

THR 431: STUDIES IN THEATRE HISTORY (3 CR):
CLASSICAL RECEPTION AND INTERCULTURAL THEATRE
Spring 2018: Tu/Th 12:40 PM-2:30 PM C304 Snyder Hall

Prof. Daniel Smith (smit2030@msu.edu)
Office: Auditorium 133
Phone: 517-884-7789

Office Hours:
Wed 2:00 PM-3:00 PM
Thurs 11:00 AM-12:00 PM
And by appointment

Course Description:

This course interrogates what counts as a classic, and how classics change over time and across cultures. We begin with a study of musical theatre historiography to contextualize the department's production of *Oklahoma!* and the challenges of producing canonical musicals in our current moment. Tracing more recent developments in musical theatre, students will propose a jukebox musical or musical revue that makes a historical claim. A second unit explores Greek tragedy. Students will read Simon Goldhill's book *How to Stage Greek Tragedy Today* and will analyze one Greek tragedy through the six challenges noted by Goldhill: Space and Concept, Acting Style, The Chorus, Politics, Translation, Gods and Heroes. The final unit 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. The course culminates with a viewing of David Furumoto's production of *The Bacchae* using traditional Asian theatre techniques.

Course Objectives:

- To introduce concepts of historical and textual analysis and their application to contemporary theatrical production
- To consider the implications of Canonical musical theatre, Classical Greek theatre, 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

Required Texts:

Simon Goldhill, *How to Stage Greek Tragedy Today*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007.

Euripides, *Bacchae*, trans. Paul Woodruff. Hackett, 1997.

Bertolt Brecht, *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*. Any translation.

Additional texts to be provided online or as photocopies. Students are also expected to see Department of Theatre productions. We will discuss *Oklahoma!* and *The Bacchae* in this class.

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 written projects and presentations.

Attendance and Participation (20%): Regular attendance and assiduous participation are expected. Points will be deducted for staring into your phone or computer and smiling/laughing at irrelevant content.

Jukebox Musical Project and Presentation (20%): Each student will write a pitch for a jukebox musical that makes a historical claim and pitch their jukebox musical to the class (3-5 pages, ca. 1000 words).

Greek Tragedy Production Concept Paper (20%): Each student will write a production concept paper for *The Bacchae* (or another Greek tragedy chosen in consultation with the instructor), responding to the challenges of staging Greek tragedy as discussed by Simon Goldhill in *How to Stage Greek Tragedy Today* (3-5 pages, ca. 1000 words).

Take-Home Final Exam (20%): A take-home exam featuring short answers and essays will focus mainly on the intercultural theatre unit of the course. We will meet during the scheduled final exam time to discuss your answers.

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 based on the needs of the class):
Reading Assignments are DUE on the date listed

WEEK ONE

Tuesday, 1/8 Introductions: What is a Classic?; Musical Theatre History and Historiography

Thursday, 1/10 Read: Alicia Kae Koger, "Trends in Musical Theatre Scholarship" [D2L]
In-class screening: *Broadway: The American Musical* Episode 4: Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin'

WEEK TWO

Tuesday, 1/15 Read: Rebecca Rugg, "What it Used to Be: Nostalgia and the State of the Broadway Musical" [D2L]
Read: Peter Casey, "On Jukeboxy-ness" [D2L]

Thursday, 1/17 Read: Lynn Riggs, excerpts from *Green Grow the Lilacs* [D2L]
Read: Daniel Pollack-Pelzner, "The Hidden History of *Oklahoma!*" [D2L]

WEEK THREE:

Tuesday, 1/22 Read: Donatella Galella, "Redefining America, Arena Stage, and Territory Folks in a Multiracial *Oklahoma!*" [D2L]

Thursday, 1/24 Read: David Savran, "Trafficking in Transnational Brands: The New Broadway-Style Musical." [D2L]

WEEK FOUR:

