

THEATER 2140-001
PLAY ANALYSIS
Syllabus

FALL 2008
TTH 3:30-4:45
Robinson 303

Instructor: James Vesce
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Office Hours (Robinson 378): MW 10-11 and by appointment

Course Goals

To learn analytical tools used by directors, designers, and actors to stage a play
To view plays through distinct theoretical approaches, modern and postmodern
To read, analyze, and compare plays from various cultures and perspectives
To perform dramaturgical research and develop collaborative interpretations

Grading and Requirements

Grading is based on a 200 point system (subject to change):

100 points – 10 exams at any time throughout the semester (10 points each)

20 points – Class participation in activities and discussions

20 points – Two written critiques of workshop productions (10 points each)

20 points – Two written critiques of departmental productions (10 points each)

20 points – Attendance at two movie nights

20 points – Read a book on a topic related to the class and submit a brief synopsis

Textbooks

There are several textbooks required for this class. In addition, readings will be placed on reserve and e-reserve either in the library or through my website. It is expected that you will make photocopies of these readings and any other materials necessary for class presentations and assignments or at the very least take careful notes for use in class.

Pritner, Cal & Scott E. Walters, *Introduction to Play Analysis*

Congdon, Constance, *Tales of the Lost Formicans*

Kotis, Greg, and Mark Hollman, *Urinetown: The Musical*

Rapp, Adam, *Nocturne*

Rapp, Adam, *Red Light Winter*

Sater, Steven and Frank Wedekind, *Spring Awakening*

Shakespeare, William, *The Comedy of Errors*

Smith, Anna Deavere, *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992*

Son, Diana, *Stop Kiss*

Wolfe, George C., *The Colored Museum*

Required Productions

You must attend two play readings during the semester and submit a written critique for each one. A schedule of readings will be provided during the semester.

You must see and submit a written critique for the following Department of Dance and Theatre productions:

Sylvia

By A.R. Gurney

Directed by Dennis Black

Lab Theatre

October 3 – 6 at 8 pm; October 7 at 2 pm

Our Country's Good

By Timberlake Wertenbaker

Directed by Lon Bumgarner

Anne R. Belk Theater

October 24 – 27 at 8 pm; October 28 at 2 pm

Admission to the play readings is free. Tickets for departmental productions are \$5 for students. Critiques are due one week from the date of the final performance.

Guidelines for Critiques

These essays are your personal evaluations of each show: what worked for you, what didn't work. You may be asked to read your critique in class, or present your ideas for discussion. For now, you may want to consider the following:

For the play readings, the priority should be your evaluation of the viability and consistency of the script. Would this work well in production? What are its strengths and weaknesses? You should keep in mind suggestions and questions for the playwright as s/he attempts to improve the script.

For the departmental shows, keep in mind you are writing a production critique. Areas of interest may include the performance of the actors, the design elements (scenery, lighting, costumes, sound), the interpretation of the text or script, or any additional aspect of the production you found interesting or problematic.

1. Write the critique while the show is still fresh in your mind.
2. Avoid plot and/or theme summaries. Take a position – be opinionated and honest, but fair.
3. The review cannot be comprehensive or thorough – it should only reflect a few aspects of the production. As much as possible use specific examples to critically assess your general impressions of the work.
4. Credit specific artists, directors, and designers by name.
5. Writing is an important aspect of the assignment. Proofread carefully. The formal rules of grammar and style apply.
6. Suggested length: 3 pages, typed/double-spaced, 10 or 12 font.

Department of Dance and Theatre
Studio Class and Performance Protocol

The following are uniform guidelines for participation in studio and seminar performance classes. In a studio class or seminar most of the work is "in-class" and "hands-on." Attendance and full participation are therefore essential. Preparation and focus should guide your work as well; your demeanor in class should reflect this at all times. It is important for everyone to work cooperatively and collaboratively, and to create an environment of openness and trust.

Attendance

Two absences are permitted. After two absences, the instructor reserves the right to lower your grade one full letter 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. *Please do not call or email the instructor explaining absences.* Failure to honor rehearsal schedules and time commitments is unprofessional and unacceptable, and will result in a lower grade. Absence at out-of-class rehearsals and group meetings will be considered as class 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.* If the door remains open you may enter but will be considered tardy. 3 tardy arrivals constitute 1 absence. If you are tardy by more than 15 minutes and choose to come to class it will still result in 1 absence.

