

THR 431: STUDIES IN THEATRE HISTORY (3 CR):  
GLOBAL THEATRE: POSTCOLONIALISM AND INTERCULTURALISM  
Spring 2017: Tu/Th 3:00 PM-4:50 PM C303 Snyder Hall

Prof. Daniel Smith ([smit2030@msu.edu](mailto:smit2030@msu.edu))  
Office: Auditorium 133  
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Office Hours:  
Wed 2:30 PM-3:30 PM  
Thurs 11:40 AM-12:40 PM  
And by appointment

**Course Description:**

This course begins with a discussion of the origins of theatre and the relationship between theatre and ritual. The course's global approach is designed to raise questions about the centrality of Western narratives of theatre history. In the first half of the semester we will consider Postcolonial drama with a focus on African theatre of the twentieth century, with a focus on the critical apparatus of Biodun Jeyifo's anthology *Modern African Drama*. Students will examine other anthologies to broaden the scope of our inquiry into other regions and traditions (Asia, South America, Eastern Europe, the Middle East, Oceania, Diasporas, Indigenous communities, etc.) and to practice skills of organizational analysis. The second half of the semester explores Intercultural Theatre, with a focus on exchanges between Euro/American and Asian cultures. First we will examine case studies in the story of the Chalk Circle, first staged as a zaju play in tenth-century China and later adapted/appropriated by playwrights Bertolt Brecht and Charles Mee. Other intercultural case studies will include Julie Taymor's use of Balinese puppetry and the Japanese Takarazuka Revue. Our intercultural journey will lead us to the MSU Museum, where the course will culminate in student performances that engage with museum exhibits such as the Hall of World Cultures.

**Required Texts:**

Biodun Jeyifo, ed. *Modern African Drama: A Norton Critical Edition* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2002).

Bertolt Brecht, *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* (any edition/translation is fine)

Additional readings to be provided online or as photocopies.

**Course Objectives:**

- To introduce concepts of historical and textual analysis and their application to contemporary theatrical production
- To consider the implications of Postcolonial and Intercultural theatre
- To develop skills of reading comprehension and understanding arguments, particularly with regard to structural organization
- 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 (20%): 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 and performance projects.

Attendance and Participation (10%): Regular attendance and assiduous participation are expected. Points will be deducted for staring into your phone or computer and smiling/laughing at irrelevant content.

Anthology Project and Presentation (25%): Each student will write a 1000-word scholarly review of an anthology of plays from the world theatre (3-5 pages).

In-class Exams (10% each; total of 20%): Exam #1 is on Modern African Drama. Exam #2 is on Intercultural Theatre and versions of the Chalk Circle.

Museum Performance Project (15%): You will work in groups to respond to exhibits at the MSU Museum, incorporating ideas we have discussed in class. This will be a public performance. (Tentatively scheduled for April 25 during class time.) You are welcome to create a video installation, but you will need to bring your own laptop. You should turn in a script.

Final Reflection Paper/Take-Home Exam (10%): You may choose to reflect further on your museum performance or other topics we have covered. A series of prompts will be provided. We will discuss these reflection papers on Thursday, May 4 from 3:00 PM-5:00 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](http://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](http://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](http://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 based on the needs of the class): Reading Assignments are DUE on the date listed**

#### WEEK ONE

Tuesday, 1/10 Introduction: Ritual and Theatre

Thursday, 1/12 Origins of Theatre/Theatre History Discussion  
Read: Mark Damen on Origins of Theatre [D2L]

WEEK TWO:

Tuesday, 1/17 Postcolonial Contexts for African Theatre: Readings and Reports  
Jeyifo Preface vii-xii and Critical Readings 415-493 (Fanon, Soyinka, Ngugi,

Thursday, 1/19 Additional Context Readings and Reports: Jeyifo, Rubin, Fiebach, Kerr

WEEK THREE:

Tuesday, 1/24 Kateb Yacine, *Intelligence Powder* (Algeria: 1959), Jeyifo 64-91  
Context for Yacine: Jeyifo 506-522

