

Theatre 110: Theatrical Play Analysis (3 credits)
Fall 2016: Tu/Th 12:40 PM-2:00 PM, C304 Snyder Hall

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Office Hours:
4:00-5:00 PM Tues, 10:00-
11:00 AM Wed., & by
appointment

Course Description:

Catalog Description: Play study in relation to theatrical production.

In this course, we will study various methods for reading plays and thinking about production choices. Students will take quizzes on each of the main plays we read (and on some critical readings), and will write papers on play analysis in action as we view three productions in the MSU Department of Theatre season. Additionally, students will put text analysis into practice by creating their own short plays, which may be staged as part of Freshman Showcase. We will begin with realism, then move on to discuss challenges to realism and questions of dramatic style. We will conclude with modern and contemporary plays that provide particular staging challenges. Some class sessions will be devoted to mock production meetings in which students will take on the roles of directors and designers. By the end of the course, students should be confident in their ability to read a play and visualize it for the stage.

Required Texts:

The Wadsworth Anthology of Drama: Brief Sixth Edition. Ed. W.B. Worthen. (Boston: Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2011).

William Shakespeare, *The Tempest* (any edition)

Other texts to be provided online or as photocopies.

Required Productions and Papers:

You will be required to see two MSU Department of Theatre productions this semester, and to write essays about them. You are encouraged to see (and/or participate in) all THR productions.

Punk Rock runs from September 30-October 9 and *The Tempest* runs from November 10-20. *Temple* takes place October 21-22. *Carnival of the Absurd* will run from December 1-4. There will also be 1-2 student productions in the Second Stage series.

You MUST see *Punk Rock* and *The Tempest*. You are encouraged to participate in *Carnival of the Absurd*. You may purchase tickets, or you may choose to serve as an usher and see the show for free. (If you are working on the show, you will be able to write a response based on your production assignment.) DO NOT wait until the last performance to see these shows, especially *Punk Rock*. Missing a performance because it is sold-out is not an acceptable excuse. If you would like to usher, please contact Stacey Greisinger in the main office, 113 Auditorium Building.

Assignments:

Attendance and Participation (10%): Regular attendance and assiduous participation are expected. You should be prepared to make a relevant contribution at least twice during each class discussion. Sleeping, texting, and social media use will have a negative effect on this grade.

Quizzes and in-class assignments (20%): There will be a quiz and/or in class assignment for each play we read, and for some of the critical readings.

Experimental Playwriting Project (10%): Students will write a short play (approximately 2 pages) exploring one of the avant-garde styles we study.

Punk Rock Production Response (20%): You will see the production and write a 3-5 page response in which you apply the tools we have learned to examine the play.

The Tempest Production Response (20%): A 3-5 page response paper analyzing the MSU Department of Theatre production of *The Tempest* with reference to genre and style.

Final Exam (20%): The take-home final exam will require students to push toward the larger implications of methods of play analysis.

Plagiarism and Academic Integrity:

If you use someone else's ideas as your own (for instance, copying a sentence from the internet into one of your papers without properly citing the author), a 0.0 for the assignment is automatic. Depending on the gravity of the offense, plagiarism may result in a 0.0 for the semester, and even a letter to the dean about your academic dishonesty. To understand expectations for academic integrity: <https://www.msu.edu/~ombud/index.html>

Grading Rubric:

4.0: Excellent work that makes a clear, sophisticated argument and explores subtle nuances. Demonstrates creative thought and a thorough understanding of course materials. Pushes toward larger implications.

3.0: Very good work that articulates an argument and shows solid understanding of course materials, but may lack creativity and may not push to further implications. (Or may demonstrate strong creativity but lack in organization.)

2.0: Acceptable work that makes an attempt at an argument. Shows a general understanding of the material, but may make errors in relation to subtler points. May have some problems with organization.

1.0: Marginally acceptable work that demonstrates major errors of understanding and organization. If creativity is demonstrated, it is done so in a way that is not relevant to the topic of the assignment. Some requirements of the assignment may not be fulfilled.

0.0: Unacceptable work that does not fulfill the requirements of the assignment.

