

Project Assignment #1

What I would like you all to do is each prepare a particularly difficult passage in a book that comes from your own discipline. Something you've been grappling with, or remember grappling with. The length should be roughly a half-page (not much shorter, in any event). It should not be a reading assignment for this class.

By "prepare", I mean you should prepare it for performance. By which I mean: you should try to communicate the thought, through the author's language, as clearly as possible. So: careful attention to subordinate clauses; careful attention to where the emphases needs to be to communicate most clearly. If the author of the passage was explaining his or her point to a friend in conversation—if this passage were indeed a script—how would it be delivered as dialogue to get the thought across? No paraphrasing. No illustrations. No props. The performer needs to address the class with his or her language, and not keep a nose buried in the text.

Each performer goes through the passage once. Then he or she goes back to the top. This second time, if there is a sentence the interlocutors (the class) don't understand, or which feels vague or unformed, they can ask the performer, "would you please repeat that?" The performer then needs to repeat the sentence either until hitting upon an inflection that communicates the thought properly, or until the interlocutors have heard the thought enough times that they understand it, and the performer can move on. When the performer has reached the end of the passage, and the end of questions, he or she does it a last time, uninterrupted, incorporating whatever has been learned about performing this text in the process.

-David Levine
2/10/16