

THTR 110: Origins & Theories of Theater

Fall 2008

Instructor: **D. Ohlandt**

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TR 9:30pm - 10:50pm

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office hours: Tuesdays 1-2pm

Wednesdays 10:30-11:30am

and by appointment

This introductory-level seminar course is designed for students from all backgrounds who are interested in exploring how theatrical performance has shaped culture and can be used as a tool for understanding human interaction. We will explore impulses throughout history to "make theater" for religious, educational, and political ends, as well as for general entertainment. We'll also turn these theories around and look at how the ideas and tools of theater and performance can provide insight into religious ceremonies, classroom interactions, political campaigns, and social events.

Course Goals & Objectives:

- to expand our vocabulary of theater and performance terminology; to learn key words from the discipline and practice of theater arts
- to identify and practice the skills of reading dramatic literature
- to identify and practice the skills of watching theatrical performance
- to learn how to define the historical, social, and theoretical context of a play; to understand what insight these contexts can provide into a play
- to practice analytical writing and academic research
- to translate non-theatrical events and situations into theatrical terms; to identify the insight that comes from "seeing" the world as performance

Texts:

The following texts have been ordered through the Lake Forest College bookstore:

The Creative Spirit: An Introduction to Theatre (Fourth Edition), by Stephanie Arnold

Key Concepts in Drama and Performance, by Kenneth Pickering

Additional readings will be posted or linked on Moodle; you should print these readings out for yourself and bring them to class on days that we are discussing them

Class Attendance Policy:

You are required to attend all class meetings, and to arrive on time, ready to work. Attendance will be taken every day (late arrivals will be noted). Excused absences will be granted for verifiable medical and family emergencies, as well as for observed religious holidays, if brought to my attention ahead of time. A number of unexcused absences or late arrivals will result in a lower grade for the course, at my discretion.

When you are in class, you should be focused on class: please turn off cell phones, and refrain from writing or reading for other classes. *Please bring with you any texts under discussion that day.*

Field Trips:

Going to Chicago to see professional performance is a hallmark of the Theater curriculum at Lake Forest College, and an educational opportunity unmatched at other colleges. The cost of tickets and transportation for class field trips are covered in part by the College's Center for Chicago Programs and the Theater department. *There may also be a "lab fee" of \$75.00 per student that shares part of the cost*

of field trips. The fee cannot be adjusted for individual students. All field trips are fully arranged before the semester begins, and no refunds of the fee can be made after the add/drop date.

Please note: It is mandatory that you attend the class field trips as arranged. Field trips will take place on Thursday or Friday evenings and will not conflict with Theater department productions. Reasonable attempts will be made to avoid conflicts with Garrick Players events and other all-campus events, but I expect that you will adjust your schedule of non-College activities in order to attend these field trips. In the event that an unavoidable conflict arises with a class field trip, I may, at my discretion, agree to one of the following options for full credit:

- you may arrange at your own expense to attend the same event at a different time, as long as you do so in time to participate in class discussions and/or projects relating to the missed event
- you may propose an alternative event or project in line with the goals of the event, which (in my opinion) requires equal or greater work on your part, again to be completed in time to participate in class discussions and/or projects relating to the missed event

Unfortunately, since all field trips are paid for at the start of the term, we cannot reimburse you for your ticket or travel expenses if you miss a field trip. You may, however, sell or give your ticket to a friend if you must miss a field trip.

Special Accommodations:

Everyone is built a little differently, and it shouldn't be surprising that everyone has different needs when it comes to learning in the classroom. Please come and talk with me if I am not meeting your needs.

I am happy to provide large-print copies of any materials that I hand out, and I can also make available written outlines of the things that I have prepared to say in class. If differences in your ability to see, hear, or learn require more elaborate aids than this— if, for example, you need outlines of what everyone else says in class— then you will need to alert me early in the term, and you will also need to arrange for services through the college.

If you have concerns about mobility requirements for any assignment or physical access to the classroom, performance spaces, or any resources, please see me and we will work together to resolve the problem.

Assignments:

✓ **daily reading assignments**, as listed on the term schedule. You should complete reading for class discussion on the day that it is listed. This will be the major component of your *participation grade* (20 points).

✓ **personal glossary of performance terms** (10 points).

As we do the readings through the term, you will be keeping a personal glossary of terms from drama and performance. Whenever you come to a word that you are slightly or largely unfamiliar with, add the word to your glossary, look up the definition (Pickering's book will come in handy here), then rephrase it in your own words. Although the definition should be in your own words, after each entry, you must cite where you found the meaning— if you asked me or a friend, that must be cited, too. If you used more than one source— all the better! Cite them all!

I expect that your glossary will be kept up to date on a daily basis, so that when we use theater and performance studies vocabulary in class discussions, everyone has a working knowledge of their

meaning. If you cannot find the meaning of a word that you have noted, *please ask about it in class!*

I will be checking your glossaries every other Tuesday, starting September 9th. You may turn them in to me as an attachment via email (MS Word or .pdf ONLY, please), or you may turn them in hard copy by the start of class. You have the choice of mixing new glossary entries with previous ones, or keeping them separate.

✓ **presentation on the "drama of education"** (5 points).

