

THE 377 – Theatre History II
Spring 2016
Section 1, T/R, CW308 9:35am – 10:50am
Section 2, T/R, CW308, 3:35pm – 4:50pm

Dr. Will Daddario, wdaddar@ilstu.edu
Office Hours: W 3:00-5:00, **and by appointment**

Graduate Teaching Assistant: Treasure Radice, tradice@ilstu.edu
Office Hours: T/R 2:30-3:30, **and by appointment**

Overview

As a variation on the traditional survey course, this class presents students with the challenge of interpreting theatre history “flights.”¹ Each flight presents plays and articles written in specific times and places that I have grouped together under an umbrella term. Students will work to understand the specific time and place of each text’s emergence as well as to find connections between the texts and the performances of those texts.

For example, in the “Performing Blackness” flight, we will launch from post-Revolution France and a melodrama about Christopher Columbus into a trans-Atlantic (and trans-temporal) journey from Europe to Albany, NY. There, we will encounter the merger between theatre and performance as we scrutinize the racial-nationalist manifestation of blackbody performance in the World’s Fair of 1901. After that, we will dive into the discord of the 1960s and attune ourselves to the world of Black Power and the Black Arts before arriving at Suzan-Lori Parks’s historical analysis in *The America Play*. In total, the flight will span two centuries and many miles so as to equip us with a critical vocabulary capable of assessing theatre’s participation in discourses of racial exclusion and inclusion.

Structure

- General Overview: Week 1
- Flight 1, Performance of Blackness: Weeks 2-8
 - René Pixérécourt, *Christopher Columbus*
 - Amma Y. Gharthey-Targo Kootin, “Lessons in Blackbody Minstrelsy”
 - Documentary: *Black Power / White Backlash*
 - Ed Bullins, *Malcolm ’71*
 - Suzan-Lori Parks, *The America Play*
- Flight 2, Queer Theory/Theatre/Performance: Weeks 10-16
 - Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, “Queer and Now”
 - Moisés Kaufman, *Gross Indecency: The Three Trials of Oscar Wilde*

¹ This notion of “flight” comes from the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari where it has a special meaning. As Brian Massumi writes, “*Fuite*,” the French word for flight, “covers not only the act of fleeing or eluding but also flowing, leaking, and disappearing into the distance (the vanishing point in a painting is a *point de fuite*). It has no relation to flying.” In terms of our class, we might think of theatre history flights as efforts to break away from inherited notions of the past, as opportunities to explore uncharted territories of thought, and as committed gestures of radical, emancipatory learning.

- S. I. Salamensky, “Re-Presenting Oscar Wilde: Wilde’s Trials, *Gross Indecency*, and Documentary Spectacle”
- Richard Meyer, “‘Have You Heard the One about the Lesbian Who Goes to the Supreme Court?’: Holly Hughes and the Case Against Censorship”
- <https://medium.com/gender-2-0>, especially <https://medium.com/matter/real-talk-with-trans-people-57b9aa3b91a8#.lzobr4b9o>
- Qwo-Li Driskill, “Shaking Our Shells: Cherokee Two-Spirits Rebalancing the World”
- Madeline George, *Seven Homeless Mammoths Wander New England*

Goals

By the end of the semester, students should be able to do the following:

- *Talk* in detail about the historical conditions that have contributed to contemporary depictions of femininity, masculinity, blackness, whiteness, queerness, and identity on the stage
- *Link* those conditions to major artistic movements such as post-revolutionary melodrama, the Black Arts Movement, and contemporary queer culture
- *Compose* articulate, written statements that combine textual interpretation and historical awareness into the beginnings of an argument
- *Develop* questions (as one *develops* pictures in a darkroom) that will lead to more in-depth inquiries into the histories of drama and theatre production from the late 18th century to the present

