

TH3172 — Theatre History

Spring 2012: January 17, 2012 through May 4, 2012

Tuesdays and Thursdays: 10:10 – 12:05, Blegen 150

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Course Description

As a continuation of TH3171, this course seeks to build an awareness of the historical dimension of theatre. Specific historical conditions lead to the composition of all the plays we will read in this class, and we must work to understand how each play simultaneously emerges from those conditions, contributes to the epistemology of a certain time and place, and (possibly) contests those historical conditions and limits of thought. Whereas TH3171 offered a sample of plays spanning two millennia, however, TH3172 presents us with the last 250 years. The last two centuries have presented an unprecedented explosion of experimentation in theatre and everyday life, both in terms of the forms of stage productions as well as the ideas motivating the creation of theatrical works. To navigate this heterogeneous field of theatricality and philosophical thought, we will explore distinct movements and genres from the late-eighteenth, nineteenth, twentieth, and early-twenty-first centuries, from the Enlightenment, Romanticism, and Melodrama, to Naturalism, Expressionism, Dada, Postcolonial Theatre, the Black Arts Movement, Feminism, Queer Theatre, and the Electronic Disturbance Theatre. By studying theatre, history, and theatre history during the last two and a half centuries, we will develop a vocabulary with which to talk about the historiography of our present moment, i.e., all the ways of thinking and modes of expression that contribute to our understanding of *now*.

Assignments and Grade Breakdown

All assignments in this class are intended to help you think critically and creatively about theatre, history, and theatre history. In the context of this class, to think *critically* means to map out, to analyze, and to expose the social and political tensions within a play produced by certain ways of thinking practiced in a specific time and place. To think *creatively* means to draw upon your unique perception of the world in order to critique a play, but also to challenge your unique perception in an effort to expand your mind and to discover new ways of seeing.

There are three types of assignments in this class. First: reading and reader response questions. You are expected to read everything assigned on this syllabus, to take detailed notes, and, when they are assigned, to complete reader responses to the plays.

Second: expository essays. Expository prose is designed to “expose,” that is, to set forth facts, ideas, and opinions *in an orderly fashion* so as to come to a fuller understanding of some aspect of a topic and to *communicate that understanding to others*. “In an orderly fashion” means: facts, ideas, and opinions are set forth point by point, with each clearly related to the next, following an overall plan of progression. “Communicate that understanding to others,” means that one of the

primary goals of writing is to persuade readers of the validity of your understanding. There are two assigned expository essays, the first during week three and the second during week eight.

Third: exams. There are two exams in this class, one on Thursday, February 23, and another on Thursday, April 26. These exams will present you with questions that you will have to answer in the form of brief and concise essays. You will receive the questions to the exam one week prior to the exam itself, and, as such, you are expected to compose thoughtful responses to the questions and to demonstrate your ability to think through the problems of theatre history that we will encounter throughout the semester.

In-Class Participation: 20%

- One aspect of your participation is attendance. It is not enough simply to show up to this class. I expect that you will come to class ready to ask questions, to answer questions, and to engage your fellow classmates in conversation.
- Another aspect of your participation is your work in small groups. The primary purpose of small group work is to provide you with a small cohort of colleagues with whom you can discuss and think through the big ideas in this class. Kristen and I will observe your work in small groups to assess your level of participation.
- You may also participate in this class by emailing your thoughts and questions to Kristen and me, or by coming to discuss your thoughts during office hours. We recognize that not everybody feels comfortable speaking in front of people, which is why we offer these alternate methods of participation. At the same time, we ask everyone in this class to think about what kind of student they are and to challenge yourselves to push passed your personal boundaries.

Informal Writing Assignments: 10%

- Reader Responses. Occasionally, I will distribute reading questions for you to answer prior to coming to class. Your answers to these questions will help me to see how you are thinking about the plays we are reading.
- Free writes. Every once and a while I will ask you to put your thoughts in words with a “free write”: a 5- to 7-minute informal writing assignment in which you answer a question that I pose or a question that has arisen during our conversation.

Formal Writing Assignment: 30%

- These are the expository essays I describe above. Each one is worth 15% of your cumulative grade.

Exams: 40%

- Each exam is worth 20% of your grade.

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. The reason for this is twofold. First, the number of people in this class makes it very difficult to follow-up on late work. I do not want to hound you for assignments. Second, and more importantly, the only way this class will work, by which I mean the only way this class will amount to a rewarding educational experience for you, is if you pay attention to *what* we discuss in class, *how* we discuss it, and *when* all assignments are due. If you don't turn something in on time, I take that as a sign that you aren't invested in the class.

