

Theatre 332: History and Theory of Comedy (3 credits)
Fall 2016: M/W 12:40 PM-2:30 PM, C304 Snyder Hall

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Office: Auditorium 133
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Office Hours:
4:00-5:00 PM Tue, 10:00 AM
11:00 AM Wed, & by
appointment

Course Description: Topics in Theatre Studies

Catalog Description: Analysis of aesthetic, social, economic, and/or political issues in theatre, drama, and performance practices, historic or contemporary.

History and Theory of Comedy will offer intensive readings on such topics as Classical Comedy, Shakespearean Comedy, Restoration Comedy, Commedia dell'arte, and Comedy of Manners. A significant focus of the course will be on translation and adaptation of comedy across cultures and time periods. Students will have the opportunity to engage with comedy as critics and as artists.

Required Texts:

Robert W. Corrigan, ed. *Classical Comedy: Greek and Roman* (New York: Applause Theatre Book Publishers, 1987). ISBN: 978-0-936839-85-1 List price: \$19.99 [CCGnR in schedule]

William Shakespeare, *The Tempest* (any edition)

Janet Bain Kopito, ed. *Four Great Restoration Comedies* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2005). ISBN: 0-486-44570-4. List Price: \$5.00 [4GRC in schedule]

Collegeville Course packet #33592. Price: \$25.95. Available at Collegeville Textbook Store, 321 E Grand River Ave, East Lansing, MI 48823.

Additional readings to be provided online or as photocopies. Students will be expected to read and thoroughly analyze one comic memoir or biography; these may be purchased individually or checked out of the library.

Students are expected to see (or participate in) the three Department of Theatre productions: *Punk Rock*, *The Tempest*, and *Carnival of the Absurd*. Tickets can be purchased through the box office, but if you sign up to usher you can see the show for free on the night that you usher. Because *The Tempest* is classified as a Comedy, we will also read it.

Course Objectives:

- To introduce concepts of historical and textual analysis and their application to contemporary theatrical production
- To consider comedy as socially and historically situated
- To develop skills of reading comprehension and understanding arguments
- To practice clarity and argumentation in written and oral expression for different kinds of audiences
- To improve visual analysis skills
- To nurture effective collaboration

Assignments:

Reading Worksheets, Quizzes, and In-Class Writing Assignments (40%): A sizable portion of your grade is daily effort at keeping up with reading and assignments. We will work together to analyze

the course readings, and you will be given time in class to work on smaller portions of the written projects.

Classical Comedy Directing/Adaptation/Design Project (20%): A written statement of 800-1200 words articulating a director's concept statement; a design statement (with appropriate research and/or renderings); or a proposal for adapting a classical comedy as a playwright/screenwriter.

Restoration/Comedy as Criticism Monologue (10%): Students will write and perform a 1-2 page monologue as an updated Restoration Comedy character, or a comically critical approach to a text.

Memoir/Biography Project (20%): Students will write a 1000-word review of a memoir or biography of a comedian. A series of worksheets will guide the writing process.

Final Exam (10%): The final exam will assess skills of reading comprehension, visual analysis, and the uses of theatre history in professional theatre contexts. The exam will take place on Thursday, December 14 from 12:45 PM-2:45 PM in our regular classroom.

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

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: Students enrolled in the Honors College who are interested in pursuing an Honors Option for this course should discuss this with the instructor early in the semester.

Course Schedule (subject to change): Reading Assignments are DUE on the date listed

WEEK ONE

Wednesday, 8/31 Introduction to the Course and one another

WEEK TWO

Wednesday, 9/3 Reading: Morreall, John, "Philosophy of Humor", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2013 Edition) [D2L]
DUE: Discussion Board Post on D2L. Please complete initial post by 11:59 PM on Tuesday, 9/2.

