



EMERSON COLLEGE, DEPARTMENT OF PERFORMING ARTS

TH315: TOPICS IN CONTEMPORARY THEATRE: TWENTIETH CENTURY AVANT-GARDE

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

The course will focus on the major works of the Avant-Garde Theatre as indexical of postmodern "disintegration of meaning" of words, and concepts. What is avant-garde theatre and does it still exist? What our avant-garde says about us, and what we say about our avant-garde? This course will examine topics in contemporary theater with particular focus on the history, theory, criticism and aesthetic concerns of selected contemporary performers and directors. We will analyze the works of contemporary directors such as Robert Wilson, Richard Foreman, Anne Bogart, Tadeusz Kantor, Jerzy Grotowski, Peter Brook, Julie Taymore, and Tadashi Suzuki, and groups such as Open Theatre, Living Theatre, and Mabou Mines. Students will examine a variety of approaches, theories, and practices in contemporary, experimental and avant-garde theater. They will be introduced to the roots of contemporary performance including the Futurist and Dada movements, through the performance trends of the 60's and 70's, to current theater.

SYLLABUS

Introduction

AVANT-GARDE MOVEMENTS: DADA & SURREALISM

LECTURE: AVANT-GARDE MOVEMENTS

READ:

Tristan Tzara, "Dada Manifesto 1918" (1918) (E-reserve)

- George Grosz; Walter Mehring. Dada-Fragments. " The Drama Review: TDR, Vol. 18, No. 2, Rehearsal Procedures Issue and Berlin Dada. (Jun., 1974), p. 130-133. (E-reserve, jstor).
- André Breton, "The First Manifesto of Surrealism" (1924) (E-reserve)
- "The Second Manifesto of Surrealism" (1929) (E-reserve)
- John G. Frey. "From Dada to Surrealism." Parnassus, Vol. 8, No. 7. (Dec., 1936), pp. 12-15. (E-reserve, jstor).

Videos:

- Germany Dada: An Alphabet of German Dadaism, 1968 - Call BN5431.
- Dada, 1969 - Call # CQ3296.
- Shock of the New: Threshold of Liberty, 1980 - Call # 100018.

AVANT-GARDE MOVEMENTS: FUTURISM, CONSTRUCTIVISM & BAUHAUS

LECTURE: AVANT-GARDE MOVEMENTS

READ:

- Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, "The Foundation and Manifesto of Futurism" (1909) (E-reserve)
- Mel Gordon. "Foregger and The Dance of the Machines." The Drama Review: TDR, Vol. 19, No. 1, Post-Modern Dance Issue. (Mar., 1975), pp. 68-73. (E-reserve, jstor).
- Susanne Lahusen. "Oskar Schlemmer: Mechanical Ballets?" Dance Research: The Journal of the Society for Dance Research, Vol. 4, No. 2. (Autumn, 1986), pp. 65-77. (E-reserve, jstor).

Video:

- Shock of the New: The Mechanical Paradise, 1980 - Call # 100014.



M,W: 4-5:45
TuTe P914
SPRING 2009

Magda Romanska
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Office: TuTe 501
Hours: TR: 10-12:00

STANISLAVSKY VS. MEYERHOLD

LECTURE: STANISLAVSKY VS. MEYERHOLD

READ:

- Stanislavsky, "Direction and Acting". WAD, Worthen, The Wadsworth Anthology of Drama, 4th edition, 2003, p. 914-918. (E-reserve)
- Nick Worrall, "Meyerhold's production of 'The Magnanimous Cuckold'," The Drama Review: TDR, Vol. 17, No. 1, Russian Issue (Mar., 1973), pp. 14-34. (E-reserve, jstor)

Videos:

- Stanislavsky: The Maker of the Modern Theatre, 1982 - Call # AW4131

ON THE CRACKING ICE: GERTRUDE STEIN, LANGUAGE AND CUBISM

LECTURE: GERTRUDE STEIN AND CUBISM

READ:

