

## THAR382: THEATRE HISTORY

PRE-REQUISITE: THAR381; THAR MAJOR OR MINOR STATUS  
TR9:35-10:50; BLOC133

SPRING 20XX  
KPULLEN@TAMU.EDU; 845.2289  
104A ACADEMIC BUILDING

DR. KIRSTEN PULLEN  
TR 11-12 AND BY  
APPOINTMENT

Why should we read and write about theatre history? How should we read and write about theatre history? For whom is theatre history written? How does theatre history help us read dramatic literature? Can dramatic literature be separated from its performance? How can dramatic literature be understood outside of its context? How can theatre history inform contemporary performance and production? How can we evaluate contemporary productions? How should we read and write reviews? How can we use theatre history?

In this class, we'll investigate the intersections between theatre history, dramatic literature, and cultural performance. We'll focus on texts, events, and people from around the world as case studies in the history of performance. We'll continue to develop our understanding of how social, political, economic, and cultural context informs literary content. We'll explore how the text as performed can change throughout time and throughout histories. We'll use performance as research, and we'll develop our writing and literary research by acting as dramaturges for our own performances. We'll bring our historically informed eyes to a TAMU production,, and learn to review theatrical performance.

At the end of the course, students will be familiar with milestones of world theatre history and canonical dramatic literature texts from European and non-European stages, be fluent in the conventions of theatre history research and writing, understand how and why to use performance as research, and be able to write an informed performance review.

### Required Texts

Zarrilli, Phillip B., Bruce McConachie, Gary Jay Williams, and Carol Fisher Sorgenfrei. *Theatre Histories: An Introduction*. New York and London: Routledge, 2006. (TH)  
Selected plays and performances, available on WebCT.

### Course Requirements

**WebCT:** All of your play and performance texts are available online. I expect you to download these texts and bring them to class. I'll also use WebCT to make announcements as well as to post marks, information on the course and exams, performance dates and groups, and assignments. It's your responsibility to check often, and to adhere to any changes indicated online.

**Participation (50):** Class works when we're all engaged. I expect you to attend every class, to have completed all the readings, to have produced a thoughtful writing and thinking response (when assigned), and to participate in all discussions, small group work, performance workshops, and other activities.

**Writing and Thinking (150):** Approximately once a week, you'll be assigned a short writing and thinking assignments on the texts we're reading. These are intended to prepare you for class, to encourage you to think carefully about a specific question, and to suggest other avenues for reading, writing, thinking, and discussing our texts. Each assignment is worth 15 points, and these assignments are worth 150 points total. There are twelve writing and thinking assignments assigned; you may earn up to 30 bonus points or skip up to two assignments without penalty.

**Performance (150 points):** Working in groups of no more than 5, you will perform a short (no more than 15-minute) selection from one of the plays we're studying. Rather than making these plays familiar or relevant to us, you will strive to make them strange. You will perform your play in a style we've already studied (either this term or in THAR381); we will only see each style once, and you must indicate your preferred style when you select groups and plays. Though you'll be choosing a style for the sake of this exercise, you will look for resonances between your text and the "strange" style – you must make your style illuminate your text, and your text must also illuminate your style. You'll make strong, historically informed, critical choices about your text and then perform those choices. Don't be afraid to do research – it helps! More information to follow.

**Review (100 points):** You will review another group's in-class performance. Your short (1000-word) reviews will present an informed evaluation of the scene we witnessed; you will use the techniques we learned in THAR381. You will also complete a peer review of another class member's review essay. More information to follow.

**Research Paper (350 points):** You will write a research paper on the theatre history topic of your choice. These short (2000-2500-word) papers will develop a thesis about a specific question in performance history. The research paper has several components. First, you'll complete an abstract (25 points), an annotated bibliography (50 points), and a partial draft (75 points) that we'll workshop in class. Then, you'll turn in your final essay (200 points). Much more information to follow.

**Final Exam (200 points):** We'll take an exam as scheduled by the registrar's office. It will cover readings, in-class screenings, discussions, residencies, performances, and activities from the entire course.

All assignments are due at the beginning of class on the date indicated. Failure to complete or earn a passing grade on the performance, research paper, review, or final exam will result in failure of the course. Late assignments will not be accepted. No extra credit will be given. Course requirements are not negotiable.

**Grade Distribution:**

Participation	50
Writing and Thinking	150
Performance	150
Review	100
Abstract	25
Annotated Bibliography	50
Partial Draft	75
Research Paper	200
Final Exam	200

**Grade Equivalency:**

1000-900	A
899.5-800	B
799.5-700	C
699.5-600	D
599.5↓	F

### **Grading Rubric**

**A=1000-900** Exceptional ability to conceptualize and present ideas; effort beyond meeting basic criteria; you have sought out new ideas and information; your work is thorough and original; your work shows initiative and imagination; there are few to no errors in your written work; overall your work shows a trajectory of development and growth. You have exceeded expectations for research, writing, or speaking at the upper division level in a Research I university.

