



## EMERSON COLLEGE, DEPARTMENT OF PERFORMING ARTS

### TH611: TWENTIETH CENTURY DRAMATIC THEORY: THEATRE, TEXT, THEORY

#### COURSE DESCRIPTION:

The course introduces students to twentieth-century dramatic theory from both academic and performance-based perspectives. It focuses on the fundamental issues raised by contemporary criticism, such as Modernism, Post-Modernism, Materialism, Psychoanalysis, Deconstruction, Feminism, Queer Theory, and Post-Colonial theory; and the ways in which contemporary theory challenges notions of race, gender, and sexuality. We will analyze the notions of identity and post-identity and how they subsequently developed. We will see how theory can illuminate our understanding of dramatic texts (characters, concepts, and milieus), how it influenced the twentieth-century drama, and how it developed in response to and in the context of drama. Although we will begin with the early-twentieth-century texts, our primary focus will be on the post-WWII period (1950s and after).

#### SYLLABUS:

##### WEEK 1 - Mon, Sept. 8 - Introduction

##### WEEK 2 – Mon, Sept. 15

#### NATURALISM IN THEATRE

- Oscar Wilde (1854-1900) *The Decay of Lying: An Observation* (1889)
- Emile Zola (1840-1902) *Naturalism in Theatre* (1878) (WebCT)
- August Strindberg (1849-1912) *Preface to Miss Julie* (1888)
- Valery Bryusov (1873-1924) *Against Naturalism in the Theatre* (from "Unnecessary Truth") (1902)
- Constantine Stanislavsky (1863-1938) *An Actor Prepares* (1936) (WebCT, pp.1-20)
- Vsevolod Vaslov Meyerhold (1874-1940) *The Naturalistic Theatre and the Theatre of Mood* (1908)
- Romain Rolland (1866-1944) *The People's Theatre* (1903)
- Georg Lukacs (1885-1971) *The Sociology of Modern Drama* (1914)
- Emma Goldman (1869-1940) Foreword to *The Social Significance of Modern Drama* (1917)

##### WEEK 3 – Mon, Sept. 22

#### THE BIRTH OF THE AVANT-GARDE

- Maurice Maeterlinck (1862-1949) *Modern Drama* (1904)
- George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950) *Against the Well-Made Play* (1911)
- F. T. Marinetti (1876-1944) *Futurism and the Theatre* (1913)
- Edward Gordon Craig (1872-1966) *The Actor and the Uber-marionette* (1908)
- Stanislaw Witkiewicz (1885-1939) *On a New Type of Play* (1920)
- Adolphe Appia (1862-1928) *Organic Unity* (1921)
- Georg Kaiser (1878-1945) *Man in the Tunnel. or: The Poet and the Play* (1923)
- William Butler Yeats (1865-1939) *The Tragic Theatre* (1910)
- Gertrude Stein (1874-1946) *Plays* (1934)
- Eugene O'Neill (1888-1953)
  - *Memoranda on Masks* (1932)
  - *Second Thoughts* (1932)
  - *A Dramatist's Notebook* (1933)

##### WEEK 4 – Mon, Sept. 29

#### AFRICAN-AMERICAN DRAMA



M: 6-9:45  
Tuftes P914  
FALL 2008

Magda Romanska  
mrmr24@cornell.edu  
Office: Tuftes 501  
Hours: M: 12-3:00

- Aida Overton Walker (1880-1914) *Colored Men and Women on the Stage* (1905)
- Alain Locke (1886-1954)
  - *The Negro and the American Stage* (1926)
  - *The Drama of Negro Life* (1926)
- W.E. B. Du Bois (1868-1963)
  - "Krigwa Players Little Negro Theatre":
  - *The Story of a Little Theatre Movement* (1926)
  - *Criteria of Negro Art* (1926)
- Zora Neale Hurston (1891-1960) *Characteristics of Negro Expression* (1934)
- Ntozake Shange (b. 1948) *unrecovered losses/black theater traditions* (1979)
- Suzan-Lori Parks (b. 1964) *Elements of Style* (1994)
- August Wilson, *The ground on which I stand* (1996) (WebCT)
- Lucinda Fisher, *Is Broadway Going Black?* (2008) (WebCT)

