

Theatre 832: Comparative Drama and Criticism  
Spring 2019: Friday 9:10AM-12:00PM, C304 Snyder Hall

Prof. Daniel Smith  
[smit2030@msu.edu](mailto:smit2030@msu.edu)

Phone: 517-884-7789

Office: 133 Auditorium  
Office Hours: Wednesday 2:00 PM-3:00 PM  
Thursday 11:00 AM-12:00 noon  
And by appointment

**Course Description:**

Catalogue Description: Comparative study and critical examination of selected playwrights, theorists, developments, movements, and trends in world drama from their beginnings to the present.

This course is intended to develop competencies in using methods from Theatre Studies to support critical analysis of plays as an artist and as a teacher. We begin with intensive study of pedagogies of Play Analysis in the context of Theatre Studies curriculum within the Theatre major and college-level general education. We then shift to discussion of dramatic canon, translation, and adaptation, loosely aligning with the department season as a laboratory for Theatre Studies. A book review project gives students the opportunity to delve into a nascent area of critical expertise, with the possibility of building a course syllabus around a chosen anthology of plays or criticism, and/or narrowing a focus for scholarly research interests. Theories of translation are studied in conjunction with classical comedy (Plautus and Molière), referring back to adaptation, pedagogy, and questions of canon. Students will complete a final project tailored to their interests in acting, design, teaching and/or scholarship.

**Course Objectives:**

- To investigate a breadth of genres and styles in dramatic literature and criticism
- To identify an area of critical expertise for in-depth examination
- To explore pedagogies of play analysis and theatre studies
- To harness the utility of book reviews for scholarship and teaching
- To develop a critical voice as an artist, teacher, and scholar

**Required Materials:**

A course packet available from Allegra Printing: [www.coursepack.alleggra.net](http://www.coursepack.alleggra.net)

Cost: Electronic (non-print pdf) \$26.83; Print copy \$34.88; Both for \$41.55.

Additional readings to be provided online or as handouts.

Students are also expected to see Department of Theatre productions of *Oklahoma!*, *A Wrinkle in Time*, and *The Bacchae*.

**Assignments:**

Attendance and Participation: Weekly attendance and assiduous participation are expected. You should aim to contribute to discussion at least twice per class session. (20%)

Critical Journal Assignments: Students will respond to short “critical journal” assignments throughout the semester. Some of these are intended to spark discussion, while others are intended to lead to larger projects. They should be posted to discussion boards on D2L. (20%)

Play Analysis Syllabus: Students will complete a syllabus for an introductory play analysis course for Theatre majors. (20%)

Book Review Project: A scholarly review of an anthology of plays or critical writing. Students should choose an anthology with a view to developing an area of expertise in dramatic literature and/or criticism, with the possibility of using this anthology as a textbook for a Theatre Studies or General Education course syllabus. (20%)

Final Project: A research-based original project related to the course topic. The project may be scholarly, artistic, and/or pedagogical in nature. This may take the form of a syllabus and instructional materials for a course on dramatic literature; a traditional research paper; a dramaturgy packet; acting preparation materials (scored script, character analysis, etc.); design research/model/renderings. This project may emerge from other assignments in the course, such as Critical Journals or the Book Review Project. Students are encouraged to consult with the instructor early in the semester about ideas for the final project, and to pursue opportunities for expansion and revision of the project after the course has ended. (20%)

### **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), an F for the assignment is automatic. Depending on the gravity of the offense, plagiarism may result in an F 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 general understanding of material, but may make errors on 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:** THR policies regarding missing class and attending a rehearsal/performance are in effect for this course. In any graduate seminar, the expectation is that you will not miss class. Exceptions for professional activities, emergencies, and family obligations are negotiable, but you must keep the instructor informed in advance.

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

**Accessibility and Accommodations:** Michigan State University is committed to providing equal opportunity for participation in all programs, services and activities. Accommodations for persons with disabilities, with documentation from the MSU Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities, may be requested by contacting me at the start of the term and/or two weeks prior to the accommodation date (test, project, etc). Requests received after this date will be honored whenever possible.

### **Weekly Schedule (subject to change based on the needs of the class):**

All course readings are DUE on the date listed and will be discussed in class that day. Some weeks list AND/OR readings for plays. Ideally you would read both plays and choose one to engage with more deeply in class. Classroom activities in those weeks will involve small group discussion of one play and reporting back to the larger group about how you would approach teaching this play to undergraduates.

