THEATRE METHODS: SHAKESPEARE to VIEWPOINTS
THDA 394-01, Fall 2011
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SYLLABUS (ABRIDGED, THDA website)

This course is an experiential survey of major European and U.S. performance methods, 1600 – present. Through readings in theatre and performance history and theory, students will investigate the social forces that have shaped acting-as-representation: from the performance demands of Shakespeare through the commedia dell’arte, from Stanislavski’s “magic if” to Brecht’s V-effekt, Barba’s “pre-expressivity” to the ongoing U.S. performance inquiry into “presence.” In a weekly intensive lab component, students will learn the specific techniques developed by and required of these practitioners and genres. The course will inquire consistently, through readings, physicality and discussion, into the ways that actors, designers and directors can deploy these forms of research in their development as theater, dance and performance artists.

Assignments:

1. “Inter-play,” n., “Reciprocal action and reaction; interaction.” There are four (4) short “Inter-play” essays due over the course of the semester (see Reading Schedule). The suggested length for the first two is 3-5 pages, so you can find your bearings with this short, pithy form; the third and fourth essays should be 3 pages. The essay allows you to bring the concepts, histories, images and embodied experiences of the previous three weeks into “reciprocal action and reaction” through writing and reflection. Detailed notes from class will be helpful here, as will your thoughtful and expert attention to the various meta-themes in the course to do with history, and theory. Show what you know, and elaborate what you think.

2. Mid-Term Project/Presentation. For the first half of the course, Theatre Histories: An Introduction, co-authored by Phillip Zarrilli, Bruce McConachie, Gary Jay Williams and Carol Fisher Sorgenfrei, will ground and complement course readings and exercises. Because this course is selecting discrete sections from the Zarrilli et.al. work, much of this ambitious and resource-rich volume will not come explicitly into the course. The mid-semester Group Research Project/Presentation attempts to address this, by requiring four small-group investigations into a further area of theater/dance/performance research, using the Zarrilli volume as the first step in that process. There is a written component to this assignment. More information on this project will be given during the second week of the course.

3. Two-part Final Assignment. You are to engage in a semester-long investigation of a performance method/innovator not covered by the course.
You must research the historical context of this method/innovation – what “it” developed in reaction to, what it furthered --, productions that incorporated these innovations directly and specifically, and the impact and ongoing inquiries (scholarly, embodied) of these techniques. This research must be synthesized in a 12-15 page paper, due December 19. Relatedly (the second part), you must also research the “how” of this technique – the exercises, sequences, vocabularies – and create an effective 10-minute workshop in this method for the Final Exam period. What you learn as facilitator of the workshop will be incorporated in essay form into the aforementioned final paper.

**Classroom Requirements:**

*“Presence” Policy:* Attendance and punctuality are crucial, at all class meetings and workshops. You are expected to come despite headaches, colds, and fatigue. Fatigue and its attendant manifestations are often merely thresholds to further learning. Many disciplines and methods of the mind-body have for thousands of years researched the ways our minds “tell us” we can’t do something – and these disciplines and methods have concomitantly researched the ways we re-train the mind so we don’t stop ourselves from proceeding. NONE of the disciplines/methods we are investigating would have manifested in the world without practitioners who overcame great odds to persevere and develop them and who refused to stop just because they were tired or had a headache or were overwhelmed. In training ourselves away from the default of “I can’t,” we develop new appreciations for our capacities and our imaginations can truly soar!

*Enactment of this policy:* Unless there is an official registration of a disability or a doctor’s letter, any absence from a workshop will be an automatic full drop of a letter grade (from “A” to “B”). You may miss one hour-long class meeting without question; any further misses will mean a grade-increment drop (an “A-“ becomes a “B+,” etc.)

*No notetaking on laptops or use of other gadgets.* Cellphones must be turned off during class and workshops.

*Respect the space.* New rules are posted on the lower level about space usage and upkeep. The Black Box and T-3 are your laboratories. Treat them well.

**Required Texts:**


2. *Macbeth*, Shakespeare


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SCHEDULE OF ASSIGNMENTS AND WORKSHOPS

Key to the Below: “Z.” = required text, Theatre Histories: An Introduction, co-authors Zarrilli, McConachie, Williams & Sorgenfrei; “(M)” = Moodle, “(M 24)” = on moodle, 24 pages FYI; unkeyed reading assignments = you are responsible for providing, sent on Required Reading List in August and available at bookstore.

Note: All Assignments are listed next to dates due.

