

Theatre 712: **Historical Methods and** **Historiography in Theatre**

“You think that just because it’s already happened, the past is finished and unchangeable? Oh no, the past is cloaked in multi-colored taffeta and every time we look at it we can see a different shape.”

–Milan Kundera

“Interpretation is exaggeration that someone will buy.”

John L. Brooke

Professor Heather S. Nathans

Office Hours: Wednesday, 1-2, or by appointment

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BOOKS/MATERIALS TO PURCHASE:

The Cambridge Introduction to Theatre Historiography

Theorizing Practice: Redefining Theatre History (Redefining British Theatre History)

Modern Historiography

Houses of History: A Critical Reader in Twentieth-Century History and Theory

The Haunted Stage

The Stage Life of Props

The Archive and the Repertoire

(Please note that some of the above books are on the department’s Ph.D. Reading List—this is your chance to get them out of the way! Other short readings for the course have been posted to our password-protected ELMS site. Readings on the site are marked with an “N”. Some readings are journal articles, and in those instances I have listed the title and date so that you can try retrieving them on JSTOR, etc. Please note that the books excerpts I have placed on ELMS are generally out of print or very, very expensive!

COURSE DESCRIPTION & GOALS:

Historiography is a study of the techniques of historical research and writing. In this course, students will explore the process by which history is conceptualized, crafted, and received. We will examine the ongoing debates among both theatre and “general” historians that have led to new approaches to the study of history. Over the past several decades, theatre scholars have sought to update traditional methods, incorporating techniques from fields as diverse as sociology, anthropology, and political science. Thus while this is not a “general” history course, *per se*, it is important that students be familiar with the growing emphasis on “interdisciplinary” methods, since those techniques have fundamentally transformed the way in which scholarly research in the theatre has been interpreted and presented.

The course begins with a broad overview of the main streams of historical and theatrical research, writing, and interpretation. We then move to a discussion of the specific challenges

facing theatre historians--who often seek to reconstruct histories from the most ephemeral of sources. We will also study specific events or documents which have undergone re-evaluation over the past century as a means of understanding trends in theatre scholarship--and we will ask how the primary evidence has been appropriated and transformed into "history." Lastly, since scholars are not the only ones who interpret past events for public consumption, we will examine play texts and performances that offer alternate ways of viewing history. By the end of this course, students should be able to do the following:

- *Identify major historiographical trends and explain their significance/connection to theatre history**
- *Conduct research on a specific project applying *each* of these major methodologies**
- *Evaluate which historiographical approaches are best suited to their individual research**

ASSIGNMENTS:

As part of this course, students will undertake a range of short assignments designed to expand their familiarity with various schools of historical thought, as well as major research archives and collections for theatre historians. Students will give a number of brief oral presentations throughout the semester, in addition to written assignments. The final project for the course is a research paper on an area of interest to you (obviously it would be to your advantage to use this opportunity to either investigate or advance a dissertation or thesis project!). You should also seriously consider developing your final essay for presentation at a conference or publication in a journal.

WEEKLY: *Quotable Quotes*

Each week choose ONE quotation from our readings (it may be from a play or it may be from one of our other texts). Write it down. Be prepared to present that one quotation in class and to explain how (for you) it can be connected to all of the other readings we did for the week. Be prepared to discuss the quotations you choose and the reasons for your choice in each class.

INTELLECTUAL EXPERIMENT: "All great ideas are conceived while walking" – Nietzsche

The pressures of graduate school can mean that students seldom have time to simply reflect on their reading and research in a creative and unstructured way. This semester we will try an experiment to address that potential area of concern. We will begin each class with 10 minutes of walking outside (!). The goal of the 10-minute walk is to focus on the "big questions" raised by the readings for the week or on particular research challenges. At the end of the 10 minutes, students return to the classroom for an additional 10 minutes of "free writing" to record questions, thoughts, possible avenues for further exploration in their work. Students will not be required to share the material from their free writing. During our break time, students will also be asked to take another 10 minute walk. This may be either a solo or social walk, chatting with colleagues. The goal of *this* walk is to allow students to re-energize and re-focus for the second half of the class. Think Thoreau, think Emerson – enjoy!

