

**Theater 192, Winter 2012**  
Upper Division Seminar:  
Research Methods in Theater & Performance  
Wed 2-4:50, Theater and Dance 2517

**Instructor:** Dr. Christina McMahon  
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**Office:** 2514, Theater and Dance building  
**Office hours:** Tues. 3-3:50; Wed. 1-1:50, *or by appointment*

**Course Description:** This course provides upper-division theater studies majors with the tools necessary to undertake rigorous research on dramatic texts, live performance, and theatre history. We will study in-depth two methods for theatre research: ethnography and “close readings” of plays. Ethnography, defined loosely as “writing about people,” involves participant-observation and interviews, in this case connected to rehearsals or the creative process of performance more broadly. “Close reading” entails a detailed analysis of a particular dramatic text for the sake of making a theoretical argument and/or staking claims about the text’s place in theatre history. Students will study both research methods and choose one approach for their final research paper. We will develop this paper in a number of stages throughout the quarter, including: locating sources, constructing an abstract and annotated bibliography, drafting, and re-drafting.

**Course Objectives.** *By the end of this course you will:*

- *Learn* methods and steps for writing ethnographies and “close readings” of drama;
- *Study* the ethics of using human subjects as research “sources” on performance;
- *Formulate* an original argument for a research paper based on analyses of primary and secondary texts/sources;
- *Critique* drafts of your peers’ writing and respond to their critiques of your own paper draft
- *Employ* critical writing skills to craft a final, analytic research paper that could potentially be revised for publication later.

**Required texts** (available at the UCEN bookstore):

- D. Soyini Madison, *Critical Ethnography: Method, Ethics, and Performance*. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2011.
- Martha Ferguson, *A Short Guide to Writing About Theatre*. New York: Pearson Longman, 2008.
- Wayne C. Booth, Gregory Colomb, and Joseph Williams. *The Craft of Research*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008.
- J.T. Rogers, *The Overwhelming*. New York: Faber and Faber, 2006
- Two additional chapters/articles retrievable as PDFs through electronic reserve from the library website (<http://eres.library.ucsb.edu/eres/default.aspx>; password TBA)

NOTE: All of the four required books will be on 2-hr reserve at the library (the library only has an older edition of Madison, 2005). However, please only consult them in the library in a pinch (i.e. left your book at home by mistake). Each student must have her or his own copy of all course materials. Please either print out or take detailed notes on the PDFs assigned through electronic reserve and bring to class with you the day the reading is assigned.

### Contacting the Instructor:

I am available throughout the quarter to discuss any aspect of the assignments with you. If my office hours are not convenient, please email me to set up a different time to meet. I will respond to emails within 24 hours, excluding weekends (i.e. an email sent Friday at noon will be addressed, at the latest, by Monday at noon).

### Course Requirements and Assessment:

1. Participation (includes “Show and Tell” and “Round Robin”): **25%**
2. A series of short assignments due weekly: **35%**
3. A final research paper developed in three drafts: **40%**
  - 1<sup>st</sup> draft due 3/7
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> draft due 3/14 (*must incorporate peer feedback*)
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> draft due 3/20 (*must incorporate instructor feedback*)

### Evaluation Policies:

- (1) **Attendance:** Attendance is mandatory. You are entitled to one absence for which you do not owe an explanation. For each additional absence, your final grade will be lowered by a full letter grade unless you contact me in advance to notify me of an urgent situation, injury, or illness (try to provide documentation when possible). If you miss more than two classes (even if one is excused), for logistical reasons you may not be able to remain in the class.
- (2) **Punctuality:** Plan to arrive punctually for class. This will ensure that you derive the full benefit of the session and that class will not be disrupted. Arriving 10 minutes late constitutes tardiness: **two incidents of tardiness will count as a full absence.**
- (3) To receive credit for the course, **students must complete all of the work assigned.** Final grades will not be given based on partially completed course requirements. **Don't assume any assignment is optional: you will not be given a grade for the class if you fail to turn in an assignment.**
- (4) Assignments must be turned in **on time** and in **hard copy.** The only exception is in the case of an excused absence on a due date (i.e. you have contacted me in advance about an unavoidable, urgent situation). In that case, make arrangements with me to make it up.

### Students with Disabilities:

If you are a student with a documented disability and would like to discuss special accommodations, please contact me via email or in person during office hours.

#### **Academic Integrity:**

Students are expected to comply with University regulations regarding academic integrity. If you are in doubt about what constitutes academic dishonesty, speak to the instructor before the assignment is due and/or examine the University web site. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to cheating on an exam (e.g., copying others' answers, providing information to others, using a crib sheet) or plagiarism of a paper (e.g., copying another student's paper, taking material from readings, in print or on-line, without citation). Failure to maintain academic integrity on an assignment will result in a loss of credit for that assignment—at a minimum. Other penalties may also apply. For a complete explanation of university procedures, please see: <http://hep.ucsb.edu/people/hnn/conduct/disq.html>

### **Grading rubric:**

**A** grades reflect work that demonstrates deep, thorough and detailed knowledge, clear logical structures, correct and purposeful use of language, proper referencing, vivid and imaginative thinking and writing, a clear grasp of theoretical concepts, developed reasoning, and well-substantiated arguments.

