

HISTORIES OF (WESTERN) DRAMA & THEATRE II

New York University
Department of English
DRLIT-UA 111

Mondays, 12:30-3:15 p.m., ARC (18 Washington Place), Room LL-03

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Office Hours: Tuesdays (1:45-3:15 p.m.); Thursdays (5-6:30 p.m.); and by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

“*Theatre Histories* is particularly emphatic that what happens inside the theatre is deeply connected to what happens outside, not just as a matter of the topics playwrights present on stage, but also how plays are performed, who performs them, who attends them, and what social developments produced changes in cultural ideas that were manifested in stylistic shifts.”

— The Authors, *Theatre Histories*, 3rd Edition (2016)

“The theatre historian will consult all the primary sources available and seek new evidence. She will ask whose history has not been told. She will ask about the gender, race, and class of the eyewitness who left us a written account or sketch of a production. She will ask who benefited from the prevailing ideologies of the age – the visible and not so visible value systems – and who did not. She will ask why previous historians asked some questions and not others. Ultimately, she will be part of the evolving process in which we are all engaged to better understand those in the past and ourselves.”

— The Authors, *Theatre Histories*, 2nd Edition (2010)

This course offers a survey of “Western” (mainly European and American) theater, drama, and performance histories from the eighteenth through the mid-twentieth century. We will not attempt to create a single, continuous narrative spanning three centuries of wildly diverse theatrical projects. Instead, we will examine works from each period and consider the varied ways that social, political, economic, and cultural conditions inform/reflect aesthetic output – and vice versa.

READINGS:

- T. Nellhaus et al., *Theatre Histories: An Introduction*, 3rd Edition (Routledge, 2016).
 - All selections from *Theatre Histories* are indicated below as “**TH.**”
- F. Schiller, *The Robbers and Wallenstein* (Penguin Classics, 1979)
- H. Ibsen, *A Doll’s House* (Dover, 1992)
- A. Chekhov, *Plays: Ivanov, The Seagull, Uncle Vanya, Three Sisters, The Cherry Orchard* (Penguin Classics, 2002)
- E. O’Neill, *Three Great Plays: The Emperor Jones, Anna Christie, and The Hairy Ape* (Dover, 2005)
- B. Brecht, *Mother Courage and Her Children* (Penguin Classics, 2007)

- S. Beckett, *Endgame and Act Without Words* (Grove Press, 1958)

These titles are available for a reasonable price at the NYU bookstore or online. All other course readings are available as PDFs for download from the course page on the NYU Classes website (indicated below as “NYUC”). Please come to class with *hardcopies* of the day’s readings on hand.

REQUIREMENTS:

Class Participation

An essential part of a vibrant society is an informed, thoughtful citizenry, empowered to ask questions about their social world. I encourage you to practice that mode of critical engagement in the classroom. To do so, you *must* come prepared, having read and considered the assigned readings, ready to grapple with, discuss, and debate the texts, performances, and critical frameworks at hand. I urge you to do so with respect and empathy for all of your interlocutors (on the page, stage, and in the seminar room). Each student is permitted one unexcused absence; all other absences must be cleared with me. Please refrain from using your cell phone in class. Laptop usage is permitted to take notes only, and again, please come to class with *hardcopy printouts* of the day’s readings, marked-up and worked-through.

Class Visit to the Theatre

As a group, we will attend a production of Eugene O’Neill’s *The Hairy Ape* on Tuesday, March 28th at the Park Avenue Armory. The tickets for this show will be paid for by the NYU Department of English. However, if you must miss the performance, it is your responsibility to make it up before our class meeting on April 3rd; if you must make up the performance, you will be responsible for reserving your seat and paying for your ticket.

Discussion Leader/Solo Pedagogical Presentation

You will select a day on the syllabus for which you will be responsible for guiding part of our seminar discussion. You will arrive in class prepared with a brief 10-minute presentation, which should culminate in a list of four questions for further discussion. The questions should derive from your research about the playwrights, theoreticians, historical moments/movements we will be discussing that day. Your goal is to shape questions that will lead to substantive discussion. You may choose to include a few images or quotations that you would like to use to enhance your presentation and our subsequent discussion, but PowerPoint presentations are not necessary. You will come meet with me in office hours (Tuesday or Thursday) the week prior to your presentation to discuss your ideas, plans, theses, and discussion questions. You will send me your discussion questions the Sunday evening (by 8 p.m.) before our Monday class meeting.

