

THEATRE 377: THEATRE HISTORY II
ILLINOIS STATE UNIVERSITY, SPRING SEMESTER 2010
SECTION 1: MONDAY AND WEDNESDAY 11:00 AM – 12:50 PM
SECTION 2: MONDAY AND WEDNESDAY 3:00 PM – 4:50 PM

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Instructor: Alan Sikes
Office: CVA 143
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COURSE GOALS

In this course I want us to explore how expectations of “What Theatre Is” and “What Theatre Does” shift over time. These expectations change radically from one historical era to the next, and I hope that our study encourages you to think critically about the relationship between past and present. This critical thinking can figure centrally in your choices for theatrical productions. I hope, for instance, that our work will dissuade you from assuming that all theatre functions exactly the same in every era; such assumptions lead to production choices that force plays from the past into the mold of the present day. I also hope, however that our work will dissuade you from assuming a theatre piece must function exactly as it did in its own era; such assumptions lead to production choices that turn plays from the past into museum pieces for the present day.

So how do I want us to think about this relationship between past and present, and how would I like this thinking to affect production choices? Rather than seeking to resolve the differences between past and present, I want to exploit those differences—to use the theatrical conditions of the past to interrogate the theatrical conditions the present. I hope this way of thinking about past and present will lead you to dynamic productions choices in the future—choices that will materialize this dynamic interplay between past and present within the theatre itself

REQUIRED TEXTS

We will use two texts extensively in class; be sure that you purchase the latest editions and that you do not buy the “Brief Version” of the Worthen anthology.

Wilson and Goldfarb: *Living Theatre*
Worthen: *Wadsworth Anthology of Drama*

Other play readings will be available as PDF’s on Blackboard; on days these plays are assigned, you should either print the PDF’s or bring e-copies to class on a laptop.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

There are four sets of assignments for this class, and three components to your final grade for the course. Each of the sets of assignments are detailed below; careful arithmetic will reveal that five points of extra credit are already available for your to earn.

Exams

You will take three exams in this class; a first exam on Feb. 10, a second on March 31, and a third during your scheduled final examination session. All exams will have a “justified multiple choice” format, in which you will select which you must choose a correct answer and then justify your choice with a one- or two sentence explanation. There will also be two essay questions on each exam; you can choose to write on one or the other question. Before each exam I will conduct an exam review. You will receive essay questions during the class period before the exam day, so that you may prepare them ahead of time.

Exams: three exams, each worth 10% of final grade

Reading Quizzes

The readings for this class are, by necessity, extensive; please arrange your schedule in order to accommodate as much time for reading as possible. In order to keep your reading on track, you will take quizzes for every reading assignment—both selections from the textbook and plays from the anthology. You will access the quizzes via Blackboard, and your opportunity to take them will end five minutes before the beginning of the class on the day the reading is assigned. You should expect to answer five questions for each quiz; the total time involved in taking each quiz should not exceed ten minutes, unless you experience unforeseen difficulty with the Blackboard program.

Quizzes: Twenty-three quizzes, each worth 1% of final grade

Writing Assignments

Writing assignments take two forms. The first form is a two-page report for two plays assigned for class. For Feb 8 and March 17 I will divide the class into two groups; each group will read different plays (*Servant of Two Masters* OR *King Stag* and *The Father* OR *Doll House*) and each student will be responsible for discussing her / his play with another student assigned the other reading assignment. The report should include 1) a synopsis of each act of the play and 2) the ways in which the play reflects the social and theatrical conditions of its moment. Failure to bring the assigned report to class on the due date will result in your dismissal from class and your receipt of an unexcused absence for that day.

The second form is a two-page discussion of guided questions that I will provide for two other plays assigned for class: *The Octoroon* and *Wedding on the Eiffel Tower*. Each response will address possible theatrical productions of the play and will be graded on 1) evidence of having read the course material, 2) engagement with all parts of the question, and 3) clarity of writing

mechanics; note that responses displaying no knowledge of class material will receive no credit for the assignment.

Reading Responses: four responses, each worth 8% of final grade

Classroom Projects

Because you should use your study of theatre history to make strong production choices, I want you to work in groups of four or five to prepare and present projects to the rest of the class; these projects should reflect the critical thinking of your group on a specific topic selected from the options that I provide. Half of the groups will present their projects during the eighth week of class; the other groups will present their projects during the sixteenth week of class. I will ask you to submit a first choice for a project date, then I will place you in small groups according to your preference; you may also work in groups of your own devising, provided that irresolvable scheduling conflicts do not arise therefrom.

