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Office Hours: TR, 2:00PM – 3:30PM

## THEA 370: DRAMATIC THEORY

TR 9:30, Spring 2012

This course proposes to introduce students to what people have been thinking about such things as theater, performance, dramatic literature, and other things associated with the stage. The course tries to identify and explore major theoretical ideas, especially those spun out in the last century or two, since these ideas sustain contemporary discourse about theatre (both criticism and analysis).

The course expects all students to keep pace with the reading. Much of the reading material is rather dense. The course expects students to invest sufficient time and effort to understand the material (as far as it can be understood).

### Required Texts

*None of the texts below have been ordered by the bookstore. You are responsible for obtaining the required books by whatever methods are suitable.*

Counsell, Colin, and Laurie Wolf, eds. *Performance Analysis: an Introductory Coursebook* (New York: Routledge, 2001). ISBN: 0-415-22407-1

Fortier, Mark. *Theory/Theatre: an Introduction*. (New York: Routledge, 2002). ISBN: 978-0-415-25437-3

Mason, *Reader for This Class* (<http://www.yavanika.org/classes>)

Sophocles, *Oedipus the King*

Beckett, *Waiting for Godot*

Miller, *Death of a Salesman*

Churchill, *Cloud 9*

**attendance.** I expect those of you who want to do well in the course will be in class and those of you who don't won't. I will add that being in class makes it easier to curry my favor by participating in class discussions, and I really like curry. I would also note that anecdotal evidence suggests strongly that students who aren't in class don't get good grades. Make of that what you will.

**late work.** No late work. See how simple life can be?

**reading.** The reading load for this class is heavy. In order to get to know the reading material sufficiently to do well on the exams, you will have to discuss your ideas about the reading in class; and in order to do *that*, you will have to come to class having read the material for the day.

**quizzes.** If it seems that y'all are skipping the reading, we'll have quizzes. This won't make anyone happy.

**writing.** Two papers of at least seven pages each are due on specified dates during the semester. You are responsible to develop the topic of each paper from your reading and our discussions of the material preceding each paper's due date. I expect each paper will demonstrate your close familiarity with the content of the course: especially the strengths and weaknesses of the various arguments the course material offers. As long as it is clear that you know the class material, additional research is not *necessary*, but certainly wouldn't hurt. Here are the topics for the papers:

Paper #1: Analysis of *Treefall*

*some questions to consider:*

- *what are the 'signs' in the play?*
- *how are we meant to read those signs?*
- *what is inherent, if unintentional, in those signs?*
- *what is the phenomenological effect of the performance?*
- *how does the performance affect its audience?*

Paper #2: "How Does Theatre Mean?"

*pay attention to the "how" part—whatever it is that theatre does, how does it do it?*

**exams.** There will be a midterm and a final exam.

**grades.** Ah, here's what y'all are really looking for:

papers: 200 pts (100, and 100)  
midterm exam: 100 pts  
final exam: 100 pts  
fudge factor: 50 pts (this includes my assessment of your engagement with the course; and, yes, this partly means 'attendance')

roughly speaking: 94%=A, 91%=A-, 88%=B+, 82%=B, 80%=B-, 78%=C+, 75%=C, 72%=C-  
65%=D, Below 65%=F

## SCHEDULE

- 1/12: First Class: Introductions, Syllabus, Books, Writing, etc.  
1/17: The Classical Split: Performance and Literature  
**Reading:** Plato (Reader); Aristotle (Reader); *Oedipus*  
1/19: Modern Poetics: Tragedy *Means/Does* Something  
**Reading:** *Death of a Salesman*; Miller, "Tragedy and the Common Man"; Steiner, "The Death of Tragedy"; Gassner, "'Enlightenment' and Modern Drama" (Reader); Mamet, "The Wind-Chill Factor" (Reader)  
1/24: Movie Day: *House of Sand and Fog*, pt. 1  
1/26: Movie Day: *House of Sand and Fog*, pt. 2  
1/31: Oh Yeah?  
**Reading:** *Waiting for Godot*; Bentley, "What Is Theatre?" (Reader)  
2/2: Semiotics  
**Reading:** Fortier, 17-28; Counsell/Wolf, 1-11  
2/7: Structuralism  
**Reading:** Counsell/Wolf, 12-24  
2/9: Brecht  
**Reading:** Counsell/Wolf, 43-48; Brecht, "Modern Theatre Is Epic Theatre" and "Theatre for Pleasure or Theatre for Instruction"; Barthes, "The Task of Brechtian Criticism" and "Theatre and Signification" (Reader); Fortier, 29-33  
2/14: Taking Meaning Apart: Deconstruction  
**Reading:** Fortier, 58-69  
2/16: Phenomenology: Meaninglessness of Meaning  
**Reading:** Fortier, 37-46  
2/21: The Logical End: Artaud  
**Reading:** Fortier, 46-58, 69-74; Artaud, from *The Theatre and Its Double* (Reader)  
2/23: *Treefall*: Meaning and Not-Meaning in Performance  
**You Must See or Be In *Treefall* by Today's Class**  
2/28: Review for Exam  
**DUE: Paper #1**  
3/1: MIDTERM EXAM  
3/6: *Hamletmachine* and Postmodernism  
**Reading:** *Hamletmachine* (Reader); Fortier, 173-192  
3/8: Performing Feelings: Stanislavsky  
**Reading:** Fortier, 82-93; Zola, Selections (Reader); Stanislavsky, "When Acting Is an Art" (Reader)  
3/13 – 3/15: SPRING BREAK  
3/20: Performing Bodies  
**Reading:** Counsell/Wolf, 133-146;  
3/22: Performing Gendered Bodies  
**Reading:** Counsell/Wolf, 66-85; Fortier, 107-117  
3/27: Churchill's *Cloud 9*  
**Reading:** *Cloud 9*; Fortier, 117-131  
3/29: Performing Ethnic Bodies  
**Reading:** Counsell/Wolf, 104-116; Fortier, 151-166

- 4/3: Materialism and Ethnicity  
**Reading:** Wilson, "The Ground on Which I Stand", "National Black Theatre Festival, 1997" (Reader); Brustein, "Subsidized Separatism" (Reader)
- 4/5: EASTER BREAK
- 4/10: Extending Brecht and Materialism: Augusto Boal  
**Reading:** Boal, "Experiments" (Reader)
- 4/12: Audience  
**Reading:** Counsell/Wolf, 24-30, 177-184; Fortier, 132-148
- 4/17: Cognitive Theory  
**Reading:** Ramachandran, "The Artful Brain" (Reader)
- 4/19: Audience and Art: *Rasa* in Theory  
**Reading:** *Natyashastra* (Reader)
- 4/24: *Rasa* in Practice: *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai* (Bollywood Film)
- 4/26: Review for Exam  
**DUE:** Paper #2
- 5/2: FINAL EXAM, 1PM