

Syllabus

CORE: Expressive Cultures

CORE-UA-740-1 in room Silver 405

2pm-3.15pm

The Necessity of Theatre

Prof. Peter Meineck

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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. 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 the Professor in Classics in the Modern World and has taught at NYU for 16 years winning the Golden Dozen Teaching Award in 2009. He holds a PhD in Classics from the University of Nottingham. He has published widely on Greek drama and cognitive theory and translated and published several Greek plays. He has held posts at Princeton, USC and UT Austin and fellowships at Harvard, UCSD and the Onassis Foundation. He also founded Aquila Theatre, a professional troupe that specializes in re-imaginings of classical drama (www.aquilatheatre.com) and has directed, designed and produced over 50 professional productions. He has also acted as a script and acting consultant on several films and TV projects, including Will Smith and Frances Lawrence. He is director of the Warrior Chorus program, which uses classical texts to create public programs with veterans. The program received the Chairman's Special Award from the National Endowment

for the Humanities, the American Philological Association Outreach Award and the 2015 Communicator Award for Performing Arts. He also founded the Shakespeare Leaders program at The Frederick Douglass Academy in Harlem. He also serves as a volunteer firefighter and EMT and is currently the Rescue Captain at the Bedford Fore Department in New York.

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 remember to silence your phones.
11. Only use electronic devices when permitted (see below).

Laptops and Smart Phones etc.

Most recent research has shown that using smart phones and laptops in class seriously diminishes your ability to retain information and keep engaged in class and distracts your classmates. However, smart devices are useful tools and I am aware of how much we use them to communicate. With this in mind this semester I am trying a new experiment. Up until now I have always banned all smart devices in class, but instead of this I am going to try and incorporate them into our learning environment. This needs your cooperation hence the following provision.

Please bring to class a device capable of connecting to the internet, this can be a smart phone, laptop, tablet etc. Several times during each class I will be posing questions or showing images using a software platform called *PollEv Presenter*. You will connect to **PolleEv.com/petermeineck365** to respond in real time. It will take a minute or so for each question to be set and load up at this point you may use your devices with the sound OFF. Once the question is live you will have one minute to post your response. Questions will be on readings and in class lectures. After this you must not use your device again until the next online poll question. In this way you will have several times in class to stay connected and we will benefit from the live interactive technology. However, out of respect for each other as biocultural human beings, when we engage in dialogue in the form of lecturing, discussion, questions and answers I insist that you be full present and not cognitively distracted by your device.

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) worth 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.

Mid Term Exam 25%

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

Final Paper 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 10%

This grade will be based on attendance, class participation in discussions and exercises in class. 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.

Class Theatre Visit

There will be one mandatory theatre visit. Students will need to purchase their tickets and for the class trip at student or group rates.

Individual Theatre Visit

Each class member is required to attend on theatre performance of their choice and prepare a five-minute presentation to the class. This must be a new show you have not seen before.

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.

Recitations

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.

NYU Classes

Please consult out NYU Classes site for the Syllabus, course information and announcements and to exchange information and ask questions on the discussion board.

Meetings

If you would like to meet with Professor Meineck or one of the Recitation instructors please e-mail them directly to arrange a meeting. E-mail addresses are listed on the top of this syllabus.

Missing Work

Please try not to miss any classes. If you must then it is your responsibility to catch up on what you have missed by consulting your classmates and consulting their notes etc. Missed classes will result in a drop in your participation grade.

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.

Woodruff, P., *The Necessity of Theater*, Oxford (2008) or read online / download at NYU Library.

Aeschylus *Persians* Oxford (1989)

Meineck P., *Sophocles Four Tragedies* Cambridge/Indianapolis, (2008).

Henderson, G., *Aristophanes' Frogs* Focus Press (2000)

Hall, Katori, *The Mountaintop*, Dramatists Play Service 2011.

These books you will need to order, read online or obtain from a bookstore

Shakespeare *Comedy of Errors*

Shakespeare *Othello*

(The Arden and Cambridge editions have the best notes. The Folger editions are inexpensive. You may also consider buying a complete works of Shakespeare edition)

Ibsen, H. *An Enemy of the People* New York (2005).

Pirandello L. *Six Characters in Search of An Author*, Hanover, NH (2000).