Coursework

You may not use one of your 2 absences as an excuse for missing a class presentation. If you are absent from class on a day of a presentation or written assignment, the assignment, when presented or turned in, will be graded without prejudice and then lowered by one full letter grade. In the case of performance presentations - you are not guaranteed the chance to present your assignment late (if going back causes a schedule problem). Late assignments will not be accepted.

Course Materials

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.

Use of Facilities

Food and drink are expressly forbidden in the studio classroom and theater. Only bottled water is acceptable. All furniture, set pieces, and props should be returned to their proper places at the end of class.

Additional Guidelines

Please keep in mind the following regulations:

- Please do not email the instructor with explanations about tardiness, absence or incomplete and late assignments. If there are extenuating circumstances you should schedule an appointment to discuss the matter in person.
- Papers are due when they are due. Late papers and extensions are not allowed.
- Do not ask about extra credit assignments.
- All out-of-class communication will be arranged through my website or via 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 complete assignments 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.
- If you do not have in your possession in class the assigned readings or play(s) for any given day, you will be marked absent for that session.
- The best way to contact me 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.
- I strongly discourage you from using my classroom as a youth hostel. Sleeping in class is at the very least most annoying.
- Visitors to class are allowed with permission of the instructor only.

Department of Dance and Theatre Mission and Purpose Statement

Majors and minors in the Department are encouraged to explore the theoretical foundations and aesthetics of both dance and theatre through a required series of cross-disciplinary courses as well as discipline-specific courses. While receiving a foundation in dance and theatre, all students in both our lecture and studio courses gain knowledge and skills that allow them to achieve career goals, commit to life-long learning, and enrich their quality of life. In addition, all students may gain practical experience through performance and technical assignments in the Department's production season.

Faculty members are committed to the teaching and practice of dance and theatre, as they foster academic progress and artistic expression in an environment that respects cultural and artistic diversity (note that "cultural diversity" refers to issues of race, ethnicity, color, national origin, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age, and disability). In addition, they contribute to the University, the community, and their professions through scholarly and creative endeavors and through service activities. To conclude: in all its endeavors the

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.

The UNC Charlotte Code of Student Academic Integrity Student Guidelines

As a student at UNC Charlotte, you have certain rights and responsibilities under the UNC Charlotte Code of Student Academic Integrity. 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. Please refer to the full Code, available online at:
<http://www.legal.uncc.edu/policies/ps-105.htm>

THEA 2140-001 Play Analysis
Schedule of Assignments

Tuesday	Aug. 21	Introduction to the Course
Thursday	23	Lecture: Play Analysis and Play Experience
Tuesday	28	Lecture: Play vs. Performance
Thursday	30	Lecture: Play Structure Read: <i>Introduction to Play Analysis</i> Chs. 2,4,5,6
Tuesday	4	Lecture: A Method For Play Analysis Read: <i>Introduction to Play Analysis</i> Intro & Ch. 1
Thursday	6	Lecture: Postmodernism
Tuesday	11	Lecture: Reading Greek Tragedy Read: <i>Oedipus Rex</i>
Thursday	13	Read: <i>Oedipus Rex</i>
Tuesday	18	Lecture: Reading Shakespeare
Thursday	20	Read: <i>The Comedy of Errors</i>
Tuesday	25	Read: <i>The Comedy of Errors</i>
Thursday	27	Read: <i>The Imaginary Invalid</i>
Tuesday	Oct 2	Lecture: Modernism Read: <i>The Cherry Orchard</i>
Thursday	4	Read: <i>Cat On A Hot Tin Roof</i>

Tuesday	9	Fall Break – No Class
Thursday	11	TBA
Tuesday	16	Lecture: Musical Theater
Thursday	18	Read: <i>Urinetown</i>
Tuesday	23	Read: <i>Spring Awakening</i>
Thursday	25	Read: <i>Spring Awakening</i>
Tuesday	30	TBA
Thursday	Nov 1	TBA
Tuesday	6	Read: <i>Tales of the Lost Formicans</i>
Thursday	8	Read: <i>Tales of the Lost Formicans</i>
Tuesday	13	Lecture: African American Theater Read: <i>The Colored Museum</i>
Thursday	15	Read: <i>Twilight Los Angeles, 1992</i>
Tuesday	20	Read: <i>Twilight Los Angeles, 1992</i>
Thursday	22	Thanksgiving Break – No Class
Tuesday	27	Read: <i>Stop Kiss</i>
Thursday	29	Read: <i>Nocturne & Red Light Winter</i>
Tuesday	Dec 4	Postmortem