

THE 392: Modern European Theatre

Fall 2010

Miami University Department of Theatre

Class Meets:

T R 2:15pm-3:30pm, 221 Hiestand Hall

Instructor:

Andrew Gibb

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Office Hours: 9-11 Mondays, 12-2 Tuesdays, or by appointment

Course Goals:

This class will familiarize the student with the major dramatic movements collectively referred to as European Modernism. Focusing on the period from the 1890s to the 1950s, we will look at work that ranges from the various forms of realism, through a number of avant-garde experiments, to the political theatre of Bertolt Brecht. Study of the philosophies, works, and practitioners of this period and place are critical to the contemporary theatre worker and student of dramatic literature, as much current dramatic writing and theatrical practice repeats (or is informed by) the experiments of European Modernism. Class material will be presented through lectures, readings, and in-class discussions. Assessment will take place through quizzes, written reflections on readings, written responses to departmental shows, assigned lead-reads, and a final exam. Additionally, as this material is being presented in the context of a theatre class, and because the instructor fervently believes in the embodied nature of dramatic thought, you will be asked to perform the various avant-garde forms of European Modernism for your fellow students. These exercises will help you to historicize the movements, works, and artists presented in the class, but will also encourage you to draw connections between them and current theatrical/dramatic practice.

Required Texts:

- *Century of Innovation: A History of European and American Theatre and Drama Since the Late Nineteenth Century* by Oscar Brockett and Robert Findlay (Allyn & Bacon)
- *The Theater of the Avant-Garde, 1890-1950: A Critical Anthology* edited by Bert Cardullo and Robert Knopf (Yale University Press)
- *Seeds of Modern Drama* edited by Norris Houghton (Applause Books)
- All other texts will be made available to you, usually through the Blackboard site, though occasionally through the Amos Music Library reserve desk or via another method.

Attendance:

Attendance will be taken at the beginning of each class; students arriving late to class will not receive full credit for attendance that day. Poor attendance can severely affect your final grade.

Final Exam:

Our final exam period is scheduled for Thursday, 16 December from 3:00 until 5:00 p.m. *Attendance is mandatory, so make travel plans accordingly!!*

Assignment Policy:

All assignments are due at the beginning of class. Exceptions may be allowed in extreme cases if arrangements have been made with the instructor *prior to the due date* (this is the case in both the lecture and the discussion section.) Unexcused late work will be evaluated starting at 90% of the original value, and 10% will be deducted for every day date after that.

Diversity Statement:

In keeping with the “University Statement Asserting Respect for Human Diversity,” the following is a foundation on which this course will operate. As a group of diverse individuals with various backgrounds including those influenced by ethnicity, race, age, gender, physical abilities, religious and political beliefs, national origins, and sexual orientations, we will strive to learn from each other in an atmosphere of positive engagement and mutual respect. Bigotry, including racism, sexism, ageism, homophobia, religious intolerance, and other forms of prejudice will not go unchallenged.

Disability:

If you have a disability of any kind that affects your ability to work successfully in this course, please see the instructor within the first two weeks of class.

Academic Honesty:

All work used in this course must be your own. See the *Miami University Handbook*, 2010-2011 Edition, Chapter 5: Academic Integrity.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Quizzes: For each set of readings we do, retention of the basic plot points or ideas will be tested by a quiz. The quiz will be offered in the first five minutes of the class period in which we discuss the readings. *(12 quizzes x 5 points per quiz)*

Written responses to readings: For each set of readings we do this semester, a number of questions will be generated by the instructor. Five times during the semester, you must turn in a written response to the week’s readings, based on answering a number of the questions provided. Which 5 weeks you choose to respond to are your choice, the only stipulation being that you cannot choose the readings that you will be lead-reading. A grading rubric for these responses will be provided to you. Responses will be due before class on the day we will discuss the readings. *(5 responses x 10 points per response)*

Lead Read: Once during the semester, you and a group of your fellow students will be responsible for guiding your classmates through the readings. In addition to the readings assigned to the whole group, you will be given extra readings to help you better understand the material. The instructor will provide you with a list of questions that you and your group must answer. You will be evaluated through a written assignment that

accompanies the lead-read, as well as through guidelines for effective presentation that will be made available to you. You will be responsible for the lead read on the materials corresponding to your creative presentation. (**Written preparation = 30 points, Facilitation = 20 points**)

Discussion: Class discussion will follow every student presentation. Participation in discussion is essential for understanding the course material. You will be awarded up to 10 points for *active* participation in each discussion. (**4 discussions [not including your own lead-read] x 10 points per discussion**)

Creative Presentation: Many of the movements and techniques we will discuss this semester cannot be fully appreciated unless one sees and hears (and maybe smells, touches, and tastes) them in live performance. Therefore, five times during the semester, you and a handful of your fellow students will be asked to take on one of these movements, and to produce a short performance piece that demonstrates what is unique about that movement. This may involve mounting an play (or scenes) from the movement, creating a new play in the style of the movement, or creating a performance that enlightens us about the people, places, or period from which the movement arose. Evaluation will be based equally upon a paper that catalogues your research, preparation, and thinking process (**50 points**), and upon the performance itself, which will be judged according to a number of clearly articulated goals (**50 points**). Rubrics will be

Analysis of Recent Production: You will write a paper that analyzes a current or recent theatrical production in terms of its debt to one or more of the movements of European Modernism. The expected length of the paper is 5-7 pages. Guidelines will be discussed in class and codified in a grading rubric. (**50 points**)

Midterm and Final Exams: A midterm will be given on Thursday, 14 October during our usual class period. A final exam will be administered during the final exam period (Thursday, 16 December from 3:00 until 5:00 p.m.). Both exams will consist of short answer/identifications and at least one essay question. (**50 points each**)

ASSESSMENT:

Categories:

Quizzes (12 quizzes x 5 points per quiz)	60 points
Written Responses to Readings (5 responses x 10 points each)	50 points
Lead Read	50 points
Discussion (10 points per discussion, 4 discussions).....	40 points
Creative Presentation.....	100 points
Production Analysis	50 points
Midterm	50 points
Final	50 points
Attendance/Participation	50 points
 Total points	 500 points