THEATRE 101: INTRODUCTION TO THEATRE

Fall Semester 2024
Tuesdays: 4:00 p.m. – 5:15 p.m.
Classroom: Baker 420

Prof. Stephen Foglia
Instructor Office: Baker Theater Building, 2nd Floor
Office hours by appointment
fs1035@hunter.cuny.edu
314-740-4433

SYLLABUS

Course description:
This course will explore the history, forms, and modern practice of making theater. We will move from broad questions like "what are the universal elements of theater" to highly specific ones like "how does a costume designer work?" and "what makes X an exciting play?" Students will leave with a richer understanding of the art form and greater experience both making and watching theater.

Course methodology:
The course will include seeing plays (both live and online), reading plays and related texts, classroom exercises, discussions, and occasional visits from guest artists. Participation in discussions and exercises and attentive presence during brief lectures are expected.

Expected Learning Outcomes:
-Students will be able to identify the elements of a theatrical production, to credit the artists and crew behind the work, and to articulate any remarkable qualities and how they contribute to the whole.

-Students will be able to speak about theatre in its historical context, relating it to movements and traditions in theatre history

-Students will gain experience as playgoers in New York City, with awareness of both the for-profit and not-for-profit spheres

-Students will gain practice as theater-makers, attempting to create meaning through performance, design, writing, and directing

Course Requirements
This course requires students' continuous engagement in diverse activities including creative expression, critical thinking and analytical writing. Students need to be prepared to share their views and ideas in both oral and written form about plays and assigned readings. Students will also need to attend four live theater performances over the course of the semester (more on that below).

Attendance

Since this course combines experiential learning, research and discussion, attendance is a critical factor. Attendance is expected **at every** class session. **Absence directly affects students' grades**. If a student must miss a class, he or she will notify the Professor in advance. If a class outing is missed, the student will make up attendance on their own time.

IMPORTANT: We will likely be spending actual program money buying show tickets at least once this semester, and the venues we visit often spend *their* money giving us discounts. That means if students no-show, and we have empty seats, the venues won't want to work with us again, and the college won't want to give us as much funding, and basically everything gets worse for future students. So don't no-show. I will be forced to drop the hammer on your participation grade if you do. Plus you'll have to make up the absence by attending that performance at your own cost.

No cell phone use during class. Use of laptops and/or tablets by permission only.

Attendance, Tardiness

- If you are 10 minutes late to class; you are marked LATE. Two tardies equal one absence.
- Three (3) unexcused absences and students **lose all participation points.**
- Late assignments lose one letter grade per day late

Grading - GRADES WILL BE POSTED ON COURSE BLACKBOARD SITE

- All Assignments and quizzes 80%
- Participation 20%

Assignments Overview

Seeing Plays:

You are required to attend four live theater performances over the course of the semester. One of those will be the theater department production of *Twelfth Night*. You may also choose to see other Hunter student productions, which should be both free and convenient. On top of that, the department will be purchasing group tickets for one Off-Broadway show in Manhattan, which you may sign up to attend. Finally, you will be told of affordable options to go out and see shows on your own. The hope is that you are ultimately able to see all four shows while spending less than $30. Of course if you're most excited to go see a hot Broadway show, you are welcome to spend more. I will be keeping track of the shows you see via a spreadsheet, so you need to show me proof of the show you saw (can be a ticket, a program, or a selfie at the show).

Some cheap ticket ideas (will add as we go)

Also: you get extra for seeing more shows! If you see a show, bring me proof, and write me a short (250wd) reaction, I will give a bump to your grade wherever it will help most.

Written Assignments:
All written assignments must be submitted **in hard copy** on the due dates (see course schedule below).

- Analyze a beat of *Antigone* as an actor (Sept 18)
- Performance Analysis Papers: (Oct 16, Nov 25)
  You will write two short essays analyzing plays you experience live during the semester. Please plan ahead to make sure you have actually seen a play in order to write about it. We will talk in class about exciting and affordable options in the city. But if you haven't seen a show in time, you can't write the paper, and you will automatically fail the assignment.
- Revised playwriting exercise (Sept 30)
- Aristotelian analysis of a movie (Oct 1)

Presentations:
- Prepare a joke and a 1-minute story (Sept 4)
- Present your casting for a play we've read (Oct 23)
- Design research for *Twelfth Night* (Nov 6)
- Group presentation on performance tradition (Nov 25)
- Final Project (Dec 9)

Extra Credit:
If you attend any outside performances above and beyond the requirements, you can write a 250wd reaction paper to earn extra credit. Extra credit will be applied to wherever it most helps your overall grade.

READINGS
Although there are many wonderful books on the topics we will be discussing, in the interest of flexibility (and mindful of textbook prices), all of our readings will be available electronically or in print-outs I bring to class.

