

Theatre 370 - Dramatic Theory and Criticism

Course description and objectives

One can take a work of art - in this case, plays, or "dramatick poesie" - and look at how this work is viewed by the culture in which it exists in terms of its relationship to nature, or to the artist, or to the audience/receiver. Throughout history, various cultures have stressed or ignored different relationships. When trying to understand plays from past times, it is helpful if one can look through the lens of the time, as it were.

This class is intended as a broad overview to expose students to the major dramatic theorists from the Greeks to Peter Brook. It is hoped that through the study of various theoretical readings and plays the student will begin to develop an ability, when analyzing plays or trends in theatre, to uncover underlying assumptions, leading to a fuller and richer understanding of the theatre in both theory and practice.

A midterm and final exam will be given. A term paper - digging out and analyzing the underlying assumptions of a work of criticism or a play - will be due at the end of the term. Midterm, final, and paper are each 1/3 of your final grade.

Texts:

Clark, Barrett - European Theories of the Drama (ETD)

Nietzsche, Friedrich - The Birth of Tragedy

Appia, Adolphe - The Work of Living Art

Brecht, Bertolt - Brecht on Theatre

Artaud, Antonin - The Theatre and its Double

Brook, Peter - The Empty Space

Other readings:

Sophocles - "Oedipus Rex"

Plato - The Republic

Kitto - Form and Meaning in Drama

The Greeks

The Greeks, A Literary Study

Shakespeare - "Hamlet"

Corneille - "Le Cid"

Goldsmith - "She Stoops to Conquer"

August

tu 29 Greek world view

readings:

Kitto, The Greeks, chap 10 - "The Greek Mind"

th 31 Plato

readings:

Sophocles, Oedipus Rex

Plato, The Republic, book 10

September

tu 5 Aristotle

readings:

ETD Greek Dramatic Criticism

Poetics

th 7 Aristotle

readings:

Kitto, Greek Tragedy, A Literary Study

tu 12 Horace

readings:

ETD Latin Dramatic Criticism

Horace's Art of Poetry

th 14 Italian and French Renaissance

readings:

ETD Dramatic Criticism of the Middle Ages

ETD Italian Dramatic Criticism of the Renaissance

ETD French Dramatic Criticism of the Renaissance

tu 19 Elizabethan

readings:

ETD Elizabethan Dramatic Criticism

Sir Philip Sidney's "An Apology for Poetry"

th 21 Elizabethan

readings:

Hamlet

Kitto, Form and Meaning in Drama, "Greek and Elizabethan Tragedy" and "Hamlet"

tu 26 17th Century France

readings:

ETD French Dramatic Criticism of the 17th Century

th 28 17th Century France

readings:

Corneille, "Le Cid"

October

tu 3 Restoration and 18th century England

readings:

ETD Restoration and 18th century English Dramatic Criticism

th 5 Restoration and 18th century England

readings:

John Dryden's "An Essay of Dramatic Poesy"

Goldsmith, "She Stoops to Conquer"

tu 10 midterm

th 19 Nietzsche

readings:

Nietzsche, The Birth of Tragedy

tu 24 Nietzsche, cont.

th 26 Appia

readings:

Appia, The Work of Living Art

tu 31 Appia, cont.

November

th 2 Brecht

readings:

Brecht on Theatre, selected essays

tu 7 Brecht, cont.

th 9 Opening - Canterbury

tu 14 Artaud

readings:

Artaud, The Theatre and its Double

th 16 Artaud, cont.

tu 21 class discussion of paper research

tu 28 Brook

readings:

Brook, The Empty Space, "Deadly Theatre" and "Holy Theatre"

th 30 Brook, cont.

readings:

Brook, The Empty Space, "Rough Theatre" and "Immediate Theatre"

tu 5 papers due
review