Assignments and Grade Breakdown

In-Class Participation: 50%

- Attendance. To participate fully in class, you must come to class each period, prepare to ask questions, commit to answering questions, and engage your fellow classmates in conversation.
- Small Group Work. The primary purpose of small group work is to cultivate insights into the material in a short period of time with the help of two or three colleagues. I will observe your work in small groups to assess your level of participation.
- Out-of-class correspondence. Email your thoughts and questions to Heather and me. Come to our office hours. I recognize that not everybody feels comfortable speaking in front of people, which is why I offer these alternate methods of participation. At the same time, I ask everyone in this class to think about what kind of student you are and to challenge yourselves to push beyond your personal boundaries.
- I’ll update your participation grade every few weeks on ReggieNet so that you have a clear understanding of your status in the class, but if you never talk in class, email Treasure/me, or contribute to the class discourse, you can assume that your participation grade will not rise above 75%.

Exams: 50%

- In Weeks 7 and 15, students will devise their own exams. In Weeks 8 and 16, students will take the exams they have devised.

- The purpose of this self-constructed exam assignment is to shift students' attention from "reaction" to "production": By controlling the means of producing your own exam, can you stimulate your critical and creative thinking practices and work as a group to synthesize several weeks of material?

Late Work Policy

I will not accept any late assignments in this class. If you do not turn in assignments on the day they are due, then you will receive no credit for them.

While this is a rigid policy, there is some room for flexibility. If, for example, you know that you will not be able to be in class one day, or if an emergency occurs at the last minute that keeps you from coming to class, you can notify me of these absences and we can work together to create an alternate due date for your work. The key word here is "communication." If you open lines of communication with me, then we can probably work something out.

Attendance Policy

There are two types of absences: excused and unexcused. Excused absences are those related to emergency situations, religious observance, and official university business. For an absence to count as excused, you must provide the appropriate documentation (e.g., a doctor's note) and alert me, whenever possible, of the absence before it occurs.

All other absences are unexcused. Because life is complicated, you are permitted two unexcused absences, no questions asked. More than two unexcused absences and your participation grade will go down. If you arrive more than 10 minutes late to class, you will be assigned a half-absence. Two half-absences equals one full absence.

Please note: Participation accounts for 50% of your overall grade. If you are not in class, then you cannot participate. If you miss a lot of classes—say, more than 5—you should expect your overall grade to drop significantly.

No Laptop/Phone Policy

Past experience moves me to institute a "no laptop/phone" policy. I do not allow computer notebooks, netbooks, laptops, phones or any other electronic device in class due to the distractions/disruptions they inevitably pose to me and to other students. If you for whatever reason feel you absolutely must use a laptop (or similar device), you must contact me individually, explain your case, and (if I approve) sign a Laptop Agreement policy specifying among other things that you will use the computer only for note-taking (disabling wireless functions), that you will sit in the back, and that you will minimize disruptions to the rest of the class.

Scholastic Dishonesty

Scholastic dishonesty means plagiarizing; cheating on assignments or examinations; engaging in unauthorized collaboration on academic work; taking, acquiring, or using test materials without faculty permission; submitting false or incomplete records of academic achievement; acting alone or in cooperation with another to falsify records or to obtain dishonestly grades, honors,

awards, or professional endorsement; altering, forging, or misusing a University academic record; or fabricating or falsifying data, research procedures, or data analysis.²

Though plagiarism is a tricky term to define these days, the Council of Writing Program Administrators' Best Practices document offers this definition: "In an instructional setting, plagiarism occurs when a writer deliberately uses someone else's language, ideas, or other original (not common-knowledge) material without acknowledging its source." For this class in particular, a student responsible for scholastic dishonesty of any kind can be assigned a penalty up to and including an "F" for the course. If you have any questions regarding the expectations for a specific assignment or exam, please contact me.