"BOOK REPORTS":

Unlike the usual "book report," this assignment asks you to evaluate the "case" that an author of "popular" history makes for his or her topic, whether it's the murder of Helen Jewett, the disappearance of the Princes in the Tower of London, or the case of Jack the Ripper. I will give you some book suggestions to begin with (you may also find your own). It is then up to you to pursue the investigation. You need to assess the way in which the author presents his/her case.

If you have access to some of the same sources (newspapers, historical records, etc.), go to those sources—do you agree with the way the author has interpreted them? BE CREATIVE in your quest—what information has the author excluded? If “interpretation is exaggeration that someone will buy,” do you buy what you’re reading? You will be asked to present their findings to the class in both an oral and written report (copy to be given to the professor at the time of the presentation).

Reports should be two single-spaced pages (copy back-to-back when possible to save paper!). Please include the correct scholarly citation and table of contents (which you may xerox as the cover page of your report). Provide an analysis of the work, describing the book’s contents, the author’s methods and approach to the subject matter, and its usefulness (or its strengths and weaknesses). In your written report, present as complete an overview of the work as you can. For your 10-minute oral report, you may provide a brief summary of the case the author makes, then focus on a section that was of particular interest to you. In your discussion make sure to connect the topic, the methods, or the agenda of the author to the readings we are working on in class. If you dispute the author’s approach or findings, feel free to say why!

*TIP: Written Report—You need to know what sources the author is relying on—especially if he/she is not a trained historian. Think about how you—as an historian—might use the same sources. Would you ask the same questions or different ones? What lens would you use to interpret the information? What story would you tell, and how would it differ from the author’s agenda?

*TIP: Oral Report--**Don’t read directly from your written report!** Instead, give us a quick overview (2-3 minutes), and then tell us what you found most interesting or striking about the book. This doesn’t mean that your presentation should be “chatty” or informal – rather that it should have ease, energy, and focus (goals that are difficult to accomplish while staring at a piece of paper!).

Some questions you may wish to address: Does the historian have a clear “agenda” in writing? Can you identify the author as a member of a particular school of thought or see evidence of certain trends in his/her work? How has the author presented the evidence? What would you challenge in the work? What would you support? Could you apply this particular approach to your own research? Is this book (either its contents or methodology) useful for others? Did it convince you? Why or why not?

*TIP: Remember your audience! Try to present the material in as engaging a manner as possible that opens the way for dialogue among your listeners. In order to make your presentation go as smoothly as possible, practice, practice, practice. **Stay within time limits!** You should speak for no more than 10 minutes. I will stop people who go over the allotted time (I will also give you withering looks and make cutting remarks about your taste in music, clothing, and luncheon meats). Part of your grade will be based on the consideration and respect that you show for your listeners in making your talk as concise and focused as possible. Offer your audience a blend of information and analysis--don’t tell everything you know. Pick and choose your arguments and points carefully. Lastly, everyone loves “show and tell,” so if you can bring the book to class or want to pass around a copy of a particularly interesting diagram, photo, manuscript, etc., feel free.

JOURNAL REVIEW:

Each student will be asked to submit a two-page, single-spaced comparative review of two scholarly journals in the fields of theatre history, “general” history, sociology, psychology, or anthropology (choose two journals in the same field). The goal of this assignment is twofold: to allow you to explore journals in your own field and/or others, and to allow you to evaluate how different journals within the same field approach similar topics. The report should include bibliographical information, a summary of each journal’s “mission statement,” and your evaluation of each journal’s approach to the field. You may cite or describe specific articles to

demonstrate your point. Alternately, you may choose to write a review in which you analyze one journal's transition in tone, style, or agenda (comparing two different phases of its history of publication). Prepare a **10 minute oral presentation** which gives an overview of the two journals and summarizes your findings. *Please prepare copies to distribute TO THE CLASS via email at the time of the report.*

REFLECTION:

Using a paper that you have written for a previous graduate course, write a **two-page, single-spaced essay** in which you evaluate your own method and approach as an historian. Try to assess which thinkers may have influenced your work and, based on our readings in the course, suggest at least one alternate interpretation of the material you collected. (Please submit the original paper with your essay!) There is no oral report attached to this project.

