

Arts & Society: Theater (THEA) (A) - LBST 1104 560 CRN: 13384
THE CULT OF PERSONALITY: Paris Hilton's America
FALL 2010 MW 12:30-1:45 STORRS 110

Instructor: James Vesce
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Office Hours (Robinson Hall 364): By appointment only

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Course Description

Visual performance - theater, film, music, television, video, the internet and beyond - has become the common language of our time and the symbolic language of our culture. In its various forms it can reflect the values of our culture and society or challenge those values by creating new mythologies and visions of the future. Through a careful study of visual performance and its various manifestations in media and celebrity we can help better understand ourselves and the nature and character of this new social language. The goal of this course is to achieve “visual literacy” – to obtain the skills necessary to think critically about the nature and content of these forms of human communication. The class will run as a combination of lecture, discussion, and performance lab. Students will read background materials, view selected film, video, and television performances, and participate in exercises and performances. No previous theater, film, or video experience is necessary – just a willingness to explore the possibilities of visual communication.

Grading and Requirements

- 20 points – Exam #1
- 20 points – Exam #2
- 30 points – Final Exam
- 20 points – Four Quizzes (5 points each)
- 10 points – Attendance at two live theatre performances (5 points each; tickets are \$6)

Grading is based on a 100 point system. There are three exams throughout the semester and one final exam at the end of the semester. The final exam is cumulative and mandatory. Your lowest grade among the three regular exams will be dropped, or if you are absent on the day of one of the exams, that missing grade will be dropped. Between four and ten pop quizzes will be given throughout the semester. The top four grades will be included in your overall grade average. *There are no makeup exams or quizzes in this course.*

Movies

You will also be required to view four movies throughout the semester: *Casablanca*, *Network*, *Bamboozled*, and *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*. A movie night will be scheduled for each movie. Attendance at movie nights is optional. However, if you do not attend, you will be expected to view the movie on your own.

Textbooks

There are six plays below required for purchase for this class. An additional play, *The Tempest* by William Shakespeare, will be available for free online. In addition, readings will be assigned and posted on Moodle. It is expected that you will make photocopies of these readings and any other materials if necessary or at the very least take careful notes for use in class.

Tales of the Lost Formicans

Constance Congdon

ISBN: 0-88145-091-X

Broadway Play Publishing

Stop Kiss

Diana Son

ISBN: 9780822217312

Dramatists

Assassins

Stephen Sondheim & John Weidman

ISBN: 9781559360388

Theatre Communications Group

Nocturne

Adam Rapp

ISBN: 9780571211326

Broadway Play Publishing

Dead Man's Cell Phone

Sarah Ruhl

ISBN: 9781559363259

The Colored Museum

George C. Wolfe

9780802130488

Grove Press

It is expected that you will use the textbooks and materials recommended for this course. Otherwise, you run the risk of inconsistency among translations and adaptations, dissimilar pagination, and all of the other inconveniences to classmates that follow from different versions of the same play or text. You might also jeopardize your preparation for exams.

It is perfectly acceptable to shop for the lowest cost for your books. I recommend any of the online booksellers like Amazon or Barnes & Noble who often offer used book options. You might also consider abebooks.com or half.com for some reasonable deals. Some book rental options are also available through the UNC Charlotte bookstore.

Attendance

Attendance in this course is mandatory. Two unexcused absences are permitted. After two absences, the instructor reserves the right to lower your grade ten points for each additional absence. Only under special circumstances will a student be allowed to miss additional classes, and then only with advanced notice and appropriate documentation, subject to the rules and regulations of the University and the discretion of the instructor. Exceptions may include but are not limited to the following: religious holidays, medical emergencies, university athletic events, family emergencies, professional opportunities. The deadline for notification of absence under special circumstances is Friday, September 3, 2010 at 5 PM. Please do not call or email the instructor explaining absences.

Tardiness

Tardiness is defined as arriving late once class has begun. If the door to the classroom is closed at the beginning of class you may not enter late. Do not even try to enter.