Information Regarding Accommodation

Illinois State University provides a welcoming atmosphere for individuals with disabilities by assisting each in functioning independently within the University community and providing equal access and opportunity in accomplishing educational, professional and personal goals. As a unit of the Student Affairs Division, Disability Concerns is the designated office to provide approved accommodation services for students and guests with disabilities. Disability Concerns obtains and maintains documentation of disability, certifies eligibility for services, determines reasonable accommodations, and develops plans for providing such accommodations. This is accomplished in a confidential manner to ensure equal opportunity for participation in all courses, programs, and activities offered by Illinois State. For more information, check out the website at: <http://disabilityconcerns.illinoisstate.edu/>. You may email Disability Concerns directly at ableisu@ilstu.edu or call them at (309) 438-5853.

Writing Assistance

Writing is an extremely important dimension of critical thinking. Moreover, writing is pivotal to the art, the craft, and the study of theatre. Like artistic practice, writing communicates an idea, viewpoint, or vision. Writing requires commitment, time, effort, thought, and investment. Our discipline understands writing to be, like theatre itself, a *process* that takes place over an extended period of time. As such, I would like you to attend to how your thinking and your writing develop throughout the semester in informal in-class writing exercises and formal essays, in your own notes, and in the emails you send to me. I want you to think of writing as an opportunity to put your complex thoughts onto paper (or a computer screen) and to challenge yourself to revise these thoughts as you gather new information from your peers and from the materials you encounter.

The Julia N. Visor Academic Center provides one-on-one writing assistance for any course or need. Visit them online: <http://universitycollege.illinoisstate.edu/tutoring/writing/>. Or, give them a call to set up an appointment: (309) 438-7100.

² This definition comes from the University of Minnesota. I use it because it is succinct. Read more here: <http://www.oscai.umn.edu/conduct/faculty/dishonesty.html>. The ISU definition is similar but longer. You can find it here: <http://deanofstudents.illinoisstate.edu/downloads/CodeOfStudentConduct-Revised5.12.pdf>.

TEXTS

You'll need to purchase the following texts from the University Bookstore:

- Suzan-Lori Parks, *The America Play and Other Works* (New York, NY: Theatre Communications Group, 1994). ISBN: 978-1559360920
- Moises Kaufman, *Gross Indecency: The Three Trials of Oscar Wilde* (London; NY: Vintage, 1998). ISBN: 978-0375702327
- Madeleine George, *Seven Homeless Mammoths Wander New England* (New York: Samuel French, 1999). ISBN: 978-0573700859

All other readings will be available as .pdfs on ReggieNet.

GENERAL OVERVIEW

Week 1: January 12 & 14

Tuesday and Thursday: [**Participate in**] General Re-Orientation

FLIGHT ONE: "PERFORMANCE OF BLACKNESS"

Week 2: January 19 & 21

Tuesday: [**Attend to an**] Unexpected starting point: European Melodrama

Thursday: [**Come ready to talk about**] Pixérécourt, *Christopher Columbus*

Week 3: January 26 & 28

Tuesday: [**Follow**] The Transmission of melodrama into America;
analyze performance of blackness

Thursday: [**As a group, work through**] Gharthey-Targo Kootin, "Lessons in Blackbody Minstrelsy"

Week 4: February 2 & 4

Tuesday: [**Watch, in rapt attention,**] Documentary, *Black Power / White Backlash*

Thursday: [**Relate the documentary to**] Ed Bullins, *Malcolm '71* and the Black Arts Movement

Week 5: February 9 & 11

Tuesday: [**Will poses the question:**] How do we read Suzan-Lori Parks?

