

Theatre 332: Topics in Theatre Studies: China, Theatre, and Intercultural Encounters  
(3 credits)

Spring 2015: M/W 10:20 AM-12:10 PM, 041 Kresge Art Center

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Office Hours:  
2:30-3:30 PM Tues, 2:30-3:30  
PM Wed., & by appointment

**Course Description:**

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

Inspired by the MSU's Year of China Initiative, this course explores China and Intercultural Performance. Students will respond to each of four course units with either a performance or a paper. Unit I: Performing China Today looks at the 2008 Beijing Olympics and the current exhibits on Chinese art at the Broad Museum. Unit II: Chinese/American Interactions considers Asian-American identities as presented in the Rodgers and Hammerstein musical *Flower Drum Song* and Alice Tuan's play *Some Asians*, as well as U.S.-China business and aesthetic exchanges presented by Arthur Miller and David Henry Hwang. Unit III details the traditional Chinese form *jingju* (Beijing Opera or Peking Opera) and its reception in the West, notably by Bertolt Brecht and David Henry Hwang. The final unit focuses on Chinese appropriations of Western aesthetics, with particular emphasis on the Nobel-prize-winning expatriate playwright Gao Xingjian. Throughout the course, students will be encouraged to take advantage of events related to the 2015 Year of China.

**Required Texts:**

Bertolt Brecht, *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*.

David Henry Hwang, *Chinglish*.

David Henry Hwang, *M. Butterfly*.

Gao Xingjian, *The Other Shore*

Additional readings to be provided online or as photocopies.

**Assignments:**

Response to Unit 1 (20%): A written response (2-3 pp.) to the Beijing Olympics and Broad Museum exhibits, or a performance response to one or more pieces at the Broad, followed by discussion questions written by the student.

Response to Unit 2 (20%): A written response (2-3 pp.) to one or more plays in this unit, or scene work from one of the plays in this unit, with scored script turned in.

Response to Unit 3 (20%): A written response (2-3 pp.) comparing versions of *Chalk Circle* story, or performance of 2 monologues from different versions.

Response to Unit 4 (20%): A written response (2-3 pp.) proposing a Chinese adaptation of a Western play or a western adaptation of a Chinese play; or scene work from Gao Xingjian (*Between Life and Death*, *Nocturnal Wanderer*, or another play we do not read together).

Attendance and Participation (20%): Regular attendance and assiduous participation are expected. This grade may include reading quizzes and/or in-class assignments.

**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>

**Honors Option:** Honors College students who are interested in pursuing an Honors Option for this course should discuss this with the instructor early in the semester. An Honors Option will usually involve a lecture/presentation of scheduled course material. If several students are interested, they may work together.

**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.

**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.

**Religious Holidays:** Students who wish to observe their religious holidays should notify me by the tenth day of the semester of the date when they will be absent. If the religious holiday is observed on or before the tenth day of the semester, notify me at the first class meeting after receipt of this syllabus. I will make every reasonable effort to honor the request; I will not penalize you for missing the class; and if an exam or paper is due during the absence, I will make some accommodation for you.

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

WEEK ONE

Monday, 1/12 Introduction to the Course and one another

Wednesday, 1/14 What is Intercultural Theatre?  
 Read: Patrice Pavis, "Intercultural Theatre Today" (2010) [D2L]

WEEK TWO

Monday, 1/19 Martin Luther King Day: Class will not meet

Wednesday, 1/21 Begin Unit 1: Performing China Today  
 Performing Chinese National Identity: The 2008 Beijing Olympics  
 Read: Luo Qing et al, "Representing the Opening Ceremony: Comparative Content Analysis from US, Brazil, UK, and China." [D2L]  
 Screen: 2008 Beijing Olympics Opening Ceremony  
[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ii-n\\_QSS0og](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ii-n_QSS0og)

WEEK THREE:

Monday, 1/26 Read: Howard Brenton, *#aiww: The Arrest of Ai Weiwei* [D2L]

Wednesday, 1/28 Visit to Broad Museum for "Future Returns: Contemporary Art from China" and "Collections in Focus: China."

**\*MEET AT BROAD MUSEUM AND PROCEED AT YOUR OWN PACE\***

WEEK FOUR:

Monday, 2/2 Project 1 Due: Papers and Performances; Unit 1 Wrap-Up.

Wednesday, 2/4 Begin Unit 2: Chinese/ American Interactions  
Screen *Flower Drum Song* in class

WEEK FIVE:

Monday, 2/9 Discussion of *Flower Drum Song*  
Read: Dan Bacalzo, "A Different Drum: David Henry Hwang's 'Revisal' of *Flower Drum Song*." *Journal of American Drama and Theatre*, 15.2 (Spring 2003): 71-83. [Link on D2L; scroll in Scribd to article]

Wednesday, 2/11 Read: Alice Tuan, *Some Asians*

[Note: *Shen Yun* Performance at Wharton Center Wednesday 2/11 and Thursday 2/12. Tickets start at \$50, so this performance is not required.]

WEEK SIX:

Monday, 2/16 Read Excerpts from Arthur Miller, *Salesman in Beijing*  
Browse US-China Arts Exchange Site: <http://uschinaarts.org/>  
Recommended Reading: Arthur Miller, *Death of a Salesman*

Wednesday, 2/18 Continue discussion of *Salesman in Beijing*

WEEK SEVEN:

Monday, 2/23 Read: David Henry Hwang, *Chinglish*

Wednesday, 2/25 Unit 2 Responses Due: Papers and Performances

WEEK EIGHT:

Monday, 3/2 Begin Unit 3: *Jingju* and Its Reception  
Lecture and Screenings

Wednesday, 3/4 Peking Opera Lecture/Discussion with Rainie Jiang

WEEK NINE:

Monday, 3/9 No Class: Spring Break

Wednesday, 3/11 No Class: Spring Break

WEEK TEN:

Monday, 3/16 Read: David Henry Hwang, *M. Butterfly*

Wednesday, 3/18 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.

WEEK ELEVEN:

Monday, 3/23

Read: Bertolt Brecht, *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*

Wednesday, 3/25

Read: West and Idema, "Introduction" to *Monks, Bandits, Lovers, and Immortals*Read: Li Xingdao, *The Record of the Chalk Circle*WEEK TWELVE:

Monday, 3/30

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

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

Wednesday, 4/1

Screening/Preview of Unit 4

WEEK THIRTEEN:

Monday, 4/6

Unit 3 Responses Due: Papers and Performances

Wednesday, 4/8

Chinese Shakespeares

Read: Ruru Li, "Hamlet in China"

<http://globalshakespeares.mit.edu/blog/2010/04/05/hamlet-in-china-translation-interpretation-and-performance/>WEEK FOURTEEN:

Monday, 4/13

Read: Gao Xingjian, *Bus Stop* [D2L]Read: Sen Ren Quah, excerpt from *Gao Xingjian and Transcultural Chinese Theatre* [D2L]

Wednesday, 4/15

Read: Gilbert Fong, *Introduction* and Gao Xingjian, *The Other Shore* [in Xingjian and Fong]WEEK FIFTEEN:

Monday, 4/20

Read: Gao Xingjian, *Dialogue and Rebuttal*

Wednesday, 4/22

Read: Gao Xingjian, *Weekend Quartet*WEEK SIXTEEN:

Monday, 4/27

Visit to MSU Museum: "Seeing China" and Hall of World Cultures

Wednesday, 4/29

Course Wrap-Up

**\*FINAL EXAM: Wednesday, May 6, 10:00 AM-12:00 noon\*****Unit 4 Responses Due: Meet at Final Exam time for Performances and Discussion**