

THEATRE 479: DRAMA THEORY AND CRITICISM
SPRING 2010; TUESDAYS 1:00 – 3:50 PM
INSTRUCTOR: ALAN SIKES

“To articulate the past historically does not mean to recognize it ‘the way it really was.’ It means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger.”

--Walter Benjamin, *“Theses on the Philosophy of History”*

COURSE GOALS

My major goal for this class is to explore how theories of the theatre shift over time, emerging, as Benjamin suggests, from a "moment of danger." Theories regarding “what theatre is” and “what theatre does” change radically from one historical moment to another, and these changing theories usually appear in tandem with changing expectations in the form and function of theatre itself. Moreover, each set of these expectations from the past is perforce viewed through our own set of expectations in the present. How do we understand the differences between past and present expectations, and why are such moments of understanding dangerous? On the one hand, we may risk uncritically projecting present theories of the theatre back into the past; on the other hand, we may also risk uncritically assuming that past theories of the theatre are transparent to us in the present. I hope that together we can use the classroom to navigate and make productive use of these dangerous moments from theatre history.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Office hours: Mobile phone: 612-327-9967

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REQUIRED TEXTS

Required texts to consider purchasing

We will use these texts extensively in class; they are also valuable additions to your library.

Aristotle: *Poetics*

Artaud: *Artaud on Theatre*

Brecht: *Brecht on Theatre*

Eagleton: *Literary Theory*

Eco: *Art and Beauty in the Middle Ages*

Gerould: *Theatre / Theory / Theatre*

Hofstadter: *Philosophies of Art and Beauty*

Required readings available as PDF's on Blackboard

We will read selections from these texts; you may want to order copies for yourself.

Arato: *Essential Frankfurt School Reader*

Auslander: *Presence and Resistance*

Brecht: *Measures Taken*
Case: *Performing Feminisms*
Corneille: *The Cid*
Descartes: *Meditations*
Docherty: *Postmodernism: A Reader*
Dolan: *Feminist Spectator as Critic*
Dukore: *Dramatic Theory and Criticism*
Euripides: *Hippolytus*
Gordon: *Dada Performance*
Kane: *Phaedra's Love*
Racine: *Phaedra*
Rancière: *Aesthetics and its Discontents*
Seneca: *Moral Epistles* vols. 1-3
Seneca: *Phaedra*
Vattimo: *The Transparent Society*
Worthen: *Wadsworth Anthology of Drama*
Žižek: *Welcome to the Desert of the Real*

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

I will derive the bulk of your grade from three written assignments, submitted to me regularly throughout the semester. Assignments take the form of response papers to the various theories discussed in class and will involve the engagement of those theories with dramatic texts also read for class. I will provide guided questions for each paper—inquiries into the ways these particular plays reflect and respond to shifting theories of “What Theatre Is” and “What Theatre Does.” The first two papers should be approximately 5 – 7 pages in length and the final paper 8 – 10 pages in length. All papers should follow Chicago citation format. Please note that these writing assignments will comprise 80% of your grade; the schedule and weighting of each assignment is as follows:

Paper One: 25% of Final Grade; due Feb. 9
Paper Two: 25% of Final Grade; due March 23
Paper Three: 30% of Final Grade; due April 27

I will award 10% of your grade based on a group discussion of the final two readings for class. These are assigned for the examination period on Thursday May 4 at 3:10 PM. Working in pairs, you will lead our conversation on readings from either 1) Rancière's *Aesthetics and its Discontents* or 2) Žižek's *Welcome to the Desert of the Real*. We will brainstorm approaches for these final discussions as the semester progresses.

The remaining 10% of your grade is based on regular attendance and active participation in class discussion. Please note the following two stipulations regarding attendance and participation. 1) More than two absences from class will result in lowering your final grade by an entire letter; I will make few exceptions to this rule, and only under circumstances of a documented emergency. 2) I will gauge whether or not you are keeping up with class readings based on your participation in class discussion; see me if you anticipate problems in following the schedule outlined below.

COURSE SCHEDULE AND WEEKLY READINGS

Note: The following versions of the *Phaedra* legend listed under course readings are *required*: Euripides, Seneca, Racine, Kane. All other dramatic texts are *highly recommended*, especially if they are unfamiliar to you, because we can use them in class as points of engagement with the theory readings. These include, in order of their engagement: Zeami: *Matsukaze*; Hildegard von Bingen: *Ordo Virtutum*; Corneille: *Le Cid*; Büchner: *Woyzeck*; Artaud: *Jet of Blood*; Brecht: *Measures Taken*.