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## WEEK 5 - Mon, Oct. 6

### EPIC THEATRE

- Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956)
  - *The Modern Theatre is the Epic Theatre* (1930)
  - *Theatre for Pleasure or Theatre for Instruction* (ca. 1936)
  - *Alienation Effect in Chinese Acting* (1936)
- Walter Benjamin (1892-1940) *What is Epic Theatre?* (1939)
- Roland Barthes (1915-1980)
  - *The Task of Brechtian Criticism* (1956)
  - *Theatre and Signification* (1963)
- Lionel Abel (1910-2001) *Of Bert Brecht -Not Simple but Simplified* (1963)
- Raymond Williams (1921-1988) *Drama from Ibsen to Brecht* (1968)

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## WEEK 6 - Mon. Oct. 13

### WRITING WORKSHOP - LIBRARY REPORTS DUE

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## WEEK 7 - Mon. Oct. 20

### REALISM AFTER WWII

- Thornton Wilder (1897-1975) *Some Thoughts on Playwriting* (1941)
- Maxwell Anderson (1888-1959) *The Essence of Tragedy* (1939)
- Arthur Miller (1915-2005) *Tragedy and the Common Man* (1949)
- Tennessee Williams (1911-1983) *The Timeless World of the Play* (1951)
- John Gassner (1903-1967) *"Enlightenment" and Modern Drama* (1954)
- Sean O'Casey (1880-1964) *Green Goddess of Realism* (1956)
- Eric Bentley (b. 1916) *What is Theatre? A Point of View* (1956)
- George Steiner (b. 1929) *The Death of Tragedy* (1961)
- Francis Fergusson (1904-1986) *The Notion of "Action"* (1964)
- Joyce Carol Oates (b. 1938) *The Edge of Impossibility: Tragic Forms in Literature* (1972)

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## WEEK 8 - Mon. Oct. 27

### THEATRE OF THE ABSURD AND THE NEW AVANT-GARDE

- Martin Esslin (1918-2002) *The Theatre of the Absurd* (1961)
- Eugène Ionesco (1909-1994) *The Avant-Garde Theatre* (1960)
- Friedrich Dürrenmatt (1921-1990) *Problems of the Theatre* (1955)
- Northrop Frye (1912-1991) *Specific Forms of Drama* (1957)
- Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980) *Beyond Bourgeois Theatre* (1960)

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## WEEK 9 - Mon. Nov. 3

## FROM RITUAL TO PERFORMANCE

- Jerzy Grotowski (1933-1999) *Towards the Poor Theatre* (1967)
- Peter Brook (b. 1925) *The Immediate Theatre* (1968)
- Peter Weiss (1916-1982) *Notes on the Contemporary Theatre* (1971)
- Bert O. States (b. 1929) *World On Stage* (1985)
- Victor Turner (1920-1983) *Images and Reflections: Ritual, Drama, Carnival, Film, and Spectacle in Cultural Performance* (1987)
- Richard Schechner (b. 1934) *What is Performance Studies Anyway?* (1998)
- Heisnam Kanhailal (b. 1941) *Ritual Theatre* (2004)

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## WEEK 10 - Mon. Nov. 10

### CLOSURE OF REPRESENTATION AND THEORY OF POST-MODERN DRAMA

- Antonin Artaud (1896-1949) *On the Balinese Theatre* (1938) *No More Masterpieces* (1938)
- Karel Brusak (1913-2004) *Signs in the Chinese Theatre* (1939)
- Jindrich Honzl (1894-1953) *Dynamics of the Sign in the Theatre* (1940)
- Jacques Derrida (1930-2004) *Theatre of Cruelty and the Closure of Representation* (1966)
- Michael Kirby (b. 1931) *Manifesto of Structuralism* (1975)
- Robert Wilson (b. 1941) "... I thought I was hallucinating hallucinating" (1977)
- Patrice Pavis (b. 1947) *Languages of the Stage* (1978)
- Bert O. States (b. 1929) *The World on Stage* (1985)
- Tadeusz Kantor (1915-1990) *Theatre Happening 1967* (1982)
- Heiner Muller (1929-,1995) *Reflections on Post-Modernism* (1979)
- Reza Abdoh (1963-1995) *Los Angeles* (1992)
- Richard Foreman (b. 1937) *Foundations for a Theatre* (1992).