Thursday: [**Class responds by reading and working through**] Parks, *The America Play*

Week 6: February 16 & 18

Tuesday: [**In order to synthesize the previous 5 weeks, we will turn back to**] Back to Lupe Fiasco's "Bitch Bad"

Thursday: [**Building from last class**] Students put it all together

Week 7: February 23 & 25

Tuesday: [**To continue active learning, students**] Devise the exam

Thursday: [**Continue to**] Devise the exam

Week 8: March 1 & 3

Tuesday: [**Simple matter of follow-thru:**] Take the exam

Thursday: [**As a reward**] NO CLASS

SPRING BREAK Week 9: March 8 & 10

NO CLASSES

FLIGHT TWO: "QUEER THEORY/ THEATRE/PERFORMANCE"

Week 10: March 15 & 17

Tuesday: [**Jump back in with**] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's "Queer and Now"

Thursday: [**With emphasis on student participation**] Continue discussion

Week 11: March 22 & 24

Tuesday: [**Come to class ready to analyze and discuss**] Moisés Kaufman, *Gross Indecency: The Three Trials of Oscar Wilde*

Thursday: [**You will have read**] S. I. Salamensky, "Re-Presenting Oscar Wilde: Wilde's Trials, *Gross Indecency*, and Documentary Spectacle" [**so as to make connections between the article, the play, and historiography more generally**]

Week 12: March 29 & 31

Tuesday: [**We will discuss**] Richard Meyer, "Have You Heard the One about the Lesbian Who Goes to the Supreme Court?": Holly Hughes and the Case Against Censorship"

Thursday: [**Students will take the lead and**] Continue discussion

Week 13: April 5 & 7

Tuesday: [**In advance, peruse and analyze**] <https://medium.com/gender-2-0>, especially <https://medium.com/matter/real-talk-with-trans-people-57b9aa3b91a8#.4sexnqd58>

Thursday: **[Be ready to discuss]** Qwo-Li Driskill, “Shaking Our Shells: Cherokee Two-Spirits Rebalancing the World”

Week 14: April 12 & 14

Tuesday: **[Consider]** When queer becomes mainstream (Leguizamo)

Thursday: **[Queer Academy!?: Let’s figure out how to incorporate]** Madeline George, *Seven Homeless Mammoths Wander New England*

Week 15: April 19 & 21

Tuesday: **[Like in Week 6]** Students put it together

Thursday: **[Like in Week 7]** Devise the exam

Week 16: April 26 & 28

Tuesday: **[This is the end?]** Take the exam

Thursday: **[No, this is the end]** Student Evaluations and Chekhov Goodbye

Further Reading

Flight: Feminism(s)

- Aphra Behn, *The Lucky Chance*
- Alfonsina Storni, *The Master of the World*
- Jill Dolan, “In Defense of the Discourse...”
- Maria Irene Fornes, *Fefu and her Friends*

Flight: Revolution

- Pierre Beaumarchais, *Marriage of Figaro*
- Introduction to the Oxford Collection of Beaumarchais’ plays
- Georg Büchner, *Danton’s Death*
- Introduction to the Oxford Collection of Büchner’s plays
- Ernst Töller, *Man and the Masses*
- Pussy Riot Closing Statements (<http://nplusonemag.com/pussy-riot-closing-statements>)

Flight: Eco-Criticism

- Anton Chekhov, *The Cherry Orchard*
- John McGrath’s *The Cheviot, the Stag, and the Black Black Oil*
- “Land matters,” the blog of Andy Wightman (<http://www.andywightman.com/>)
- Kia Corthron, *Splash Hatch on the E Goin’ Down*

Flight: The Merchant

- Francis Beaumont, *The Night of the Burning Pestle*
- George Lillo, *The London Merchant*

- Michal Kobialka, “Representational Practices and Real Abstraction in Early Eighteenth-Century London”
- Lucy Prebble, *Enron*

Flight: Colonial/Post-Colonial

- Richard Cumberland, *The West Indian*
- Athol Fugard, *The Island*
- Aimé Césaire, *A Tempest*
- Harry Garuba, “The Island Writes Back...”

Flight: Beyond Sense

- Madame Rachilde, *The Crystal Spider*
- Tristan Tzara, *The Gas Heart*
- Stanton B. Garner, “Gas Heart: Disfigurement and the Dada Body”
- Electronic Disturbance Theatre, *Sustenance: A Play for all Trans [] Borders*