In class, you will give a 10-minute presentation of your observations of the "drama of education" at Lake Forest College. Using tools of dramatic and performance analysis that we will discuss in class, you will choose one of your other classes and observe it closely to find elements of character, plot, language, music, spectacle, rhythm, conflict, tension, and resolution. (You will obtain permission from your professor before taking notes on this.) More details about this assignment will be handed out in class.

✓ **scene from Angels in America** (5 points).

In groups, you will choose a short scene from the play *Angels in America*, memorize it, rehearse it, prepare costumes and props for it, and choose a location on campus that is appropriate for the political impact and stylization of your group's scene.

✓ **written work** (40 points total).

Please see page 5 of this syllabus on formatting and other technical requirements for papers.

— analytic papers:

Four shorter analytic papers, worth 5 points each, are due in class on the following dates:
9/4, 9/16, 9/30, 10/14

Each of these short papers will be a critical analysis of the topic or issue assigned in the prompt handed out in class. Each paper should be *3-4 pages long*. You must follow this structure—

paragraph #1: Clearly state the specific feature of the issue or topic you will be discussing, or identify which question posed in the prompt you will address. Include a direct citation from the readings that inspired your response.

paragraph #2: Take a stand on the issue, or pose an answer to the question. Briefly summarize your two to four key reasons for taking that particular stand or posing that particular answer.

paragraphs #3-#6: One at a time, explain your reasons. Each paragraph should include more than one quote from the readings (with proper citation). Use specific, concrete examples to support your reasons.

Late papers will lose ½ point for each day they are late, beginning with ½ point off for papers turned in after the start of class but before midnight on the due date, then another ½ point the following morning.

— research paper:

A longer research paper, worth 20 points, is due in class on 11/25. Your research paper will take up a topic from our class discussions or readings and go beyond our classwork in significant ways. The research paper should be *8-10 pages long*. Your paper should be clearly organized to support a well-thought-out thesis statement, and you should use a number of 1) direct quotes from reliable academic sources and 2) specific concrete examples to support your argument.

Possible topics include: Hopi ritual performances, Medieval Mystery plays, Catholic symbolism in drama, the Black Theater Movement, August Wilson's cycle of plays, playwright Peter Schaeffer, the Tectonic Theater Project, Theater of the Absurd, Bertolt Brecht, AIDS plays, Latino/a Theater, dramaturgy,

Robert Wilson, Martha Graham, performance in education, street performance, campaigning for office...

Two weeks before the paper is due, you must submit to me a thesis statement and full-sentence outline of your paper. If the outline is turned in on time, I will respond with feedback that, if considered, will help you earn a better grade on your paper.

You must make an appointment with the Writing Center as you work on this paper— their appointments may fill up, so make them early. They can help you at any stage of the process, although it may be most helpful to work with them either as you prepare the outline, or once you get feedback from me on the outline and get ready to write the paper.

Late papers will lose 2 points for each day they are late, beginning with 2 points off for papers turned in after the start of class but before midnight on the due date, then another 2 points the following morning. A late outline will result in 2 points being taken off the grade of the paper. If you do not turn in an outline by one week before the due date, I will not have time to provide any feedback or guidance for you, and you will earn only 2/3 credit on the paper.

✓ **final exam** (20 points)

Grading:

written work = 40 points

personal glossary = 10 points

presentation on the "drama of education" = 5 points

Angels in America scene = 5 points

final exam = 20 points

participation = 20 points

total = 100 points

Letter grades will be assigned according to a standard 100 point scale. I reserve the right to make adjustments to the final grading curve.

Professor Ohlandt's requirements for written work:

Papers are due in class on the due dates laid out for the option you choose. If you choose to submit your paper electronically, it must be sent or uploaded before class begins that day.

Written work must be in MLA format, using MLA standards for citation, and be printed double-spaced in 11- or 12- pt font, with 1" margins. Your pages must be numbered, and the first page should have a header that includes a title (or "final exam" if it is the final exam), the course number, the date the paper was turned in, semester and year, and your name, in whatever arrangement you find aesthetically pleasing, *as long as the information is clear and logical.*

You should use parenthetical citations in the body of your paper, and you must include a works cited page with bibliographic entries at the end, under its own heading. *Your works cited page does not count towards your total page count!*

All ideas that are not your own must be cited (parenthetical citations are appropriate here), even if you do not quote them directly.

I encourage you to submit formal written work (research papers, analytical papers, outlines, etc) in electronic form via email <ohlandt@lakeforest.edu> or our class webpage on Moodle. Papers submitted electronically must be submitted as attachments, not as inline text. On receipt, I will convert your file to a .pdf document, and I will mark/grade it using a stylus input, so it will look like handwriting. I will save the marked paper as a different .pdf and return it to you in that format. You should be able to print .pdf files on any computer with the free Adobe reader installed.

If you choose to submit your papers in hard copy, you may print on both sides of the page— *however*, if your last page is printed on both sides, please staple a blank page on the end for me to write my comments. You must staple your pages together if you submit a hard copy— paper clips are not acceptable.

If you choose to submit your papers electronically, the formatting and citation standards apply.

Grammatical, spelling, and formatting errors will absolutely lower your grade. *If it seems that you have not proofread your paper at all, I will return it to you for proofreading and accept it again within 24 hours for half credit.*