

TH3171 – Theater History

10:10 A.M. - 12:05 P.M., Tu, Th (09/04/2012 - 12/12/2012)

Anderson Hall, Room 250

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Office Hours: Thursdays, 12:30 – 1:30, or by appointment

Course Overview

I offer this class to you as a scholarly and pedagogical experiment. Whereas the traditional theatre history survey course attempts to cram 2000 years of historical events into fifteen weeks, this particular class sidesteps all pretension to mastery and comprehensive understanding. Instead of focusing exclusively on *what* happened, we will concern ourselves primarily with *how*: How have theatre and performance scholars set about understanding historical theatre events? How do we relate ancient theatrical events to our present situations? How does one conduct historical research? In short, how do we *do* theatre history? This last question is perhaps the most important since, in this class, we will not so much learn about theatre history, as though it was some foreign object laid out in front of us on a table, as we will perform the role of theatre historians, historiographers, and theoreticians.

Course Structure

There are three parts to this class. The first two parts take the form of case studies. Part one, unfolding between weeks one and five, presents a case study in the ancient theatre traditions of Greece (Tragedy), Japan (Noh), and India (Sanskrit). Part two, running from weeks six to nine, presents a case study in comedy during which we will explore the plays of Terence, Molière, and Aphra Behn. Each of these two parts culminates in a case study synthesis for which you will write short papers that compare and contrast the diverse plays and histories you have studied. Part three, which runs from week ten to the end of the semester, consists of a research project. In groups of four or five, you will follow instructional prompts and undertake research on one specific theatre-historical topic. In the place of a final exam, your group will present its research and findings to the rest of the class during the last few days of class.

Assignments and Grade Breakdown

Class Participation: 30%

- Reading
- In-class discussion
- Email correspondence
- Visiting office hours
- Working in small groups

Comparative Analyses: 30%

- Ancient Theatre (Due Tues., Oct. 2, Revised Draft due Thurs., Oct. 4): 15%

- Comedy (Due Tues., Oct. 30, Revised Draft due Thurs., Nov. 1): 15%

Final Research Project: 40%

- Weekly Assignments: 10%
- Blogs (Individual Journal): 10%
- Presentation: 20%

College of Liberal Arts Grades by Percentage

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| A (93 – 100%) | 4.000 - Represents achievement that is outstanding relative to the level necessary to meet course requirements |
| A- (90 – 92%) | 3.667 |
| B+ (87 – 89%) | 3.333 |
| B (83 – 86%) | 3.000 - Represents achievement that is significantly above the level necessary to meet course requirements |
| B- (80 – 82%) | 2.667 |
| C+ (77 – 79%) | 2.333 |
| C (73 – 76%) | 2.000 - Represents achievement that meets the course requirements in every respect |
| C- (70 – 72%) | 1.667 |
| D+ (67 – 69%) | 1.333 |
| D (63 – 66%) | 1.000 - Represents achievement that is worthy of credit even though it fails to meet fully the course requirements |
| F (0 – 62%) | 0.000 – Fails to meet basic course requirements |

Writing In This Class

In this class, you will complete short, informal writing assignments, formal comparative analyses, and structured blog entries. The style of each writing assignment will be different, but the purpose of each is the same: to help you process the material you come across. Unlike thinking, which moves very quickly and can travel in multiple directions at once, writing requires that you put one word in front of another in order to communicate a complex idea as clearly as possible. As you engage with theatre history in this class, I'd like you to treat each writing assignment as a way to practice structuring and communicating your thoughts.

In terms of the department's curriculum, writing in this class serves an additional purpose. TH3171/TH3172 presents students with opportunities to rehearse the writing skills needed for advanced classes such as Dramatic Literature, Text and Performance, and Contemporary Black Theatre. Theatre History is not a writing-intensive class, but it is a class in which you are encouraged to use writing to enrich your thinking about theatre.

Writing is pivotal to the art, the craft, and the study of theatre. Like artistic practice, writing communicates an idea, viewpoint, or vision. In writing we convey thoughts and observations to others to gain a better understanding of our own ideas and interpretations and in order to foster collaboration; writing is joining a conversation.