- Aristotle. *The Poetics*. Translated by S.H. Butcher. 3 November 2008.
- Boal, Augusto. *Theatre of the Oppressed*.
- Bogart, Anne. *The Viewpoints Book*.
- Booth, Eboni. *Primary Trust*
- Brecht, Bertolt. "A Short Organum for Theatre"
- Brook, Peter. *The Empty Space.*
- Felner, Mira. *Think Theatre.*
- Fuchs, Elinor. "Visit to a Small Planet: Some Questions to Ask a Play." *Theater*. Vol 34, No 2. Summer 2004. Duke University Press.
- Lee, Minna. *Last Gold.*
- Mamet, David. *True and False*
- Meisner, Sanford and Longwell, Dennis. *Sanford Meisner on Acting*.

- Parks, Suzan-Lori. “From the Elements of Style”
- Parks, Suzan-Lori. *Topdog/Underdog*
- Scherstuhl, Alan. “Review Advice.” PDF.
- Shakespeare, William. *Twelfth Night.*
- Sondheim, Stephen. *Finishing the Hat/Look I Made a Hat.*
- Sophocles. *Antigone*. Adapted by Gregory Mosher.
- Spolin, Viola. *Improvisation for Theater*.
- Staats, Andrea*. omg we ate a guy!!*
- Wangh, Stephen. “The Joys of Stagefright”
- Wilder, Thornton*. Our Town.*

AI POLICY

ChatGPT and other generative AI tools are not permitted. If I find you have used them, you will receive a zero for the assignment and have to completely redo it. Depending on how you have used the tool, it could even be treated as a form of plagiarism, which has more severe consequences. Don’t do it.

TRIGGER WARNING

As part of this course, we will be experiencing works of art representing viewpoints and situations that may be uncomfortable. In some cases, we will be seeing new work for which I cannot offer a thorough warning regarding all possible triggers. Feeling secure in your ultimate safety as you explore challenging subjects is important, and I encourage you, in cases where you are concerned, to reach out to the art institution in advance and to prepare yourself however necessary.

Relatedly, we will have to *talk* about the works of art that challenge and discomfort us, at times engaging with new topics as thorny as those represented in the art itself. Participation in these discussions is part of the class. We will conduct these conversations with sensitivity and care for ourselves and others.

ADA Statement:

In compliance with the ADA and with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, Hunter College is committed to ensuring educational access and accommodations for all its registered students. Hunter College’s students with disabilities and medical conditions are encouraged to register with the Office of AccessABILITY for assistance and accommodation. For information and appointment contact the Office of AccessABILITY located in Room E1214 or call (212) 772-4857 /or VRS (646) 755-3129.

Hunter College Policy on Academic Integrity:

Hunter College regards acts of academic dishonesty (e.g., plagiarism, cheating on examinations, obtaining unfair advantage, and falsification of records and official documents) as serious offenses against the values of intellectual honesty. Hunter College is committed to enforcing the CUNY Policy on Academic Integrity and will pursue cases of academic dishonesty according to the Hunter College Academic Integrity Procedures.

Hunter College Policy on Sexual Misconduct:

In compliance with the CUNY Policy on Sexual Misconduct, Hunter College reaffirms the prohibition of any sexual misconduct, which includes sexual violence, sexual harassment, and gender-based harassment retaliation against students, employees, or visitors, as well as certain intimate relationships. Students who have experienced any form of sexual violence on or off campus (including CUNY-sponsored trips and events) are entitled to the rights outlined in the Bill of Rights for Hunter College.

a. Sexual Violence: Students are strongly encouraged to immediately report the incident by calling 911, contacting NYPD Special Victims Division Hotline (646-610-7272) or their local police precinct, or contacting the College's Public Safety Office (212-772-4444).

b. All Other Forms of Sexual Misconduct: Students are also encouraged to contact the College's Title IX Campus Coordinator, Dean John Rose (jtrose@hunter.cuny.edu or 212-650-3262) or Colleen Barry (colleen.barry@hunter.cuny.edu or 212-772-4534) and seek complimentary services through the Counseling and Wellness Services Office, Hunter East 1123.

CUNY Policy on Sexual Misconduct Link:
http://www.cuny.edu/about/administration/offices/la/Policy-on-Sexual-Misconduct-12-1-14-with-links.pdf

COURSE SCHEDULE
MW - 4:00-5:15pm

W- AUGUST 28
First Meeting
Introductions
Syllabus discussion
What is theater for?
ACTIVITY: 2 Truths and a Lie

M- SEPTEMBER 2
NO CLASS. COLLEGE CLOSED

W- SEPTEMBER 4
WATCH (in-class): Pina, Dread Scott, Ali Wong, In the Heights, Talking Heads, Chappell Roan Caffe Cino pic
What is theater?
ACTIVITY: Tell a joke, tell a story
READING DUE: Brook (p.1-20), Felner (Ch. 1), Boal (3 prefaces)
WATCHING DUE (at-home): *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* (on Netflix) OR *Passing Strange* (on youtube)
ASSIGNMENT DUE: prepare a joke and a 1-minute story

M- SEPTEMBER 9
Acting Unit
Quick performance history lecture
Presentational v Representational
WATCH (in-class): Kathakali, Noh, Beijing Opera, If Beale Street Could Talk
ACTIVITY: morning routine (presentational and representational)
READING DUE: Stanislavski, Mamet, Meisner, Wangh