Class Protocol

Please keep in mind the following regulations:

- Please do not email the instructor or teaching assistants with explanations about tardiness, absence or incomplete and late assignments. If there are extenuating circumstances you should follow the procedures outlined above.
- There will be a daily sign-in sheet, and it is your responsibility to make sure you sign it. If you do not sign the attendance sheet you will be marked absent ... and there are NO EXCUSES or EXCEPTIONS! Wait to go to the bathroom until after you sign the attendance sheet. Also, anyone caught signing another student's name on the attendance sheet will fail the class for the semester and be reported to Dean of Students as "Academically Dishonest". This can lead to suspension and expulsion from school. Bottom line: DON'T RISK IT! You will get caught!
- Do not ask about extra-credit assignments.
- All out-of-class communication will be arranged through the Moodle website, the teaching assistants' email address, and your UNC Charlotte email account. You are responsible for responding as needed to any and all out-of-class communication. For schedule changes and all other course information you should check your email account and the webpage for this course on a regular, if not daily, basis.
- The following excuses for failure to fulfill the requirements in this course are no longer acceptable in the electronic age: computers and printers that don't work, emails and phone messages you never receive, no time to attend a show.
- The best way to contact us is by email generally during the day. Phone messages are helpful but I can't always guarantee a response. Be sure your email address is accurate and active.
- You are responsible for approaching your fellow students for lecture notes and assignments information.

Some other observations:

- Talking is unacceptable in a college classroom.
- I strongly discourage you from using my classroom as a youth hostel. Sleeping in class is at the very least annoying and you will be marked absent if you do so.
- Food of any kind is not permitted in the class (only water is acceptable).
- Internet or electronic access of any kind is not allowed for the duration of the class. This includes the use of cell phones, iPods, and any other similar device.
- Laptops for the purpose of notetaking are only permitted in the front rows of the lecture hall.
- Visitors to class are allowed with permission of the instructor only.
- In regard to the behaviors listed above, I strongly suggest that you adhere to all of them. If not, you will be publicly embarrassed.

Finally, if at any time during the course of the semester you find that you cannot keep up in the class or that you inevitably heading toward a poor or failing performance, please contact me or one of the teaching assistants before any more time goes by. You'd be surprised how much that can help in difficult situations.

Disability Services

If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, you are encouraged to contact both your instructor and the Office of Disability Services, Fretwell 230, 704/687-4355, as early as possible in the term. It is your responsibility to make your special needs known so that we may be of assistance.

Department of Theatre Mission and Purpose Statement

The Department of Theatre's mission is two-fold. First, we promote creativity, inquisitiveness, critical thinking, communication skills (oral and written), and cultural appreciation through the study of theatre. Second, we teach the specific craft of theatre-making through classroom experience, individual and collaborative study, and actualized stage productions, all emphasizing the particular skills necessary for the generation of high-quality stage performance. Students learn to participate in current critical discourse while engaging with the theory, history and material conditions of performance, and broaden their personal horizons as they encounter a range of ideas and issues – political, social, and aesthetic – through the unique art form which is theatre. The program thus creates a rigorous intellectual environment firmly rooted in the theatrical art form.

From this broad-based grounding in the fundamentals of the medium, students can then opt to specialize in one of the component subfields: history and theory, dramaturgy, playwriting, acting, directing, production, and design. In addition these fundamentals will also prepare students who so wish to specialize in theater education with the goal of obtaining a North Carolina teaching license. Throughout their training, students work both as faculty-mentored individuals and in collaborative groups, so that in addition to making significant contributions to the cultural life of the campus through departmental productions, they emerge ready for theatrical internships, graduate programs or for any profession which places value on independent thinking, confidence, and communication skills.

STUDENT GUIDELINES TO THE UNC CHARLOTTE CODE OF STUDENT ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

As a student at UNC Charlotte, you have certain rights and responsibilities under the UNC Charlotte Code of Student Academic Integrity (the Code). The Code defines these responsibilities and guarantees you certain rights that ensure your protection from improper accusations of academic integrity violations. You should familiarize yourself with the provisions and procedures of the Code. These guidelines provide a brief summary of the Code and are intended to be used as a quick reference for UNC Charlotte students. Please refer to the full Code, available online at <http://www.legal.uncc.edu/policies/ps-105.html> for complete policies and procedures.

RESPONSIBILITIES

To promote a positive academic environment that encourages excellence, leadership, honesty, and potential, you have an obligation to uphold the standards of academic integrity at UNC Charlotte. Your responsibilities include being aware of and not engaging in the following activities:

Cheating

- Copying from another student's paper or course work.
- Receiving unauthorized assistance during an exam, test, or quiz.
- Using books, notes, or other materials or devices (such as calculators) when they are prohibited.
- Obtaining or viewing a copy of an exam, test, or quiz before it is given.

