ways that I can structure the course or a specific happening to suit your own learning needs, whether or not you are registered with disability services. Registering with the Accessible NU (<http://www.northwestern.edu/accessiblenu/students/student-information/index.html> or 847-467-5530) may afford you certain legally-protected accommodations that will be also be forwarded to each of your other instructors. Make sure you submit this request as early each quarter as possible.

Students with Dependents: University classrooms rarely recognize the unique needs of students with dependents. Please let me know in advance should circumstances require you to bring a dependent to a happening. Breastfeeding children are always welcome.

Academic Honesty: Northwestern’s policy on academic integrity (<http://www.northwestern.edu/provost/policies/academic-integrity/index.html>) asks you to (1) be ethical in your treatment of other people’s work and ideas by citing their ideas accurately and fairly and (2) produce new work for each course that is an honest outcome of your own work. Violations of this policy will likely result in failure of the course and could carry additional repercussions.

GRADING

Generative Writing, Online Archive, and Low-Stakes Performances (20% of final grade): During and beyond each happening, you will work through course materials and your own research by composing multiple pieces of generative writing, building an online archive of our course on instagram (username: archive_of_trash; password: trash2020), and staging short, low-stakes performances. This work should inform your final presentation. Keep all of your generative writing and notes in your Performance Portfolio (see previous page). Provided you are present and fully participating in each happening, you will always receive full credit for this work.

Archival Show-and-Tells (20% of final grade): Twice between weeks four and nine of the quarter, you will create a 10-15-minute performance inspired by an artifact you find during independent archival research at the Northwestern Library's special collections. In the second week of happenings, we will visit Special Collections together, and you will meet in small groups with Jason Nargis, Special Collections Librarian the following week to begin your individual research. Sign-up for your meetings with Jason Nargis and your show-and-tells the first week of the quarter.

Final Performance (20% of final grade): Your final 20-minute performance will be based upon readings and discussions, your archival research at the Special Collections, our trips to the Leather Museum and Village Thrift, and your generative work throughout the quarter. In week 5, you will submit an initial proposal for this final performance. In the happening following our trip to Village Thrift, you will submit an edited proposal for the final performance that draws from readings, field trips, and your independent research. Schedule your final performance slot in the first week of the quarter.

Performance Community (40% of final Grade): The most important thing we can produce in this course is a critical, generous, and committed performance community. Some methods we all might contribute to this ongoing effort:

- Attending all happenings
- Asking follow-up questions or referring to the work of each other in group discussions
- Directing discussion toward each other
- Taking notes when co-performers express exciting ideas
- Respecting the ideas and work of others by witnessing co-performers with interest and care
- Being committed to critical and loving self-reflection
- Keeping the classroom distraction-free by keeping phones off and avoiding side conversations
- Being generous, honest, and intentional with feedback
- Asking questions during happenings rather than over email
- Offering to take on roles like notetaking, reading aloud, and being a spokesperson for small group discussion

- Critically, intentionally, and lovingly participating in classroom discussion
- Being willing to try out new approaches
- Pushing beyond the strategies that have always worked for you in the past
- Engaging fully in happenings even when the goals for engagement aren't immediately clear
- Exploring new possibilities from co-performer and instructor feedback
- Taking risks in low-stakes performances and writing
- Arriving on time with all course texts and materials and completing assigned homework
- WeBeing boldly communicative about your needs and what you have to offer your co-performers •

