Why do we still go to the theatre to watch plays? What is it about drama that can often seem to express so much about the tensions and stresses found in a given culture? Why does classical drama in particular continue to be performed and speak to so many different audiences? What is a classical play and how do theatre artists interpret them for contemporary spectators and why have so many works of drama been used to reflect the social, political and economic situations of peoples all over the world? This new course takes its title and inspiration from Paul Woodruff’s book, *The Necessity of Theater: The Art of Watching and Being Watched* (Oxford 2008) and will be an exploration of the cultural significance of classical Theatre and how and why it continues to be performed today. Students will examine Theatre from four distinct periods focusing on plays that are still regularly performed on contemporary stages: Athens in the Fifth Century BCE, Elizabethan London, Early Modern Europe and Contemporary America. Two plays from each period will be read and discussed as well as supporting chapters and articles and sections from Woodruff’s book. In addition to illustrated lectures and class discussions there will also be participatory workshops and class visits by artists working in the field. We will be discussing these plays from a cultural, historical and a practitioners perspective. Students will be asked to participate in readings, exercises and demonstrations but they do not need to have any acting or performance ability.

Peter Meineck is Clinical Associate Professor in Classics and has taught at NYU for 12 years winning the Golden Dozen Teaching Award in 2009. He held posts at Princeton, USC and UT Austin. He also founded Aquila Theatre, a professional troupe that specializes in re-imaginings of classical drama ([www.aquilatheatre.com](http://www.aquilatheatre.com)), and is Director of the Ancient Greeks/Modern Lives program which received a Chairman’s Special Award from the National Endowment for the Humanities in 2010.

**Requirements**

Your presence is expected at all lectures and recitations. Bring all assigned readings to class: if you don’t have the text, you can’t follow the lecture or answer questions. You must complete all components of the course: that is, you may not opt out of any papers, reports, or exams or make a practice of skipping recitation; if you do so, you risk failing the course, regardless of your grades in other components.

**Class Etiquette**

1. Please refrain from talking when your professor or a classmate is addressing the class or when the class is listening to audio/video course materials.
2. Please do not eat in class. Drinks are fine.
3. Please clean up any mess you make during class.
4. Please treat your professor and classmates with respect.
5. Please sleep in your own bed at home and not in class.
6. Please bring an open and inquiring mind to class and be prepared to discuss views that may differ from yours, intelligently and with respect.
7. Please do not leave class or start packing up your belongings until your professor has informed you that class has finished.
8. Please treat any visitors to class as you would your professor.
9. Please do not be late for class.
10. Please turn off cell phones, blackberries, i-pads, laptops and remove headphones. Technology is great and we will be using it in class but as this is a humanities class let’s try and be human. If you need to take notes on a computer please supply a note from the Moses Center.
11. Also please do not use the internet, instant messages, Skype, MP3 players or any other electronic device that will impair your full participation on class.
12. Please remember to silence your phones.

Mitigating Circumstances

If you are aware of any conditions or circumstances that will affect your course work in any way (such as learning disabilities, medical problems etc.) it is your responsibility to make your professor fully aware of them at the earliest opportunity either in person after class, by scheduling an appointment, via telephone, e-mail or in writing and by communicating with the relevant advisory department such as the Moses Center. If a student fails to make due notification the professor will be unable to take any such circumstances into consideration when setting work or calculating grades.

Grading

Written work

3 one-page reports worth 5% each (total 15%)
3 three-page papers worth 10% each (total 30%)

All written assignments must be completed and turned in by the date and time listed on the syllabus.

**LATE PAPERS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED FOR ANY REASON WHATSOEVER.** Failure to complete any of the written assignments will result in a failing grade.

There will be six written assignments set (in addition to a final paper). Three will be one page each and three will be three pages each. Students will receive written work back with comments and grades in one week. TA’s will discuss written assignments with students in recitations.

Mid Term Exam 20%

This will comprise of ten questions on the course material that will each require a one or two paragraph response.

Final 20%

This will be a final 8-page paper due at the time of the last class. Students may choose a title from one of five assigned topics. Their final title and thesis must be approved by the TA's or Instructor.

Participation and Blackboard postings 15%

This grade will be based on attendance, class participation in discussions and exercises, online participation on the course Blackboard discussion board and recitation participation. After two classes and or recitations missed the grade drops 2% for each subsequent missed class unless for medical reasons which must be documented by a dated doctor’s note, or religious observances.
Each class member must make at least 10 Blackboard postings by the final class date. These should be a few sentences on the readings, advancing the class or precept discussions or comments on performances seen. More than 10 postings will significantly enhance the participation grade, less than ten will likewise diminish the grade.

Class Theatre Visit

There will be two mandatory theatre visits. One as a class during October and another chosen individually towards the end of the course. Students will need to purchase their tickets and for the class trip a student group discount will be obtained.

Readings

Readings are set on the day they appear in the schedule and must be completed by the following class period for discussion. Additional readings may be assigned in class as well as those that appear on the syllabus. It is imperative that students keep up with the readings and are prepared to discuss them in class and precept groups.