**B** grades reflect work that demonstrates deep, thorough and detailed knowledge, proper referencing, a good grasp of theoretical concepts, developed reasoning, and well-substantiated arguments, but not much imaginative thinking and writing. **B** work does not contribute original ideas and arguments, but relies mainly on the ideas and knowledge discussed in class. **B** work may also **lack** clarity in the writing itself, a logical structure, correct and purposeful use of language, and sufficient proofreading.

**C** grades reflect work that shows inconsistent or partial solutions to problems, and understanding of basic ideas and methods.

Failing grades (**D and lower**) reflect work that shows inconsistent or partial solution to problems, is superficial, confused, showing incorrect or absent references, an unoriginal or absent viewpoint, poor grasp of critical concepts, sloppy writing or proofreading, undeveloped ideas, lack of originality, irrelevant material, or irrelevant substantiation.

### **Explanation of Assignments and Assessment:**

#### **1) PARTICIPATION (25%)**

- **Your active involvement is essential to your participation grade. This means that keeping up with the readings is imperative.** Since we only meet once a week, the readings assigned each week are substantial. Therefore, you should be reading and working consistently throughout the week.
- “Round Robin.” Class sessions will essentially be roundtable discussions about the readings and assignments. Every class, I will ask students at random to provide at least one thoughtful question, observation, or opinion about each of the readings assigned. All students must do all of the readings, whether they are targeted more toward ethnography or “close reading.”
- “Show and Tell.” You will do an informal “report” on your research to the class once this quarter. You should focus on a problem or question that’s coming up in your research, so that the rest of the class can give you ideas about how to work through it.
- On the last day of class, you will complete a self-evaluation of your participation grade, which I will take into account before I assign your final grade.

## 2) SERIES OF SHORT ASSIGNMENTS (35%)

- Each week you will turn in the short assignment designated on the syllabus. These are designed to help you lay the groundwork for your final research project. Individually, they represent all of the preliminary steps you should take before drafting a paper. I will go over expectations for each assignment with you a week in advance.

## 4) FINAL RESEARCH PAPER (includes 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> drafts) (40%)

- For your final paper, you will devise an original argument about a topic of your choosing. You can do EITHER an ethnographic approach (i.e. observing rehearsals/performance contexts and doing interviews) OR a “close reading” of a play of your choice.

- In either case, you will need a critical “hook.”

---**Ethnography example:** How do gender hierarchies play out among actors, directors, and crew members rehearsing UCSB’s production of *Iphigenia 2.0*?

---**“Close reading” example:** How does Charles Mee revise classical Greek notions of gender in his contemporary re-working of Euripides, *Iphigenia 2.0*?

- If you choose to do a close reading of a play, your final draft should be 10-12 pages. You should come to class on January 18<sup>th</sup> with an idea for your play and paper topic.
- If you choose to do an ethnographic approach, your final draft should be 8-10 pages. You should come to class on January 18<sup>th</sup> with an idea for your field site and topic. Possibilities for field sites are endless: rehearsals for a UCSB main stage or student-run production, Improvability (Fri. nights), Laughology (Sat. nights), a tango or salsa class offered on campus or downtown. Any site involving performance is fair game, but you should have consistent access to it. You should spend at least 3 hours per week at your field site, beginning the week of January 25<sup>th</sup> and ending March 7<sup>th</sup> (when your first draft is due).
- **Five secondary sources required for close readings; three secondary sources required for ethnographies.**
  - One of these may be a production review. The rest should be scholarly sources. Scholarly sources are defined as **books, book chapters, or articles from academic journals (NOTE: Articles from publications like the *New York Times* are NOT scholarly sources. They are journalism. You may use them, but they will not count towards your scholarly sources minimum).**
  - Unless you receive prior approval, **web pages do not count as scholarly sources.**
  - To receive credit, you must complete all three parts (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> drafts).

## Reading and Assignment Schedule

\*Readings listed under a particular date must be done **before** the class period that day. You are responsible for bringing the designated reading material to class every day. Not having reading materials with you in class will negatively impact your participation grade.

\*When the assigned reading is digitized (available through the Library Eres page), each student is expected to come to class with **either** a **printout** of the whole document or **detailed notes** on it for reference during discussions.

### 1/11 Course Introduction

#### Syllabus Overview

**View & Discuss:** *Cannibal Tours* (Dennis O'Rourke, 1988)

### 1/18 Brainstorming a Research Topic

Come to class today with an idea for a research topic (either an ethnography [where?] or a close reading of a play [which one?]).