### **Week 1: Introductions**

#### **Friday 1/11**

- Anne Berkeley, "Changing Views of Knowledge and the Struggle for Undergraduate Theatre Curriculum, 1900-1980." [D2L]
- Jeanne Klein, "Review of *Teaching Theatre Today*." *Theatre Topics* 17.2 (September 2007), 69-71. [D2L]
- Daniel Smith, "Big Ten Theatre Studies Requirements." Internal Memo. Theatre Studies Area. Michigan State University Department of Theatre. East Lansing, MI: 2017. [D2L]
- Daniel Smith, "Brecht for Theater Majors: Teaching Epic Theater in a Play Analysis Course." *Brecht Yearbook* 41 (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2017), pp. 63-76.

Before class, please reflect on your experiences with required courses in your undergraduate curriculum, both within your major and in general education.

## Week 2: Classical Dramatic Theory and Play Analysis

### **Friday 1/18**

- Aristotle, *Poetics* [D2L]
- Freytag, “Five Parts and Three Crises of the Drama” [CP]
- Euripides, *The Bacchae* (Paul Woodruff or T.A. Buckley translation)

Critical Reflection 1: To what extent do you agree with Aristotle and Freytag about what makes a satisfying dramatic experience?

## Week 3: Play Analysis Methods and Pedagogy

### **Friday 1/25**

- Elinor Fuchs, “E.F.’s Visit to a Small Planet” [D2L]
- Julian Olf, “Reading the Dramatic Text for Production” [D2L]
- Geoff Proehl, “Pattern” from *Toward a Dramaturgical Sensibility* [CP]
- Shelly Orr, “Teaching Play Analysis” [D2L]
- Oscar Wilde, *The Importance of Being Earnest* [D2L]
- Daniel Smith, “Importance of Being Earnest Audition Information” [D2L]

Critical Reflection 2: How do you read a play when you read it as an artist? How is this different from reading it as a student to discuss in a Theatre Studies course?

## Week 4: Canon

### **Friday 2/1**

- Michael Billington, 101 Greatest Plays List (2015) [D2L]
- Susan Jonas, “The Other Canon: 10 Centuries of Plays by Women.” (2015) [D2L]
- David Clauson, “Alternative Canon” (2018) [D2L]
- Terrence McNally, *And Away We Go* [CP]

Critical Reflection 3: What plays were you taught as canonical? Did you appreciate this or resent this, or were you ambivalent? What plays/movements are essential for a Theatre major to learn?

## Week 5: Canon and Musical Theatre

### **Friday 2/8**

Note: I suggest reading the secondary materials chronologically this week, in the order listed below.

- Alicia Kae Koger, “Trends in Musical Theatre Scholarship” (1992) [D2L]
- Rebecca Rugg, “What It Used to Be: Nostalgia and the State of the Broadway Musical.” (2002) [D2L]
- Donatella Galella, “Redefining America, Arena Stage, and Territory Folks in a Multiracial *Oklahoma!*” (2015) [D2L]
- Daniel Pollack-Pelzner, “The Hidden History of *Oklahoma!*” (2018) [D2L]
- Excerpts from Lynn Riggs, *Green Grow the Lilacs* [D2L]

For class, be prepared to reflect on musical theatre and exceptionalism. Why is musical theatre often seen as a separate form with separate training programs and a separate canon? Would you include musical theatre texts in your Play Analysis course?

#### Week 6: Translation and Pedagogy

##### **Friday 2/15**

- Dorothy Chansky, “American Higher Education and Dramatic Literature In(to) English.” [D2L]
- Michael Evans, “Credo” [D2L]
- Sarah Ruhl, “Introduction” to *Three Sisters* [D2L]
- Dassia Posner, “Translating into Polyphony: Creating a Dramaturgical Translation of *Three Sisters* at Steppenwolf.”
- Recommended: Anton Chekhov, *Three Sisters* (any translation)

**DUE:** Play Analysis Syllabus

\**Oklahoma!* Runs 2/15-2/24

#### Week 7: Critical Approaches to Shakespeare

##### **Friday 2/22**

- Andrew Hartley, *The Shakespearean Dramaturg* Chapters 2-7 [CP]
- Laura Bohannon, “Shakespeare in the Bush” [D2L]
- Caridad Svich, *Twelve Ophelias* [D2L] AND/OR Aimé Césaire, *A Tempest* [D2L]