Now, 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 for one of the exams, or if something happens 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 with communication with either Kristen or me, then we can probably work something out.

College of Liberal Arts Grades by Percentage

A (93 – 100%)	4.000 - Represents achievement that is outstanding relative to the level necessary to meet course requirements
A- (90 – 92%)	3.667
B+ (87 – 89%)	3.333
B (83 – 86%)	3.000 - Represents achievement that is significantly above the level necessary to meet course requirements
B- (80 – 82%)	2.667
C+ (77 – 79%)	2.333
C (73 – 76%)	2.000 - Represents achievement that meets the course requirements in every respect
C- (70 – 72%)	1.667
D+ (67 – 69%)	1.333
D (63 – 66%)	1.000 - Represents achievement that is worthy of credit even though it fails to meet fully the course requirements
F (0 – 62%)	0.000 – Fails to meet basic course requirements

Goals

I would like you to determine three specific goals for yourself for this semester. Ask yourself these questions: In order to have a fulfilling semester, what specific skills do I want to improve? What type of thinking would I like to practice in this class? When developing your goals, be as specific as possible. These goals will act as your own personal benchmark that you can review at the end of the semester. You must write your goals into your copy of the syllabus and also email your list of three goals to Kristen and me by Thursday, January 19. This assignment counts as one reader response.

1.

2.

3.

Writing in this class

Writing is pivotal to the art, the craft, and the study of theatre; therefore, in our class we will focus on the following characteristics of writing:

Like artistic practice, writing communicates an idea, viewpoint, or vision. In writing we convey thoughts and observations to others to gain a better understanding of our own ideas and interpretations and in order to foster collaboration; writing is joining a conversation.

Writing requires commitment, time, effort, thought, and investment. Just as we re-read a play, rehearse a scene, and re-draft designs, we must put time and attention toward revising our ideas, proposals, and arguments when we write creative and critical papers.

Writing that aims to persuade, inform, or describe needs to be complex, vivid, precise, self-aware, and supported by rigorous research.

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 pay attention to how your thinking and your writing develop throughout the semester in informal in-class writing exercises, formal expository essays, and on exams. I want you to think of writing as an opportunity to put your complex thoughts onto paper and to challenge yourself to revise these thoughts as you gather new information from your peers and from the materials you encounter.

Attendance Policy

You are expected to attend each and every class this semester. If for some reason this is not possible, then you need to know the following information. The first two absences will not affect your grade. Every absence after that, however, will result in the deduction of five percentage points from your class participation grade. This means, for example, that three total, unexcused absences will drop your grade from 90% to 85%. Excused absences do not result in a grade decrease. For an absence to count as excused, you must provide the appropriate documentation (e.g., a doctor's note). More than five absences total will result in an automatic failure of this class.

If you arrive to class without having read the assigned materials, you will be asked to leave. Should this occur, you will be marked as absent for that class period. Such an occasion might occur if we ask you a question and your response reveals a lack of engagement with the text or suggests that you did not read the assignment. We will also assess your level of participation through informal writing assignments usually taking the form of questions related to the assigned reading. Both Kristen and I will be working diligently to ascertain each student's level of participation. We reserve the right to assign absences retroactively.

No Laptop/Computer Policy

Past experience moves me to institute a "no laptop" policy. I do not allow computer notebooks, netbooks, laptops, 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, 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.

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."

Within this course, a student responsible for scholastic dishonesty of any kind can be assigned a penalty up to and including an "F" or "N" for the course. If you have any questions regarding the expectations for a specific assignment or exam, ask.

Course Texts

You are responsible for getting all of the course readings. In addition to the bookstore, the course packet, and the Moodle site, you should be aware that the library has many of the plays we will discuss this semester. If you choose to purchase your texts from Amazon.com or some other online proprietor, be aware that you must have the texts before they are assigned on the syllabus. In other words, "my book is in the mail" is not an acceptable excuse.

In the Bookstore

Brecht, Bertolt. *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*.
Fornes, Maria Irene. *Fefu and Her Friends*.
Fugard, Athol; Kani, John; Ntshona, Winston. *The Island. Statements*.
Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von. *Faust*, Part One.
Hwang, David Henry. *M Butterfly*.
Jones, LeRoi (Amiri Baraka). *Dutchman and The Slave: Two Plays*.
Strindberg, August. *Miss Julie*.

