

**CMST 3900, Section 002 - Puppets & Props**

Fall 2014

MWF 1:30-2:20, 137 Coates Hall

Final Examination December 12, 10:00 - 12:00

Dr. John LeBret

OFFICE: 132 Coates - PHONE: 225.578.3664 - EMAIL: [jlebret1@lsu.edu](mailto:jlebret1@lsu.edu)

OFFICE HOURS: M&W 10:30-12:30 or by appointment

TEXTBOOKS: Gross, Kenneth. *Puppet: An Essay on Uncanny Life*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 2011. (required)  
Nelson, Victoria. *The Secret Life of Puppets*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press. 2003. (required)  
Bell, John. *American Puppet Modernism: Essays on the Material World in Performance*. Palgrave MacMillan 2013. (required)

Course Description: CMST 3900 is an intermediate/advanced course designed to investigate a specific theme, problem, or topic in communication. Our class aims to unpack the ideas of material performance and materiality in theatrical aesthetics ciphered through deceptively simple puppets and (performing) props, but in the context of a workshop rather than a seminar. To put it another way, this course privileges subjective doing over the more traditional approach of objective study. By the end of this course you should have produced a performance portfolio as well as developed complex understanding of puppetry as it relates to both practical and philosophical concerns.

Requirement: Each student is expected to attend all scheduled class meetings, complete readings and assignments in accordance with the schedule, and enthusiastically contribute to discussions and workshop activities. Additionally, course participants are responsible for three readings/research projects that expand our understanding of contemporary material performance. Finally, students will design, construct, script, and perform with several puppets over the course of the term.

Disabilities Act: If you have a disability that may have some impact on your work in this class and for which you may require accommodations, please see a Coordinator in the Office for Disability Services (112 Johnson Hall) so that such accommodations may be arranged. After you receive your accommodation letters, please meet with me to discuss the provisions of those accommodations as soon as possible.

Course Evaluation: **Participation will account for 20% of your final assessment.** All classes require some obligation to the course community and this is especially true for this course. Attendance, punctuality, and preparedness are essential and expected. Additionally, because you will be responding to other's performances, you should make every effort to be a critically engaged collaborator who is forthright and helpful without being cruel. Students who miss class also miss out on the opportunity to contribute to the community. Similarly, students who are unprepared or otherwise disengaged from daily activities are less able to offer the full value of their participation. Students who are unable or unwilling to make this course a priority will be graded accordingly and I strongly advise that, should you anticipate a problem with succeeding in this aspect of the course, you should consider an alternative class that is more in keeping with your needs.

Reading projects: **Reading projects will account for 20% of your final assessment.** Each student is responsible for two of the assigned reading days, one at the beginning of the semester and again at the close. While all students are expected to read all assigned readings, the assigned readers will contribute a detailed outline of the material as well as question prompts to guide the class discussion.

Research project: **The research project will account for 20% of your final assessment.** Each student is responsible for an outside research project that investigates contemporary practice with a traditional puppet form. One half of the assessment is based on the development of an outline or narrative that form the basis of an in-class presentation. The other half is based on the design and production of an example puppet that allows hand-on experience for others in the class.

The Puppetfolio: **The aesthetic performances will account for 30% of your final assessment.** Over the course of the semester you will create at least three puppets and engage in six performances. While I will offer feedback and critique at each stage, graded assessment will be based on the overall portfolio of work done during the semester. This structure encourages students to take risks with the individual assignments in order to develop a richly conceived and executed vision for final critique. This is a workshop environment; failure is both anticipated and valued. Improvement over the course of the semester is valued over an immediate mastery that fails to find an avenue for growth or development.

The exams: **The midterm and final examinations will account for 10% of your final assessment.** Examination assessments are less helpful in this type of course, since so much of what I anticipate will be important to the class is not the content of our materials but what we, individually and collectively, do with them. Accordingly, should I find that exams are unnecessary for course participants I will eliminate them from the grading and merge the reserved percentage across all other assessments by weight.

The Space: The HopKins Black Box is both a classroom and a performance space. Students are expected to contribute to daily maintenance by cleaning up after themselves, including returning all tools and materials used in a given day to the appropriate storage space. Students are also required to attend at least two performances in the space over the course of the term. The season is available at [www.lsu.edu/hbb](http://www.lsu.edu/hbb).

#### Calendar

- 8/25/14 - Welcome, syllabus overview, First Puppet
- 8/27/14 - Respond to NPH's Puppet Dreams, begin puppet factory
- 8/29/14 - Factory work
  
- 9/01/14 - Labor Day holiday
- 9/03/14 - Finish Factory work
- 9/05/14 - Puppet: An Essay on Uncanny Life (prologue - chap. 3) - *Grad Showcase*
  
- 9/08/14 - Puppet History, abridged
- 9/10/14 - 60 second introductions workshop
- 9/12/14 - Puppet: An Essay (chap. 4 - 6)
  
- 9/15/14 - Spotlight: Puppetry & the Avant-Garde
- 9/17/14 - 60 second fable workshop - *Sideshow w/ Guest Artist Nico Wood* 9/18
- 9/19/14 - Puppet: An Essay (chap. 7 - 9) - Clear Spotlight topics EoD
  
- 9/22/14 - Puppet: An Essay (chap. 10 - coda)
- 9/24/13 - 60 second affect workshop
- 9/26/13 - Spotlight: Punch & Judy
  
- 9/29/14 - Spotlight: Toy Theatre & Everyday objects
- 10/01/14 - Spotlight: Film & Television
- 10/03/14 - Fall Break!!!

- 10/06/14 - Spotlight: Shadow & Light
- 10/08/14 - Spotlight: Bunraku - *A Pigment of Your Imagination* 10/9/14-10/11/14
- 10/10/14 - Spotlight: Robot & Automaton
  
- 10/13/14 - Spotlight: Avatar & Cyborg
- 10/15/14 - Spotlight: Marionettes & Giants, papers due
- 10/17/14 - TBA
  
- 10/20/14 - Construction Week
- 10/22/14 - Construction Week
- 10/24/14 - Construction Week
  
- 10/27/14 - Scene Collaboration
- 10/29/14 - The Secret Life of Puppets (Preface - chap. 3) - *Uncanny Valley* opens
- 10/31/14 - 60 second Movement & Voice workshop
  
- 11/03/14 - Secret Life (chap. 4 - 6)
- 11/05/14 - Playing with props in public
- 11/07/14 - 60 second scene workshop 1
  
- 11/10/14 - Secret Life (chap. 7 - 10)
- 11/12/14 - Playing with props in public
- 11/14/14 - 60 second scene workshop 2
  
- 11/17/14 - Secret Life (chap. 11 - 12)
- 11/19/14 - Playing with props in public
- 11/21/14 - TBA
  
- 11/24/14 - TBA
- 11/26/14 - Thanksgiving Pregame
- 11/28/14 - Thanksgiving Aftermath
  
- 12/01/14 - On Beyond Puppets - *Fall Showcase* 12/2/14
- 12/03/14 - 60 Second Performances - *On a Snowy Evening* opens
- 12/05/14 - Final Review
  
- 12/12/14 - 10:00 - 12:00 exam