

# Performance Analysis

WGST 50103  
Fall 2018

*Due date:*  
October 3



Harry Houdini--1899

## What's in this Packet:

- Research context and essay directions
- Suggested Performances
- Resources to Help You



Stage West, Fort Worth, 2018

*Example of an essay similar to what you will do: "Gender Trouble in the High School Hallway":*

<https://tinyurl.com/yd347okb>



**Othello and Desdemona:**

Source text: *The Plays of William Shakespeare / Edited and Annotated by Charles and Mary Cowden Clarke / Illustrated by H. C. Selous / With Thirty-five Full Page Engravings after Frank Dicksee, RA., H. M. Paget, A. Hopkins, R. W.S., and others. Published: London, Paris and Melbourne: Cassell & Company, Limited [1864–68?]*

Images above: From the first edition of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* Illustrations by Edward W. Kemble

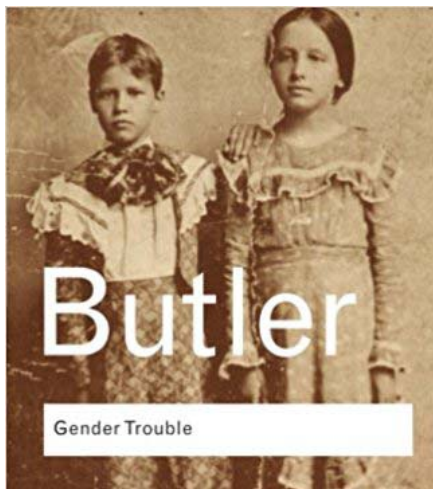


## Context for the Project

Concepts underlying this project come from rhetorician Judith Butler. One of Butler's books—first published in 1990 but still frequently cited—is *Gender Trouble and the Subversion of Identity*.

Take a moment to consider the book's cover in light of other images in this project packet.

How do these images suggest ways in which gender identity is “performed”? And how some performances subvert norms while others affirm them?



Above: Sheet music cover page for a song based on Jenny Lind's performance of operatic songs, published by William Hall and Son of New York, drawn from a photograph by Sarony

# Performing Gender

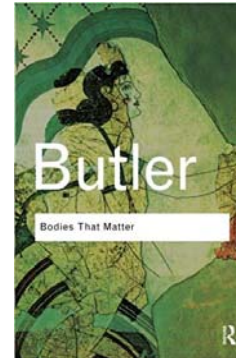
**Butler has critiqued some readings of her work as too limited or even uninformed:**

“The bad reading goes something like this: I can get up in the morning, look in my closet, and decide which gender I want to be today. I can take out a piece of clothing and change my gender, stylize it, and then that evening I can change it again and be something radically other, so that what you get is something like the commodification of gender, and the understanding of taking on a gender as a kind of consumerism. . . . [treating] gender deliberately, as if it’s an object out there, when my whole point was that the very formation of subjects, the very formation of persons, *presupposes* gender in a certain way—that gender is not to be chosen and that ‘performativity’ is not radical choice and it’s not voluntarism . . . Performativity has to do with repetition, very often the repetition of oppressive and painful gender norms . . . This is not freedom, but a question of how to work the trap that one is inevitably in” (interview with Liz Kotz in *Artforum*).

Another important book by Butler that addresses the idea of gender as “performed” is *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex*, first published in 1993.

In this book, Butler expanded on and clarified her ideas about how heterosexual norms for gendered performance are learned and why we need to analyze presentations of “the body” as well as language patterns if we’re going to understand how our

expectations for gendered behaviors are socially constructed.



## Using Butler’s Ideas

Perhaps predictably, Butler’s ideas have been appealing to (and useful for) theorists and practitioners working in theatre and other performative arts: <https://acrocollective.net/2015/04/11/gender-bending-theatre-performance/>

See, for instance, Sarah Grochala’s “Gender Trouble” (which even borrows Butler’s title), a 2016 online essay suggestive of how the UK-based theatre company HEADLONG

has brought ideas from Butler’s work into their productions: <https://headlong.co.uk/ideas/gender-trouble/>.

Along related lines, when writing reviews of stage plays, films, and art exhibits, critics often invoke Butler’s concepts, whether explicitly or implicitly. See, for example, “Boys Will Be Boys: Gender Performativity” on a Bush Green Theatre show: <https://www.bushtheatre.co.uk/bushgreen/boys-will-be-boys-gender->

**An important note to take into account:**

Butler herself has come under intense criticism recently around a written campaign against a specific Title IX case. See, for context:

<https://tinyurl.com/yatklhby>

<https://tinyurl.com/ycojxc7y>

## Your Assignment:

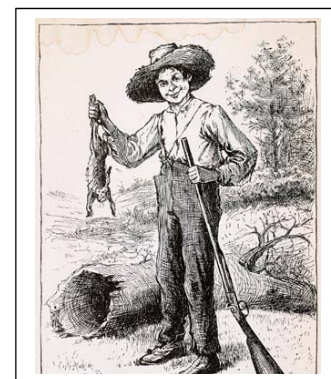
Prepare a written description and analysis of a particular performance's presentation of gender in the context of Butler's ideas on performativity. You will present your research orally in a mini-conference to be held during class time, so be sure to practice your oral delivery ahead of that class session and keep your written version to no more than 7 pages, double-spaced.

Fold in references to secondary sources to support your argument. (Undergrads may use general-interest online sources; grad students should include published scholarship.) You should supplement your written analysis with images—most likely photographs from the performance you interpret, though you may choose additional images to set your performance in a comparative framework. (Your images may be shared via handout or the class video screen.)