STAGING HISTORY:

This is a research project that invites you to interpret one set of evidence and materials from several angles. You must pick a topic by **February 16**. You will spend the rest of the semester developing research on this topic, and presenting that research to the class. Here's the catch—you will present the project multiple times over the course of the semester, but each time using a different historiographical style.

Presentation 1: Annales School

Presentation 2: Marxist

Presentation 3: Cultural History

Presentation 4: New Historicism

Presentation 5: "History from Below"

For **each** presentation you will give a **10 minute explanation** of how you might shape your story in the style of each of these schools of thought listed above. You will need to explain how your evidence can be used to support your argument. **Note: You will need to go to the "horse's mouth" for method on this project. You must seek out examples of each method as part of your research (for example, if you are presenting in the style of the Annales School, you would want to look at the work of Marc Bloch, etc.).** Use Bruce McConachie's essay ("Paradigms") as a model for your discussion! Please note—these are oral presentations ONLY (I get a written copy, though your classmates do not)—therefore, they need to be polished, well-rehearsed, and timed! Think of these as conference papers—you must persuade an audience that has NO opportunity to read or review your material! DO NOT cover the same material each time. Use each report as an opportunity to delve into some new aspect of your research. For example, if your topic is the Federal Theatre Project, you could use the Annales presentation to explore the geography and social context of the FTP in a specific region; you could use the Marxist presentation to explore the fear of socialism/communism/labor unrest that helped to close the FTP; you could use the New Historicism project to explore the evolution of some of the FTP scripts and the power dynamics involved in shaping them, etc.

I STRONGLY URGE YOU TO USE THESE PROJECTS AND THIS SEMESTER TO WORK ON YOUR DISSERTATION OR THESIS RESEARCH. YOU MAY HAVE THE ENTIRE SEMESTER TO READ, RESEARCH, WRITE, AND PRESENT ABOUT YOUR TOPIC. EVEN IF YOU ARE STILL IN THE PROCESS OF EXPLORING AND DEFINING A TOPIC, THINK OF THIS AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO TRY IT OUT IN FRONT OF A HELPFUL AUDIENCE AND TO TEST WHETHER IT IS A VIABLE TOPIC (BEFORE COMMITTING ADDITIONAL TIME TO THE PROJECT BEYOND THIS CLASS).

PROSPECTUS AND FINAL ESSAY:

For this assignment, you may build on the material that you choose for the “Staging History” section of the course, or you may work on another topic in an area of interest to you. The first part of the assignment asks you to create a prospectus which outlines your topic and plan of research, as well as the method (s) of analysis you plan to apply. You will be asked to present a **15 minute overview** of your topic in class, so that your colleagues can ask questions, offer feedback, suggest additional sources, etc. (Again, I get a copy – your classmates do not.)

The second part of the assignment asks you to write a paper which addresses some portion of your topic; for example, if you outline a broad subject, such as the connection between plague and theatre closings in Elizabethan England, you may not be able to cover the topic adequately in a twenty-page paper. Instead, you may wish to focus on one incident that illustrates your argument and demonstrates your approach to the topic. Part of your paper must be your rationale for choosing a particular approach to the work (why Marxist, for example?).

GRADING:

Book Report	5 %
Journal Review	5%
Reflection	10%
Staging History	25% (5% each)
Prospectus	25%
Final Paper	30%

****A general note: I do not accept late papers or assignments.** The only exceptions are emergency situations which involve a Dean’s excuse or a letter from a physician. As you know, the department uses Turabian’s guidelines for citations, notes, etc. Please make sure you are familiar with this form. Please see the University guidelines (below) for policies on sexual harassment, religious observances, etc.

Your final grade will be based upon the following chart:

A+	above 98%
A	93-97%
A-	90-92%
B+	88-89%
B	83-87%
B-	80-82%
C+	78-79%
C	73-77%
C-	70-72%
D+	68-69%
D	63-67%
D-	60-62%
F	below 60%

Please note that the University of Maryland assigns the following meaning to letter grades (<http://www.faculty.umd.edu/teach/grades.html>):

“The university uses the following grading system: A, B, C, D, F, XF, I, P, S, and W. These marks remain as part of the student’s permanent record and may be changed only by the original instructor on certification, approved by the department chair and the dean, that an actual mistake

was made in determining or recording the grade.