Writing requires commitment, time, effort, thought, and investment. Just as we re-read a play, rehearse a scene, and re-draft designs, we must put time and attention toward revising our ideas, proposals, and arguments when we write creative and critical papers.

Writing that aims to persuade, inform, or describe needs to be complex, vivid, precise, self-aware, and supported by rigorous research.

Late Work Policy

I will not accept any late assignments in this class. If you do not turn in assignments on time, then you will receive no credit for them. The reason for this is twofold. First, the number of people in this class makes it very difficult to follow up on late work. I do not want to hound you for assignments. Second, and more importantly, the only way this class will work, by which I mean the only way this class will amount to a rewarding educational experience for you, is if you pay attention to *what* we discuss in class, *how* we discuss it, and *when* all assignments are due. If you don't turn something in on time, I take that as a sign that you aren't invested in the class.

Now, while this is a rigid policy, there is some room for flexibility. If, for example, you know that you will not be able to complete an assignment on time, or if something happens at the last minute that keeps you from coming to class, you can notify Bryan or me of these problems and we can work together to create an alternate due date for your work. The key word here is "communication." If you open lines of communication with Bryan and me, then we can probably work something out.

Scholastic Dishonesty

Scholastic dishonesty means plagiarizing; cheating on assignments or examinations; engaging in unauthorized collaboration on academic work; taking, acquiring, or using test materials without faculty permission; submitting false or incomplete records of academic achievement; acting alone or in cooperation with another to falsify records or to obtain dishonestly grades, honors, awards, or professional endorsement; altering, forging, or misusing a University academic record; or fabricating or falsifying data, research procedures, or data analysis.

Though plagiarism is a tricky term to define these days, the Council of Writing Program Administrators' Best Practices document offers this definition: "In an instructional setting, plagiarism occurs when a writer deliberately uses someone else's language, ideas, or other original (not common-knowledge) material without acknowledging its source."

Within this course, a student responsible for scholastic dishonesty of any kind can be assigned a penalty up to and including an "F" or "N" for the course. If you have any questions regarding the expectations for a specific assignment or exam, ask.

Attendance Policy

You are expected to attend each and every class this semester. If for some reason this is not possible, then you need to know the following information. The first two absences will not affect your grade. Every absence after that, however, will result in the deduction of five percentage points from your class participation grade. This means, for example, that three total, unexcused absences will drop your grade from 90% to 85% (for example). Excused absences do not result in a grade decrease. For an absence to count as excused, you must contact Bryan or me beforehand (if at all possible) and provide the appropriate documentation (e.g., a doctor's note). More than five absences total will result in an automatic failure of this class.

If you arrive to class without having read the assigned materials, you will be asked to leave. Should this occur, you will be marked as absent for that class period. Such an occasion might occur if we ask you a question and your response reveals a lack of engagement with the text or suggests that you did not read the assignment. We will also assess your level of participation through informal writing assignments usually taking the form of questions related to the assigned reading. Both Bryan and I will be working diligently to ascertain each student's level of participation. We reserve the right to assign absences retroactively.

No Laptop/Phone Policy

Past experience moves me to institute a "no laptop/phone" policy. I do not allow computer notebooks, netbooks, laptops, phones or any other electronic device in class due to the distractions/disruptions they inevitably pose to me and to other students. If you for whatever reason feel you absolutely must use a laptop, you must contact me individually, explain your case, and (if I approve) sign a Laptop Agreement policy specifying among other things that you will use the computer only for note-taking (disabling wireless functions), that you will sit in the back, and that you will minimize disruptions to the rest of the class.