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## WEEK 11 - Mon. Nov. 17

### PERFORMANCE, GENDER AND SEXUALITY

- Charles Ludlam (1943-1987) *Ridiculous Theatre, Scourge of Human Folly* (1975)
- Alina TroyanoI, *Carmelita Tropicana* (2000)
- Jill Dolan, *Desire Cloaked in a Trenchcoat* (1989)
- Judith Butler (b. 1956) *From Parody to Politics* (1990)
- Rebecca Schneider (b. 1959) *The Explicit Body in Performance* (1997)
- Peggy Phelan (b. 1959) *Mourning Sex: Performing Public Memories* (1997)
- Fuchs, Elinor. "When Bad Girls Play Good Theaters." *The Death of Character: Perspectives on Theater after Modernism*. (1996) (WebCT).
- O'Dell, Kathy. "The Performance Artist as Masochistic Woman." *Arts Magazine*. 62.10. (June 1988) (WebCT).

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## WEEK 12, 13, 14 - Mon. Nov. 24, Dec. 1, Dec. 8

### PRESENTATIONS

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## MONDAY, DECEMBER 15. 8:00 pm

### FINAL PAPER DUE

### BOOKS:

Available at Emerson Bookstore or Amazon.com

[Theatre in Theory 1900-2000: An Anthology, by David Krasner.](#)

Other readings will be available on WebCT E-reserve.

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### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The primary goal of the course is to familiarize students with the twentieth century theatre studies and dramatic theory.

- Students will gain understanding of critical and cultural trends in Theatre Studies.
- Students will be able to understand Theatre Studies as a discipline, its issues, methodologies, and practices.
- Students will learn to navigate related vocabulary in their critical and creative endeavors.
- Students will read theory and explore methods for documenting, analyzing, interpreting, and writing about theatre.
- Students will have an opportunity to explore theoretical aspects of the discipline.

#### **LEARNING PROCEDURES**

- Lecture/demonstration of various schools of thought and dramatic traditions.
- Reading and discussion.
- Viewing and analysis of various performances.
- Research, fieldwork.
- Final analytical research paper summarizing the research, fieldwork, and performance experience.

#### **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 TH 611.

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.

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#### **COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

- Come to class on time.
- Read all assigned texts and come to class prepared to discuss them. It is expected that you devote between 3 to 4 hours per week to readings. You are expected to participate in classroom discussion, and I will call on you to answer questions pertaining to the readings.
- Fully participate in classroom discussions, contributing your own ideas. You are being trained to read the material as artists and/or scholars, not as a general reader, and that means that you should always know the materials of the day thoroughly and be prepared to have specific, concrete things to add to our discussions. The success of the class depends on you sharing your ideas and taking an active role in discussion.
- Prepare one reader's response.
- Prepare one library report.
- Prepare Power Point presentation.
- Write a final research paper.

You must finish your powerpoint presentation and your final paper to pass the course.

Each student is encouraged to make at least two individual appointments with the instructor throughout the semester.

NOTE: According to 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 to take the exam). No exceptions.

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#### **ASSIGNMENTS**

Detailed guidelines will be posted on WebCT.

**LIBRARY REPORT:** The report has the form of an extended bibliography. The purpose of the assignment is to research a particular performance practice as socio-political issue (race, gender, class, sexuality, social status, etc). You need to know what was done before, how, why, and for what purpose (aesthetic, political, social, etc.). 5 books (2-3 pages) for undergraduates. 10 books (5 pages) for graduate students.

**READER'S RESPONSE:** Short 10 minutes presentation on assigned readings.

**POWER POINT PRESENTATION:** Your presentation can include interviews, observations, images, videos, summary of your research, etc. You should explore a particular environment, its inner dynamic, and its socio-political conditions. Your Power Point presentation needs to be between 10 and 15 minutes long (30 slides min for graduates).

**FINAL PAPER:** Min. 15 pages . Your paper should include 1) your main thesis framing the problem you explored, 2) the description of research findings (observations, data, description of performances, including, but not limited to, the audience/performer relationship, the social, political, cultural goals of the performance practice you researched, etc.) 3) the

conclusions drawn from your research.

### LATE ASSIGNMENTS

- 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.
- Final papers received late will not be accepted.

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](http://www.emerson.edu/learning_assistance/writing_center/index.cfm)

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### 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), and F = 0 (failing). Based on this scale, the following class grading policy will be observed:

- CLASS ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION - 200 points
- READER'S RESPONSE - 100 points
- LIBRARY REPORT – 200 points
- POWER POINT PRESENTATION – 200 points
- FINAL PAPER - 400 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.

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### 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."

## **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 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 that 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 to address 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).

Standing Invitation: Please feel free to come to my office hours or to make an appointment.