



## CULTURAL IDENTITY AND EMPATHY

### **Student Learning Outcomes:**

- define personal values and beliefs by reflecting on the ways their identities and cultures are constituted in and through performance.
- use appropriate language and communication methods that consider others' points of view and respect differences by creating performance and written work that demonstrates understanding of various social, cultural, and political perspectives and identities.

### **Prompt:**

An individual's self-concept is often seen as something deriving from or connected with a larger sense of cultural identity. In this performance, you will research and embody a person with a cultural identity you feel to be distant from your own cultural identity. You will develop a 5-7 minute performance script by transcribing your interview of another person. You will then stage a memorized performance that includes careful embodiment of the language, scene, context, and perspective of the cultural other you choose to engage.

### **Instructions and Format:**

1. Find a person who you can speak with about a cultural experience or identity that you feel to be different from your own cultural identity or experience. Ask for permission from this person to speak with them about their cultural identity or experience.
2. Conduct research online and at the USF Library in order to gain background knowledge about this person's culture before speaking with them. Prepare a series of open-ended questions that you may ask in order to learn more about this person's cultural identity (see additional interview guidelines below).
3. After conducting your research and conversation, develop a 5-7 minute performance script from these texts. You may incorporate outside sources, but your interview text should be verbatim (word for word). A typed copy of your script is due at the time of your performance.
4. Prepare a 5-7 minute memorized performance that includes careful embodiment of the language, scene, context, and perspective of the cultural other you choose to engage. This performance must:
  - Include a text (transcribed interview with some additional research) that presents a cultural identity you experience as being different from you own.
  - Include deliberate performance choices in regards to the use of voice (vocal variety, clarity, quality, volume, etc.), body (gesture, movement, posture, etc.), and space (staging, relationship to audience, development of boundaries, etc.). These choices should match the gestures and speaking style of the person you interview.
  - Demonstrate a commitment to empathetically engaging with and attempting to understand the experience of the person you interview.
  - Demonstrate a careful and respectful awareness of the audience.

5. Attend and engage as audience members with all of the performances. Provide meaningful feedback and descriptive observations about the performances.

**Interview Guidelines:**

*Form:* Performing a cultural other using interview transcripts is a form of performance that can reveal a great deal of insights about the person being interviewed and about the performer. These performances strive to match the speaking styles, gestures, and expressions of the other person as closely as possible. This requires a careful attention to the details of not only what the speaker says, but also how the speaker talks and moves. In this assignment, your interview will provide insight about a cultural identity that you consider distant from your own cultural identity. This performance will present this cultural identity in terms of both content and form.

*Step 1 Permission:* Find a person who you can speak with about a cultural experience or identity that you feel is distant from your own cultural identity or experience. Ask for permission from this person to speak with them about their cultural identity or experience. Explain that this project is a course assignment, and be respectful of their wishes. Arrange a time and place to conduct the interview.

*Step 2 Research:* Conduct research online and at the USF Library in order to gain background knowledge about this person's culture before the interview. Based on your research prepare a series of open-ended questions that you may ask in order to learn more about this person's cultural identity. Avoid asking yes or no questions. Instead, develop questions that ask for specific stories and experiences. Type these questions out, and know that you may not be able to ask all of your questions during your interview.

*Step 3 Interview:* If possible, and if your interviewee agrees, record your conversation. Ask your questions, but most importantly listen to the answers and stories the other person shares with you.

*Step 4 Transcribe:* After your interview, transcribe the conversation by typing word for word what was said. As you work to develop a 5-7 minute script look for stories and aspects of the interview that most clearly reveal or point to the cultural identity and values of the other person. You may include a frame with references to your outside research if appropriate.

*Step 5 Practice:* Practice your script and try to match, as closely as possible, the speaking style and movements of the other person. This performance should present a clear portrait of the other person for your audience. As you practice pay attention to aspects of the speaking style including volume, tempo (including pauses and fillers such as "uh" and "um"), pitch, articulation, and pronunciation. Include unique qualities of the stories including mistakes and corrections made by the other person. Practice and develop your use of body in ways that also match the movements and gestures of the other person as closely as possible. Pay attention to posture, use of hands, use of gestures, and other movements that are unique to the other person. Rehearse until you feel comfortable with the persona you have created.

**Course:** ORI 4019 Performing Identity & Culture

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