Written Assignments

- 1) Two **Close-Reading Scratchpads**: In class on **January 20th** AND **February 6th**, you will hand in a marked-up photocopy of the day’s assigned play-text *PLUS* 2 pages of notes and thoughts on the material. This is a critical close-reading exercise meant to explore the productivity and possibility of getting stuck and causing trouble. While I will collect and read over these, they will not be graded.
- 2) One 5-page **Scene Analysis**: Draw on the observations and ideas from one of your scratchpads to make an argument about what a scene from *The London Merchant* or *The Robbers* is doing. Your

paper should take into account the scene's basic function as part of the play's plot and/or its development of character. However, because your argument is based on intensive close-reading, it will be able to penetrate beyond this basic information to uncover something much more interesting and unexpected. **(DUE: Wednesday, February 15th)**

3) One 8-page **"Realisms"** assignment (3-page analysis & 5-page play): Historically and conceptually, "realism" is a term that has had many different meanings. This assignment will ask you to write a 3-page analysis of "realism" in *A Doll's House* and *The Cherry Orchard*, followed by a 5-page play (or play-fragment) in which you present your own version of "realism." The analysis portion should be highly specific: engaging with a single passage from each play and calling upon specific details that construct and characterize each work's "realism." For the play(-fragment), consider how you will make creative use of these observations: what realist techniques will you borrow from Ibsen and/or from Chekhov, and what new realist techniques will you devise? **(DUE: Friday, April 7th)**

4) One 12-page **Theatre Histories in Action** essay: Although the progression of this course adheres more-or-less to standard periodizations and genre consolidations, one of our goals throughout the semester is also to consider different ways that the histories of theatre might be told and retold. For this reason, we are working with *Theatre Histories* as a textbook, as it challenges more traditional forms of organization and attempts to narrate a history of theatre based on "developments in human communication." In line with this expanded purview, you will conduct research over the course of the semester that asks you to think beyond regional, national, aesthetic, or generic categories. The output of this research will be a final research paper. For this assignment, you will choose *one* of the "periods" or "genres" we address in class and further investigate one of its plays/performances (from our syllabus, or not, as you wish) through the lens of *one* critical "framework" of your choosing: institutional considerations, social stratifications (based on class and/or race), sexuality and gender, urban/geographical distribution, philosophical or theological interpretation, communities of production, technologies of performance, knowledge transmission (via rehearsal, collective devising, etc.). You will consult with me in office hours as you decide the aesthetic "object" and the critical "framework" you would like to explore.

Your essay will consist of two (related) parts:

- Part 1 (8 pages) should advance an original argument about your chosen text/performance "object" read through the lens of your critical "framework." The essay should address questions that are historical, theoretical, and aesthetic. Please be sure to explicate the critical apparatus and use specific examples from the play-text to build your argument. Your analysis must consult at least three secondary sources.
- Part 2 (4 pages) should formulate your own directorial/artistic approach to your chosen text/performance based on the critical framework you are using in Part 1. This second part should take the tone of a production proposal (or manifesto) that outlines your ideas for a production/adaptation based on your "interpretation" of and "argumentation" about the play-text. Be as detailed as you can about the aesthetic choices you will make and the various contexts in which your production hopes to intervene. **(DUE: Monday, May 15th)**

EVALUATION:

You will be evaluated on your thoughtful participation and the level of your contribution to the discourse of the class, as well as the timely completion and responsible composition of your written

work throughout the semester. There will be no extensions on any of your assignments. Course evaluation will be based on the requirements as follows:

Participation **20%**

Class Discussion Leader/Solo Pedagogical Presentation **10%**

Close-Reading Scratchpad **5%**

Scene Analysis **20%**

Realisms Assignment **20%**

Theatre Histories in Action Essay **25%**

COURSE SCHEDULE (*subject to change and revision*)

WEEK 1: JANUARY 23

INTRODUCTIONS

WEEK 2: JANUARY 30

“ENLIGHTENED” SENTIMENTALITY

- **TH:** “Introduction: Theatre for bourgeois civil society,” 256-260.
- **TH:** “Theatre and sentiment: newspapers, private lives, and the bourgeois public sphere, 1700-1785,” 261-276.
- G. Lillo, *The London Merchant* (1731) [NYUC]
- G. E. Lessing, selections from *Hamburg Dramaturgy* (1767-69) [NYUC]
- E. Fuchs, “EF’s Visit to a Small Planet: Some Questions to Ask a Play” (2004) [NYUC]