## What kinds of performances can be analyzed?

Consistent with the far-reaching impact of Butler's ideas, you should not feel limited to artistic performances such as in theatre, dance, art exhibits, or film. Applications of Butler's work, for example, have extended into the world of business, education, and beyond. (See the resource list at the close of this packet.) So you might consider a formal

presentation by a guest speaker, a roundtable of multiple speakers, a television commercial, a TED talk, a gendered "performance" by a group at an event (such as the prelude to a football game), or even the "performance" of a job in action, such as a visit to a doctor's office or a television interview with a public figure.



## Criteria for evaluation

Choice of performance in line with assignment goals (10%)

Clarity of and insights in performance description (20%)

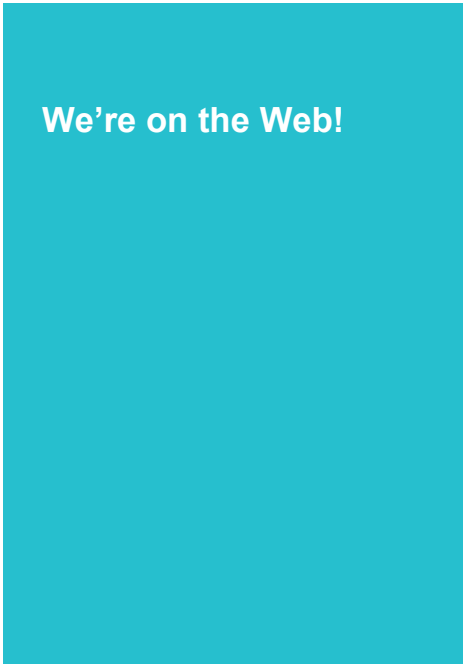
Details and quality of your own analysis in terms of the assignment expectations (30%)

Effective incorporation of supporting scholarship (10%)

Polished Presentation (30%)

- a) Inclusion of appropriate images ably placed and shown--10%
- b) Effective editing of handout or other text shared visually (e.g., PPT slides)—10%
- c) Effective oral presentation skills (e.g., thoughtful —10%

*See rubric reflecting the breakdown in criteria listed above.*





One the first photographs of Sitting Bull by Orlando Scott Goff in Bismarck, ND, 1881; Library of Congress; for background, see Gerald Vizenor, *Fugitive Poses*

### Examples of Performances you might consider for your study:

“Legacy” Art Show depicting “the clash of cultures of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century American West” at the Sig Richardson Museum (through September 8)

[An Octaroon, at Fort Worth’s Stage West](#), based on Dion Boucicalut’s *The Octaroon*;

[Stage Kiss](#) at Circle Theatre;

[Nina Simone: Four Women](#) at Jubilee

*Teach Us All* Film Screening on the “little Rock Nine”

Palko 130, September 13 at 6:30

Theatre; Bella Robinson’s presentation for the WGST #MeTOO series (Sept 25);

TCU Football vs. Iowa State (September 29)

TCU Women’s Soccer vs. Texas Longhorns (September 30)

[Crow musical artist Supaman](#) at “Indigenous Day” Oct 1 at TCU (7:30 BLUU)

Stockyards Rodeo, Fridays and Saturdays

## Resources (readings useful to all, sources for undergrads):

a) Performance of gender roles in mass media

<http://socialpsychonline.com/2015/08/culture-gender-stereotyping-advertising/>

<https://www.livescience.com/46380-superheroes-and-violent-play.html>

<http://krytyka.org/gender-stereotypes-in-mass-media-case-study-analysis-of-the-gender-stereotyping-phenomenon-in-tv-commercials/>

<https://adanewmedia.org/2016/10/issue10-miller-rauch-kaplan/>

b) Gender performance in business/speaking presentations

[http://westsidetoastmasters.com/article\\_reference/the\\_gender\\_gap.html](http://westsidetoastmasters.com/article_reference/the_gender_gap.html)

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/carolkinseygoman/2016/03/31/is-your-communication-style-dictated-by-your-gender/#73aca5beb9d3>

<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/21-eye-opening-ways-men-women-communicate-differently-arnold-sanow/>

<https://prezi.com/vjf5gwq6ilnn/gender-differences-in-business-communications/>

c) Gender Performance in the Arts: e.g., Reviews of play performances focused on gender:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/11/theater/review-in-boy-a-man-deals-with-gender-cards-hes-given-not-born-with.html>

<https://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/15/theater/review-in-photograph-51-nicole-kidman-is-a-steely-dna-scientist.html>

<https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2017/apr/27/a-dolls-house-part-2-review-sophisticated-sequel-offers-vibrancy-and-wit>

<http://www.sophiawallace.com/girls-will-be-bois>



## A List of Don'ts for Women on Bicycles

Based on articles published in the New York World newspaper, circa 1895.

*Don't faint on the road.*

In the late 19th century a woman with a bicycle no longer had to depend on a man for transportation. More and more women came to regard the cycle as a 'freedom machine'.<sup>\*</sup>

However, it wasn't the smoothest of rides. In 1895, members of the Unique Cycling Club of Chicago publicly 'disciplined' two of its female members for disobeying rules regarding dress code. The women paid the price for daring to cycle in skirts, as they were stripped down to their 'bloomers' in front of a crowd of 200 people by several 'strong armed' members of the club.

Below is a published list of rules for women on bikes from the same newspaper. Read on if you want to tear your hair out!



\* Ref. Robert A. Smith, A Social History of the Bicycle. (McGraw Hill, 1972), p. 76.