Plagiarism

- Submitting the work of another as your own.
- Directly quoting from a source without proper citation.
- Paraphrasing or summarizing another's work without acknowledging the source.
- Using facts, figures, graphs, charts, or information without acknowledging the source.
- Purchasing and/or copying commercial term papers or other course work and submitting it as your own.

(See the Appendix to the Code for helpful examples of plagiarism.)

Fabrication or Falsification

- Altering, inventing, or counterfeiting information.
- Counterfeiting a record of internship or practicum experience.
- Falsely citing a source of information.
- Altering grade reports or other academic records.
- Submitting a fraudulent excuse for missing a class or other academic exercise.

Multiple Submissions

- Submitting the same academic work more than once for credit in one or more courses.
- Making minor revisions in credited papers, reports, or presentations (including oral presentations), and submitting them as new work.

Abuse of Academic Materials

- Destroying, stealing, or making inaccessible any academic resource material.
- Destroying or damaging computer programs or files needed by others for academic work.

Complicity in Academic Dishonesty

- Helping or attempting to help another person commit an act of academic dishonesty.

Note: Transient students (students from other universities enrolled in UNC Charlotte courses) are bound by the rules, and responsibilities of the Code. If a transient student is convicted of violating the Code, UNC Charlotte may notify his/her permanent university.

RIGHTS

If a faculty member accuses you of an academic integrity violation, the Code guarantees you certain rights:

- To require that the University handle alleged violations according to the procedures set forth in the Code.
- To refuse any faculty-imposed punishment not provided in the Code.
- To seek advice and receive help from the Dean of Students, the Student Defense Counsel, or the Chair of the Academic Integrity Board (AIB).
- To consider a settlement offer for at least 72 hours.
- To appeal an AIB ruling within three days of the hearing. (Appeal procedures are outlined in Section V.D of the Code.)

PROCEDURES

You are protected from improper accusations of academic integrity violations by the following procedures:

- A faculty member must follow the procedures provided in the Code (see reverse of this brochure) to accuse you of a Code violation.
- For first-time offenses of a less serious nature, the Code provides a settlement procedure (see Section V.A of the Code).
- For more serious violations, OR if you refuse to sign a settlement offer, OR if you have a prior academic integrity offense, the case must be referred to the Chair of the AIB, who will determine if a hearing before the AIB is appropriate.
- The Code provides detailed procedures for AIB hearings and appeals.

The Cult of Personality: Paris Hilton's America
Bibliography

- Appignanesi, Richard, et. al., *Introducing Postmodernism*
Baudrillard, Jean, *Screened Out*
Bauerlein, Mark, *The Dumbest Generation: How The Digital Age Stupefies Young Americans and Jeopardizes Our Future*
Bloom, Allan, *The Closing Of The American Mind*
Brown, Tina, *The Diana Chronicles*
Dowd, Maureen, *Are Men Necessary?: When Sexes Collide*
Goethals, Gregor, *The TV Ritual: Worship At The Video Altar*
Kronman, Anthony T., *Education's End: Why Our Colleges And Universities Have Given Up On The Meaning Of Life*
Lasch, Christopher, *The Culture of Narcissism: American Life In An Age of Diminishing Expectations*
McLuhan, Marshall, *Understanding Media*
Miles, Barry, *Hippie*
Myerson, George, *Heidegger, Habermas, and the Mobile Phone*
Pinchbeck, Daniel, *2012: The Return of Quetzalcoatl*
Pink, Daniel, *A Whole New Mind: Why Right-Brainers Will Rule The Future*
Postman, Neil, *Amusing Ourselves To Death: Public Discourse In The Age of Show Business*
Schickel, Richard, *Intimate Strangers: The Culture Of Celebrity*
Sheehy, Gail, *New Passages: Mapping Your Life Across Time*
Wallace, Patricia, *The Psychology of the Internet*
Whybrow, Peter, *American Mania: When More Is Not Enough*

SYLLABUS AGREEMENT:

To be handed in on or before Wednesday September 1, 2010.
(Minus 10 points if not turned in)

I have read the syllabus thoroughly and agree to its terms and conditions.

Signature _____

Printed Name: _____

Date: _____