Tuesday, 1/29 Read: Christine Margaret Young, "'Attention Must Be Paid,' Cried the Balladeer: The Concept Musical Defined" [D2L]

Thursday, 1/31 Read: Stacy Wolf, "Defying Gravity: Queer Conventions in the Musical *Wicked*." [D2L]
Jukebox Musical/Musical Revue Pitch Presentations begin

WEEK FIVE:

Tuesday, 2/5 Jukebox Musical/Musical Revue Pitch Presentations continue

Thursday, 2/7 Jukebox Musical/Musical Revue Pitch Presentations continue

WEEK SIX:

Tuesday, 2/12 Reading: Mark Damen on Origins of Theatre [D2L]
Reading: Aristotle's *Poetics* [D2L]

Thursday, 2/14 Reading: Euripides, *Bacchae* (trans. Paul Woodruff)

WEEK SEVEN:

Tuesday, 2/19 Reading: Goldhill, Introduction and Chapter 1, pp. 1-44
In-class: Reading review; Space and Concept workshop

Thursday, 2/21 Due: Spatial Analysis paragraph
Reading: Goldhill, Chapter 2, pp. 45-79
In-class: Reading review; Chorus screenings and workshop

WEEK EIGHT:

Tuesday, 2/26 Reading: Goldhill, Chapter 3, pp. 81-117
In-class: Reading review; discussion of Actor's role; 3-actor tracking

Thursday, 2/28 Due: Chorus paragraph and Actor paragraph
Reading: Goldhill, Chapter 4, pp. 119-152
In-class: Reading review; discussion of Greek theatre and politics

WEEK NINE:

SPRING BREAK: CLASS WILL NOT MEET TUESDAY 3/5 OR THURSDAY 3/7

WEEK TEN:

Tuesday, 3/12 Due: Politics and Relevance paragraph
Reading: Goldhill, Chapter 5, pp. 153-187
In-class: Reading review; Translation workshop

Thursday, 3/14 Due: Translation paragraph
Reading: Goldhill, Chapter 6, pp. 189-223
In-class: Reading review; work time for papers

WEEK ELEVEN:

Tuesday, 3/19 Greek Tragedy Unit Wrap-Up

DUE: Greek Tragedy Production Concept paper

Thursday, 3/21 Visit to MSU Museum: Origins of Theatre/Intercultural Theatre

WEEK TWELVE:

Tuesday, 3/26: Intro to Classical Chinese Theatre
Read: West and Idema, "Introduction" to *Monks, Bandits, Lovers, and Immortals* [D2L]

Thursday, 3/28: Read: Li Xingdao, *The Record of the Chalk Circle*

WEEK THIRTEEN:

Tuesday, 4/2: Read: Bertolt Brecht, "Alienation Effects in Chinese Acting."
Read: 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]

Thursday, 4/4: Takarazuka Revue: Browse website <http://kageki.hankyu.co.jp/english/>
In-class screening of *Dream Girls* (Takarazuka documentary)

WEEK FOURTEEN:

Tuesday, 4/9 Read: Bertolt Brecht, *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*
Read: Wenwei Du, "The Chalk Circle Comes Full Circle."

Thursday, 4/11 Read: Charles Mee, *Full Circle*
<http://www.charlesmee.org/html/fullcircle.html>

WEEK FIFTEEN:

Tuesday, 4/16 Japanese Noh Theatre
Read: Zeami, *A Mirror to the Flower* [D2L]

Thursday, 4/18 Japanese Kabuki Theatre

WEEK SIXTEEN:

Tuesday, 4/23 Discuss MSU Production of *The Bacchae*

Thursday, 4/25 Prep for Take-Home Final

**TAKE-HOME FINAL EXAM DUE WEDNESDAY, MAY 1 BY 10:00 AM.
WE WILL MEET AT THE SCHEDULED FINAL EXAM TIME, WEDNESDAY, MAY 1
10:00AM-12:00 PM TO DISCUSS.**