

**TH 452 Spring 2014 Steve Burch, RJ 138, 348-0343**

RJ 201, MWF 10-10:50am [sburch@as.ua.edu](mailto:sburch@as.ua.edu)

Office Hours: Tues 11:00am-12:30pm and by Appt.

**Required Texts:**

Wilson and Goldfarb, *Living Theatre* [LT]

Burch, ed. *Course Reader* [CR]

\*Readings, viewing on Blackboard

“Don’t cut the rooster story! That’s human interest!”

Ben Hecht and Charles MacArthur, *The Front Page*

“Yes, yes, it’s the most comical thing in the world. And we laugh, we laugh, with a will, in the beginning. But it’s always the same thing. Yes, it’s like the funny story we have heard too often, we still find it funny, but we don’t laugh anymore.”

Samuel Beckett, *Endgame*

**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, the second of the series, will examine the known and frequently contested history of the, mostly, western European theatre, from the Romantic movement of the late 18th century to the theatre of today. 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. At the end of the course, students will be able to provide a greater historical and theoretical context to their theatrical experiences as either informed audiences or as practicing artists and artisans.

### **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 “unexcused” 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.

### **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 tardies equals one unexcused 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: *Blood Wedding* (Feb 10-16), *Picnic* (Feb 24-Mar. 4), *The Birthday Party* (Apr 7-13), *Urinetown* (Apr 14-20). Details for each review will be provided the week of the performance.

Exams: There will be both a midterm and a final exam given in this course. Details will be provided. There may be an occasional unannounced quiz on the readings and from Blackboard. Hint: Stay current. Also, the Final Exam will be Tuesday April 30. There will be no early exams given. Arrange your schedules accordingly.

Writing Assignments: There will be three (3) brief writing assignments, about a given subject based on the readings. One of them will be in class 1-2 page writing exercises. Two will be take home, 2-4 pages. You will generally be given a week to complete these assignments. Then you will get a graded and annotated response from me. Students with a grade of less than B- will then have up to three days to rewrite the assignment for a better grade. \*Students may opt to do a research paper (8-10 pages) in lieu of the third writing assignment and final exam. You will need to discuss this and your topic with me.

Play Reading Reports: You will be required to write a one-two (1-2) page play report on the twelve\* (12) plays you will read for the class (*A Glance at New York, The Wedding, The Blind, Riders to the Sea, Dark Lady of the Sonnets, Jet of Blood, A Sunday Morning in the South, The Bald Soprano, Dutchman, Hamletmachine, Statements Under Arrest for the Immorality Act*). These reports will be due the day each play is scheduled to be discussed. They will consist only of details of the play's plot and theme. Details will be forthcoming. These will form a part of the class participation grade and are not to be confused with the writing assignments.

- *Buster Keaton's Outing* by Garcia Lorca will be handed out a week before the Lorca class.

Oral Reports: (Group Reports/Commentaries) The class will be divided into six groups. Each group will research a particular playwright, or theatre company, or historical event and present their biography, critical reception, impact on their theater. Each member of the group will be responsible for one area of the topic and will provide me with a 1-2 page paper about their research for this area, due at the time of the presentation. Each presenter's presentation should take roughly 5 minutes. An additional five-ten minutes will be reserved for class discussion, questions, and contestations on the material. Although the group will be responsible for that class's material, this is NOT a free pass for the class on that material. All will be responsible for having read the material and taking an active part in post-discussions. The groups will be chosen during the second week of classes. One week before the presentation, the group will meet with Steve either before or after class that day to discuss their forthcoming presentation. It is the responsibility of each group to see that this happens.

### **The COOKIE RULE OF ORAL REPORTS**

If any presenter goes over five minutes, they will be responsible for bringing in cookies for the class to enjoy at the next class period. (Of course, if you know ahead of time that your work will go over, you may elect to bring them to your presentation.)

Reading Assignments: I know this appears to be a great deal of reading. It is. But there are breaks, especially in the *Course Reader's* critical essays. (And I think you'll be provoked and excited by most of them.) As for the *Living Theatre*, my suggestion is a quick read of the material. Where I think you should slow down and absorb the material, I will attempt to alert you (as well as talk about it in class). Also, there will be group projects on some of the material. Essentially, the trick is to determine individually what is important for you to read; read it; and take good notes in class. The subject matter is pretty wide, and rather than attempt to reduce it, I'd prefer you had a sense of our subject's breadth.

All assignments are due as scheduled in the syllabus. If problems arise, please contact your instructor. For legitimate excuses, some late assignments may be accepted without any lowering of the grade. Otherwise, late assignments will be accepted but not at full credit.

### **Grades:**

\*Writing Assignments @ 50 points each = 150

Midterm Exam @ 150 points = 150

Play Reviews @ 50 points each =	200
Oral Reports (oral presentation) @ 100 =	100
Oral Reports (written paper) @ 100 =	100
Final Exam or Research Paper & Abstract/Bibliography @ 250 points =	250
Class Participation and Play Reports @ 50 points =	<u>50</u>
Total =	1000

### **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:**

Should you require accommodation for a disability, please contact Disabilities Services at 348-4285. After initial arrangements are made, then contact me.

