

Theatre 307 – Theatre History and Dramatic Literature, Renaissance through Modern

Spring 2011

Instructor: Dr. Terry Brino-Dean

Section #01

TR 2:20-3:35 PM

FTC classroom

3 credits

Course Description:

Catalog description: Survey of the major theatrical and dramatic conventions, practices, theories, and traditions from the late nineteenth century to the present day. Assignments and assessment measures based on students' progression of study in theatre history and the major. As best as one can do in fifteen weeks, this course will explore the forces that have shaped the art of theatre, the practice of dramatic writing, the evolution of theatre architecture, and the ever-changing ideas that have influenced styles of acting and performance. In addition, we will focus on various contemporary socio-political issues (feminism, postmodernism, multiculturalism, post-colonialism, etc.) and apply these to our studies. This reflects the point of view that our understanding of history is never static, but involves a fluid process of discovery that always reflects issues relevant to the present. While we will look at theatre from a world-wide perspective, there will be a stronger emphasis on performance traditions within our own hemisphere, the West, and forms of theatre that have particularly influenced the development of contemporary theatre in the United States.

Course Objectives:

Students should leave the course with an enhanced understanding of and curiosity for theatre history and the ways that different movements, individuals, and cultures in the past have shaped contemporary theatre and drama. **Beginning theatre history students, as well as intermediate students with a foundation in theatre history** who are delving deeper into these studies, will be expected to apply play analysis and historiographic skills in pragmatic ways. **Advanced students of theatre history** will take on more advanced work in synthesizing a knowledge of theatre history and theory with the practice of theatre art. Advanced students will also complete a major research project in theatre history, demonstrating skills for documenting historical events and analyzing their significance. Students should achieve the following course objectives:

1. Gain knowledge of important movements and events in theatre history.
2. Develop skills for analyzing and contextualizing theatrical events and practices.
3. Understand theatre of this period from a variety of different cultural perspectives within the broader social, political, and economic conditions in history.
4. Recognize plays as artifacts of unique production circumstances and historical contexts.
5. Apply script analysis skills to the context of production.
6. Gain a better understanding of contemporary theatre and drama practices.

First/second semester theatre history students will:

7. Develop the ability to research the production history of a play and understand how to apply that knowledge to contemporary productions.
8. Apply knowledge of a playwright and her/his career to plausible production concepts.

Final semester theatre history students will:

9. Apply knowledge of theatre history and theory to develop production concepts.
10. Develop skills as a theatre historian and an understanding of the field of theatre studies.

Course Requirements:

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Wilson, Edwin and Alvin Goldfarb. *Living Theater: A History*. Fifth Edition. New York: McGraw-Hill Higher Education, 2008. ISBN: 9780073514123

Worthen, W.B. *The Wadsworth Anthology of Drama*. Sixth Edition, New York: Wadsworth, Cengage Learning, 2011. ISBN: 9781428288140

RECOMMENDED TEXTS:

Ball, David. *Backwards and Forwards: A Technical Manual for Reading Plays*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1983. ISBN: 9780809311101

Ferguson, Marcia. *A Short Guide to Writing about Theatre*. New York: Longman, 2007. ISBN: 9780321136732

GRADED ASSIGNMENTS:

- 1. Reader's Journals** – In lieu of quizzes on daily readings and plays, students will complete a Reader's Journal. There are two kinds of journal entries: *play responses* and *two-column journals*. For play reading assignments, the journal will involve responses to plays based on detailed instructions given prior to each reading. All other reading assignments require the use of a two column journal based on readings from the text that must be prepared for each class meeting. Reader's Journal assignments will be collected and checked on each class day when a play or reading is due and then returned soon after.

**THE ENTIRE JOURNAL WILL BE COLLECTED
AND GRADED AT THE END OF THE SEMESTER.**

The grade on the journal is based on three factors: 1) the level and extent of comprehension, analysis, and reflection demonstrated in each journal; 2) The timeliness with which journals are submitted throughout the semester; and 3) The final product, which may include additions and revisions.

One of the major tasks of the two-column journal format, and a skill that you must develop, is how to selectively choose the most important information from text readings to include in your journal. You must learn to find the most important information; it is not possible for the journal to be all-inclusive. You are developing a resource for yourself that you can use in the future that is more concise than a full textbook and more practical since it is written in your own words. Discover the four or five most important ideas on each page and elaborate on those concepts. For a person who writes in an average size font and leaves some room in between notes where things can be added later, you should plan on 5-7 letter-sized pages per chapter in your journal.