Critical Journal 4: Shakespeare

#### Week 8: Adaptation

##### **Friday 3/1**

- Linda Hutcheon, Introduction to *A Theory of Adaptation* [CP]
- Leanore Leiblein, Review of Hutcheon in *Borrowers and Lenders: A Journal of Shakespeare Appropriation* [D2L]
- William Whittington, Review of Hutcheon in *Comparative Literature Studies* [D2L]
- George Dibdin Pitt, *The String of Pearls (Sweeney Todd)* AND/OR Mac Wellman, *Dracula* [D2L]

Critical Journal 5: Approaching Adaptation

#### Week 9: Spring Break

Friday 3/8: Class will not meet

#### Week 10: Adapturgy

##### **Friday 3/15**

- Jane Barnette, *Adapturgy: The Dramaturg’s Art and Theatrical Adaptation* (2017) [CP]
- Mary Cowper, “Review of Adapturgy” (2018) [D2L]
- Tracy Young, *A Wrinkle in Time* (adapted from the novel by Madeleine L’Engle) [D2L]
- Quinn Mattfield, *Frankenstein* (adapted from the novel by Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley) [D2L]

### Week 11: Roman Comedy, Commedia dell'arte and Practice-Based Research

#### **Friday 3/22**

- Tim Moore and Sharon James, "Roman Comedy in Performance: Using the Videos of the 2012 NEH Summer Institute." *Didaskalia* 12 (2015) [D2L]
- Mimi Kammer, "Reflections on the 2012 Institute on Roman Comedy in Performance: Revising the Procedures of the National Endowment for the Humanities through Theatre Production as Research and Pedagogy." *Theatre/Practice* vol. 4 (2015). [D2L]
- Erin Moodie, "License to Thrill: Humor and Linguistic Accuracy in Translations of Roman Comedy." *The Classical Journal* vol. 111, no. 1 (October-November 2015), 11-23. [D2L]
- Plautus, *Pseudolus* scenes: B,C,D,E (video and text) [D2L]

Critical Journal 6: Practice-Based Research/Practice As Research

### Week 12: Molière in Translation and Adaptation

#### **Friday 3/29**

- Molière, *The Misanthrope* (trans. Neil Bartlett) [CP]
- Robert Falls et al, "Production Dramaturgy of a Classic" [CP]
- Christopher Hampton, *The Philanthropist* [CP]
- Kenneth C. Bennett, "*The Philanthropist* and *The Misanthrope*" [CP]

### Week 13: Reading Week

**Friday 4/5:** Class will not meet. You are encouraged to schedule a meeting with me to discuss your Anthology Review Project.

### Week 14: Anthology Review Projects

**Friday 4/12:** Class Presentations of Anthology Review Projects

**DUE:** Book Review

### Week 15: Japanese Noh Theatre, Greek Tragedy, and Problems of Intercultural Theatre

#### **Friday 4/19**

- Zeami, *A Mirror to the Flower* (1424) [D2L]
- Giannis Tsaras et al, "Traditional Noh Theatre and Ancient Greek Tragedy: Comparative Study Towards a Common Performance" [D2L]
- Min Tian, "'Alienation Effect' for Whom? Brecht's (Mis)Interpretation of the Classical Chinese Theatre" *Asian Theatre Journal* 14.2 (Autumn 1997): pp. 200-222. [D2L]

### Week 16: Chalk Circles

#### **Friday 4/26**

- Wenwei Du, "The Chalk Circle Comes Full Circle: From Yuan Drama to the Western Stage to Peking Opera." *Asian Theatre Journal* 12.2 (Autumn 1995): pp. 307-325. [D2L]
- Li Xingdao, trans. West and Idema, *The Record of the Chalk Circle* [D2L]
- Charles Mee, *Full Circle* [D2L]
- Recommended: Bertolt Brecht, *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*

**Exam Week: Final Projects Due.** We will meet to discuss them at the scheduled exam time: Tuesday, April 30, 2019, 12:45pm - 2:45pm in C304 Snyder Hall.

### Bibliography

Aristotle, *Poetics*. Trans. S.H. Butcher. 1902.

Jane Barnette, *Adapturgy: The Dramaturg's Art and Theatrical Adaptation*. (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2017).

Kenneth C. Bennett, "The Philanthropist and The Misanthrope: A Study in Comic Mimesis." *Theatre Research International* 6 (1981) pp. 85-92.

Anne Berkeley, "Changing Views of Knowledge and the Struggle for Undergraduate Theatre Curriculum, 1900-1980." Anne Fliotsos and Gail Medford, eds. *Teaching Theatre Today: Pedagogical Views of Theatre in Higher Education*. (New York and London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

Laura Bohannon, "Shakespeare in the Bush." *Natural History* (August-September 1966).