Information regarding accommodation

The University of Minnesota is committed to providing all students equal access to learning opportunities. Disability Services is the campus office that works with students who have disabilities to provide and/or arrange reasonable accommodations. Students registered with Disability Services, who have a letter requesting accommodations, are encouraged to contact the instructor early in the semester. Students who have, or think they may have, a disability (e.g. psychiatric, attentional, learning, vision, hearing, physical, or systemic), are invited to contact Disability Services for a confidential discussion at **612-626-1333 (V/TTY)** or **ds@umn.edu**. Additional information is available at the DS website **<http://ds.umn.edu>**.

As a student you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance or reduce your ability to participate in daily activities. University of Minnesota services are available to assist you with addressing these and other concerns you may be experiencing. You can learn more about the broad range of confidential mental health services available on campus via **www.mentalhealth.umn.edu**.

Information about writing assistance and resources for native and non-native English speakers

The Writing Center is an excellent resource for all students. You can find the Writing Center at 15 Nicholson Hall (East Bank), room number 15. It is open Monday-Thursday, 9:00am to 4:30pm, and on Friday, 9:00am - 2:15pm. The following link takes you to a page where you can make an appointment: **<http://writing.umn.edu/sws/hours>**. There are also walk-in appointments available at 9 Appleby Hall. More information is available at that website.

If English is not your first language, you may find some assistance at the Writing Center. More importantly, however, I would like you to talk with me about your needs. If you have any

concerns about the readings, anxieties about the writing assignments, or if I talk too fast in class, please let me know.

Course Texts

You are responsible for getting all of the course readings. In addition to the bookstore and the course packet, you should be aware that the library has many of the plays we will discuss this semester. If you choose to purchase your texts from Amazon.com or some other online proprietor, be aware that you must have the texts before they are assigned on the syllabus. In other words, “my book is in the mail” is not an acceptable excuse.

There is one play available for purchase in the bookstore: Ellen McLaughlin’s *Ajax in Iraq*. All other readings are located in the course packet, which you also purchase in the bookstore.

Week-by-Week Breakdown

Week 1: Introduction, Methodology, (Ir)Rationale

Tuesday: September 4

In Class: Course Introduction: *Doing* theatre history instead of simply *learning about it*. Or, the relationship between *how* and *what*

Assignment: Zimmerman, Bernhard. “Introduction.” *Greek Tragedy, an Introduction*. Trans. Thomas Marier. Baltimore; London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991. 1-25. (ISBN: 0-8018-4119-4)

Thursday: September 6

In Class: Discuss Zimmerman, Architecture, Vase Painting, and Greek Tragedy; Introduce library resources

Assignment: Read Sophocles. *Ajax*. Trans. R. C. Trevelyan. *MIT Classics Online*. April 12, 2012 <<http://classics.mit.edu/Sophocles/ajax.pl.txt>> and locate articles/research materials that deal with the play

Week 2: Ancient Greek Tragedy

Tuesday, September 11

In Class: Discuss *Ajax* and research materials

Assignment: Read Ellen McLaughlin. *Ajax in Iraq*. Playscripts Inc.

Thursday, September 13

In Class: Discuss *Ajax in Iraq*

Assignment: Read Peter A. Campbell’s “Teaching Japanese Noh Drama through Visualizing Space,” *Theatre Topics* 21.1 (March 2011): 1-10 and either excerpt from Zeami, *The Flowering Spirit: Classic Teachings on the Arts of No*, trans. William Scott Wilson (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 2006) or excerpt from Rath’s *The ethos of Noh: actors and their art* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004)

Week 3: Noh Theatre

Tuesday, September 18

In Class: Discuss Campbell, Zeami, and Rath

Assignment: Read Zeami's *Atsumori* and find one interesting piece of information about this play

Thursday, September 20

In Class: Discuss *Atsumori* and the information you discovered

Assignment: Read either Farley Richmond and Yasmin Richmond, "The Multiple Dimensions of Time and Space in Kūṭiyāṭṭam, the Sanskrit Theatre of Kerala," *Asian Theatre Journal* 2.1 (Spring 1985): 50-60 or V. Raghavan, "Sanskrit Drama: Theory and Performance," *Comparative Drama* 1.1 (Spring 1967): 36-48

