



**TH 551 Theatre History I: "From Ritual to Romance"**

**Fall 2013**

**Prof. Steven Burch, RJ 138**

**RJ 201**

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

**MWF 10-10:50am**

**205-348-0343; [sburch@as.ua.edu](mailto: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:**

Norton Anthology of Drama **(NA)** \*(any edition is acceptable)

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

**\*\*Certain plays will require each student to obtain their own copy, from our library, online, or bookstores (online or local). Edition or translation will not matter.**

**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: *Book of Days* (Lanford Wilson): Sept. 30-Oct. 6, and Sept. 30; *Seven Guitars* (August Wilson): Oct 7-13; *Bloody Bloody Andrew Jackson* (Alex Timbers, Michael Friedman): Nov. 11-17; *School for Lies* (David Ives): Nov 18-24. Details for each review will be provided the week of the performance.

Exams: There will be both a midterm (Oct. 11) and a final exam (Dec. 10) 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 **Tuesday Dec. 10<sup>th</sup> from 8-10:30am.\*\*** There will be no early exams given. Arrange your schedules accordingly. Graduate students may opt to replace the Final Exam with a research paper which will be due by the exam date and time.

Writing Assignments: You will be given two (2) 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 (10-15 pages) in lieu of the 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 sixteen (16) plays you will read for the class (*Agamemnon, Oedipus the King, Antigone, Medea, The Bacchae, Lysistrata, Dulcitius, Noah, Pierre Pathelin, Doctor Faustus, Twelfth Night, Hamlet, Life is a Dream, Le Cid, Tartuffe, The Misanthrope*). 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. 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/Research Paper:	150pts
Midterm Exam:	150pts
Bibliography:	50 pts*(for research paper only)
Writing Assmts:	50 pts each (100 pts)
Group Reports:	100 pts presentation
Play Reviews:	100 pts each (400 pts)
<u>Class Participation:</u>	<u>50 pts</u>

Total = 1000 points maximum

**Academic Misconduct:** Cheating or plagiarism **will be** severely penalized. Papers **AND** presentations 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):**

<b><u>Week/date:</u></b>	<b><u>Topic:</u></b>	<b><u>Assignment/Event:</u></b>
1	W 8/21	Course Introductions, syllabus
	F 8/23	Origins of western theatre NA: 1-4
2	M 8/26	Greek theatre NA: 4-12
	W 8/28	Tragedy, Aeschylus CR: <i>Agamemnon</i>
	F 8/30	Sophocles CR: <i>Antigone</i> , NA: <i>Oedipus the King</i> <u>videos</u>
3	M 9/2	<b>HOLIDAY (Labor Day)</b>
	W 9/4	Euripides, Pielmeier CR: Pielmeier "Confessions of a Playwright," <i>Medea</i> , "Classic Drag"
	F 9/6	Euripides, Case NA: The Bacchae; CR: "Classic Drag"
4	M 9/9	Old Comedy, New Comedy CR: <i>Lysistrata</i> <b>Writing Assignment #1 Due</b>
	W 9/11	Plato, Aristotle CR: The Poetics
	F 9/13	Hellenistic theatres
5	M 9/16	Rome and Byzantium NA: 12-16 <u>videos</u>
	W 9/18	Horace, Cicero CR: Qunitillian

	F 9/20	<b>Group Report #1: Seneca's <i>Medea</i> and tragedy and Plautus' <i>The Menaechmi</i> and comedy</b>	
6	M 9/24	Medieval Theatre	NA: 25-31; CR: Tertullian
	W 9/26	Hrosvitha, Mysteries, Moralities	CR: <i>Dulcitius, Noah</i>
	F 9/28	<b>Group Report #2: Oberammergau Passion Play</b>	
7	M 9/30	Secular theatre	CR: <i>Pierre Pathelin</i>
		<b><i>Book of Days</i> (Wilson), Allen Bales Theatre, Sept. 30-Oct. 6* (No perf. Oct. 5)</b>	
	W 10/2	Italian Renaissance	NA: 31-38
	F 10/4	Comedia dell'arte	
8	M 10/7	Theatre architecture and design	
		<b>Play Review #1 Due</b>	
		<b><i>Seven Guitars</i> (Wilson), Marian Gallaway Theatre, Oct. 7-13</b>	
	W 10/9	Neoclassicism; Cinthio, Castelvetro	LT: 167-1174; CR
	<b>F 10/11</b>	<b>MIDTERM EXAM</b>	
9	M 10/14	English Renaissance	NA: 38-42; <i>Doctor Faustus</i> CR: Stallybrass
		<b>Play Review #2 Due</b>	
	W 10/16	Elizabethan playwrights, acting companies	NA: <i>Twelfth Night</i>
	F 10/18	Jacobean drama and masques	NA: <i>Hamlet</i>
10	M 10/21	<b>Group Report #3: Shakespeare's Authorship?</b>	
	W 10/23	Spain's Golden Age	NA: 42-45
	F 10/25	Spain's secular theatre	** <i>Life is a Dream</i> (Calderon)
11	M 10/28	<b>Group Report #4: Lorca and <i>Fuente Ovejuna</i></b>	
		<b>Abstracts and Biblios Due</b>	
	W 10/30	French Renaissance	NA: 45-48

### Writing Assignment #2 Due

	F 11/1	French theatre production, <i>Le Cid</i>	** <i>The Cid</i>
12	M 11/4	Racine and Moliere	CR: <i>Tartuffe</i> ; ** <i>The Misanthrope</i>
	W 11/6	Moliere and Rostand	videos
	F 11/8	English Restoration	NA: 48-50
13	M 11/11	Restoration theatres and actors	

### Nov. 11-17: *Bloody Bloody Andrew Jackson* (Timbers, Friedman), Allen Bales Theatre

	W 11/13	Actresses on English Stage	CR: Maus ; videos
	F 11/15	18 <sup>th</sup> Century Theatres, Legislation	NA: 50-53
14	M 11/18	Ballad Operas and the Licensing Act	<u>Video: <i>The Beggar's Opera</i></u>

### Play Review #3 Due

### Nov. 18-24 *School for Lies* (Ives/Moliere), Marian Gallaway Theatre (no perf. Nov. 23)

	W 11/20	<b>Group Report #5: Marivaux and Beaumarchais</b>	
	F 11/22	18 <sup>th</sup> Century Germany	NA: 53-54
15	M 11/25	18 <sup>th</sup> Operas and theatre	<u>Videos: <i>The Magic Flute</i>, <i>The Drottningholm Court Theatre</i></u>

### Play Review #4 Due

### W-F 11/27-29 THANKSGIVING, NO CLASSES

16	M 12/2	Romanticism, Melodrama: Germany, France	NA: 54-57
	W 12/4	Popular Entertainment: Circus, Burlesque, etc.	videos
	F 12/6	Last Class, wrap-up, review	

**Tuesday, December 10<sup>th</sup>, 11:30am-2pm FINAL EXAM or Research Papers Due**

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

a. Aristophanes and *Lysistrata*, satire, transvestism, misogyny, burlesque, anti-war. Is it really all or any of these?

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. Is this play as subversive as many critics proclaim? Why? Does it speak in this metro-sexual society?

d. Plato and the Christian Coalition: theatre as a corrupting influence. Can it be controlled? Banned?

e. David Garrick, Caroline Neuber and Gotthold Lessing: educating actors and audiences; creating art in the theatre space.

f. The proscenium arch stage's transformation of performance: why the audience matters, then and now.

g. Circuses and Freak Shows at Fairs in the 16<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> centuries; compare to today. Is there an online parallel?