WEEK ONE: COURSE INTRODUCTION

T 1/12: Read Gerould, *Introduction* (Text)

WEEK TWO: ANCIENT GREECE: THEATRE DEFINED AND REDEFINED

T 1/19: Read: Plato: *Republic* (Dukore 12 – 31; PDF)
Read: Aristotle: *Poetics* (Text)
Read: Euripides: *Hippolytus* (PDF)

WEEK THREE: ANCIENT ROME: THEATRE ADOPTED AND ADAPTED

T 1/26: Read: Horace: *Art of Poetry* (Gerould 68 – 83; Text)
Read: Longinus: *On the Sublime* (Dukore; PDF)
Read: Seneca: *On Crowds* (PDF)
Read: Seneca: *Phaedra* (PDF)

WEEK FOUR: EARLY CHRISTIANITY AND THE MIDDLE AGES

T 2/2: Read: Plotinus: *Enneads* (Hofstadter 139 – 164; Text)
Read: Augustine: *De Musica* (Hofstadter 185 – 202; Text)
Read: Eco: *Art and Beauty in the Middle Ages* (5 – 64; Text)
Read: Hildegard von Bingen: *Ordo Virtutum* (PDF)

WEEK FIVE: CLASSICAL TRADITIONS OF INDIA AND JAPAN

T 2/9: Read: Bharata: *Natyasastra* (Gerould 84 – 95; Text)
Read: Zeami: *On the Art of No Drama* (Gerould 96 – 107; Text)
Read: Zeami: *Mirror Held to the Flower* (Worthen 196 – 208; PDF)
Read: Zeami: *Matsukaze* (Worthen 172 – 176; PDF)

PAPER ONE DUE TODAY

WEEK SIX: THE RENAISSANCE: RECUPERATION AND REVISION

T 2/16: Read: Castlevetro: *Poetics of Aristotle* (Gerould 108 – 116; Text)

Read: Guarini: *Compendium of Tragicomic Poetry* (Gerould 128 – 134; Text)
Read: Robertellus: *On Comedy* (Dukore; PDF)
Read: Scaligar: Poetics (Dukore; PDF)
Read: Lope de Vega: *New Art of Writing Plays* (Gerould 135 – 145; Text)

WEEK SEVEN: EARLY MODERN FRANCE: NEOCLASSICAL DEBATES

T 2/23: Read: Scudery: *Observations on Le Cid* (Dukore 211 – 217; PDF)
Read: Corneille: *Apologetic Letter* (Dukore 217 – 220; PDF)
Read: French Academy: *Opinions* (Dukore 220 – 226; PDF)
Read: Corneille: *Le Cid* (PDF)
Read: d'Aubignac: *Whole Art of the Stage* (Gerould 146 – 154; Text)
Read: St. Evremond: *Of Ancient and Modern Tragedies* (Dukore 271 – 277; PDF)
Read: Racine: *Phédre* and *Preface* (PDF)

WEEK EIGHT: EARLY MODERN ENGLAND: ISSUES OF MORALITY

T 3/2: Read: Northbrooke: *Treatise Against. . .* (Dukore 159 – 162; PDF)
Read: Sidney: *The Defense of Poesy* (Gerould 117 – 127; Text)
Read: Collier: *Short View of Immorality. . .* (Dukore 351 – 358; PDF)
Read: Congreve: *Amendments to Collier. . .* (Dukore 359 – 363; PDF)
Read: Steele: *Preface to Conscious Lovers* (Dukore 396 – 397; PDF)
Read: Goldsmith: *Comparison of Sentimental. . .* (Dukore 424 – 426; PDF)

WEEK NINE: NO CLASS: SPRING BREAK

T 3/9: No Class: Spring Break

WEEK TEN: MODERN AESTHETIC PHILOSOPHIES

T 3/16: Read Descartes: *Meditations: Synopsis, I, II, and VI* (PDF)
Read: Kant: *Critique of Judgment* (Hofstadter 277 – 343; Text)
Read: Hegel: *Philosophy of Fine Art* (Hofstadter 378 – 445; Text)