Week 4: Sanskrit Theatre

Tuesday, September 25

In Class: Discuss Time and Space in Sanskrit Theatre

Assignment: Read King Shudraka's *Toy Cart*, locate one source on Sanskrit theatre that moves beyond a Western framework (cite source, and read as much of it as possible)

Thursday, September 27

In Class: Watch video, *A Casebook on Sanskrit Theater*; discuss Western lens

Assignment: Write Comparative Analysis Paper (see prompt)

Week 5: Case Study Synthesis—Ancient Greek Tragedy, Noh Theatre, and Sanskrit Drama

Tuesday, October 2

In Class: Workshop papers

Assignment: Revise papers

Thursday, October 4

In Class: [Revised Papers Due] Discuss our first case study synthesis; debrief and look forward

Assignment: Read Odai Johnson's "Unspeakable Histories: Terror, Spectacle, and Genocidal Memory"

Week 6: Comedy, Part 1: Terence and Ancient Rome

Tuesday, October 9

In Class: Discuss "Unspeakable Histories"

Assignment: Read Terence's *The Eunuch*¹

Thursday, October 11

In Class: Discuss Terence through Johnson; attempt to answer the question: What is comedy?

Assignment: Read Moliere's *School for Wives* and *Critique of the School for Wives*; complete reading questions

Week 7: Comedy, Part 2: Moliere

Tuesday, October 16

¹ http://www.gutenberg.org/files/22188/22188-h/files/terence1_2.html#eunuch

In Class: Discuss *School for Wives* and *Critique of the School for Wives*. What historical context would you need to know in order to understand this play better?

Assignment: Find resources about the French Academy

Thursday, October 18

In Class: Discuss the French Academy, history, and “context”

Assignment: Read Aphra Behn’s *Lucky Chance*

Week 8: Comedy, Part 3: Restoration England

Tuesday, October 23

In Class: Discuss and Contextualize Aphra Behn and *The Lucky Chance*

Assignment: Find materials about Aphra Behn

Thursday, October 30

In Class: Discuss “comedy” via Behn

Assignment: Write Comparative Analysis Prompt

Week 9: Case Study Synthesis—What’s so funny?

Tuesday: October 30

In Class: Workshop papers

Assignment: Revise Papers

Thursday, November 1 [ASTR]

In Class: [Revised Papers Due] Debrief—Looking ahead to the final project, what seems most challenging about conducting research?

Assignment: None.

Week 10: Introduction to Final Projects

Tuesday, November 6

In Class: Introduce Guidelines and Goals of project; select topic; “Narrow your scope”

Assignment: Work on “Narrow your scope”

Thursday, November 8

In Class: “Narrow your scope”

Assignment: Post your group’s proposal to your blog by Noon on Saturday, November 10

Week 11: Work on Final Projects

Tuesday, November 13

In Class: “Format of the Presentation”

Assignment: Post sketch of final presentation format to your blog by 5pm today

Thursday, November 15

In Class: “Divide and Conquer”

Assignment: Compile annotated bibliography and answer “synthesis” questions by Sunday, November 18 at 5pm. Post both on blog

Week 12: Work on Final Projects

Tuesday, November 20

In Class: “Sculpt!”

Assignment: Post your argument to your blog by Wednesday, Nov. 21 at 5pm

Thursday, November 22 [Thanksgiving—NO CLASS]

Week 13: Dress Rehearsal and Presentations

Tuesday, November 27

In Class: “Dress Rehearsal” of presentations

Assignment: Final preparations

Thursday, November 29

In Class: Group Presentations, Groups 1-5.

Assignment: Blog Reflections (each person must write a short paragraph about the presentations: what was interesting, what did you learn, what did you want to know more about?)

Week 14: Continue Presentations

Tuesday, December 4

In Class: Group Presentations, Groups 6-10

Assignment: Blog Reflections

Thursday, December 6

In Class: Group Presentations, Groups 11-15

Assignment: Blog Reflections

Week 15: Wrap Up

Tuesday, December 11

In Class: Evaluations and Course Wrap Up