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SCHEDULE of HAPPENINGS

	Monday	Wednesday
week 1 (object) orientations	1/6 read: "Notes on Camp" (Susan Sontag); read: "Orientations: Toward a Queer Phenomenology" (Sara Ahmed)	1/8 listen to: "'Coming Clean' About Growing Up in a Hoarding Household" from <i>Tell Me More</i> (Kimberly Rae Miller, int. by Celeste Headlee, hosted by Michel Martin); read: "Introduction" from <i>The Hoarders: Material Deviance in Modern American Culture</i> (Scott Herring) sign-up: Show-and-tells, meeting with Jason Nargis
week 2 a/Archives	1/13 read: "The 'Stuff' of Archives: Mess, Migration, and Queer Lives" (Martin, F. Manalansan IV) read: "The Bedside Table Archives: Archive Intervention and Lesbian Intimate Domestic Culture" (Rebecka Taves Sheffield)	1/15 meeting with Jason Nargis, Special Collections read: "'The Archive' is Not an Archives: Acknowledging the Intellectual Contributions of Archival Studies" (Michelle Caswell) read: "Finding & Using Archival Collections and Primary Sources" (NU Archives and Special Collections)
week 3 (queer) deviance	1/20 No Happening: Martin Luther King Jr. Day attend: Group meetings with Jason Nargis, Special Collections Librarian (sign-up)	1/22 read: "The Drag Queen and the Mummy" (Edward Conlon); watch: "Sick: The Life and Death of Bob Flanagan, Supermasochist" (dir. Kirby Dick)
week 4 happy scripts	1/27 read: "Introduction: Why Happiness, Why Now?" from <i>The Promise of Happiness</i> (Sara Ahmed) read: "Chapter 2: Stuff" from <i>Essential: Essays by the Minimalists</i> (Joshua Fields Millburn & Ryan Nicodemus)	1/29 watch: 1 episode of <i>Clean House</i> or <i>Hoarding: Buried Alive</i> or <i>Hoarders</i> (sign-up) read: "Introduction" and "Part 1: KonMari Master Tips" from <i>Spark Joy: An Illustrated Master Class on the Art of Organizing and Tidying Up</i> (Marie Kondo)
week 5 the lost object	2/3 read: "Mourning and Melancholia" (Sigmund Freud); listen to: "House on Loon Lake" from <i>This American Life</i> (Adam Beckman, ex. prod. Ira Glass)	2/5 watch: <i>Grey Gardens</i> (dir. Albert and David Maysleys); watch: "The Revolutionary Costume for Today" and "Around the World" from <i>Grey Gardens: The Musical</i>

	<p>watch: “Ring of Keys” from <i>Fun Home: The Musical</i></p> <p>watch: “Everything I Know” from <i>In the Heights</i></p>	
week 6 (sex) toys	<p>2/10</p> <p>read: “The Toy Bag” from <i>Techniques of Pleasure: BDSM and the Circuits of Sexuality</i> (Margot Weiss)</p> <p>read: “Toy Theory: Black Barbie and the Deep Play of Difference” from <i>Skin Trade</i> (Ann duCille)</p>	<p>2/12 trip to Leather Museum and Archives</p> <p>read: “Queer Curatorship: Performing the History of Race, Sex, and Power in Museums” (Jennifer Tyburczy);</p> <p>submit: final performance proposal draft</p>
week 7 subject-objects	<p>2/17</p> <p>read: “Introduction: Now” from <i>Habeas Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human</i> (Alexander G. Weheliye)</p> <p>watch: The Couple in the Cage (Coco Fusco and Paula Heredia)</p>	<p>2/19</p> <p>read: “Resistance of the Object: Aunt Hester’s Scream” from <i>In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition</i> (Fred Moten)</p>
week 8 shopping	<p>2/24</p> <p>read: “Consumption in Context” from <i>Purchasing Power: Black Kids and American Consumer Culture</i> (Elizabeth Chin)</p> <p>read: “‘Shopping While Black’: Black consumers’ Management of Racial Stigma and Racial Profiling in Retail Settings” Cassi Pittman</p>	<p>2/26 trip to Village Discount Outlet</p> <p>read: “Introduction” and “Chapter 4: This Never Happened: A Surreal Autoethnography of What Might Have Been” from <i>My Life with Things: The Consumer Diaries</i> (Elizabeth Chin)</p>
week 9 animacies	<p>3/2</p> <p>read: “Animal: New Directions in the Theorization of Race and Posthumanism” (Zakiyyah Iman Jackson)</p> <p>read: “Chapter 5: Lead’s Racial Matters” from <i>Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, and Queer Affect</i> (Mel Chen)</p> <p>submit: edited final performance proposal</p>	<p>3/4</p> <p>read: “Powers of the Hoard” from <i>Vegetable, Animal, Mineral: Ethics and Objects</i> (Jane Bennett, ed. Jeffery Jerome Cohen)</p>
week 10	<p>3/9</p> <p>perform: final performances!</p>	<p>3/11 No Happening: Reading Week</p>
exam week	<p>TBD</p> <p>perform: final performances!</p>	<p>TBD</p> <p>perform: final performances!</p>