Please also bring your *Craft of Research* (Booth) book to class with you today

#### Reading:

- Ferguson, Chapters 1 & 2
- Madison, pp. 1-17 (excluding the “warm-ups”); 81-92 (“Case 3: Community Theatre”)
- Rogers, *The Overwhelming* (Please read **ONLY** the play; not the postscript yet)

-**While reading *The Overwhelming***, take notes in the margins as Ferguson describes on pgs. 36 & 37. If you were to write a paper about this play, what kind of thesis statement might you develop? Be prepared to discuss in class.

**Assignment Due:** “Representing the Other” (3 pgs, see handout)

### 1/25 Refining the Research Topic

### Reading:

- Ferguson, Chapter 4
- Booth, Chapter 3, “From Topics to Questions”
- Madison, pp. 19-27
- Rogers, “What Came After: a Postscript” (in *The Overwhelming*, 113-23). Here, Rogers talks about an ethical issue that arose as he was interviewing Rwandans in the U.S. to write his play. As a researcher, did Rogers handle the situation correctly? What could/should he have done differently? Be prepared to discuss in class.

**Assignment Due:** “Diagramming your Topic” (1.5 pgs). Using your research topic, follow the steps that Booth describes for: 1) narrowing your topic (p. 39); 2) Moving from a topic to a claim (p.39-40), 3) Asking questions of your topic (pp. 40-43); and 4) Discovering your topic’s larger significance (pp. 46-47, steps 1,2,&3). **We will go through an example in class on 1/18.**

## 2/1 Preliminary Research & Analysis

### Reading:

- Madison, Ch. 5; plus pp. 160-163 (“Case 3: Community Theatre”)
- Ferguson, Ch. 6
- *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*, Ch. 2, “In the Field: Participating, Observing, and Jotting Notes” (eres)

### Assignments Due:

- \*If doing an ethnography, turn in: “Fieldnotes I: The Raw Write-up” (see handout) (2-3 pgs.)
- \*If doing a close reading, turn in: “The Scene Analysis” (see handout; Ferguson ch.6) (2-3 pgs.)

## 2/8 Locating Secondary Sources

\*\*We will meet in the library today at 1 for a one-hour session on finding scholarly sources with a librarian at UCSB. Library classroom number TBA. We will re-convene in TD 2517 for the second half of class.\*\*

### Reading:

- Booth, Ch. 5 & 6
- Ferguson, Ch. 5
- *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes* (1995), Ch. 3, “Writing Up Fieldnotes I: From Field to Desk” (39-65). (eres)

**Assignment Due:**

\*If doing an ethnography, turn in: “Fieldnotes II: The Formal Write-up” (see handout) (2-3 pgs.)

\*If doing a close reading, turn in: “The Character Analysis” (see handout; Ferguson ch.6) (2-3 pgs.)

**2/15 Engaging Secondary Sources**

**Reading:**

- Booth, Ch. 7-10

**Assignment Due:**

\*Annotated Bibliography (we’ll go over this in class on 2/8)

**2/22 Structuring your Paper / Writing a Research Proposal**

**Reading:**

- Booth, pgs. 173-86 (*also review his storyboard explanation and diagram on pgs. 130-31*)
- Madison, pp. 27-49 (excluding “warm-ups”)

**Assignments Due:**

\*Everybody turns in a research abstract (250 words) (we’ll go over this in class on 2/15)

\*If doing an ethnography, turn in: “Transcribing an Interview” (see handout) (3 pgs.)

\*If doing a close reading, turn in: “Biographical Sources” (see handout) (3 pgs.)

**2/29 Planning your Draft**

**Reading:**

- Booth, Chapters 13 & 16
- Madison, Ch. 8 (excluding “warm-ups”)

**Assignments Due:**

\* Muse Map or Storyboard (*we'll do an example in class on 2/22*)

### **3/7: Drafting your Paper**

#### **Assignment Due: FIRST DRAFT**

- Course Wrap-Up, Part I: Watch and discuss excerpts of *Possession* in class
- Peer-review workshop with drafts in class

### **3/14: Re-Drafting your Paper**

#### **Reading:**

- Booth, Chapters 14 & 17
- Course Wrap-Up, Part II: Watch and discuss *Couple in the Cage* in class

\*In-class: Self-evaluation of your Participation Grade

**Assignment Due: SECOND DRAFT** (substantially revised according to peer comments)

**YOUR SECOND DRAFTS WITH MY DETAILED COMMENTS WILL BE AVAILABLE TO PICK UP FROM MY BOX IN THE THEATER AND DANCE MAIN OFFICE BY 4 P.M. ON FRIDAY, MARCH 16<sup>TH</sup>.**

**FINAL PAPER DRAFTS DUE IN MY BOX BY 5 P.M. ON TUES., MARCH 20<sup>TH</sup>. THEY SHOULD BE SUBSTANTIALLY REVISED ACCORDING TO MY FEEDBACK.**

**\*PLEASE TURN IN ALL THREE DRAFTS, INCLUDING THE 1<sup>ST</sup> AND 2<sup>ND</sup> ONES W/COMMENTS ON THEM.\***

**HAPPY SPRING BREAK!!**