In Course Packet

Brecht, Stefan. *Queer Theatre*.
Césaire, Aimé. *A Tempest*.**
Césaire, Aimé. *Discourse on Colonialism* [excerpt]**
Cook, Susana. *Hamletango*.**
Costello, Donald P. "LeRoi Jones: Black Man as Victim."***
Gerould, Daniel and Méténier, Oscar. "Oscar Méténier and 'Comédie Rosse': From the Théâtre Libre to the Grand Guignol."***
Hamlin, Cyrus. "The Composition of Faust."
Hwang, David Henry; DiGaetani, John Louis. "'M. Butterfly': An Interview with David Henry Hwang."***
Jerrold, Douglas W. *Black-eyed Susan, Or, All in the Downs: A Nautical and Domestic Drama, in Two Acts*.
Jones, LeRoi. "The Revolutionary Theatre."***
Kane, Sarah. *Blasted*.
Kokoschka, Oscar. *Murderer Hope of Womankind*.
Marinetti, Filippo Tommaso. *The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism*.**

Pixérécourt, René-Charles Guilbert de. *The Dog of Montargis*.
Rachilde (Margarite Eymery), *The Crystal Spider*.
Smith, Jack. "The Perfect Filmic Appositiveness of Maria Montez."**
Sontag, Susan. "Notes on Camp."**
Tzara, Tristan. "Dadaism."

On Moodle

Beaumarchais, Pierre Augustin de. *The Marriage of Figaro*.**
Büchner, Georg. *Danton's Death*.
Cocteau, Jean. *The Wedding on the Eiffel Tower*.
Electronic Disturbance Theatre and b.a.n.g lab, *Sustenance: A Play for all Trans [] Borders*
Töller, Ernst. *Man and the Masses*.
Tzara, Tristan. *The Gas Heart*.

**these texts are available online

Week-by-Week Breakdown

Week 1: Introduction (Theatre through the lens of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution)

Tu. January 17

In Class: Distribute syllabus, discuss the course, frame the semester
Assignment: Read Beaumarchais, *The Marriage of Figaro*¹

Th. January 19

In Class: *Marriage of Figaro*
Assignment: Read Cyrus Hamlin, "The Composition of *Faust*"

Week 2: From Enlightenment to Romanticism

Tu. January 24

In Class: Discuss The Composition of *Faust*¹
Assignment: Read Goethe, *Faust*, Part One

Th. January 26

In class: Discuss *Faust*, Part One
Assignment: Read Büchner, *Danton's Death*

Week 3: Ripple effect of the Revolution—*Sturm und Drang*

Tu. January 31

In Class: Discuss *Danton's Death*
Assignment: Expository Essay #1 (Due Next Class)

¹ <http://oll.libertyfund.org/simple.php?id=1563>

Th. February 2

In Class: Writing Workshop for Expository Essays

Assignment: Read Douglas Jerrold, *Black-Eyed Susan*

Week 4: Melodrama**Tu. February 7**

In Class: Discuss *Black-Eyed Susan*

Assignment: Read René-Charles Guilbert de Pixérécourt, *The Dog of Montargis*

Th. February 9

In Class: Discuss *The Dog of Montargis*

Assignment: Read Oscar Metenier, *Meat Ticket* and *Little Bugger*

Week 5: Naturalism**Tu. February 14**

In Class: Discuss *Meat Ticket* and *Little Bugger*

Assignment: Read August Strindberg, *Miss Julie*

Th. February 16

In Class: Discuss *Miss Julie*

Assignment: Read Madame Rachilde, *The Crystal Spider*

Week 6: Symbolism**Tu. February 21**

In Class: Discuss *The Crystal Spider*

Assignment: Study for the exam

Th. February 23

In Class: Exam #1

Assignment: Read Oscar Kokoschka, *Murderer Hope of Womankind*

Week 7: Expressionism**Tu. February 28**

In Class: Discuss *Murderer Hope of Womankind*

Assignment: Read Ernst Töller, *Man and the Masses*

Th. March 1

In Class: Discuss *The Man and the Masses*

Assignment: Read Brecht, *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*

Week 8: Epic Theatre**Tu. March 6**

In Class: Discuss, *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*

Assignment: Expository Essay #2 (Due Next Class)

Th. March 8

In Class: Workshop Expository Essays

Assignment: (To read over Spring Break) F.T. Marinetti, *The Futurist Manifesto*;² Tristan Tzara, *The Dada Manifesto*;³ Tzara, *The Gas Heart*;⁴ Jean Cocteau, *The Wedding on the Eiffel Tower*

Week 9: SPRING BREAK

Tu. March 13 [NO CLASS]

Th. March 15 [NO CLASS]

Week 10: Futurism and Dada

Tu. March 20

In Class: Discuss manifestos

Assignment: Keep Thinking!