WEEK 3: FEBRUARY 6

STURM UND DRANG: ROMANTICISM UND REVOLUTION

- **TH:** “Theatre and sentiment: newspapers, private lives, and the bourgeois public sphere, 1700-1785,” 276-279 & 288-290
- **TH:** “Nationalism in the theatre, 1760-1880,” 291-298
- F. Schiller, *The Robbers* (1781)
- J. J. Rousseau, “An Epistle to Mr. D’Alembert” (1767) [NYUC]

WEEK 4: FEBRUARY 13

POST-REVOLUTIONARY MELODRAMA

- **TH:** “Nationalism in the theatre, 1760-1880,” 299-307
- G. Pixérécourt, *The Dog of Montargis, or Murder in the Wood* (1814) [NYUC]
- V. Hugo, Preface to *Cromwell* (1827) [NYUC]

WEEK 5: FEBRUARY 20 – NO CLASS – PRESIDENT’S DAY

WEEK 6: FEBRUARY 27

IMPERIALISM AND RACISM IN AMERICAN MELODRAMA

- **TH:** “Nationalism in the theatre, 1760-1880,” 307-317
- **TH:** “Performing ‘progress’: From imperial display to the triumph of realism and naturalism, 1790-1914,” 325-332

- J. A. Stone, *Metamora, or, The Last of the Wampanoags* (1829) [NYUC]
- J. D. Mason, selections from *Melodrama and the Myth of America* (1993) [NYUC]
- J.D. Mason, “The Politics of *Metamora*” (1991) [NYUC]
- D. Boucicault, *The Octoroon* (1859) [NYUC]

WEEK 7: MARCH 6

MINSTRELSY & OTHER “POPULAR” ENTERTAINMENTS

- **TH:** “Nationalism in the theatre, 1760-1880,” 318-323
- **TH:** “Performing ‘progress’: From imperial display to the triumph of realism and naturalism, 1790-1914,” 332-341
- “The Show” from *Inside the Minstrel Mask* (1996) [NYUC]
- E. Lott, selections from *Love and Theft* (1994) [NYUC]
- Watch: *American Experience: Stephen Foster* – a film by Randall MacLowry (2006) [NYUC]

WEEK 8: MARCH 13 – NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK

WEEK 9: MARCH 20

NATURALISM & REALISM I

- **TH:** “Performing ‘progress’: From imperial display to the triumph of realism and naturalism, 1790-1914,” 342-362
- H. Ibsen, *A Doll’s House* (1879)
- E. Zola, “Naturalism in the Theatre” (1881) [NYUC]
- J. Templeton, “The Doll House Backlash: Criticism, Feminism, and Ibsen” (1989) [NYUC]

WEEK 10: MARCH 27

NATURALISM & REALISM II

- A. Chekhov, *The Cherry Orchard* (1904)
- K. Stanislavsky, “From Inner Impulses and Inner Action” (1916-20) [NYUC]
- U. Hagen, selections from *Respect for Acting* (1973) [NYUC]

TUESDAY, MARCH 28: MANDATORY CLASS VISIT TO THE THEATRE

Eugene O’Neill’s *The Hairy Ape* – directed by Richard Jones
 Park Avenue Armory (643 Park Avenue, between 66th and 67th Streets)
 Show begins at **7:30 p.m.** (meet at the Armory at 7:15 p.m.)

WEEK 11: APRIL 3

AMERICAN EXPRESSIONISMS

- **TH:** “New media divide the theatres of print culture, 1870-1930,” 363-92
- S. Glaspell, *The Verge* (1921) [NYUC]
- E. O’Neill, *The Hairy Ape* (1921)

WEEK 12: APRIL 10

MANIFESTOS OF THE EUROPEAN AVANT-GARDE

- **TH:** “Theatre and the unceasing communications revolutions,” 403-407
- **TH:** “New theatres for revolutionary times, 1910-1950,” 409-424

- F. T. Marinetti, “The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism” (1909) [NYUC]
- T. Tzara, “Dada Manifesto” (1918) [NYUC]
- A. Artaud, “No More Masterpieces,” “The Theatre and Cruelty,” and “The Theatre of Cruelty (First Manifesto)” in *The Theatre and Its Double* (1938), pgs. 74-100 [NYUC]
- A. Artaud, *The Spurt of Blood* (1925) [NYUC]

WEEK 13: APRIL 17

EPIC THEATRE

- **TH:** “New theatres for revolutionary times, 1910-1950,” 424-444
- B. Brecht, *Mother Courage and Her Children* (1939)
- B. Brecht, “Theatre for Pleasure or Theatre for Instruction” (1935) and “*Verfremdung* Effects in Chinese Acting” (1936) in *Brecht on Theatre* [NYUC]
- B. Brecht, “Courage Model 1949” in *Brecht on Performance* [NYUC]