WEEK THREE:

Monday, 9/12 Reading: Sutherland, “Aristophanes and the Scope of Comedy” and Aristophanes, *Lysistrata* [CCGnR: pp. 1-68]

Wednesday, 9/14 Reading: Corrigan, "Aristophanic Comedy: The Conscience of a Conservative" and Aristophanes, *The Birds* [CCGnR: pp. 69-160]
Director/Designer/Adapter Project Assigned

WEEK FOUR:

Monday, 9/19 Reading: D'Atri, "Introduction" and Menander, *The Grouch* [CCGnR pp. 161-234]
DUE: Proposal for Memoir/Biography Project

Wednesday, 9/21 Reading: Corrigan, "Plautus and Farce;" Plautus, *The Menaechmi*
[CCGnR
pp. 235-340]

WEEK FIVE:

Monday, 9/26 Translating Roman Comedy: Screen NEH Roman Comedy scenes
Reading: Assigned script excerpt [D2L]

Wednesday, 9/28 Reading: Bovie, "Introduction" and Plautus, *Mostellaria (The Haunted House)* [CCGnR pp. 341-412.]

***Punk Rock opens 9/30**

WEEK SIX:

Monday, 10/3 Reading: Bovie, "Introduction" and Terence, *The Self-Tormentor* [CCGnR pp. 413-484]

Wednesday, 10/5 DUE: Classical Comedy Director/Designer/Adapter project

WEEK SEVEN:

Monday, 10/10 Reading: Hroswitha, *Dulcitius* [D2L]
In-class: Screen *In Search of Shakespeare* Part 1; discussion of medieval drama

Wednesday, 10/12 Reading: Hartley, *The Shakespearean Dramaturg*, Chapters 2-7 [CP 1-16]
In-class: Reading discussion; Memoir/Biography Organization work

WEEK EIGHT:

Monday, 10/17 Reading: Shakespeare, *The Tempest*

Wednesday, 10/19 Restoration Comedy
Reading: Wycherly, *The Country Wife* (4GRC)

***TEMPLE October 21-22**WEEK NINE:

Monday, 10/24 Reading: Etherege, *The Man of Mode* (4GRC)

Wednesday, 10/26 Reading: Behn, *The Rover* (4GRC)

WEEK TEN:

Monday, 10/31 Reading: Susan Sontag, Notes on "Camp" [D2L]

Wednesday, 11/2 DUE: Restoration Monologue/Comedy as Criticism Monologue

WEEK ELEVEN:

Monday, 11/7 Reading: Rudlin, "Origins" [CP 31-41]
Commedia dell'arte

Wednesday, 11/9 Reading: Bermel, "Introduction" [CP 43-52] and Molière, *The Flying Doctor* [CP 53-62]
Commedia dell'arte and Molière

****Tempest* opens 11/10**WEEK TWELVE:

Monday, 11/14 Reading: Gozzi, *The Serpent Lady*

Wednesday, 11/16 Begin Screening of *Molière*

WEEK THIRTEEN:

Monday, 11/21 Complete Screening of *Molière*
Discussion

Wednesday, 11/23 Memoir Project Work Time

*Thursday: Thanksgiving

WEEK FOURTEEN:

Monday, 11/28 Reading: Molière, *The Misanthrope* (trans. Neil Bartlet) and Robert Falls
et al "Production Dramaturgy of a Classic." [CP]

Wednesday, 11/30 Reading: Hampton, *The Philanthropist* and Kenneth Bennett, "*The Misanthrope* and *The Philanthropist*: A Study in Comic Mimesis." [CP]

WEEK FIFTEEN:

Monday, 12/5 Reading: Neil LaBute, *The Shape of Things* [CP] and Oona Hatton, "The Performance of Theatre Criticism" [D2L]

Wednesday, 12/7 DUE: Memoir/Biography Project
Wrap-up and Discussion of Memoir Projects

FINAL EXAM: Thursday, December 14 from 12:45 PM-2:45 PM in our regular classroom