WEEK ELEVEN: GERMANY: PHILOSOPHICAL AND ARTISTIC INNOVATIONS

T 3/23: Read: Lessing: *Hamburg Dramaturgy* (Gerould 236 – 247; Text)
Read: Schlegel: *Lectures on Dramatic Art* (Gerould 268 – 275; Text)
Read: De Staël: *Of Dramatic Art from Germany* (Gerould 262 – 267; Text)
Read: Büchner: *Woyzeck* (PDF)

PAPER TWO DUE TODAY

WEEK TWELVE: NATURALISM: SUPPORTERS AND DETRACTORS

T 3/30: Read: Zola: *Naturalism in the Theatre* (Gerould 358 -367; Text)

Read: Strindberg: *Preface to Miss Julie* (Gerould 368 – 380; Text)
Read: Nietzsche: *The Birth of Tragedy* (Hofstadter 496 – 554; Text)
Read: Maeterlinck: *Tragical in Everyday Life* (Gerould 381 – 389; Text)

WEEK THIRTEEN: THE AVANT GARDE: AESTHETICS OF REVOLUTION

T 4/6: Read: Marinetti: *Founding Manifesto of Futurism* (PDF)
Read: Marinetti: *Futurist Synthetic Theatre* (PDF)
Read: Tzara: *Dada Manifesto* (Gordon 45 - 51; PDF)
Read: Breton: *First Surrealist Manifesto* (PDF)
Read: Artaud: *Theatre of Cruelty* (Text)
Read: Artaud: *Theatre and Cruelty* (Text)
Read: Artaud: *Theatre and Culture* (Text)
Read: Artaud: *Theatre and the Plague* (Text)
Read: Artaud: *Jet of Blood* (Text)

WEEK FOURTEEN: BRECHT AND BEYOND: AESTHETICS FOR REVOLUTION

T 4/13: Read: Brecht: *Modern Theatre is The Epic Theatre* (Text)
Read: Brecht: *Theatre for Pleasure or Instruction* (Text)
Read: Brecht: *The Street Scene: Basic Model. . .* (Text)
Read: Brecht: *A Short Organum for the Theatre* (Text)
Read: Brecht: *The Measures Taken* (PDF)
Read: Lunacharsky: *Theses on. . . Marxist Criticism* (Dukore 949 – 959; PDF)
Read: Bukharin: *Poetry, Poetics, Problems of Poetry...* (Dukore 967 – 969; PDF)
Read: Adorno: *Commitment* (Arato 300 - 318; PDF)

WEEK FIFTEEN: CRITICAL THEORY: INTERDISCIPLINARY INTERSECTIONS

T 4/20: Read: Heidegger: *Origin of the Work of Art* (Hofstadter 647 – 700; Text)
Read: Eagleton: *Structuralism and Semiotics* (Text)
Read: Eagleton: *Post-Structuralism* (Text)
Read: Eagleton: *Psychoanalysis* (Text)
Read: Kane: *Phaedra's Love* (PDF)

WEEK SIXTEEN: POSTMODERNITY AND THEORIES OF PERFORMATIVITY

T 4/27: Read: Vattimo: *The Transparent Society* (1 – 11; PDF)
Read: Hassan: *Toward a Concept of Postmodernism* (146 – 156; PDF)
Read: Auslander: *Presence and Resistance* (9 – 19; PDF)
Read: Auslander: *Presence and Resistance* (35 – 51; PDF)
Read: Dolan: *The Feminist Spectator as Critic* (1 - 18; PDF)
Read: Butler: *Performative Acts and Gender Constitution* (270 – 282; PDF)

PAPER THREE DUE TODAY

EXAMINATION WEEK: NEW CRITICAL HORIZONS

T 5/4: Read: Žižek: *Welcome to the Desert of the Real* (PDF)
Read: Rancière: *Aesthetics and its Discontents* (PDF)

PAIRED PRESENTATION DUE TODAY

FINAL NOTES: PLAGIARISM AND DISABILITY ACCOMMODATIONS

I trust that plagiarism will not be an issue in a graduate seminar such as this; suffice to say that I will treat any cases of plagiarism as serious matters indeed. I also trust that you will feel free to contact me regarding any disability accommodations that you may require—please see me after class or during my office hours to discuss such accommodations.