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WEEK ONE: EMBODYING AND SPATIALIZING OUR INTENTIONS

W 9/7  READ:
TH 9/8  MEET BLACK BOX: Intro. to Workshop Space
F 9/9  READ:

WEEK TWO: PLAYING SHAKESPEARE

M 9/12  READ:
W 9/14  READ:
TH 9/15  WORKSHOP: Cheryl Moore Brinkley, “Embodying Shakespeare’s Speech”
F 9/16  READ:

WEEK THREE: THE COMMEDIA DELL’ARTE

M 9/19  READ:
W 9/21  READ:
F 9/23  READ:

WEEK FOUR: LEGACIES OF 19TH C. acting…Minstrelsy, Melodrama

M 9/26  READ:
W 9/28  READ:
F 9/30  READ:

WEEK FIVE: STANISLAVSKY AND ‘THE SYSTEM’

M 10/3  READ:
DUE: First “Inter-Play” Essay, 3-5 pages
W 10/5  READ:
TH 10/6  WORKSHOP: Beth C., “Stanislavsky’s System and Chekhov’s Worldview

F 10/7

WEEK SIX: VSEVOLOD MEYERHOLD AND WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN
M 10/10  READ:
W 10/12  READ:
TH 10/13  WORKSHOP: Vladimir Rovinsky, “Meyerhold’s Biomechanics”
F 10/14  READ: Vsevolod Meyerhold, “The Government Inspector” (M 20)

WEEK SEVEN: THE GREAT DEPRESSION, COLLECTIVES, ‘THE GROUP’
M 10/17  READ:
W 10/19  READ:
TH 10/20  WORKSHOP: Harry Waters Jr, “The Meisner Technique”
F 10/21  READ:

WEEK EIGHT: SYNTHESES 1
M 10/24  Group Presentation #1: ________________________________

Group Presentation #2: ________________________________
DUE: Second “Inter-Play” Essay, 3-5 pages

W 10/26  Group Presentation #3: ________________________________

Group Presentation #4: ________________________________

FALL BREAK

WEEK NINE: BERTOLT BRECHT AND ‘COMPLEX FEELING’
M 10/31  READ:
W 11/2    READ:
TH 11/3   WORKSHOP: Beth C., “Rendering the Self Multiple: Brechtian Acting”
F 11/4    READ:

WEEK TEN: POST-WWII ‘HOLY ACTOR’ LINEAGE: GROTOWSKI, BARBA, DAH TEATAR
M 11/7    READ:
W 11/9    READ:
TH 11/10  WORKSHOP: Beth C., “DAH Teatar and Basic Principles”
F 11/12  NO ASSIGNMENT. *The Inland Sea* opens.

**WEEK ELEVEN: U.S., NYC, THE OPEN THEATRE IN THE SIXTIES**

| M 11/14 | READ: |
| W 11/16 | READ: |
| F 11/18 | READ:  DUE: Third “Inter-Play” Essay, 3 pages. |

**WEEK TWELVE: SYNTHESSES II**

| M 11/21 | NO ASSIGNMENT. Class will meet to review and synthesize. |

| W 11/23 | NO CLASS MEETING. Papers due as electronic MS Word document e’mail attachments by 4:00 p.m. W 11/23. |

HAPPY THANKSGIVING!

**WEEK THIRTEEN: AUGUSTO BOAL AND THE THEATRE OF THE OPPRESSED**

| M 11/28 | READ: |
| W 11/30 | READ: |
| TH 12/1 | WORKSHOP: Sonja Kuftinec, “TO and Firing the ‘Cop in the Head’” |
| F 12/2 | READ: |

**WEEK FOURTEEN: VIEWPOINTS TRAINING**

| M 12/5 | READ: |
| W 12/7 | READ: |
| TH 12/9 | WORKSHOP: Leif Jurgensen, “Viewpoints Training at the SITI Company”(M) |
| F 12/9 | NO ASSIGNMENT, review and synthesize |

**WEEK FIFTEEN: SYNTHESSES III: VISIONS**

| M 12/12 | READ:  C.L.R. James, on Cricket (M 3)  DUE: Fourth and Final “Inter-Play” Essay, 3 pages. |

**DUE DURING EXAM PERIOD, FRIDAY 12/16, 8-10 a.m.**: Twelve 10-minute mini-workshops based on your in-depth research.
DUE MONDAY, 12/19 by noon: In-depth research papers on off-syllabus group or movement, incorporating reflections on the exercise(s) you presented 3 days earlier.