

## THTR 358: Dramatic (& Performance) Theory

Spring 2007-08

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TTh 1pm - 2:20pm

Buchanan 210

office hours: T 2:30-4pm

W 1:30-3pm

In this seminar course we will explore how theories of drama have evolved into theories of dramatic performance and most recently into the field of "performance studies." Starting with the end of the 19th century and the birth of "modern" drama, we will examine how theories of what drama should be came to influence ways of making theater. In the second half of the term, we will turn our attention to theories of performance as they grew out of (and eventually moved away from) theories of drama. Theorists of interest will include Antonin Artaud, Bertolt Brecht, Richard Schechner, Judith Butler, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, and Gay McAuley. We will also be going to Chicago a few times during the term to practice applying theory to understanding and analyzing contemporary performance.

### Texts–

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

*Theories of the Theatre: A Historical and Critical Survey from the Greeks to the Present*, by Marvin Carlson

*Theatre / Theory / Theatre*, edited by Daniel Gerould

*The Performance Studies Reader*, edited by Henry Bial

**You should acquire for yourself the following plays, any edition:**

*Ubu Roi* by Alfred Jarry

*The Good Woman of Szechwan* by Bertolt Brecht

**supplemental readings will be posted in electronic form on Moodle**

### Regular Class Attendance:

When you are in class, you should be focused on class: turn off cell phones, no food, no writing letters or reading for other classes. *Bring with you any texts under discussion that day.*

You are required to attend all class meetings, and to arrive on time, ready to work.

Attendance will be taken every day (tardies will be noted). A number of unexcused absences or late arrivals will result in a lower grade for the course, at my discretion.

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.

### Field Trip Attendance:

Going to Chicago to see professional performance is a hallmark of the Theater Program at Lake Forest College, and an educational opportunity unmatched at other colleges. Of necessity, many of these trips will take place outside of normal class meeting time.

Please note: There will be a fee of \$200 (payable to the business office) associated with the costs of attending performances in Chicago. Your attendance is mandatory on class field trips. 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

You will not, under any circumstances, be reimbursed for your ticket or travel expenses for a missed 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:**

**1) 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.)*

**2) personal definitions of “performance”** *This will impact on your participation grade. If you turn in late or do not do TWO definitions, your participation grade will automatically drop five points; for each late or absent definition after the first two, your participation grade will automatically drop two additional points. NO EXCUSES.*

Before class EACH Tuesday, you should write out and submit to me your personal evolving definition of what exactly “performance” is. You may submit this to me in email as text (not as attachment). You may be as brief or as detailed as you wish, but you should be striving to reach as complete a definition as you can.

The point of this assignment is NOT to test whether you are doing the readings— so don't try to write definitions of what the theorists would say, unless you personally happen to agree with them. The point is to help me see how thoughtfully you are considering the readings and the issues raised by them. We will sometimes discuss your definitions in class as they evolve. *And, trust me, you will see them again.*

**3) discussion facilitation** (10 pts. total; 5 pts. each) Each student will choose 2 days during the term to “lead” and facilitate critical discussion on the readings assigned for the day. The two days you choose must be from different units. On the days you have chosen to lead discussion, you will be responsible for doing a “mini-presentation” to introduce the readings,

which should include some (not necessarily all) of the following: historical context of the reading, social context of the reading, biographical information about the theorist(s), excerpts from, photographs of, or famous incidents relating to the theorist's creative work, some interactive exercise that demonstrates a central component of the theory laid out in the reading.

**4) performance demonstration of Brechtian theory (10 points total)** We will use Brecht's work to help us understand how theories of drama lead to practical acting techniques. Each student will be responsible for planning and "performing" a demonstration of Brechtian theory in class on Tuesday March 4. More details will be given in class!

**5) written work (40 points total)** Each student may choose one of the two options for written work listed below, or she/he may choose one option for the first half of the term and then switch to the other option. Please see page 5 of this syllabus on formatting and other technical requirements for papers.

- Option A: *recommended for first-year students, or students who would like to work on improving their writing skills*

Eight short papers, worth 5 points each, due in class on the following dates:

1/22, 2/5, 2/19, 3/4, 3/18, 4/1, 4/15, 4/29

Each paper for option A should be a critical response to an issue or question raised in the readings for the previous unit, or a critical analysis of how a theory we read was applied in a performance we saw (topic ranges for each paper are specified after the due date on the term schedule). Each paper should be *3-4 pages long*, double-spaced and typed. Please follow this structure—

*paragraph #1*: Clearly state the issue or question you will be discussing. 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  $\frac{1}{2}$  point for each day they are late, beginning with  $\frac{1}{2}$  point off for papers turned in after the start of class but before midnight on the due date, then another  $\frac{1}{2}$  point the following morning.

- Option B:

Two longer papers, worth 20 points each, due in class on the following dates:

2/28, 4/22

Each paper for option B should be an analysis of a theorist or theory, or an analytic comparison of a couple of theorists or theories, which exceeds and goes beyond our class discussion in significant ways. Each paper should be *10-15 pages long*, double-spaced and typed. Your paper should be clearly organized to support a well-thought-out thesis statement, and you should use a number of direct quotes from the readings and specific concrete examples to support your argument.

Two weeks before each paper is due, you must submit to me a thesis statement and 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.

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. An outline not turned in by one week before the due date will not be accepted and will result in only 2/3 credit being earned on the paper.

**6) final exam (20 points)** An essay-style take-home exam will be distributed in class on Tuesday April 29. (If you are absent in class that day, you must arrange to pick up the exam from me after that class meeting.) The exam must be completed and turned in by 4:30pm on Tuesday May 6. If you submit your exam electronically, follow the guidelines for submitting papers via email. If you choose to turn in a hard copy of your final exam, I will be in my office from 4-5pm ONLY on Tuesday May 6 to receive them. Exams received within 15 minutes after 4:30pm on Tuesday May 6 will earn 3/4 credit. Exams received between 15 and 30 minutes after 4:30pm on Tuesday May 6 will earn half credit only. *Exams received more than 30 minutes after 4:30pm on Tuesday May 6 will not be accepted and you will earn zero points.* I reserve the right to use the clock(s) in my office, on my computer, and/or on the email server to determine when late exams are submitted.

#### Grading:

written work = 40 points  
discussion facilitation = 10 points  
Brecht demo = 10 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.

#### Notes about email:

Please give me a minimum of four hours to respond to an urgent email. I typically will not respond to emails sent after 6pm until the next morning, or to emails sent anytime on Saturdays and Sundays until Monday morning.

#### Submitting papers via email or Moodle

I encourage you to submit your papers and the final exam in electronic form to me at [<ohlandt@lakeforest.edu>](mailto:ohlandt@lakeforest.edu) or via our class webpage on Moodle. (Please be patient, I am just learning Moodle for the first time this year.) Papers submitted electronically MUST be uploaded as an attachment, and they MUST be formatted like other papers– double-spaced, paginated, with a title and your name, in MLA format, etc.

ONLY the following formats are acceptable: 1) .pdf (Adobe Acrobat) - preferred, 2) WordPerfect, 3) MS Word.

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 I have technical difficulties with the stylus input, I reserve the right to print a hard copy of your paper, mark it, and return it to you in hard copy.*

### **D'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.

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.*