A+, A, A- denotes excellent mastery of the subject and outstanding scholarship.

B+, B, B- denotes good mastery of the subject and good scholarship.

C+, C, C- denotes acceptable mastery of the subject and the usual achievement expected.

D+, D, D- denotes borderline understanding of the subject. These grades denote marginal performance, and they do not represent satisfactory progress toward a degree.

F denotes failure to understand the subject and unsatisfactory performance.

XF denotes failure due to academic dishonesty

A note about Academic Integrity: The University has a Code of Academic Integrity, available on the web at www.inform.umd.edu/Campus

Into/Departments/jpo/code_acinteg.html. We assume that students are familiar with the principles of the Code, which prohibits cheating on exams, plagiarizing papers, submitting the same paper for credit in two courses without authorization, buying papers, submitting fraudulent documents, and forging signatures. Students who have questions or concerns about these issues should contact the instructors or view the website for additional information.

You must fully and accurately cite all sources that you use in discussion group assignments or writing assignments. You should refer to one of the following sources for citation guidelines: *A Writer's Reference* by Diana Hacker (used in English 101–MLA style), *A Manual for Writers* by Kate Turabian, or *The Chicago Manual of Style*. Remember that failure to correctly cite your sources may result in disciplinary action by the university. If you have concerns about your understanding of the proper form for citations, please consult your professors or the Learning Assistance Center (4-7693) or the Writing Center (5-3785). Please remember, that as far as the university is concerned, “ignorance of the law is no excuse.” Your failure to consult the above sources or your failure to “understand” them will not excuse you from charges of academic dishonesty.

BELOW ARE THE UNIVERSITY'S POLICIES ON THE HONOR CODE,
ACCOMMODATIONS FOR DISABILITIES, AND SEXUAL HARRASSMENT.

RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE POLICY

The University's policy "Assignments and Attendance on Dates of Religious Observance" provides that students should not be penalized because of observances of their religious beliefs; students shall be given an opportunity, whenever feasible, to make up within a reasonable time any academic assignment that is missed because of individual participation in religious observances. Students have the responsibility to inform the instructor of any intended absences for religious observances in advance. Notice should be provided as soon as possible, but no later than the end of the schedule adjustment period.

For more information: www.inform.umd.edu/EdRes/FacRes/teach/religious.html

ACCOMMODATING INDIVIDUALS WHO HAVE DISABILITIES

The University is committed to making reasonable accommodations for individuals with disabilities that have been documented by the Disability Support Service (0126 Shoemaker Hall). A disability should be verified and discussed with the Disability Support Service before the student contacts the professor or TA. If you wish to discuss academic accommodations for this class, please contact the professor or TA no later than the end of the schedule adjustment period.

For more information:

www.inform.umd.edu/CampusInfo/Departments/Counseling/Disability_Support/

HONOR CODE

The University has a nationally recognized Honor Code, administered by the Student Honor Council. The Student Honor Council proposed and the University Senate approved an Honor Pledge. The University of Maryland Honor Pledge reads:

"I pledge on my honor that I have not given or received any unauthorized assistance on this assignment/examination."

Unless you are specifically advised to the contrary, the Pledge statement should be handwritten and signed on the front cover of all exams, papers, projects, or other academic assignments submitted for evaluation in this course. Students who fail to write and sign the Pledge will be asked to confer with the instructor. Please recognize that all students are subject to the requirements of the University's Code of Academic Integrity whether or not they write and sign the Honor Pledge.

For more information: www.umd.edu/honorpledge

www.inform.umd.edu/CampusInfo/Departments/PRES/policies/iii100a.html

SEXUAL HARASSMENT POLICY

The University is committed to maintaining an academic work environment free of sexual harassment for all faculty, staff and students. Sexual harassment diminishes individual dignity and impedes equal educational and employment opportunities. Sexual harassment will not be tolerated at the University; it is a violation of law and University policy. Individuals who engage in sexual harassment will be subject to disciplinary action. Please be advised that the University has procedures in place to report sexual harassment and correct it when it occurs. Students who have questions about sexual harassment or the University policy and procedures may call the Office of Judicial Programs (314-8204). To read the entire Policy see "Appendix B: Campus Policy and Procedures on Sexual Harassment" in the Undergraduate Catalogue.