Th. March 22

In Class: Discuss *The Gas Heart* and *The Wedding on the Eiffel Tower*

Assignment: Read Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*⁵ and *A Tempest*⁶

Week 11: Postcolonial Theatre

Tu. March 27

In Class: Discuss *A Tempest*

Assignment: Read Athol Fugard, *The Island*

Th. March 29

In Class: Discuss *The Island*

Assignment: Read LeRoi Jones, “The Revolutionary Theatre,”⁷ and Donald P. Costello, “LeRoi Jones: Black Man as Victim”⁸

Week 12: Black Arts Movement

Tu. April 3

In Class: Discuss “The Revolutionary Theatre,” “LeRoi Jones: Black Man as Victim,” and The Black Arts Movement

Assignment: Read LeRoi Jones (Amiri Baraka), *Dutchman*

Th. April 5

In Class: Discuss *Dutchman*

Assignment: Read Maria Irene Fornes, *Fefu and Her Friends*

² <http://www.unknown.nu/futurism/manifesto.html>

³ <http://www.sas.upenn.edu/~jenglish/English104/tzara.html>

⁴ <http://www.english.emory.edu/DRAMA/TzaraGas.html>

⁵ <http://www.rlwclarke.net/Theory/SourcesPrimary/CesaireDiscourseonColonialism.pdf>

⁶ <http://firstyear.barnard.edu/shakespeare/tempest/tempete>

⁷ Website: <http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/maai3/protest/text12/text12read.htm>; PDF: <http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/maai3/protest/text12/barakatheatre.pdf>

⁸ <http://www.nathanielturner.com/leroi-jones2.htm>

Week 13: Feminism(s)

Tu. April 10

In Class: Discuss *Fefu and Her Friends*

Assignment: Read Sarah Kane, *Blasted*

Th. April 12

In Class: Discuss *Blasted*

Assignment: Read Stefan Brecht, *Queer Theatre*; Jack Smith, “The Perfect Filmic Appositeness of Maria Montez”; Susan Sontag, “Notes on Camp”

Week 14: Queer Theatre/Theory

Tu. April 17

In Class: Discuss Stefan Brecht, *Queer Theatre*; Jack Smith, “The Perfect Filmic Appositeness of Maria Montez”; Susan Sontag, “Notes on Camp”

Assignment: Read Susana Cook, *Hamletango*⁹

Th. April 19

In Class: Discuss *Hamletango*

Read: David Henry Hwang, John Louis DiGaetani, “‘M. Butterfly’: An Interview with David Henry Hwang” and Hwang, *M Butterfly*

Week 15: Asian-American Theatre

Tu. April 24

In Class: Discuss *M Butterfly*

Assignment: Study for the exam

Th. April 26

In Class: Exam #2

Assignment: Read Electronic Disturbance Theatre and b.a.n.g lab, *Sustenance: A Play for all Trans [] Borders*

Week 16: Our Contemporary Moment

Tu. May 1

In Class: Discuss *Sustenance: A Play for all Trans [] Borders*

Assignment: Keep thinking!

Th. May 3

In Class: Reflect and Wrap Up

Information regarding accommodation

The University of Minnesota is committed to providing all students equal access to learning opportunities. Disability Services is the campus office that works with students who have disabilities to provide and/or arrange reasonable accommodations. Students registered with Disability Services, who have a letter requesting accommodations, are encouraged to contact the instructor early in the semester. Students who have, or think they may have, a disability (e.g. psychiatric, attentional, learning, vision, hearing, physical, or systemic), are invited to contact Disability Services for a confidential discussion at **612-626-1333 (V/TTY)** or **ds@umn.edu**. Additional information is

⁹ <http://tangolesbiango.blogspot.com/2009/05/hamletango.html>

available at the DS website <http://ds.umn.edu>.

As a student you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance or reduce your ability to participate in daily activities. University of Minnesota services are available to assist you with addressing these and other concerns you may be experiencing. You can learn more about the broad range of confidential mental health services available on campus via www.mentalhealth.umn.edu.

Information about writing assistance and resources for non-native English speakers

The Writing Center is an excellent resource for all students. You can find the Writing Center inside Nicholson Hall (East Bank), room number 15. It is open Monday-Thursday, 10:30 to 5:15, and on Friday, 10:30 - 2:15. The following link takes you to a page where you can make an appointment: <http://writing.umn.edu/sws/hours.htm>.

If English is not your first language, you may find some assistance at the Writing Center. More importantly, however, I would like you to talk with me about your needs. If you have any concerns about the readings, anxieties about the writing assignments, or if I talk too fast in class, please let me know so that I can adjust my tempo.