Journals can take either a hand-written or an electronic format. In other words, you could create your journal in the traditional way, by writing in a notebook or binder with removable/reinsertable paper (so that you can turn things in bit by bit as you go). Or you can use electronic formats such as web-logs, web-sites, or as Microsoft Word files in order to create the journal. Electronic formats will give you greater access to visuals and/or web-links that you might want to include in the right column of your journal. Any of these formats are acceptable for the journal, but I would recommend that you choose one format and stick with it for the whole semester. Switching formats creates a very messy product in the end that is less functional for you in the future. Journals are worth a total of 300 possible points.

2. Class Preparation, Participation, and Performance – The class performance grade reflects the student's apparent level of preparation for each class meeting and the quality of her/his participation. Because of the interactive and experiential nature of the structure of this course, class attendance and participation are mandatory, as is punctuality. Students are expected to fully participate in class and small group discussions. Students have the chance to earn up to 10 points for each class meeting (27 total). In addition, the instructor will award up to 30 discretionary points at the end of the semester for a total of 300 possible points. Every three weeks (usually six class meetings totaling 60 points), students will be asked to fill out forms that provide a chance for them to self-evaluate their class participation. The instructor will then evaluate each student's participation, based on observation by the instructor and input from the student, and return the self-evaluation with a grade. A copy of the self-evaluation form is attached; please note the criteria for this assessment. Of course, being absent from class entails that the student fails to earn any points for that particular class. Showing up late to or unprepared for class will result in deductions from the daily grade. Obviously, sleeping or doing homework for this or any other class are signs of especially poor class performance. If a student misses a class (excused or unexcused), s/he can ask the instructor for the opportunity to complete an assignment to make up what was missed from the class meeting and thus earn (up to) 10 points. ***You must see the instructor if you desire a make-up assignment!***

3. Class Projects – Class projects are worth a total of 300 possible points and differ depending on the level of the student in the course:

STUDENTS IN THE FIRST OR SECOND SEMESTER OF THEATRE HISTORY:

- **Production History Project** – Each student will be assigned one play from this period for which they will complete a full stage history, documenting the history of productions of the play beginning with the first production and going through the most recent productions. Students will develop the ability to identify the most significant productions in the history and demonstrate why they are particularly noteworthy and/or influential. Students must uncover details about each production and analyze what can be learned from this information to apply to contemporary productions. 200 points can be earned on the Production History project.
- **Playwrights – Beginning, Middle, Now** – Students will work in groups to research a living playwright and her/his career. Each group will read multiple plays from the writer's oeuvre and develop an understanding of the ways in which the playwright's work has changed over time. In a paper, groups will detail their findings and articulate a series of principles that theatre artists should keep in mind in approaching productions of this playwright's works. All projects will be presented in class, and there are 200 possible points available.

STUDENTS IN THE FINAL SEMESTER OF THEATRE HISTORY:

- **Research Paper and Presentation** – For this project, each student must complete a research paper on a topic chosen from a list distributed at the beginning of the semester. All projects will require extensive *library* research and will culminate in a 6-8 page paper and a 6-10 minute presentation to the class. The project is an opportunity for you to develop a particular area of expertise in theatre history by exploring that area in a more in-depth fashion than we will have time as a class. Presentations and due dates for papers will be staggered throughout the semester to allow students to be able to share their findings with the class. 200 points can be earned on the project.

- **Theory/Performance Development or Adaptation Project** – This assignment requires students to participate in one of two different projects. The first option challenges students to engage in the theatre-making process within a specific twentieth-century theoretical framework. Students will use existing play texts and/or accounts – or create their own performances – that grow directly out of a body of conscious theory. For instance, students could perform a scene that clearly demonstrates deconstruction or feminism. The Adaptation Project requires students to adapt a pre-twentieth-century play text for a contemporary performance such that it demonstrates a particular theoretical paradigm. For example, one might adapt *Tartuffe* such that it is post-colonial. Adaptation projects also require the presentation of a (rehearsed) reading of ten minutes of the play. A paper explaining the analysis and research of the theory and how it has been implemented in the project must be submitted on the day that the project is presented to the class. This project will be worth 200 possible points.