Recitation

The recitation is an integral part of this course. You must attend every meeting. Speaking up in recitation is required, not optional: if you’re shy or having trouble with the work, consult your instructor. Missing more than two meetings will bring down your grade. If you miss more than half the recitations, you will fail the course.

Plagiarism

Essay and exam questions are designed specifically for this course, and they must be answered without using, print or internet resources, Wikipedia, essays-for-sale sites, the services of a hard-up graduate student, friends or family members etc. Copying or paraphrasing or rewriting words that someone else has written is cheating. Students caught cheating will receive an F for the entire course.

Required Texts

These books are at the NYU Bookstore. Please use these editions as we will be using their introductory and critical materials.

Wertenbaker, Tomberlake, Our Country’s Good, Dramatic Publishing. (1990) (not in bookstore, please order online or at a bookstore).

Other Readings

Other readings will be placed on Blackboard as downloadable PDF files.
Syllabus
(subject to change depending on guest speaker’s availability etc.)

September

Week 1.
Tue 4th Course Introduction: The Necessity of Theatre
Reading: Woodruff: Prologue and Introduction (pp. 3-28)
Thu 6th Where does Theatre come from and why do we still need it?
Reading: Woodruff: Part One: 1 and 2 (pp. 31-62)
One page Report 1 Set

Week 2.
Tue 11th Theatre by Combat Vets for Combat Vets: Ancient Athens
Reading: Sophocles Ajax.
Thu 13th Combat Trauma and Tragedy: Sophocles’ Ajax 1
Reading: Introduction to Sophocles Ajax and Theatre of War (Blackboard)
One Page Report 1 Due

Week 3.
Tue 18th Combat Trauma and Tragedy: Sophocles’ Ajax 2
Reading: Woodruff: Part One: 3-4 (pp. 63-92)
One Page Report 2 Set
Thu 20th Free speech and Filth: Comedy and Democracy
Reading: Aristophanes’ Frogs.
Introduction to Aristophanes’ Frogs.

Week 4.
Tue 25th Saving the City: Aristophanes’ Frogs 1
Reading: Woodruff: Part One: 5-6 (pp. 93-122)
One Page Report 2 Due
Thu 27th Guest Speaker on Ancient Drama.
Reading: Woodruff: Part One: 7 (pp. 123-140)
Three Page Paper 1 Set

October

Week 5.
Tue 2nd Masks and Motion: The spectacle of Theatre
Reading: *The Neuroscience of the Tragic Mask* (Blackboard)

**Thu 4th**
*Really* Reading Shakespeare: A workshop
Reading: Shakespeare, *Macbeth*
**Three Page Paper 1 Due.**

**Week 6.**

**Tue 9th**
Assassination, Murder Mayhem and *Macbeth 1*
Reading: Woodruff: Part Two: 8-9 (pp. 145-187), introduction to *Macbeth.*
**Three Page Paper 2 Set.**

**Thu 11th**
Assassination, Murder Mayhem and *Macbeth 2*
Reading: Woodruff: Part Two: 10, 11, 12 and Epilogue (pp. 188-231)

**Week 7.**

**Tue 16th**
FALL RECESS. NO CLASS

**Thu 18th**
The Aesthetics of Shakespeare
Reading:
**Three Page Paper 2 Due.**

**Week 8.**

**Tue 23rd**
Theatre Reinvented: Elizabethan London
Midterm review
Reading: Midterm Study

**Thu 25th**
**Midterm Exam**
In class - one hour ten minutes.
Reading: Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*

**Week 9.**

**Tue 30th**
Denying Death by Dreaming: *A Midsummer Night’s Dream 1*
**Three Page Paper 3 Set**
Reading: Introduction to Midsummer and TBD.

**November**

**Thu 1st**
Denying Death by Dreaming: *A Midsummer Night’s Dream 2*
Reading: TBD

**Week 10.**

**Tue 6th**
Guest Speaker on Staging Shakespeare
**Three Page Paper 3 Due**
Reading: Ibsen *An Enemy of the People*

**Thu 8th**
Ibsen’s Environmental Anarchy: *An Enemy of The People 1*
Reading: Introduction to *Enemy* and TBD

**Week 11.**
Tue 13th  
An Enemy of The People 2 – Modeling Ibsen’s Characters.  
**One Page Report 3 Set**  
Reading: Six Characters in Search of an Author

Thu 15th  
Staging Surrealism: Six Characters in Search of an Author 1  
Reading: TBD

Week 12.

Tue 20th  
Staging Surrealism: Six Characters in Search of an Author 2  
**One Page Report Due**  
Reading: Our Country’s Good  
**Final Paper Set.**

Thu 22nd  
THANKSGIVING RECESS. NO CLASS

Week 13.

Tue 27th  
Our Country’s Good — Timberlake Wertenbaker  
Reading TBD

Thu 29th  
Our Country’s Good 2  
Theatre Visits Set

December

Week 14.

Tue 4th  
Class Visit  
Theatre Visits Ongoing

Thu 6th  
Theatre Visit Reports  
Theatre Visits Ongoing

Week 15.

Tue 11th  
Theatre Visit Reports 2  
Reading TBD.

Thu 13th  
The future of Theatre  
**Final Paper Due in Class.**