- Stein, Gertrude, in Selected Writings of Gertrude Stein, 1990.
- "Three Portraits of Painters: Cezanne, Matisse and Picasso," pp. 327-336. (E-reserve)
- "Four Saints in Three Acts." pp. 577-590. (E-reserve)

Video:

- Gertrude Stein: When This You See, Remember Me, 1970 - Call #

THE BODY, THE SOUL AND THE OBJECT: KANTOR VS. GROTOWSKI

LECTURE: TADEUSZ KANTOR

READ:

- Jan Klossowicz. The Drama Review: TDR, Vol. 30, No. 3. (Autumn, 1986), pp. 98-113. (E-reserve, jstor).
- Tadeusz Kantor, "The Theatre of Death," pp. 106-116 (E-reserve); "New Theatrical Space. Where Fiction Appears," pp. 134-141 (E-reserve); "The Infamous Transition from the World of the Dead into the World of Living: Fiction and Reality," pp. 145-150. in A Journey Through Other Spaces: Essays and Manifestos, 1977-1990 (E-reserve)

Video:

- The Theatre of Tadeusz Kantor, 1991 (private collection).

LECTURE: JERZY GROTOWSKI AND LABORATORY THEATRE

READ:

- Jerzy Grotowski, in The Grotowski Sourcebook (ed. Richard Schechner)
- "Towards a Poor Theatre," pp. 28-37 (E-reserve);
- "External Order, Internal Intimacy: Interview with Grotowski," pp. 107-113. (Marc Fumaroli) (E-reserve);
- "Grotowski or the Limit," pp. 306-311 (Jan Kott). (E-reserve)

Video:

- Jerzy Grotowski, 1970 - Call # 768949.
- Akropolis, 1988 - Call # BT8379.

PETER BROOK, REZA ABDOH, ROBERT WILSON

LECTURE: PETER BROOK

READ:

- "Talking with Peter Brook" Interview with Richard Schechner. The Drama Review: TDR, Vol. 30, No. 1. (Spring, 1986), pp. 54-71. (E-reserve, jstor).
- Delgado, Maria. "Brook." In Contact With the Gods?: Directors Talk Theatre. pp. 36 – 54 (E-reserve)

Video:

- Stages, 1980 - Call # AG7830
- Marat/Sade, 1989 - Call # DK8592

LECTURE: REZA ABDOH

READ:

- John Bell. "AIDS and Avantgarde Classicism: Reza Abdoh's 'Quotations from a Ruined City'." TDR (1988-) > Vol. 39, No. 4 (Autumn, 1995), pp. 21-47.
- "Theatre Is Not about Theory": An Interview with Reza Abdoh Josette Féral; Reza Abdoh TDR (1988-) Vol. 39, No. 4 (Autumn, 1995), pp. 86-96

Video:

- Quotations from a Ruined City, 1988 - Call# 408

NOTE: This is Tuesday Class

LECTURE: ROBERT WILSON

READ:

- Bill Simmer. "Theatre and Therapy: Robert Wilson." The Drama Review: TDR, Vol. 20, No. 1, Theatre and Therapy. (Mar., 1976), pp. 99-110. (E-reserve, jstor).
- Craig Owens. "Einstein on the Beach": The Primacy of Metaphor." October, Vol. 4. (Autumn, 1977), pp. 21-32 (E-reserve, jstor).

Video:

- Einstein on the Beach, 1987 - Call # CT9001.

FIRST LIBRARY REPORT DUE: FEB 20

EASTERN INFLUENCES

LECTURE: BUTOH

READ:

- Bonnie Sue Stein. "Butoh: 'Twenty Years Ago We Were Crazy, Dirty, and Mad'."
- The Drama Review: TDR, Vol. 30, No. 2. (Summer, 1986), pp. 107-126. (E-reserve, jstor).
- Senda Akihiko; Hijikata Tatsumi; Suzuki Tadashi. "Hijikata Tatsumi: The Words of Butoh," "Fragments of Glass: A Conversation between Hijikata Tatsumi and Suzuki Tadashi. The Drama Review: TDR (1988-), Vol. 44, No. 1. (Spring, 2000), pp. 62-70 (E-reserve, jstor).

