Morse Academic Plan: Expressive Cultures

The Necessity of Theatre

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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), 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 www.ancientgreeksmodernlives.org

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

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 a timely fashion. TA’s will discuss written assignments with students in recitations.

2 one-page reports worth 5% each (total 10%)
2 two-page papers worth 5% each (total 10%)
1 three-page paper worth 10% each (total 10%)
1 one-page play report worth 5%
Final Paper (see below)

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.

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 30%

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. The final title and thesis must be approved by the TA’s or Instructor.
**Participation and NYU classes 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 NY classes 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.


Syllabus

Readings are **SET** on the day they appear in the syllabus and **DUE** in the next class period. Please bring at least two discussion points on each reading to class ready to discuss when called upon.

### September

**Week 1.**

**Tue 3rd**  
Course Introduction: The Necessity of Theatre  
Reading: Woodruff: Prologue and Introduction (pp. 3-28)

**Thu 5th**  
Watching and Being Watched: Defining Theatre  
Reading: Woodruff: Part One: 1 and 2 (pp. 31-62)  
**One page Paper 1 Set**

**Week 2.**

**Tue 10th**  
Mind, Brain and Mimesis: The biology of Theatre  
Reading: Woodruff: Part One: 3-4 (pp. 63-92)

**Thu 12th**  
The Neuroscience of the Dramatic Mask  
Reading: Woodruff: Part One: 5-6 (pp. 93-122)  
Reading: *The Neuroscience of the Tragic Mask* (ONLINE)  
**One Page Paper 1 Due**

**Week 3.**

**Tue 17th**  
Before Theatre: Procession, Cult and the Chorus  
Reading: Woodruff: Part One: 5-6 (pp. 93-122)  
**One Page Paper 2 Set**

**Thu 19th**  
The Theatricality of Greek Tragedy  
Reading: Aeschylus *Agamemnon*  
Introduction to the *Oresteia*.  

**Week 4.**

**Tue 24th**  
The spectacle of Greek Theatre: Environment  
Reading: Woodruff: Part One: 7 (pp. 123-140)  
**One Page Paper 2 Due**

**Thu 26th**  
The Politics of the *Oresteia*  
Reading: Aeschylus *Libation Bearers*  
**Two Page Paper 1 Set**

### October

**Week 5.**

**Tue 1st**  
The Tragic Paradox: Pleasure in Pity and Fear  
Reading: *The Furies*
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<tr>
<td>Thu</td>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>The <em>Oresteia</em>: Justice: Human and Divine</td>
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<td>Reading: Woodruff: Part Two: 8-9 (pp. 145-187)</td>
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<td><strong>Two Page Paper 1 Due</strong></td>
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<td>Week 6.</td>
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<td>Tue</td>
<td>8th</td>
<td>Obscenity, inhibition and laughter: Comedy and Catharsis</td>
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<td>Reading: Aristophanes <em>Frogs</em></td>
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<td><strong>Two Page Paper 2 Set</strong></td>
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<td>Thu</td>
<td>10th</td>
<td>Saving the City: Aristophanes <em>Frogs</em></td>
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<td>Quick Midterm Review</td>
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<td>Reading: Woodruff: Part Two: 10, 11, 12 and Epilogue (pp. 188-231)</td>
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<td>Week 7.</td>
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<td>Tue</td>
<td>15th</td>
<td><strong>FALL RECESS. NO CLASS</strong></td>
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<td>Thu</td>
<td>17th</td>
<td>Two views of Greek Drama: Darren Gardner and Timothy Franz</td>
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<td>Reading: Mid Term Study</td>
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<td><strong>Two Page Paper 2 Due</strong></td>
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<td>Week 8.</td>
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<td>Tue</td>
<td>22nd</td>
<td><strong>MIDTERM EXAM</strong></td>
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<td>In class - one hour ten minutes.</td>
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<td>Thu</td>
<td>24th</td>
<td><em>Really</em> Reading Shakespeare: A workshop</td>
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<td>Reading: Shakespeare, <em>Twelfth Night</em></td>
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<td><strong>Three Page Paper 1 Set</strong></td>
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<td>Week 9.</td>
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<td>Tue</td>
<td>29th</td>
<td><em>Twelfth Night</em></td>
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<td>Reading: Staging Shakespeare (NYU Classes)</td>
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<td>Thu</td>
<td>31st</td>
<td>Staging Narratives</td>
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<td>In class participation</td>
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<td>Reading: Shakespeare’s <em>Othello</em></td>
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<td>Week 10.</td>
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<td>November</td>
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<td>Tue</td>
<td>5th</td>
<td><em>Othello</em></td>
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<td><strong>Three Page Paper 1 Due</strong></td>
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<td>Reading: Introduction to <em>Othello</em></td>
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<td><strong>FINAL PAPER SET</strong></td>
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<td>Thu</td>
<td>7th</td>
<td>Interpreting <em>Othello</em> — Contemporary stagings</td>
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Reading: Ibsen *An Enemy of the People*

**Week 11.**

**Tue 12th**
Ibsen’s Environmental Anarchy: *An Enemy of The People*
Reading: Introduction to *Enemy*

**Thu 14th**
*An Enemy of The People* 2 – Modeling Ibsen’s Characters.
In class participation.
Reading: *Six Characters in Search of an Author*

**Week 12.**

**Tue 19th**
Staging Surrealism: *Six Characters in Search of an Author* 1
Reading: TBD

**Thu 21st**
Staging Surrealism: *Six Characters in Search of an Author* 2
Reading: Ruhl’s *Eurydice*

**Week 13.**

**Tue 26th**
*Eurydice*
Reading: Play of your choice

**Thu 28th**
THANKSGIVING NO CLASS

December

**Week 14.**

**Tue 3rd**
Play reports.
Theatre Visits Ongoing
One page Theatre Reports Set

**Thu 5th**
Theatre Visit Reports
Theatre Visits Ongoing

**Week 15.**

**Tue 10th**
Theatre Visit Reports 2
One Page Theatre Reports Due

**Thu 12th**
The future of Theatre
FINAL PAPER DUE IN CLASS