GRADING:

Reader's Journal	300 points = 30%
Class Projects	400 points = 20%
Class Participation	300 points = 30%
Total Grade	1000 points = 100%

GRADING SCALE:

A	= 100% - 93%	Outstanding
A-	= 92% - 90%	
B+	= 89% - 87%	
B	= 86% - 83%	Very Good
B-	= 82% - 80%	
C+	= 79% - 77%	
C	= 76% - 73%	Satisfactory
C-	= 72% - 70%	
D+	= 69% - 67%	
D	= 66% - 63%	Unsatisfactory
D-	= 62% - 60%	
F	= Below 60%	Failure

Comments:

1. Attendance is required and will be taken at every class meeting. As outlined above, involvement in class meetings is a very important part of this course, and by missing class, students are missing the opportunity to earn points. Absence and tardiness are considered serious matters. ***If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to find out what was covered that day.*** If a student misses a class, s/he can ask the instructor for the opportunity to do a make-up assignment (written work or an oral presentation due at the very next class meeting) to have the chance to earn the points missed from class. If you are going to miss class, you must notify the instructor in advance. Failure to notify the instructor as soon as possible will result in any assignments due being considered turned-in late. ***You cannot miss more than two classes without your final grade being affected.*** All absences after the first two will result in a one-third deduction from your final grade (e.g., A- becomes a B+) *regardless* of make-up work completed. ***I do not distinguish between excused or unexcused absences.*** No matter what *causes* you to miss class, missing class means you've missed *work* that takes place in the classroom that is required for the course and that every other student is doing. So the only way to make it up is to make it up. Extraordinary circumstances should be discussed with the instructor as early as possible.

2. The instructor operates from the perspective that all good professional writing is done with the opportunity for review and comment by others. Therefore, research and project papers can be revised and re-submitted. I will return papers with a grade and my comments. Students can revise them and turn in a final draft at the following class meeting. If not re-submitted by the following class meeting, the original grade

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earned on the paper will stand. You must also re-submit the original draft of your paper upon submitting a re-written paper. *Re-writes do not guarantee an improved grade!!* However, experience shows that almost *all* students who work to revise papers improve their writing greatly and achieve higher grades.

3. **Communication between the students and the instructor is important and encouraged.** Please feel free to make an appointment to meet with me outside of class-time if you have any questions or problems during the semester.

4. It is your responsibility to ensure that all technology associated with any assignment or project on which you are working for the class functions correctly. For example, you are responsible for backing up computer documents and files and making sure your flash drive isn't corrupted and ensuring that the printer you are using is operating properly and that your printer cartridge still has ink, etc., etc., etc. I would suggest trying to print things out well in advance of when you have to run to SHUPAC to make it to class on time. This ensures that you can trouble-shoot any problems that could occur when printing. Additionally, please remember that it is *your* responsibility to ensure that any assignment submitted to the instructor via electronic means (as an e-mail attachment) is received. ***Any assignment not handed-in on time due to a technology problem will be considered late and will be graded accordingly.***

5. In fairness to students who meet deadlines, assignments handed in late will be reduced by ***one full grade for each session the assignment is late.*** One full letter grade is the equivalent of 10 points out of 100.

6. Cell phones: Please turn your cell phone off during class meetings, or at the very least adjust your phone's features (by using mute ***NOT VIBRATE!***) so that it does not ring or vibrate audibly during class. And whatever you do, never answer your phone in class or walk out of class so that you can answer it. If there is some reason, such as an emergency situation, that you feel might require you to answer your phone during our class time, don't come to class. Additionally, text messaging during class is not acceptable. Answering your phone or texting during class will, to say the least, negatively affect your class participation grade.

7. This class will rely on the active participation of each and every class member. You are responsible for coming to each class prepared for discussion, debate, and activities related to readings and assignments. I strongly suggest that you prepare yourself for class by utilizing your Reader's Journal. Just breezing through a chapter in the text and blindly highlighting things does not prepare you for class; you actually have to think about the issues at hand and consider how they relate overall to the course. Taking some short notes makes this happen. Helpful notes can be those that help you to decipher, comprehend, and remember the material, but they should also consist of questions, challenges, and ideas that you found particularly interesting and that you'd like to develop further through class discussion. The Journal is an excellent place to record these notes. If you are not prepared on a given day, consider staying home. If you are not prepared you will score poorly on your class participation grade.