**B=899.5-800** Solid work; meets basic requirements; evident language competency; few errors; you are able to engage but generally do not go beyond information and ideas readily accessible through class, readings, and discussions. Your research, writing, and speaking are commensurate with upper division standing in a Research I university.

**C=799.5-700** Marginal work; writing assignments and discussions demonstrate limited ability or effort to engage ideas and information; written assignments have many errors (sentence structure, spelling, grammar, etc.) and/or are underprepared. Your research, writing, and speaking are slightly below expectations for students with upper division standing in a Research I university and should be improved with additional effort.

**D=699.5-600** Quantity and quality of work falls far below the expectations of upper division students in a Research I university. You are either not expending enough effort or you need help to accomplish the work required.

**F=below 600** Needs no explanation.

### **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Policy Statement**

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact Disability Services, in Cain Hall, Room B118, or call 845-1637. For additional information visit <http://disability.tamu.edu>.

### **Plagiarism**

As commonly defined, plagiarism consists of passing off as one's own the ideas, words, writings, etc., which belong to another. In accordance with the definition, you are committing plagiarism if you copy the work of another person and turn it in as your own, even if you should have the permission of the person. Plagiarism is one of the worst academic sins, for the plagiarist destroys the trust among colleagues without which research cannot be safely communicated. If you have any questions regarding plagiarism, please consult the latest issue of the Texas A&M University Student Rules, under the section "Scholastic Dishonesty."

KNOW THE CODE. See <http://www.tamu.edu/aggiehonor/> for the Aggie Honor Code.

*"An Aggie does not lie, cheat or steal, or tolerate those who do."*

**PERF382: THEATRE HISTORY**  
**COURSE SCHEDULE**

**DR. KIRSTEN PULLEN**  
**SPRING 2008**

*All readings and written assignments must be completed before class. All performances must take place on the date indicated. All performance papers must be submitted one week after the performance. All work submitted must be typed. No late assignments, no extra credit, no exceptions.*

	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Reading</b>	<b>Writing</b>
19 Jan	<b>THEATRE HISTORY/ PERFORMANCE HISTORY</b>		
<b>SENTIMENTALITY AND SENSATION</b>			
21 Jan		TH 188-91; 216-223	
26 Jan		<i>The Belle's Stratagem</i>	How can you tell that <i>The Belle's Stratagem</i> was written by a woman? Perform a feminist analysis of the play.
28 Jan		<i>The Belle's Stratagem</i> <b>*Performance*</b>	
2 Feb		TH 223-29; 254-60	Nominate a contemporary text (film, television program, play, song/album) as a melodrama. Which social group does it suggest holds the most power in society? How does the audience understand their relative position, power, and privilege? How does the melodrama support the status quo?
4 Feb		TH 230-39; 281-87; 311-24	<b><i>The Belle's Stratagem</i> Review Due</b>
9 Feb		<i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i> TH 319-24	
11 Feb		<i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i> <b>*Performance*</b>	Find a contemporary example of blackface performance. Where did it occur? What was the reaction to it? What was the intent behind it? How does it incorporate or deny the history of blackface as described in your reading?
16 Feb			
<b>THE RISE OF REALISM</b>			
18 Feb		<i>The Three Sisters</i> TH 382-91	<b><i>Uncle Tom</i> Review Due</b> Jing-Xi worksheet
23 Feb		<i>The Three Sisters</i> <b>*Performance*</b>	Perform a cultural materialist analysis of <i>The Three Sisters</i> . What ideology is represented in the text? How does Chekhov challenge and sustain that ideology through mise-en-scène, structure, and language (NOT plot, theme, character, or dialogue)?
25 Feb		<i>Cat on a Hot Tin Roof</i> TH 355-62	Perform a queer reading on <i>Cat on a Hot Tin Roof</i> . Is Brick gay? Is Brick queer? Is this a queer play? Is all theatre queer?
2 Mar		<i>Cat on a Hot Tin Roof</i> <b>*Performance*</b>	<b><i>Three Sisters</i> Review Due</b> <b>Proposal Due</b>
<b>THE RESPONSE TO REALISM</b>			
4 Mar		TH 287-94; 332-33; 348-54	Compare and contrast the Stanislavsky