W- SEPTEMBER 11
Continue discussion and activity
ACTIVITY: open scenes
Note: you'll have a guest teacher for this class because I will be in rehearsal for a reading. You are all invited to the reading. Info here. Reserve free ticket by emailing literary@theaterforthenewcity.net

M- SEPTEMBER 16
Listening: Meisner repetition
Physical: Suzuki exercise
Wear comfy clothes

READING DUE: Antigone (Sophocles)
OPTIONAL EVENT: Japanese Demon Sword Dance demonstration
Groups for Final Projects assigned

W- SEPTEMBER 18
Acting workshop with Brynne McManimie of Apocalyptic Artists
ASSIGNMENT DUE: analyze a beat of *Antigone* as an actor

M- SEPTEMBER 23
Playwriting Unit
Quick history of playwriting, how to read a script
ACTIVITY: 1) read fresh scene (*Topdog/Underdog*) 2) world of *Antigone*
READING: Fuchs, Parks (From the Elements of Style)

W- SEPTEMBER 25
Continue discussion of playwriting
ACTIVITY: 1) read fresh scene (*A Streetcar Named Desire*) 2) writing exercises
MAKE SURE TO BRING A NOTEBOOK AND A PEN/PENCIL TO WRITE WITH

M- SEPTEMBER 30
Discuss *Primary Trust*, use Fuchs framework
READING: *Primary Trust*
ASSIGNMENT DUE: revise and submit one of your exercises from Wednesday

Group outing to see *Sunset, Eclipsed by Seagulls* at The Tank (MUST SIGN UP)
Meet at The Tank at 6:30pm to receive tickets

W- OCTOBER 2
NO CLASS

M- OCTOBER 7
Aristotle lecture/discussion
Apply to *Antigone, Primary Trust*
READING DUE: Aristotle

W- OCTOBER 9
Must have seen first live play by now
Discuss play we have seen live via Aristotle and Fuchs
ASSIGNMENT DUE: Aristotelian analysis of a movie you love

M- OCTOBER 14
NO CLASS. COLLEGE CLOSED

T- OCTOBER 15

CLASS FOLLOWS MONDAY SCHEDULE
Directing Unit
Brief lecture on history of directing
Watch (in class) excerpts from Marat/Sade, Strehler Tempest, She Loves Me
READING DUE: Brook (p.21-32), Brecht (Short Organum excerpts), Bogart (thru Ch. 4)
ACTIVITY: stage tableaux

W- OCTOBER 16
Directing workshop
Practical job of director
ASSIGNMENT DUE: first analysis paper
Group outing to see *Bad Kreyol* at Signature Theater (MUST SIGN UP)

M- OCTOBER 21
Mise-en-scene
Audience arrangements
Watch *Taming of the Shrew* clips
READING DUE: *Last Gold*

W- OCTOBER 23
ASSIGNMENT DUE: present your casting for a play we've read

M- OCTOBER 28
Design Unit
Visit from Taylor: Set Design Workshop
Reading: Costume Design (and here and here), Appia (and here), Jack Fisk profile

W- OCTOBER 30
Discuss reading
ACTIVITY: lighting prompts, costume prompts, ground plan for *Last Gold*

M- NOVEMBER 4
Producing Unit
Discuss *Our Town*
Theater in NYC
READING DUE: *Our Town*

W- NOVEMBER 6
Visit from Gregory Mosher
ACTIVITY: Read reviews of live performance we saw and discuss
READING DUE: Reviews of live play we saw

M- NOVEMBER 11
Group presentations of global performance traditions

ASSIGNMENT DUE: group presentation of global performance tradition

W- NOVEMBER 13
Watching (in class): Shakespeare: Twelfth Night (Shakespeare's Globe) ;
Anne Hathaway and Raul Esparza in Shakespeare in the Park's 2009 production of Twelft…
; Twelfth Night (1996) - O Mistress Mine ;
(1983) Fanny and Alexander (TV Mini Series) Episode 3 of 5 - Ingmar Bergman
READING DUE: *Twelfth Night*

M- NOVEMBER 18
Visit from 12th Night artists
ASSIGNMENT DUE: design research for Twelfth Night

W- NOVEMBER 20
Musical theater lecture
READING DUE: Sondheim (skim, focus on his interpolations)

M- NOVEMBER 25
Guest visit from Elijah or Santino
ACTIVITY: song writing
ASSIGNMENT DUE: Second performance analysis

W- NOVEMBER 27
NO CLASS. FRIDAY SCHEDULE

M- DECEMBER 2
Improv Day
OR
Dance theater
WATCHING: Dance Videos
READING DUE: Spolin OR Smith

W- DECEMBER 4
Puppets with Claudia

M- DECEMBER 9
In-class performances
ASSIGNMENT DUE: Final project

W- DECEMBER 11
In-class performances, day two

DECEMBER 18, 3pm
HOLD FOR FINALS