Video:

- Butoh: Piercing the Mask, 1991 - Call # 718184.

LECTURE: TADASHI SUZUKI

READ:

- Yukihiko Goto. "The Theatrical Fusion of Suzuki Tadashi." Asian Theatre Journal, Vol. 6, No. 2. (Autumn, 1989), pp. 103-123.

Video:

- One Step in a Journey: Tadashi Suzuki, 1993 - Call # 718188.

MID-TERM EXAM

SPRING BREAK

ENSEMBLES

LECTURE: ANNE BOGART AND THE SITI COMPANY

READ:

- Landau, Tina. "Source-Work, the Viewpoints and Composition: What Are They?" Anne Bogart: Viewpoints. Eds. Michael Dixon and Joel A. Smith. Lyme, NH: Smith and Kraus, 1995. pp. 13-30 (E-reserve, t).
- Herrington, Joan. "Directing with the Viewpoints." Theatre Topics 10.2 (2000): 155-168. (E-reserve, t)
- Diamond, David. "Balancing Acts." American Theatre 18.1 (January 2001): 30-38 (E-reserve, t) .

LECTURE: THE LIVING THEATRE

READ:

- Aronson, Arnold, American Avant- Garde Theater. pp. 42-61
- The Living Theatre. "Paradise Now": Notes. The Drama Review: TDR, Vol. 13, No. 3. (Spring, 1969), pp. 90-107. (E-reserve, jstor).

Video:

- Paradise Now - Call # CN6637

SECOND LIBRARY REPORT DUE: March 19

LECTURE: THE OPEN THEATRE

READ:

- Aronson, Arnold, American Avant- Garde Theater. pp. 75-102.

Video:

- The Serpent: A Ceremony - Call # CA4165

LECTURE: THE WOOSTER GROUP

READ:

- Marranca, Bonnie. "The Wooster Group: A Dictionary of Ideas." PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art 25.2 (May 2003): 1-18 (E-Reserve, t).

PUPPERS AND OBJECTS

LECTURE: JULIE TAYMOR

READ:

- "Julie Taymor: From Jacques Lecoq to "The Lion King": An Interview
- Richard Schechner; Julie Taymor. The Drama Review: TDR (1988-), Vol. 43, No. 3, Puppets, Masks, and Performing Objects. (Autumn, 1999), pp. 36-55. (E-reserve, jstor).

Video:

Julie Taymor: Setting a Scene, 1992 - Call # EJ2579

SOLO PERFORMANCES

LECTURE: WHOOPI GOLDBERG

READ:

- Goldberg, Whoopi. "Whoopi Goldberg." Extreme Exposure: An Anthology of Solo Performance Texts from the Twentieth Century. Ed. Jo Bonney. St. Paul: Theatre Communications Group, 2000. pp. 209-219 (E-reserve, t).

Video:

- Direct from Broadway: Whoopi Goldberg, 1986 - Call # AV1174.

LECTURE: SPALDING GRAY

READ:

- Gray, Spalding. "Introduction and Author's Note." Swimming to Cambodia. New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1985. (E-reserve, t)
- Gray, Spalding. "My Art in Life: Interviewing Spalding Gray." TDR: The Drama Review 46.4 (2002): 154-174. Project Muse. Emerson College Lib., Boston. 17 Jan. 2006. (E-reserve, t).

Video:

- Swimming to Cambodia, 1987 - Call # CK3514.

LECTURE: ANNA DEAVERE SMITH

READ:

- Smith, Anna Deavere. "Introduction and Production History. Twilight Los Angeles". 1992 on the Road: A Search for American Character. New York: Anchor Books, 1994. xvii-xxviii. (E-reserve, t)
- Smith, Anna Deavere. "Timeline." Twilight Los Angeles, 1992 on the Road: A Search for American Character. New York: Anchor Books, 1994. 257-265. (E-reserve, t)
- Stepanek, Marcia. "Creative Reality: Anna Devere-Smith." Women in Communications. 14 July 2002. 17 Jan. 2006. (E-reserve, t).

