



TH 451/551, Theatre History I: "From Ritual to Romance"

Fall 2011

Prof. Steven Burch, RJ 219

RJ 204

Tues., 11am-1:30pm (or by appt.)

MWF 10-10:50am

205-348-0343; sburch@as.ua.edu

"We know what is right, we distinguish it clearly, but we don't achieve it."

Euripides

"They are the abstract and brief chroniclers of their time."

William Shakespeare

Required reading:

Wilson and Goldfarb, *Living Theater*, 5th edition **(LT)** *(any edition is acceptable)

Burch, ed., *Course Reader* **(CR)**

Course Prerequisites:

TH 120, TH 220, or permission of the instructor.

Course Description:

It has been written that theatre is the arena where humans attempt to make sense of their experiences, as individuals and as members of a community. Consequently, the theatre is more than the sum of its technological developments. It is intimately and sometimes immeasurably bound up with a community's history, i.e., its politics, economics, wars, celebrations and defeats, and, most emphatically, its gendered, racial, and class identities. This course will examine the known and frequently contested history of the, mostly, western European theatre, from the ancient Greeks to England and Germany in the middle of the eighteenth century. This history will survey styles of performance, theatrical architecture and costuming, and technological machinery. And we will read several play texts and influential critical essays.

Theatre history, like political history, is an act of interpretation. Every generation redefines its priorities and revises what was previously known and accepted within the community orthodoxy. This

course will offer opportunities to think about how history works, and how a community responds by telling itself stories through performance and spectacle.

Course Objectives (Learner-Centered Outcomes):

- a. To equip each student with new and/or renewed critical and analytical skills in the reading and interpretation of historical events, players, and theories regarding historical theatrical practices, productions, reception, and controversies.
- b. As a Writing Intensive (W) course, to equip students with better writing and communicative skills through intensive practice over the course of the semester. These will be executed and assessed through writing assignments and two exams with essay questions.

Attendance Policy:

Attendance is mandatory and is absolutely critical to your success in this course. This course has a collaborative nature and requires both your physical and your intellectual presence. Accordingly, if you miss more than three **(3)** classes, your final grade will be lowered **thirty-three (33) points for each additional absence**. This does not mean that you have three “freebies.” This means that you have three separate days in which to handle those inevitable days when you are sick or are otherwise unable to attend class. Use them judiciously. Likewise, perfect attendance will be favorably considered. Besides, the classes will prove to be a joy and you wouldn’t want to miss them anyway.

Tardiness Policy:

The same rules apply as for attendance. Lateness is highly disruptive to the teacher and the students. You are expected to be here on time. The rule of thumb is simple: if you’re not here when I take attendance, you’re late. And **three lates equals one absence**. Obviously, there will be special circumstances, but they should be very few and far between.

Papers, Exams:

Play reviews: You will attend and write a review of the four productions of this semester: *Purgatorio*: Sept. 26-Oct. 2; *Animal Crackers*: Oct 10-16; *City of Angels*: Nov 7-13; *The Seagull*: Nov 14-20. Details for each review will be provided the week of the performance.

Exams: There will be both a midterm (Oct. 14) and a final exam given in this course. Details will be provided. There may be an occasional unannounced quiz on the readings. Hint: Stay current. Also, the **Final Exam** will be **Wednesday Dec. 14th from 11:30am-2pm.**** There will be no early exams given. Arrange your schedules accordingly. Graduate students are exempt from the Final Exam, to be replaced by research papers which will be due by the exam date and time.

Writing Assignments: You will be given three (3) writing assignments, 2-4 pages each, about a given subject. You will generally be given a week to complete the assignment. Then you will get a graded and annotated response from me. Students with a grade of less than C+ will then have up to

three days to rewrite the assignment for a better grade. **You may opt to do a research paper (8-10 pages) in lieu of the final writing assignment and final exam. You will need to discuss this and your topic with me by the midterm exam.

Play Reading Reports: You will be required to write a one-two (1-2) page play report on the nine (9) plays you will read for the class (*Agamemnon, Antigone, Medea, The Frogs, Dulcitius, Noah, Pierre Pathelin, Macbeth, Tartuffe*). These reports will be due the day each play is scheduled to be discussed. They will consist of details of the play's plot and theme and your personal reaction to three questions. Details will be forthcoming. These will form a part of the class participation grade and are not to be confused with the writing assignments.

Group Reports/Commentaries:

The class will be divided into six groups. Each group will research either a particular playwright, their biography, critical reception, and impact on their theatre; or the group may talk about historical productions or events. Each member of the group will be responsible for one area of that topic and will provide a 1-2 page paper about their research for this area, due at the time of the presentation (this could consist of your notes for the presentation). The list of writers, plays, and subjects follows the calendar. The groups will be chosen/assigned during the second week of classes.

Assessment:

This will be achieved through the combination of writing exercises (including play reviews), exams which will demand an understanding of historical movements and persons and application of the concepts to productions and terms that do not necessarily follow, and group oral reports on people, events, and movements germane to theatre history. The key is not rote memorization but understanding and usage of materials.

Evaluations/Grading: (based on 1000 points)

Final Exam:	250pts
Midterm Exam:	150pts
Research Paper:	250pts* (optional)
Bibliography:	50 pts*(for research paper only)
Writing Assmts:	50pts each (150 pts; 100 pts for students who opt to write a research paper)
Group Reports:	75pts presentation; 75pts for report (150pts)
Play Reviews:	50pts each (200 pts)
<u>Class Participation:</u>	<u>100pts</u>

Total = 1000 points maximum

Academic Misconduct: Cheating or plagiarism **will be** severely penalized. Papers must be original work, written by you and you only for this class. Downloads from websites or adaptations from previous coursework are unacceptable. Consult the *Student Handbook*, which is available from Student Services, for a complete definition of academic misconduct.