For more information:

www.inform.umd.edu/CampusInfo/Departments/PRES/legal/policies/sh.html

ASSIGNMENTS (Please note that assignments are due on the date that they are listed.)

***Quotable Quotes:* Each week choose ONE quotation from our readings (it may be from a play or it may be from one of our other texts). Write it down. Be prepared to present that one quotation in class and to explain how (for you) it can be connected to all of the other readings we did for the week. Be prepared to discuss the quotations you choose and the reasons for your choice in each class.**

“Words, Words, Words”--An Introduction to the Course

JAN 26: Introduction to the course
DUE:
Arcadia, Tom Stoppard
“Is there too much ‘history’ in my theatre history?” Nathans (N)

The “Begats”--Tracing Traditions in History

FEB. 2: DUE:
-*The Houses of History*, pp. 1-58
-“Cultural Systems and the Nation-State: Paradigms for Writing National Theatre History,” *NETJ* 1997, pp. 29-44 (N)
-*Modern Historiography*, pp. 1-70
-*The Cambridge Introduction to Theatre Historiography*, pp. 1-153

FEB. 9: DUE:
-*The Cambridge Introduction to Theatre Historiography*, pp. 154-268
-*Modern Historiography*, pp. 70-136
-*The Houses of History*, pp. 59-110
-*The Haunted Stage*, pp. 1-96

FEB. 16: DUE:
- *The Haunted Stage*, pp. 96-177
-*Modern Historiography*, pp. 137-170
-*The Houses of History*, pp. 110-140
-*The Archive and the Repertoire*, pp. 1-78
TOPIC CHOICES FOR SEMESTER DUE

Same history in a new way? Different approaches to the field

FEB 23: DUE:
The Stage Life of Props, 1-116
-*The Great Cat Massacre*, pp. 75-104 (N)
-*The Houses of History*, pp. 172-229
-*The Archive and the Repertoire*, pp. 79-189
Book reports due

MAR 2: DUE:
-*The Stage Life of Props*, pp. 117-202

Theorizing Practice, pp. 8-71
The Archive and the Repertoire, pp. 189-278
Journal reports DUE

MAR 9: DUE:
-*Theorizing Practice*, pp. 120-135
-*The Houses of History*, pp. 141-203
-"Foucault's History of Culture," (N)
-*Cities of the Dead*, pp. 1-71 (N)
Presentation 1

MAR 16: SPRING BREAK!!!!!!

History from "Below"

MAR 23: DUE:
-*New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, "History from Below," (N)
--Readings from *Liberation Historiography: African American Writers and the Challenge of History* (N)
-*The Houses of History*, pp. 204-276
Presentation 2
Schedule meeting with Heather to discuss final paper/prospectus

MAR 30: DUE:
-*New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, "Women's History," (N)
-*Theorizing Practice*, pp. 71-87
Presentation 3

Elusive Evidence

APR 6 : DUE:
-*Theorizing Practice*, pp. 88-119
-*The Houses of History*, pp 277-325
Reflections due

APR 13: DUE:
-*Theorizing Practice*, pp. 136-177; 213-231
Presentation 4

APR. 20: DUE: Presentation 5

APR 27: DUE: Prospectus Presentations

MAY 4: DUE: Prospectus Presentations

MAY 11: PAPERS DUE--Dinner at Heather's house

BOOK REPORT SUGGESTIONS:

The Murder of Helen Jewett

Devil in the White City

Will in the World

Daughter of Time

Edward II

Guns, Germs, and Steel

Manhunt

New York Burning

The Shakespeare Riots

The Lodger: Shakespeare and his Life on Silver Street

Scandalmonger

Brave Companions

The Jefferson-Hemings Myth : An American Travesty

“Popular” histories by authors like Stephen Ambrose or Harold Bloom

I recommend that you choose something with a strong narrative style and that claims to be a “true” history of the events it depicts. Of the suggestions listed above, *Edward II* and *Daughter of Time* are overtly “fictional” ones, however, you can find historical evidence that will let you investigate and/or challenge the stories they tell.