One week before the due date of your project, each group will submit a two-page proposal with 1) a summary of the planned presentation, 2) an explanation of how the presentation addresses the project prompts, and 3) any special needs or challenges that your presentation involves. Every group member must sign the proposal after its completion and before its submission; failure to sign will result in the forfeiture of ability to participate and receive credit for the project.

Project presentations should last 20 – 30 minutes; groups should be prepared to take questions from the class regarding their approach and choices. All students should participate equally in the group presentation. Additionally, each student will submit a 3 page process paper that offers a) a personal account of the group approach to the project; b) an individual summary of duties and responsibilities to the project; and c) a personal statement of the grade deserved by the group as a whole.

Classroom Projects: presentation 15% and process paper 5% of final grade

ATTENDANCE POLICY

The surest way to fail this course is to skip class meetings. I will take attendance each day; you are allowed two absences with no need to provide excuses; additional unexcused absences will result in the reduction of your final grade by one half letter per absence. Note also that obvious failure to prepare for or participate in class will also be grounds for reduction of the final grade.

LATE WORK POLICY

I will not tolerate egregiously late submissions of required work. Late assignments will receive a maximum of one-half credit unless you can convince my graduate assistant to act with leniency due to a document excuse that details the reasons for your delay in finishing the assignment.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week One: Review and Neoclassical France

M 1/11: Course policies; Review of Fall 2009 material

W 1/13: Read *Living Theatre*: 234 – 255

Week Two: Neoclassical France

M 1/18: No class; MLK Holiday

W 1/20: Read Racine: *Phaedra* (Wadsworth)

Week Three: Restoration and Eighteenth Century England

M 1/25: Read *Living Theatre*: 258 – 287

W 1/27: Read Sheridan: *School for Scandal* (PDF File)

Week Four: Eighteenth Century France

M 2/1: Read *Living Theatre* 288 – 301

W 2/3: Read *Living Theatre* 301 – 327

Week Five: Eighteenth Century Italy and Germany

M 2/8: Read Goldoni: *Servant* OR Gozzi: *King Stag* (PDF Files)

W 2/10: Examination I

Week Six: Romanticism and Melodrama

M 2/15: Read *Living Theatre* 328 – 343

W 2/17: Read Boucicault: *Octoroon* (PDF File)

Week Seven: Kabuki and Chinese Opera

M 2/22: Read *Living Theatre* 100 – 108

W 2/24: Read *Living Theatre* 90 – 96 and 404 – 406

Week Eight: Group Projects I

M 3/1: Group Projects Round I

W 3/3: Group Projects Round I

Week Nine:

M 3/8: No class: Spring Break

W 3/10: No class: Spring Break

Week Ten: Naturalism and Realism

M 3/15: Read *Living Theatre* 372 – 390

W 3/17: Read Strindberg: *Father* (PDF File) OR Ibsen: *Doll House* (Wadsworth)

Week Eleven: The European Avant-Garde

M 3/22: Read *Living Theatre* 390 – 403

W 3/24: Read Cocteau: *Wedding on the Eiffel Tower* (PDF File)

Week Twelve: Bertolt Brecht and Epic Theatre

M 3/29: Read Brecht: *Mother Courage* (Wadsworth)

W 3/31: Examination II

Week Thirteen: Theatre of the Cold War

M 4/5: Read *Living Theatre* 452 – 477

W 4/7: Read Beckett: *Endgame* (Wadsworth)

Week Fourteen: Postmodern Theatre

M 4/12 Read *Living Theatre* 492 – 513 and 519 – 537

W 4/14 Read Parks: *America Play* (PDF File)

Week Fifteen: Global Stages

M 4/19 Read *Living Theatre* 538 – 565

W 4/21 Read Nottage: *Ruined* (PDF File)

Week Sixteen: Group Projects II

M 4/26: Group Projects Round II

W 4/28: Group Projects Round II

Examination Week:

M 5/3: Section II Examination III at 1:00 PM

W 5/5: Section I Examination III at 7:50 AM

FINAL NOTES: PLAGIARISM AND DISABILITY ACCOMMODATIONS

I trust that plagiarism will not be an issue in an upper-level class like this; suffice to say that I will treat any cases of plagiarism as serious matters indeed. I also trust that you will feel free to contact me regarding any disability accommodations that you may require—please see me after class or during my office hours to discuss such accommodations.