8. If you have a disability that may require consideration by the instructor, you should contact Terri Bassi, the Director of Disability Services at 724-838-4295 or bassi@setonhill.edu as soon as possible to develop a plan of accommodation. You should provide the instructor with a copy of your accommodation plan and schedule a meeting so that you can be supported in an informed manner. It is not necessary to disclose to your instructor the nature of your disability. If you need accommodations for successful participation in class activities prior to your appointment at the Disability Services Office, you should offer information in writing to your instructor which includes suggestions for assistance in participating in and completing class assignments.

9. Seton Hill University expects that all its students will practice academic honesty and ethical conduct. The University regards plagiarism, cheating on examinations, falsification of papers, non-sanctioned collaboration, and misuse of library material, computer material, or any other material, published or unpublished, as violations of academic honesty. Violations of the Seton Hill University Academic Integrity policies and could be grounds for expulsion from the university. Please familiarize yourself with the rules on Academic Integrity in the University Catalog, pages 22-24. If there is any question in your mind about what this policy entails or what might constitute plagiarism, please see me or your academic advisor immediately. All work submitted in the course must be your own and be written exclusively for this course. Do not turn in work you have written in the past and do not turn in other people's writing as if it were your own. The use of all sources (other people's ideas, quotations and paraphrases from published work, including that of textbooks and the Internet) must be properly documented with accurate and consistent use of an official documentation style (for this course, MLA.). To help yourself avoid plagiarism, **START WITH A BLANK PAGE** and compose everything in your own words, quoting from sources only as necessary and documenting sources from which you obtain information and/or paraphrase. **NEVER** start by cutting and pasting **ANYTHING**. *Submission of any work as your own that was not written and appropriately cited by you will result in automatic failure for this course.*

10. Incompletes require the approval of the Division Chair and will be granted in only the most serious of circumstances.

11. A concerted effort has been made to ensure that this syllabus will actually reflect the workings of the course. However, due to practical reality, all things in this syllabus are subject to change. Students will be notified of any necessary changes in a timely manner.

Principle of Studying Theatre History:

“By definition, a history is a chronicle – a recapitulation of events from the past. It cannot, therefore, be a contemporary, spontaneous occurrence. And yet, that is precisely what theatre is – a theatre event exists not in the past but in the present. In fact, it exists only at the moment when it occurs. The essence of theatre is an immediate exchange between the audience and what unfolds onstage: performances, words of a text, and visual effects of sets, lights, and costumes. *The first challenge in [studying] theatre history, therefore, is to bring theatre from the past to life today.*”

-- Wilson and Goldfarb, p. vii

Principle of Class Discussion:

**“I may not agree with what is being said,
but I will try to understand *why* it is being said.”**

Principle of Theatre Creation:

Dare to Fail Gloriously!!

Course Schedule

**ASSIGNMENTS ARE DUE ON THE DAY WITH WHICH THEY ARE LISTED!!!
READER'S JOURNALS ARE DUE ON THE DAY ON WHICH EACH READING IS DUE!!!**

- T 1/25 Introduction to the course. Review.
R 1/27 1915-1945 – dramatic movements. Wilson and Goldfarb Chapter 13, 415-427. **Assign Production History and Research Paper and Presentation Projects.**
- T 2/1 *Mother Courage and Her Children*, by Bertolt Brecht
R 2/3 1915-1945 – Europe during war years, Asia. Wilson and Goldfarb Chapter 13, 427-436.
- T 2/8 *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, by Luigi Pirandello
R 2/10 1915-1945 – America. Wilson and Goldfarb Chapter 13, 436-449.
- T 2/15 *Machinal*, by Sophie Treadwell
R 2/17 *Cradle Will Rock* – film screening.
- T 2/24 *Cradle Will Rock* – film screening. Discussion.
R 2/26 1945-1975 – experimental theatre, Wilson and Goldfarb Chapter 14, 453-466.
- F 2/25 *Blood Relations* opening night, 8:00 PM performance.**
- T 3/1 *Endgame*, by Samuel Beckett
R 3/3 **No class.**
- T 3/8 **Spring Break – No class.**
R 3/10 1945-1975 – realism, technology, Wilson and Goldfarb Chapter 14, 467-477.
- T 3/15 Review and discuss *Death of a Salesman* and *The Glass Menagerie* (from TR110).
R 3/17 1945-1975 – America. Wilson and Goldfarb Chapter 14, 477-488.
- T 3/22 *Dutchman*, by Amiri Baraka
R 3/24 **Production History Projects due.** Discuss projects. **Assign Playwright and Theory/Performance Projects.**
- T 3/29 America 1975-Present – drama. Wilson and Goldfarb Chapter 15, 493-515.
R 3/31 Review and discuss *Fences*, *True West*, and *Topdog/Underdog* (from TR110)
- T 4/5 *M. Butterfly*, by David Henry Hwang
R 4/7 *Angels in America, Part I: Millennium Approaches*, by Tony Kushner
- T 4/12 America 1975-Present – musicals, alternatives. Wilson and Goldfarb Chapter 15, 515-531.
R 4/14 America 1975-Present – performance art. Wilson and Goldfarb Chapter 15, 531-535.