Luis Alfaro *Mojada* script TBA.

Syllabus

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

January

Week 1.

Tue 23 Course Introduction: The Necessity of Theatre
Reading Set: Woodruff: Prologue and Introduction (pp. 3-28)

Thu 25 Watching and Being Watched: Defining Theatre
Reading Set: Woodruff: Part One: 1 and 2 (pp. 31-62)

Week 2.

Tue 30 The Origins of Theatre: Procession, Cult and Chorality

Paper 1 Set (one page)

Reading: Woodruff: Part One: 3-4 (pp. 63-92)

February

Thu 1 World Theatre Traditions: An Introduction
Reading: Meineck *The Neuroscience of the Tragic Mask* and Csapo, *Riding the Phallus* (NYU CLASSES: "Resources").

Week 3.

Tue 6 Greek Theatre: An Introduction.
Reading: Woodruff: Part One: 5-6 (pp. 93-122)
Paper 1 Due

Thu 8th The Theatricality of Greek Tragedy: Masks and Movement.
Reading: Aeschylus *Persians*
Paper 2 Set (one page)

Week 4.

Tue 13 Playing the Other: *The Persians*
Reading: Woodruff: Part One: 7 (pp. 123-140)
Paper 2 Due

Thu 15 The Tragic Paradox: Why do we “enjoy” tragedy?
Reading: Sophocles *Ajax*.
Paper 3 Set (two page)

Week 5.

Tue 20 Sophocles' *Ajax*: Combat Trauma and the Greeks
Reading: Introduction to Sophocles, *Four Tragedies*

Thu 22 Theatre, War and Democracy: Sophocles' *Ajax*.
Reading: Woodruff: Part Two: 8-9 (pp. 145-187)
Paper 3 Due

Week 6.

Tue 27^h

Obscenity, inhibition and laughter: Comedy and Catharsis

Reading: Aristophanes *Frogs*.

Paper 4 Set (two page)

March

Thu 1

Saving the State with Theatre: Aristophanes *Frogs*.

Reading: Woodruff: Part Two: 10, 11, 12 and Epilogue (pp. 188-231)

Week 7.

Tue 6

The Aesthetics of Theatre: Aristophanes' *Frogs*.

Mid Term Review

Reading: Mid Term Study

Paper 4 Due

Thu 8^h

MIDTERM EXAM

In class - one hour ten minutes.

Reading: Shakespeare, *A Comedy of Errors*

Paper 5 set (three page)

Week 8.

Tue 13

SPRING BREAK

Thu 15 **SPRING BREAK**

Week 9.

Tue 20^t *Really* Reading Shakespeare: A workshop
Reading: TBD.

Thu 22 Stranger in a Strange Land: *Comedy of Errors*
Reading: Shakespeare, *Othello*
Paper 5 Due

Week 10.

Tue 27 Othello the outsider
Reading. TBD

FINAL PAPER SET

Thu 29 Staging *Othello*: Adapting or appropriating?
Reading: Staging Shakespeare Project.

April

There will be one required class play/theatrical reading visit in April to be assigned

Week 11.

Tue 3 In class presentations: Staging Shakespeare Project.

Reading: Foley Essay on Julia Ward Howe.

Thu 5 Julia Ward Howe's *Hippolytus*: Slavery and Suffragettes
Reading: *An Enemy of the People*

Week 12.

Tue 10 Ibsen's new realism *An Enemy of The People*
Reading: TBD "Fake News" and Theatre Project

Thu 12 *An Enemy of the People* – Modeling Ibsen's Characters.
In class participation.
Reading: *Six Characters in Search of an Author*

Week 13

Tue 17 Staging Surrealism: *Six Characters in Search of an Author*
Reading: Katori Hall, *The Mountaintop*
One-page play reports set.

Thu 19 *The Mountaintop* class discussion
Reading: Luis Alfaro *Mojada*

Week 14.

Tue 24 *Mojada* class discussion

One-page play reports Due

Theatre Visits

Thu 26 Producing Theatre

Theatre Visits

May

Week 15

Tue 1 Theatre Visit Reports and Discussion 1

Theatre Visits ongoing

Thu 3 Theatre Visit Reports and Discussion 2

FINAL PAPER DUE IN CLASS