Dorothy Chansky, "American Higher Education and Dramatic Literature In(to) English." *Theatre Survey* 54.3 (September 2013) pp. 419-438.

Mary Cowper, "Review of *Adapturgy*." *MBR Bookwatch* 17.3 (March 2018).

Wenwei Du, "The Chalk Circle Comes Full Circle: From Yuan Drama to the Western Stage to Peking Opera." *Asian Theatre Journal* 12.2 (Autumn 1995): pp. 307-325.

Michael Evans, "Credo" in *The Mercurian: A Journal of Theatrical Translation* 4.1 (Spring 2013), pp. 4-14.

Robert Falls et al, "Production Dramaturgy of a Classic." *Dramaturgy in American Theatre: A Source Book* (Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace, 1997), pp. 308-316.

Gustav Freytag, "Five Parts and Three Crises of the Drama," from *Freytag's Technique of the Drama*, trans. Elias J. MacEwen (Chicago: S.C. Griggs and Co., 1895).

Elinor Fuchs, "E.F.'s Visit to a Small Planet" *Theater* 34.2 (2004), pp. 4-9.

Donatella Galella, "Redefining America, Arena Stage, and Territory Folks in a Multiracial Oklahoma!" *Theatre Journal* 67 (2015), pp. 213-233.

Christopher Hampton, *The Philanthropist: A Bourgeois Comedy* (London: Faber and Faber, n.d.)

Andrew Hartley, *The Shakespearean Dramaturg: A Theoretical and Practical Guide* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), pp. 35-64.

Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006).

Mimi Kammer, "Reflections on the 2012 Institute on Roman Comedy in Performance: Revising the Procedures of the National Endowment for the Humanities through Theatre Production as Research and Pedagogy." *Theatre/Practice* vol. 4 (2015).

Jeanne Klein, "Review of *Teaching Theatre Today*." *Theatre Topics* 17.2 (September 2007), pp. 69-71.

Alicia Kae Koger, "Trends in Musical Theatre Scholarship: An Essay in Historiography." *New England Theatre Journal* vol. 3 (1992), pp. 69-85.

Terrence McNally, *And Away We Go*. In *Selected Works: A Memoir in Plays*. (New York: Grove Press, 2015).

Molière, *The Misanthrope*, trans. Neil Bartlett. *American Theatre* vol. 7 no. 4-5 (July/August 1990). Supplement pp. 1-18.

Erin Moodie, "License to Thrill: Humor and Linguistic Accuracy in Translations of Roman Comedy." *The Classical Journal* vol. 111, no. 1 (October-November 2015), 11-23.

Tim Moore and Sharon James, "Roman Comedy in Performance: Using the Videos of the 2012 NEH Summer Institute." *Didaskalia* 12 (2015).

Julian Olf, "Reading the Dramatic Text for Production." *Theatre Topics* 7.2 (1997), pp. 153-169.

Shelly Orr, "Teaching Play Analysis: How a Key Dramaturgical Skill Can Foster Critical Approaches." *Theatre Topics* 13.1 (March 2003), pp. 153-158.

George Dibdin Pitt, *The String of Pearls (Sweeney Todd)*. Michael Kilgariff, ed. *The Golden Age of Melodrama*. (London: Wolfe Publishing, 1974).

Dassia Posner, "Translating into Polyphony: Creating a Dramaturgical Translation of *Three Sisters* at Steppenwolf." *Theatre Topics* 23.1 (March 2013), 19-34.

Geoffrey S. Proehl, "Pattern" from *Toward a Dramaturgical Sensibility: Landscape and Journey* (Teaneck, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2011), pp. 85-121.

Rebecca Rugg, "What It Used to Be: Nostalgia and the State of the Broadway Musical." *Theater* 32.2 (2002), pp. 44-55.

Daniel Smith, "Brecht for Theater Majors: Teaching Epic Theater in a Play Analysis Course." *Brecht Yearbook* 41 (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2017), pp. 63-76.

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

Giannis Tsaras et al, "Traditional Noh Theatre and Ancient Greek Tragedy: Comparative Study Towards a Common Performance" *Archi-cultural Interactions through the Silk Road*. Conference Proceedings. Nishinomiya, Japan. (July 2016), pp. 49-52.

Zeami, *A Mirror to the Flower*. 1424. Trans. Tom Hare. *Zeami: Performance Notes*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), pp. 96-128.