Video:

- Twilight: Los Angeles, 2000 - Call # ES2288.

LECTURE: FEMINIST PERFORMANCE ART

READ:

- Schneider, Rebecca. "Binary Terror and the Body Made Explicit." Explicit Body in Performance. 1997. pp. 12-32. (E-reserve).
- Fuchs, Elinor. "When Bad Girls Play Good Theaters." The Death of Character: Perspectives on Theater after Modernism. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996. pp. 108-127. (E-reserve).
- O'Dell, Kathy. "The Performance Artist as Masochistic Woman." Arts Magazine. 62.10. June 1988: 96-97 (E-reserve).

Videos:

- Female Misbehavior, 1992 - Call # EM5166.
- Vagina Monologues, 2002 - Call #

FIELDWORK REPORTS DUE - APRIL 11

FINAL PRESENTATIONS

PERFORMANCE CONCEPTS DUE (ORAL PRESENTATION)

FINAL EXAM: 4:00-5:45

FINAL RESEARCH PAPER DUE

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Students will develop an understanding of the historic roots of contemporary theater within the social-political climate in which it was made.
- Students will integrate theory and practice in developing various approaches to the understanding of contemporary theatre.
- Students will practice multiple ways of seeing, thinking about, and responding aesthetically to contemporary theater.

LEARNING PROCEDURES

- Lecture/demonstration of various theatrical traditions.
- Discussion with guest artists.
- Viewing and analysis of performances.
- Reading/discussion/writing.

NOTE:

The syllabus is available on WebCT. To access it: 1). Go to <http://webcms.emerson.edu>. 2). Enter your Emerson email address and password. 3). Click on TH315.

Your grades, assignments, handouts and articles on E-reserve will also be available at WebCT. Please, make sure to access it as soon as possible to familiarize yourself with the system. I will communicate with you via email. Therefore, you must have and check regularly your Emerson email account.

BOOK:

Available at Emerson Bookstore or Amazon.com

Arnold Aronson, [American Avant-Garde Theatre](#). 2000.

Electronic-Reserves on WebCT:

(To access them: 1. Go to <http://webcms.emerson.edu>. 2. Enter your Emerson email address and password. 3. Click on TH315. 4. On the right hand Course Menu, click on Library E-Reserves.)

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

- Read all assigned text and come to class prepared to discuss them.
 - Come to class on time.
 - Fully participate in classroom discussion, contributing your own ideas.
 - Write two library reports, one fieldwork report, and final paper.
 - Prepare production concept presentation.
 - Take mid-term exam and final exam.
 - Attend mid-term review session.
 - Each student is encouraged to make at least two individual appointments with the instructor throughout the semester.
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EXAMS:

MID-TERM EXAM - MARCH 12 (25 multiple choice questions)

FINAL EXAM - APRIL 30 (25 multiple choice questions)

NOTE: According to the department policy, we do not administer early or late exams (unless you're sick). Therefore, please, plan your holiday vacations and family gatherings with the final exam date in mind. Please, do not purchase your plane tickets or make other plans for this date (unless you do not plan taking the exam). No exceptions.

PAPERS:

Assigned papers must be typed and turned in on the due date, at the start of class. Use one-inch margins and 12-point font. Don't forget to staple your paper. While citing your sources, be consistent and always follow the MLA format. For detailed guidelines, you can either refer to the MLA handbook or you can use this website: [Citing Sources and Avoiding Plagiarism](#). Cite ALL your sources and include bibliography.

LATE PAPERS:

- One day - ten points of the grade deducted
- Two days - twenty points of the grade deducted

Assignments received 3 days late will not be accepted.

NOTE: Final papers received late will not be accepted. No exceptions.