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T 4/19 *Fires in the Mirror*, by Anna Deavere Smith

R 4/21 ***Easter Break – No class.***

T 4/26 International-Present – Europe, Canada, Australia. Wilson-Goldfarb, Chapter 16, 539-551.

R 4/28 *Cloud Nine*, by Caryl Churchill

F 4/29 *Cabaret* opening night, 8:00 PM performance.

T 5/3 International-Present – Africa, Latin America, Asia, Middle East. Wilson and Goldfarb
Chapter 16, 551-563.

R 5/5 Review *Translations* and “*Master Harold*” ...*and the boys* (from TR110). Read *Death and the King’s Horseman*, by Wole Soyinka

Thursday, May 12, 10:30 AM – 12:30 PM. Final Exam Period.

Playwright and Theory/Performance Project Presentations.

Reader’s Journals Collected. Closure.

Theatre History and Dramatic Literature
Two Column Reader's Journal
Required Format

Column A

Column B

Notes from the Text

Main concepts

Important vocabulary

The central ideas of the authors

Facts

Specific details that particularly interest you

**MAKE SURE THAT EVERYTHING IS
LEGIBLE!**

**LEAVE PLENTY OF SPACE IN BETWEEN
ITEMS SO THAT THE JOURNAL IS NEAT
AND SO THAT YOU CAN FILL IN THINGS
LATER AS YOU SEE NECESSARY AFTER
CLASS MEETINGS.**

Your Responses to the Text

Feelings evoked

Memories spurred

Experiences you've had that you can connect
to the reading

Any context for your understanding of the text

Anything from other fields of study
(skills/concepts) that you can relate to the
reading

Challenges to issues raised by the authors

Words

Phrases

Pictures (cut and pasted or drawn)

Feel free to be creative

REQUIRED:

Questions – you must write at least three
questions for each chapter. This requires that
you *read the text critically!* Questions could
relate to ideas from the reading that you'd like
to have clarified, concepts that you'd like to
see discussed in class, or issues that you would
like to debate. Questions can appear anywhere
in Column B, but please mark questions with a
circled Q, like this: (Q)

Individual Class Performance Evaluation

Name: _____ **Date:** _____

Attendance: (Rate yourself from 1-low to 5-high.)

1. Attended classes and was on-time and prepared 1 2 3 4 5

Group Involvement: (Rate yourself from 1-low to 5-high. Circle one number for each item.)

2. Applied knowledge gained from assignments
to group activities 1 2 3 4 5

3. Showed interest in group discussions
and activities 1 2 3 4 5

4. Was open-minded and listened to the
comments of others 1 2 3 4 5

5. Helped facilitate group discussions 1 2 3 4 5

6. Asked questions of others 1 2 3 4 5

7. Helped group stay focused on tasks 1 2 3 4 5

8. Encouraged the participation of other
group members 1 2 3 4 5

Class Involvement: (Rate yourself from 1-low to 5-high. Circle one number for each item.)

9. Began classes with a positive and
constructive attitude 1 2 3 4 5

10. Asked pertinent questions in class 1 2 3 4 5

11. Came prepared for class discussions 1 2 3 4 5

12. Brought assignments prepared for class 1 2 3 4 5

13. Articulated an understanding of class materials 1 2 3 4 5

14. Was able to respond effectively to questions
posed by others 1 2 3 4 5

15. Took risks to stretch myself 1 2 3 4 5

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Question of the Day: Please answer on the back of this page.