How Percentages translate to GPA:

93%-100%=4.0

89%-92.9%=3.5

84%-88.9%=3.0

80%-83.9%=2.5

75%-79.9%=2.0

70%-74.9%=1.5

65%-69.9%=1.0

64.9% or less=0

Attendance: You may choose to miss two classes, no excuse necessary, unless there's an exam that day. Missing more than two classes will affect your participation assessment. DoT's

policies regarding missing class and attending a rehearsal/performance are in effect for this course.

D2L: This course will use D2L for posting documents and announcements. Please check your MSU email account regularly.

Religious observance: From Provost Youatt, “It is the responsibility of those students who wish to be absent due to religious observance to make arrangements in advance with their instructors. ... As an institution, we are committed to the value of inclusion, and so our practices must conform to our commitments. I am confident that working together we can continue to build an environment that supports and fosters diversity and inclusiveness.” Additional information on MSU’s Religious Observance policy can be found on the website of the Office of Inclusion and Intercultural Initiatives, <http://www.inclusion.msu.edu/diversityandinclusion/ReligiousObservance.html>

For students with a disability: I am available to discuss appropriate academic accommodations that you may require as a student with a disability. Requests for academic accommodations need to be made during the first week of the semester, so arrangements can be made. Students with a disability should contact the Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities (RCPD), 120 Bessey Hall, 517/353-9642 or TTY 517/355-1293. The *University’s Disability/Reasonable Accommodations Policy* is available on the web at www.rcpd.msu.edu.

Integrity of Scholarship and Grades: The principles of truth and honesty are recognized as fundamental to a community of teachers and scholars. The University expects that both faculty and students will honor these principles and in so doing protect the validity of University grades. This means that all academic work will be done by the student to whom it is assigned, without unauthorized aid of any kind. (See General Student Regulation 1.00, Scholarship and Grades, for specific regulations.) Instructors, for their part, will exercise care in the planning and supervision of academic work, so that honest effort will be positively encouraged. Please refer to General Student Regulation 1.00, Protection of Scholarship and Grades at: www.msu.edu/unit/ombud/RegsOrdsPolicies.html.

Spartan Code of Honor

“As a Spartan, I will strive to uphold values of the highest ethical standard. I will practice honesty in my work, foster honesty in my peers, and take pride in knowing that honor is worth more than grades. I will carry these values beyond my time as a student at Michigan State University, continuing the endeavor to build personal integrity in all that I do.” For more information visit: honorcode.msu.edu.

Use of Social Media: As members of a learning community, students are expected to respect the intellectual property of course instructors. All course materials presented to students are the copyrighted property of the course instructor and are subject to the following conditions of use:

1. Students may not record lectures or any other classroom activities without express written permission of the instructor. If permission is granted, students may only use the recordings only for their own course-related purposes.
2. Students may not share the recordings with other students enrolled in the class. Sharing is limited to using the recordings only for their own course-related purposes.
3. Students may not post the recordings or other course materials online or distribute them to anyone not enrolled in the class without the advance written permission of the course instructor and, if applicable, any students whose voice or image is included in the recordings.
4. Any student violating the conditions described above may face academic disciplinary sanctions. For more information see <http://acadgov.msu.edu/>

Class/Rehearsal/Performance Policy

Our primary focus is your education. Classes should take precedence over production. To ensure that this focus remain balanced we have instituted a “no class attendance means no rehearsal policy” for all BFA and MFA actors and Stage Managers.

Every course has different attendance guidelines. This policy is related to the number of allowed absences in any THR or DAN class. If you exceed the number of allowed absences for any individual class, the Director of the production that you are involved with will be notified regarding the break of policy and you will not be permitted to participate in that evening’s rehearsal or performance. Please check the attendance policy carefully on all syllabi.

As an example, most acting classes allow two unexcused absences. You may use these at any time and it will not affect your attendance at rehearsal or performance. If you miss class again and have exceeded your limit of allowed absences, you will not be allowed to attend that evening’s rehearsal or performance. This is related to all THR and DAN classes.

Honors Option: Honors College students who wish to pursue an Honors Option for this course should speak with the instructor early in the semester. Past H-Options have involved giving a lecture presentation on the historical context of a play studied by the class, or seeing an additional production and writing a paper about it.

Course Schedule (schedule is tentative and subject to change):

Readings are due on the date listed. We will discuss those readings in class that day.