WEEK 14: APRIL 24

BECKETT’S HIGH MODERNISM

- **TH:** “The aftermath of the Second World War: Realism and its discontents in an increasingly shrinking world, 1940-1970,” 445-467
- S. Beckett, *Endgame* (1957)
- T. W. Adorno, “Trying to Understand Endgame” (1958) [NYUC]

WEEK 15: MAY 1

POST-WAR AMERICAN AVANT-GARDES

- **TH:** “The aftermath of the Second World War: Realism and its discontents in an increasingly shrinking world, 1940-1970,” 472-475
- **TH:** “Art, politics, or business? Theatre in search of identity, 1968-200,” 477-483 & 487-492
- Watch: *Resist with the Living Theatre* – a film by Dirk Szusziess (2007) [NYUC]
- A. Baraka, *Dutchman* (1964) [NYUC]
- A. Baraka, “The Revolutionary Theatre” (1965) [NYUC]

WEEK 16: MAY 8

THE BROADWAY MUSICAL & FINAL PROJECT PRESENTATIONS

- Watch: *Sweet Charity* – a film directed by Bob Fosse (1969)
- S. Wolf, “‘Something Better than This’: *Sweet Charity* and the Feminist Utopia of Broadway Musicals (2004) [NYUC]

EMAIL FAQ:

I look forward to getting to know you over the course of the semester and am excited to hear from you if you would like to set up a time to speak in office hours. However, do keep in mind that I check my email only once each weekday afternoon. In most cases, please expect to wait 24 hours to hear back from me. Please be sure if you are emailing about a time sensitive issue that you leave an appropriate amount of time for a response from me.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

All students are responsible for understanding and complying with the NYU College of Arts and Science Statement on Academic Integrity. Please familiarize yourself with that statement, which is available at: <http://cas.nyu.edu/page/academicintegrity>. Under **NO** circumstances will academic dishonesty or plagiarism be tolerated in this course.

SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS:

This class welcomes students with visible and invisible disabilities and will meet all and any academic accommodations to which a student is entitled. Accommodations may be made for students registered through the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities. For assistance in obtaining an accommodation, contact the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities [719 Broadway, 2nd Floor, (212-998-4980)].

MORE ON WRITING ASSIGNMENTS:

- Please submit all assignments as PDF documents if possible.
- Assignments for this course should be written in twelve-point, standard font (Garmond or Times New Roman), with 1-inch margins, double-spaced.
- The stipulated length of an assignment indicates the number of full pages I expect it will take to satisfy the terms of the assignment. A first page with a large header section, or a page with big block quotes, is not quite a full page, and you should be aware of this so that you can make sure to take the full amount of time and space the assignment requires.
- Always include a “Works Cited” page with full bibliographic information for each text you cite (even if you’re only citing one). Throughout the paper, make sure to give a page number for each citation of the text. If you have questions about formatting either your in-text citations/footnotes or your Works Cited page, please consult the Chicago Manual of Style.
- Assignments turned in after the deadline will be marked down. Very late assignments will not receive credit.
- If you’re having trouble with an assignment, or you anticipate a problem with a specific deadline, I encourage you to talk to me about it as soon as possible. Please don’t wait until the last minute.

GRADING CRITERIA:**A = Excellent**

This work demonstrates comprehensive and solid understanding of course material and presents thoughtful interpretations, well-focused and original insights and well-reasoned analysis. “A” work includes skillful use of source materials and illuminating examples and illustrations. “A” work is fluent, thorough and shows some creative flair.

B = Good

This work demonstrates a complete and accurate understanding of course material, presenting a reasonable degree of insight and broad level of analysis. Work reflects competence, but stays at a general or predictable level of understanding. Source material, along with examples and illustrations, are used appropriately. “B” work is reasonable, clear, appropriate and complete.

C = Adequate/Fair

This work demonstrates a basic understanding of course material but remains incomplete, superficial or expresses some important errors or weaknesses. Source material may be used inadequately or somewhat inappropriately. The work may lack concrete, specific examples and illustrations and may be hard to follow or vague.

D = Unsatisfactory

This work demonstrates a serious lack of understanding and fails to demonstrate the most rudimentary elements of the course assignment. Sources may be used inappropriately or not at all. The work may be inarticulate or extremely difficult to read.

F = Failed

Work was not submitted or completed according to parameters (page length, topical focus, types of sources), or completely failed to express the most basic and elementary aspects of the course.

Plus (+) or minus (-) grades indicate your range within the aforementioned grades.