### **Schedule (subject to change):**

<u>Week/date:</u>	<u>Topic:</u>	<u>Assignment/Event:</u>
1	W 1/8	Course Introductions, Syllabus
	F 1/10	video
		Early 19 <sup>th</sup> century theatre, melodrama, well-made play
		LT: 328-343
2	M 1/13	Early U.S. theatre, Mercy Otis Warren, Anna Cora Mowett, Astor Place Riots
	W 1/15	Baker: <i>Glance at New York</i> **
	F 1/187	CR; video
		Vaudeville
		video/Blackboard
3	<b>M 1/20</b>	<b>HOLIDAY (MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. DAY)</b>
	W 1/22	Group Presentation #1: African Grove Theatre and Minstrelsy
	F 1/24	Wagner, Saxe-Meiningen, Nietzsche
		LT: 354-364

4	M 1/27	Group Presentation #2: 19 <sup>th</sup> Century Acting Joseph Jefferson, Charlotte Cushman, Ada Mencken, Lillie Langtry, James O'Neill, William Gillette	LT: 344-353
	W 1/29	Ibsen, Zola, Naturalism; Antoine, Stanislavsky	CR; LT: 373-390
	F 1/31	<i>Miss Julie</i> (Strindberg)	video
5	M 2/3	<i>The Wedding</i> (Chekhov)**	CR
		Writing Assignment #1 Due	
	W 2/5	Anti-realism (symbolism)	LT: 390-399
		<i>The Blind</i> (Maeterlinck)**	CR
	F 2/7	Modernism, Primitivism; <i>Rite of Spring</i>	video
		Freud essay; Freud for Beginners	CR
			Blackboard
6	M 2/10	Group Report #3: 19 <sup>th</sup> Century British Acting (Irving, Beerbohn Tree, Terry, Poel, Granville-Barker, Mrs. Campbell)	
		<b>2/10-16, <i>Blood Wedding</i> (Lorca), Allen Bales Theatre</b>	
	W 2/12	Ireland's National Theatre	video/Blackboard
		<i>Riders to the Sea</i> (Synge)**	CR/ Blackboard
		<i>Dark Lady of the Sonnets</i> (Shaw)**	CR
F	2/14	Anti-realism (expressionism, DaDa, Cruelty)	LT: 414-422
		<i>Jet of Blood</i> (Artaud)**	CR
		Artaud essay	CR
		<i>Buster Keaton's Outing</i> (Lorca)	handout
7	M 2/17	Anti-realism (epic theatre, Brecht)	LT: 423-426
		Brecht essay	CR; video

**2/18-22 ARDT Spring Concert, Morgan Auditorium**

W 2/19 Brecht Blackboard

**F 2/21 MIDTERM EXAM**

8 M 2/24 African American Representation video

**2/24-3/2, Picnic (Inge), Marian Gallaway Theatre**

W 2/26 *A Sunday Morning in the South* (Johnson)\*\* CR

F 2/28 Group Presentation #4: America in the 20s-30s (Theatre Guild, Civic Repertory, Living Newspaper, Odets, Welles, Porgy and Bess)

LT: 436-449

9 M 3/3 Eugene O'Neill videos/Blackboard

**Wed-Fri 3/5-9 SETC (Theatre classes cancelled)**

10 M 3/10 Absurdist Theatre; Esslin essay LT: 453-466; CR

*Ohio Impromptu* (Beckett) video

**3/11-15, DANCE ALABAMA!, Morgan Auditorium**

W 3/12 *The Bald Soprano* (Ionesco)\*\* CR

*Dutchman* (Baraka)\*\* video

F 3/14 Group Presentation #5: Europe 30s, 40s (Coupeau, Giraudoux, Lorca, Pirandello, Coward, Rattigan)

11 M 3/17 Postwar Realism, U.S. and Britain LT: 467-474

W 3/19 Miller, Williams, Albee video/Blackboard

F 3/21 Europe 50s-70s LT: 464-466, video

*Marat/Sade* (Weiss) video

**Mon-Fri 3/24-28 SPRING BREAK**

12 M 3/31 Grotowski essay, Chaiken, *The Serpent* video; CR

W 4/3 *Hamletmachine* (Muller)\*\* CR

**F 4/4 HONORS DAY (classes dismissed)**

13 M 4/7 Postcolonial Africa LT: 551-556

Soyinka essay; Fugard essay CR

*Statements Under Arrest for the Immorality Act* (Fugard)\*\* CR

**4/7-13, *The Birthday Party* (Pinter), Allen Bales Theatre**

W 4/9 Postmodernism, Performance Art LT: 493-534

*Couple in a Cage* video

F 4/11 *Sphinxes Without Secrets* video

14 M 4/14 Bill Irwin video

Play review #3 due

**4/14-20, *Urinetown* (Kotis), Marian Gallaway**

W 4/16 Anna Deavere Smith video

F 4/18 Group Presentation #6: Performance Art (Draper, Ettinge, Monk, Gray, Ludlam, Living Theatre)

15 M 4/21 *Anatomy of a Song* (Sondheim) video

Play Review #4 due

W 4/23 Making *Company* cast album video

F 4/25      Wrap-up, end of semester

**FINAL EXAM: Tuesday April 30<sup>th</sup>, 11:30am-2pm, RJ 201**

**NO EARLY EXAMS GIVEN!!!**