WEEK ONE

Thursday, 9/1

Introductions

Dramatic Structure and Freytag’s Pyramid; Plot-Bead Diagrams

WEEK TWO

Tuesday, 9/6

Susan Glaspell, *Trifles* (Worthen 669-674) AND “A Jury of Her Peers” (Worthen 660-668)

- Thursday, 9/8 Realism: Henrik Ibsen, *A Doll House* (Worthen 415-440)
- WEEK THREE:
Tuesday, 9/13 Lajos Egri, "Premise" from *Art of Dramatic Writing* [D2L]; Ibsen cont'd
- Thursday, 9/15 Rejecting Realism: Alfred Jarry, *Ubu Roi* (Worthen 441-458)
- WEEK FOUR:
Tuesday, 9/20 Dada/Surrealism/Theatre of Cruelty: Short play readings on D2L
Also read "Artaud and the Theatre of Cruelty" (Worthen 406-407) and
Artaud "The Theatre and Its Double" Excerpt (Worthen 641-646)
- Thursday, 9/22 Theatre of the Absurd: Short plays and Critical Readings on D2L
Also read "Theatre of the Absurd" (Worthen 407-8)
- WEEK FIVE:
Tuesday, 9/27 **Short Play Assignment Due**; in-class readings of plays
- Thursday, 9/29 Expressionism: Sophie Treadwell, *Machinal* (Worthen 675-702)
[September 30-October 9: *Punk Rock*, Studio 60 Theatre, Auditorium Building]
- WEEK SIX:
Tuesday, 10/4 Sophocles, *Oedipus the King*; also read Worthen 13-20 on Greek
Theatre
- Thursday, 10/6 Aristotle, *Poetics* (excerpt; Worthen 88-96); *Oedipus* cont'd
- WEEK SEVEN:
Tuesday, 10/11 Molière, *Tartuffe* (Worthen 310-338)
- Thursday, 10/13 Elinor Fuchs, "EF's Visit to a Small Planet" [D2L]; *Tartuffe* cont'd
- WEEK EIGHT:
Tuesday, 10/18 Discussion of MSU THR Production of *Punk Rock*
***Punk Rock* Critical Response Essay due**
- Tuesday, 10/20 Screen *Theater of War*
- WEEK NINE:
Tuesday, 10/25 Bertolt Brecht, *Mother Courage and Her Children* (519-547)
Also read Brecht, "The Street Scene." (Worthen 636-640)
- Thursday, 10/27 *Mother Courage*, cont'd

WEEK TEN:

Tuesday, 11/1 William Shakespeare, *The Tempest* [Any edition]
 Thursday, 11/3 *Tempest* cont'd

WEEK ELEVEN:

Tuesday, 11/8 Caryl Churchill, *Cloud 9* (572-600)
 Thursday, 11/10 *Cloud 9*, cont'd
 [November 11-20: *The Tempest*, Pasant Theatre at Wharton Center]

WEEK TWELVE:

Tuesday, 11/15 In-class screening of *Changing Stages: Between Brecht and Beckett*
 Thursday, 11/17 Samuel Beckett, *Endgame* (548-571)

WEEK THIRTEEN:

Tuesday, 11/22 Amiri Baraka, *Dutchman* (Worthen 764-774)
 Also read Baraka, "The Revolutionary Theatre" excerpt (869-871)
 Thursday, 11/25 Thanksgiving: Class will not meet

WEEK FOURTEEN:

Tuesday, 11/29 Anna Deavere Smith, *Fires in the Mirror* (Worthen 837-867)
 Thursday, 12/1 Augusto Boal, from *Theatre of the Oppressed* (Worthen 1057-1063)
 Luis Valdez, *Los Vendidos* (Worthen 775-780)
 Luis Valdez, *No Saco Nada de la Escuela* [D2L]

WEEK FIFTEEN:

Tuesday, 12/6 Griselda Gambaro, *Information for Foreigners* (899-919)
 Also read "Argentina" section in Worthen (876-878)
 Thursday, 12/8 Discussion and review. Prep for Final Exam.

** Take-Home FINAL EXAM due Tuesday, December 13 by 12:45 PM**

We will meet during the final exam time, 12:45-2:45 PM to discuss