

What Is Performance Studies?

Performance Studies examines performances in two broad categories: artistic performances and cultural performances. Artistic performances are performances marked and understood as art: solo-performance, performance art, performances of literature, theatrical storytelling, plays, and performance poetry are all examples of this sort of performance. This category considers performance as an art form.

Cultural performances include those events embedded in everyday life in which a culture's values are displayed for their perpetuation: rituals such as parades, religious ceremonies, and community festivals as well as conversational storytelling, performances of social and professional roles, and individual performances of race, gender, sexuality, and class. This category considers performance as a way of studying how people move through the world as individuals, construct identity, and build community together.

Performance Studies is also keenly interested in the intersection between these categories. For instance, one might study the performances of a particular culture and turn that study into a staged performance about that culture. Cultural performances influence the kinds of artistic performances that a culture creates and, in turn, those artistic performances influence cultural performances. Therefore, Performance Studies embraces the creative process of making art as well as the critical process of analyzing performances.

Performance Studies first emerged as its own field of study in the last decades of the twentieth century informed by insights from anthropology, sociology, theatre, oral interpretation, communication studies, literary criticism, cultural studies, ethnography, folkloristics, mythological studies, and psychology. Today, performance scholars contribute to these diverse fields of study. A recommended online brochure, "[A Student's Guide to Performance Studies](#)," outlines the recent developments in performance studies over the last two decades.

Performance Studies at Kennesaw State University

The Program in Theatre and Performance Studies here at KSU features performance as an art form, as a field of study, and as a method of inquiry (or a way of knowing) in classes throughout the major. The entire program embraces the idea of embodied learning, "that knowledge—the process of attaining, sharing, and projecting knowing—can be accomplished through doing" (Alexander 415).

The degree program features several required courses in Performance Studies as well as courses that integrate the scholarship of Theatre Studies and Performance Studies, including:

- Introduction to Performance Studies
- Performing Culture
- Performing Literature
- History & Theory I: Ancient through Renaissance Theatre & Performance
- History & Theory II: Neoclassical through Early Modern Theatre & Performance

- Senior Seminar: Contemporary Theatre & Performance

Additionally, the program offers a Concentration in Performance Studies, which includes:

- Performance Art
- Adapting & Staging Literary Texts
- Performance Composition Dramaturgy
- Directing
- Directing Styles