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 17 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](http://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 pubic 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 Force 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. Therefore they are not permitted in class. Please keep them in your bag or pocket.

Participation

This is a class about performance and presence and therefore your active presence is a vital part of passing this course. You will each be placed in a small group of around six people and often in class you will work on problem solving, textual analysis and research questions within your groups and then one person in each group will be called on to report back to the class. You are also required to deliver a five minute play report to the entire class and each of you will be selected to be a class leader at least once if not more. This is a good way for me to get to know you and to show your participation. Therefore if you are going to miss class it is essential to let me know in advance via e-mail. You will also be asked to write a “one minute essay” at the end of each class and may be called on to read it to the rest of the class. You will be able to practice these elements within your smaller recitation units. The aim of this course is to improve your writing and your personal presentation skills as well as teaching you about certain aspects of performance.
Also, I may use a variety of techniques to enhance the learning environment of the class and will need your participation to make these effective. Please volunteer when asked to do so. These include:

1. **Drama techniques.** These are short, simple, fun exercises designed to demonstrate a point.
2. **Improvisations.** Nothing to fear and you will be guided.
3. **Hot seating.** This is where you “become” the character and answer questions from the rest of the class.
4. **Observations.** Weather permitting we may go outside to observe relevant behavior of people.
5. **Objective work.** This is where we find an acting objective in a piece of text and devise an improvisation to prove its effectiveness.
6. **Group scene analysis.** Your group will work on a small sections of text collectively to form opinions and present them to the class.
7. **One Minute Essays.** You will be asked to write a quick statement on a given theme based on the class and may be called on to present it.
8. **Pass the prop.** A theatrical prop may be passed to you by a fellow student to answer a question.
9. **Lightsaber.** You may be handed a laser pointer and asked to show certain items on a projected image.
10. **Physical Response.** You may be asked to stand up to show your opinion on a true or false statement.
11. **Debate the point.** Teams may be asked to debate a point.
12. **Daily experts.** You will be asked to be a daily expert at least once this semester. This is when you report your group’s findings and give a summary of the point made in the class.
13. **Group Wars.** Groups may compete against each other on a position and be judged by the rest of the class.

**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 25%

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 a very simple 20 question write-in exam on the course material and set texts.

**Final Paper 25%**

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 15%**

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 assigned during the semester. 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. You may also attend Professor Meineck’s office hours from 12.30-1.30pm Tue and Thu.

**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.

Aristophanes’ *Frogs* translated by Peter Meineck (provided by instructor)
Ellen McLaughlin *Oresteia* script (provided by instructor)
*Kill Move Paradise* by James IJames (provided by instructor)
Luis Alfaro *Mojada* script (provided by instructor)

**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.

**PLEASE NOTE** This syllabus is subject to change based on a number of factors such as bad weather, instructor illness, availability of invited speakers, rate of class progress etc.
However unless notified in writing the deadlines for written work and readings will not change and it is the student’s responsibility to ensure that these are met.

September

Week 1.

Tue 4  
Course Introduction: The Necessity of Theatre  
Reading Set: Woodruff: Prologue and Introduction (pp. 3-28)

Thu 6  
Watching and Being Watched: Defining Theatre  
Reading Set: Woodruff: Part One: 1 and 2 (pp. 31-62)

Week 2.

Tue 11  
Rosh Hashanah NO CLASS

Thu 13  
The Origins of Theatre: Procession, Cult and Chorality  
Reading: Woodruff: Part One: 3-4 (pp. 63-92)

Week 3.

Tue 18  
World Theatre Traditions: An Introduction  
Reading: Woodruff: Part One: 5-6 (pp. 93-122)  
Paper One Set (2 pages)

Thu 20  
Greek Theatre: An Introduction.  
*Riding the Phallus* (NYU CLASSES: “Resources”).  
Reading: Meineck *The Neuroscience of the Tragic Mask* and Csapo,

Week 4.

Tue 25  
The Theatricality of Greek Tragedy: Masks and Movement.  
Reading: Woodruff: Part One: 7 (pp. 123-140)  
Paper One Due

Thu 27  
The Theatrical Environment. Ritual, Space, Time  
Reading: Reading: Woodruff: Part Two: 8-9 (pp. 145-187)

October

Week 5.

Tue 2  
The Tragic Paradox: Why do we “enjoy” tragedy?  
Reading: Aeschylus *Agamemnon*

Thu 4  
Theatre and Corrupted Ritual: *Agamemnon*
Reading: Aeschylus *Libation Bearers*
Introduction to the *Oresteia* by Helena Foley
and *The Motif of Corrupted Sacrifice in Aeschylus’ Oresteia* by Froma Zeitlin (NYU Classes)
**Paper Two Set (2 pages)**

**Week 6.**

**Tue 9**
Legislative Day **NO CLASS**

**Thu 11**
Comprehending the Chorus
Reading: Aeschylus *Eumenides*
**Paper Two Due**

**Week 7.**

**Tue 16**
Problematizing Patriarchy
Reading: Woodruff: Part Two: 10, 11, 12 and Epilogue (pp. 188-231)

**Thu 18**
Greek Tragedy and Social Justice
Reading: Aristophanes *Frogs*

**Week 8.**

**Tue 23**
Debating the *Oresteia*
Reading: Griffiths: *Comedy at Athens* (Chapter on NYU Classes)

**Thu 25**
Obscenity, inhibition and laughter: Comedy and Catharsis
Reading: *Agon Sophias: Judging the Arts, and Dionysus’ Verdict.*
(Chapters on NYU CLASSES)
**Paper Three Set (4-5 pages)**

**Week 9.**

**Tue 30**
The Aesthetics of Theatre: Aristophanes’ *Frogs.*
Mid Term Review
Reading: Mid Term Study

**November**

There will be one required class play/theatrical reading visit in November to be assigned and PLAY REPORT SET.

**Thu 1**
**MIDTERM EXAM**
In class - one hour ten minutes.
Reading: *The Oresteia* by Ellen McLaughlin
Week 10.
Tue  6  Election Day – NO CLASS
Thu  8  Group Reports on McLaughlin’s Oresteia
        Reading: Luis Alfaro Mojada
        Paper Three Due

Week 11.
Tue 13  In class group discussion on Mojada
        Reading: Mojada Research
        FINAL PAPER SET (8-10 pages)
Thu 15  Group presentations on Mojada
        Reading: Kill Moves Paradise

Week 12.
Tue 20  In class group discussion on Kill Moves Paradise
        Reading: Kill Moves Paradise Research
Thu 22  Thanksgiving NO CLASS

Week 13
Tue 27  In class group presentations on Kill Moves Paradise
        Reading: TBA
Thu 29  Producing Theatre
        Reading: Work on final paper

December
Week 14.
Tue  4  Producing Theatre in class workshop
        Reading: Work on final paper
Thu  6  Theatre Visit Reports and Discussion 1
        Reading: Work on final paper
        FINAL PLAY REPORT DUE (HARD COPY)

Week 15
Tue 11  Theatre Visits Reports and Discussion 2
        Reading: Work on final paper

Thu 13  Theatre Visit Reports and Discussion 3
        FINAL PAPER DUE IN CLASS