Thursday, 1/26 Guest Artist Visit: Cori Ellison, Opera Dramaturg and Translator

WEEK FOUR:

Tuesday, 1/31 Ama Ata Aidoo, *The Dilemma of a Ghost* (Ghana: 1965), Jeyifo 242-275  
Context for Aidoo: Jeyifo 582-601

Thursday, 2/2 Tawfik al-Hakim, *Fate of a Cockroach* (Egypt: 1966), Jeyifo 3-63  
Context for al-Hakim: Jeyifo 494-505

WEEK FIVE:

Tuesday, 2/7 Fugard/Kani/Ntshona, *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* (South Africa: 1973), Jeyifo 92-125; Context: Jeyifo 523-547.

Thursday, 2/9 Wole Soyinka, *Death and the King's Horseman* (Nigeria: 1975)  
Context for Soyinka: Jeyifo pp. 548-569

WEEK SIX:

Tuesday, 2/14 Tsegaye Gabre-Medhin, *Collision of Altars* (Ethiopia: 1977)  
Context for Gabre-Medhin: Jeyifo pp. 570-581

Thursday, 2/16 Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Ngugi wa Mirii, *I Will Marry When I Want*  
(Kenya: 1982)  
Contexts: Jeyifo pp. 602-614

WEEK SEVEN:

Tuesday, 2/21 Femi Osofisan, *Esu and the Vagabond Minstrels* (Nigeria: 1986)  
Contexts: Jeyifo pp. 615-636  
Anthology Presentations Work Time/Review for Midterm

Thursday, 2/23 **Exam #1: Modern African Drama**

WEEK EIGHT:

Tuesday, 2/28 Anthology Project Presentations

Thursday, 3/2 Anthology Project Presentations (cont'd)  
**\*\*Anthology Review Papers Due\*\***

WEEK NINE:

Tuesday, 3/7

No Class: Spring Break

Thursday, 3/9

No Class: Spring Break

WEEK TEN:

Tuesday, 3/14

Intro to Classical Chinese Theatre

Read: West and Idema, "Introduction" to *Monks, Bandits, Lovers, and Immortals* [D2L]

Thursday, 3/16

Read: Li Xingdao, *The Record of the Chalk Circle*

WEEK ELEVEN:

Tuesday, 3/21

Read: Bertolt Brecht, *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*

Read: Wenwei Du, "The Chalk Circle Comes Full Circle."

Thursday, 3/23

Read: Bertolt Brecht, "Alienation Effects in Chinese Acting."

Min Tian, "'Alienation-Effect' for Whom? Brecht's (Mis)Interpretation of the Classical Chinese Theatre." *Asian Theatre Journal* 14.2 (Fall 1997): 200-222. [D2L]

WEEK TWELVE:

Tuesday, 3/28

Read: Charles Mee, *Full Circle*

<http://www.charlesmee.org/html/fullcircle.html>

Thursday, 3/31

**Exam #2:** Chalk Circle and Intercultural Theatre

WEEK THIRTEEN:

Tuesday, 4/4

Visit to MSU Museum: \*Meet at MSU Museum (across the street from the Library)\*

Thursday, 4/6

Museum Performance Project Planning

Read: MSU Museum Website descriptions of exhibitions; Anna Johnson, "Coco Fusco and Guillermo Gómez-Peña" *BOMB Magazine* Interview

<http://bombmagazine.org/article/1599/>

WEEK FOURTEEN:

Tuesday, 4/11

Readings on Julie Taymor and Balinese Puppetry

Thursday, 4/13

Takarazuka Revue: Browse website <http://kageki.hankyu.co.jp/english/>

WEEK FIFTEEN:

Tuesday, 4/18

Japanese Noh Theatre

Read: Zeami, *A Mirror to the Flower* [D2L]

Thursday, 4/20

Rehearsal/Workshop Time for MSU Museum Performances

WEEK SIXTEEN:

Tuesday, 4/25           MSU Museum Performance

Thursday, 4/27         Course Wrap-Up

**Final Exam Time:** Thursday, May 4, 3:00 PM-5:00 PM, C303 Snyder. We will meet during this time to discuss your take-home final/reflection paper.