Disabilities: To request disability accommodations, please contact Disabilities Services at 348-4285. After initial arrangements are made with this office, contact your professor.

Schedule (subject to change):

<u>Week/date:</u>	<u>Topic:</u>	<u>Assignment/Event:</u>	
1	W 8/24	Course Introductions, syllabus	LT: 1-12
	F 8/26	Origins of western theatre	LT: 12-22
2	M 8/29	Greek theatre	LT: 26-33, 47-52
	W 8/31	Tragedy, Aeschylus	LT: 34, CR: <i>Agamemnon</i>
	F 9/2	Sophocles	LT: 35; CR: <i>Antigone</i> , <u>videos</u>
3	M 9/5	HOLIDAY (Labor Day)	
	W 9/7	Euripides, <i>Case</i>	LT: 36; CR: <i>Medea</i> , "Classic Drag"
	F 9/9	Aristophanes, Old Comedy	LT: 45-46; CR: <i>The Frogs</i>
4	M 9/12	Menander, New Comedy	LT: 56-57
		Writing Assignment #1 Due	
	W 9/14	Plato, Aristotle	LT: 38-44, CR
	F 9/16	Hellenistic theatres	LT: 53-60
5	M 9/19	Rome and Byzantium	LT: 62-82, 115-17, <u>videos</u>
	W 9/21	Horace, Cicero	LT: 73-74; CR
	F 9/23	Group Report #1: Seneca's <i>Medea</i> and tragedy and Plautus' <i>The Menaechmi</i> and comedy	

6	M 9/26	Medieval Theatre	LT: 115-117
Sept. 26-Oct. 2 27, Purgatorio, Allen Bales Theatre			
	W 9/28	Hrosvitha, Mysteries, Moralities	LT: 119-136; CR: <i>Dulcitius, Noah</i>
	F 9/30	Group Report #2: Oberammergau Passion Play	
7	M 10/3	Secular theatre	LT: 136-138, CR: <i>Pierre Pathelin</i>
Play Review #1 Due			
Oct. 4-7: Dance Alabama! Morgan Auditorium			
	W 10/5	Italian Renaissance	LT: 143-156
	F 10/7	Group Report #3: Commedia dell'Arte	
8	M 10/10	Theatre architecture and design	LT: 156-166
Oct. 10-16, Animal Crackers, Marian Gallaway Theatre			
	W 10/12	Neoclassicism; Cinthio, Castelvetro	LT: 167-1174; CR
	F-10/14	MIDTERM EXAM	
9	M 10/17	English Renaissance	LT: 176-180; 187-201; CR:
	Stallybrass		
Play Review #2 Due			
	W 10/19	Elizabethan playwrights, acting companies	LT: 181-186; 201-205
	F 10/21	Jacobean drama and masques	LT: 206-214; CR: <i>Macbeth</i>
10	M 10/24	French Renaissance	LT: 234-237, 245-254
Writing Assignment #2 Due			
	W 10/26	Group Report #4: Shakespeare's Authorship?	
	F 10/28	FALL BREAK (Thursday-Friday, Oct. 27-28)	
11	M 10/31	French Theatre Production, <i>Le Cid</i>	LT: 238-241, video
Abstracts and Biblios Due			
	W 11/2	Racine and Moliere	LT: 241-245; CR: <i>Tartuffe</i>
	F 11/4	Spain's Golden Age	LT: 216-220

Writing Assignment #3 Due

12 M 11/7 Spain's secular theatre LT: 220-232

Nov 7-13, *City of Angels*, Allen Bales Theatre

W 11/9 **Group Report #5: *Fuente Ovejuna* and *Life is a Dream***

F 11/11 English Restoration LT: 258-269; CR: Maus

13 M 11/14 Restoration theatres and actors LT: 270-379

Play Review #3 Due

Nov. 14-20: *The Seagull*, Marian Gallway Theatre

W 11/16 Actresses on English Stage videos

F 11/18 18th Century Theatres, Legislation LT: 289-312

14 M 11/21 Ballad Operas and the Licensing Act Video: *The Beggar's Opera*

Play Review #4 Due

W-F 11/23-25 THANKSGIVING, NO CLASSES

15 M 11/28 18th Century Germany LT: 299-300; 305-306; 318-323,
326-27

W 11/30 18th Operas and theatre Videos: *The Magic Flute*, *The Drottningholm Court Theatre*

F 12/2 **Group Report #6: Gotthold Lessing and *Hamburg Dramaturgy***

16 M 12/5 Bunraku, video LT: 85--111

W 12/7 Kabuki's Beginnings and Misogyny LT: 104-108; video

F 12/9 Last Class, wrap-up, review

Wednesday, December 14th, 11:30am-2:00pm FINAL EXAM

Possible research paper topics: (feel free to offer other topics)

a. Aristophanes and *Lysistrata*, satire, transvestism, misogyny, burlesque

b. Congreve and *The Way of the World*, the triumph of the emerging middle-class theatre audience and censorship; is theatre inherently immoral? Are its actors and actresses immoral?

- c. Shakespeare and *As You Like It*, drag and gender, comedy, and sexuality
- d Plato and the Christian Coalition: theatre as a corrupting influence
- e Neuber and Lessing: educating actors and audiences
- f . The proscenium arch stage's transformation of performance: why the audience matters