NOTE: No electronic submissions. Hard copies only. No exceptions.

HELP:

To get help with their papers (proofreading, organizing your ideas, etc), students can make appointments at the Writing Center in person at 216 Tremont Street or by calling 617-824-7874. Because the Center can get busy, students should make appointments in advance. This is not a drop-in Center. For more information, see website:

http://www.emerson.edu/learning_assistance/writing_center/index.cfm

GRADING

The College uses a system of letter grades and quality points to evaluate student performance. Grade point averages are computed on a scale where A = 4.0 (93-100), A - = 3.7 (90-92), B+ = 3.3 (87-89), B = 3.0 (83-86), B - = 2.7 (80-82), C+ = 2.3 (77-79), C = 2.0 (73-76), C - = 1.7 (70-72), D = 1.0 (60-69), F = 0 (failing). Based on this scale, the following class grading policy will be observed:

- Class attendance and participation - 200 points
- Library reports - 100 points (50 points each)
- Fieldwork - 200 points
- Mid-Term Exam - 100 points
- Performance Concept - 100 points
- Final Exam - 100 points
- Final paper - 200 points
- _____
- TOTAL 1000 points

Final grades:

- A = 1000 - 930 points
- A - = 900 - 929 points
- B + = 870 - 899 points
- B = 830 - 869 points
- B - = 800 - 829 points
- C + = 770 - 799 points
- C = 730 - 769 points
- C - = 700 - 729 points
- D = 600 - 699 points
- F = 698 or less

An I (Incomplete) is assigned when students engaged in passing work are unable to complete class assignments for medical reasons or other extenuating circumstances. No exceptions.

ATTENDANCE

Attendance is essential to learning. If you must miss class, you are responsible for all work due and assigned on that day. Please try to let me know about absences ahead of time, and contact me afterwards so that you can be filled in on missed work. Assignments not turned in due to an absence are still considered late work.

According to Emerson Handbook: "Students are expected to attend classes regularly and promptly and are responsible for all work done in their classes while they are absent. Attending an out-of-class activity of event for another course may not be used as an excuse to disregard a given class's attendance policy. In addition, Massachusetts state law requires that any student who is unable, because of religious beliefs, to attend classes or to participate in any examination, study, or work requirement on a particular day shall be excused from any such requirement. The student will receive an opportunity to make up the examination, study or work requirement which may have been missed because of such absence on any particular day provided, however, that such make-up examination or work does not create an unreasonable burden upon the College." No exceptions. "

CLASS POLICY: According to Emerson Handbook, "for courses meeting twice a week, 3 unexcused absences would result in a failing (F) grade." Therefore, you will be allowed 2 (2) unexcused absences without penalty (excluding mid-term review and final review). If you miss more than two classes, you will fail the course. Students with health/family emergencies need to consult the Dean of Students. If you miss mid-term review or final exam review, your final grade will be lowered one step (e.g., from A to A- or from A- to B+, etc.). If you are caught signing attendance sheets for another student or being signed in, you will fail the course. No exceptions.

PUNCTUALITY

Tardiness will result in a lowered participation grade. Three tardies equals one absence. If you are more than a half-hour late, you will be marked absent automatically.

DISABILITIES

If you believe you have a disability which may require accommodations in this class, please, register with the Disability Services Coordinator, Dr. Anthony Bashir at 216 Tremont Street, 5th Floor, (617-824-7415) so that, together, you can work to develop methods of addressing needed accommodations in this class.

PLAGIARISM

"Plagiarism is the use of words and ideas of another as if they were one's own and without acknowledgement of their source. Plagiarism is stealing, and constitutes a serious offense against any ethical code, be it scholastic, artistic, or professional. The attempt of any student to present as his or her own work, the work of another, or any work which he or she has not honestly performed, or to pass an examination by improper means, renders the offender liable to immediate suspension/dismissal. The aiding and abetting of a student in any dishonesty is likewise held to be a grave breach of discipline." ([Emerson College Policy on Plagiarism](#)).