			System with Biomechanics. What are the relevant strengths and weaknesses of each? Which might best prepare an actor to play Doricourt in <i>Belle's Strategem</i> or Eliza in <i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i> ? Why?
9 Mar		<i>The Threepenny Opera</i>	
11 Mar		<i>The Threepenny Opera</i> TH 377-78; 399-406 <b>*Performance*</b>	Apply a semiotic approach to <i>Threepenny</i> . What sign system is Brecht using? What do the setting and the structure tell us about the world in which the play takes place? <b>Cat Review Due</b>
23 Mar		TH 362-69	
<b>RESISTANCE AND GLOBALIZATION</b>			
25 Mar		TH 415-16; 420-24; 425-29; 439-445	Using the principles of performative writing, document our Beckett exercises. How can you make the event live through its record? How can your writing perform our performances? <b>Threepenny Review Due</b>
30 Mar	BRYANT ALEXANDER		
1 Apr		<i>My Children! My Africa</i>	Identify a TAMU practice that results in a vortex of behavior. What are its condensational events? How do these events travel from the TAMU context into the wider world? How are they transformed by media?
6 Apr		TH 485-504	<b>MC! MA! Review Due</b>
8 Apr		TH 435-38 <i>Theatre of the Oppressed</i>	
<b>POST-PERFORMANCE</b>			
13 Apr		<i>Tokyo Notes</i>	Apply a discourse analysis to <i>Tokyo Notes</i> . What is spoken about, and who is speaking? What systems of power are directing the conversation? How effectively can (Western) discursive theory describe this (Japanese) play?
15 Apr		<i>Tokyo Notes</i> <b>*Performance*</b>	
20 Apr		TH 450-65	
22 Apr	<b>WORKSHOP</b>		<b>Tokyo Notes Review Due</b> <b>Draft Due</b>
27 Apr		TH 466-471 <i>Medeaplay</i>	How does Müller deconstruct <i>Medea</i> ? What are the multiple meanings of this text, and of the "original"? What links this text to Euripides' version? What "evidence" do you, Müller, and Euripides use to construct a text about Medea?
29 Apr		<i>Medeaplay</i> <b>*Performance*</b>	
8 May	<b>FINAL EXAM</b>		<b>Medeaplay Review Due</b> <b>Research Paper Due</b>

**Review (100 points):** You will write a cogent, careful review of one of the performances we witness in class. Your 1000-word review will evaluate the performance's success **as research** (and therefore, the central idea framing the essay will focus on research as performance rather than acting ability, technical direction, staging, etc., though of course these will inform your review).

Your review will consist of reportage (what the performance did), analysis (how and why it did that), and judgment (how well it communicated the group's research goals). You must balance these three elements in order to reach critical mass.

You will write for a specific audience (your classmates) and your ability to communicate to this audience will partially determine your mark. Your review will of course be evidence of your very best thinking and writing, and of course it will be titled, stapled, typed, and double-spaced. There will be no grammatical or typographical errors in your review.

You will also complete a peer edit of another group member's review. Your peer edit should follow the rubric available on WebCT. Each student will complete only one review, to be assigned when performance groups are assigned. Reviews are due one week after each performance. Your mark for the review includes the peer edit (25 points) and review itself (75 points).

**If you do not turn in a review, you will fail the class.**

**Performance (150 points):** Working in groups of no more than 5, you will perform a short (15-minute) intervention into the play of your choice. Your performance must directly and clearly include material from the play text as written. It need not be time-based (beginning/middle/end); it need not present a specific scene; it need not summarize the play. In order to facilitate our understanding of different styles and genres, you will perform your scene in a different style or genre, one that we have previously explored in class (either last semester of this term).

As always, your performances are examples of performance as research. That is, you must use the performance project to investigate and understand the original play text, context, performance style, language, genre, setting, staging, and aesthetics. You must help us discover something we cannot learn solely from our own reading and discussion.

Your performance will be graded on the clarity, complexity, innovation, and intellectualism of your performance choices. What other style and genre did you choose? Why? How does it speak to the original text, and how does it challenge the intents and receptions of that text? What portions of the text will you stage? Where will you stage them? How will you frame the performance? How will you establish the performer/audience relationship? How will you complicate our understandings of both the original text and the alternate style and genre? What will we learn about each?

**If you don't participate in a performance, you will fail the class.**

**Research Essay (300 points):** You will write a 2000-2500-word argumentative research paper on the theatre history/dramatic literature/performance studies topic of your choice. You will develop a thesis that allows you to take a particular position, whether you're writing about a challenging play, overlooked genre, heroic actor, influential director, or novel technology. Your research will include other critics' interpretations; the social, political, and economic context that informs your topic; biographical and historical information; and/or production history. You will situate your own opinions and analysis within a broader critical framework. There are no hard and fast requirements for the quantity of research you incorporate into your paper; a good rule of thumb, however, is to have *at least* as many sources as you have pages.

These are formal, academic papers, and all the niceties of grammar, organization, diction, etc. apply. Your papers will be graded on the sophistication of the argument and the sufficiency of the support, the originality of the topic, the level of analysis, incorporation of relevant detail, the clarity of the argument, and the creativity of the approach.

You will turn in a short (250-word) abstract that identifies your topic and methodology and presents a research thesis (16 Feb; 50 pts) and an annotated bibliography of at least 5 sources (11 Mar; 50 pts). We will workshop partial drafts (intro and body paragraph) in class (23 Apr; 50 pts). If you do not turn in an abstract, annotated bibliography, or draft, I will not accept your research essay.

**If you don't turn in a research essay, you will fail the class**

Theater Historiography website  
[www.theater-historiography.org](http://www.theater-historiography.org)  
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