

Department: DRAM

Course No.: 4135W (235W)

Title: Period Studies in Theatre

Credits: 3

Contact: D. A. Stern

WQ: W

Catalog Copy:

Current Title and Catalog Copy

4135W. Period Studies in Theatre. Prerequisite: DRAM 2130, 2131;ENGL 1010 or 1011 or 3800;open to juniors or higher. May be repeated for credit with change in course content. An in-depth examination of a major period or periods of theatre history and dramatic literature. Topics will vary.

Revised Title and Catalog Copy

4135W. Period Studies in Theatre. Prerequisite: DRAM 2130, 2131;ENGL 1010 or 1011 or 3800;open to juniors or higher. Open to dramatic arts majors only. May be repeated for credit with change in course content. An in-depth examination of a major period or periods of theatre history and dramatic literature. Topics will vary.

RATIONALE FOR ACTION REQUESTED

All of the Dramatic Arts Department's upper division performance and design/technical courses are part of its professional theatre, BFA training programs. Most remaining upper-division courses in theatre history, literature, and criticism are among the core offerings that fulfill other requirements for all of our undergraduate majors. Our limited faculty and facility resources do not permit us to make courses that are not part of our General Education offerings available to the general student population. The most efficient way of avoiding unwarranted enrollment in these 3000 and 4000-level courses is for them to be open to Dramatic Arts majors only. Directors of different programs within the department will consider petitions on a case-by-case base from non-majors who believe their individual backgrounds warrant their enrollment in any of these courses.

W Criteria: . Each student will write three to four papers (depending on instructor and topic) which will total a minimum of fifteen typed, double-spaced pages. The paper assignments allow students to gain their own critical understanding of the difficult, theoretical elements of the period being studied.

In most course papers, students will explore how the theoretical principles that characterize a given period of drama history/literature are reflected by or embodied in representative plays from that same period.

The purpose of the course is for student to gain understanding of the controlling principles of drama in a given period (classical, realistic, post-modern, etc.—varying from semester to semester) and to become familiar with a range of dramatic literature from the period that embody those principles. In their written assignments, students will demonstrate mastery of basic course content by analyzing scripts and giving examples of how specific principles are reflected by the playwrights. For example, in a given paper a student might demonstrate how randomly-selected portions of dialogue in a script from the realist period always reflect back to the play's theme or throughline of dramatic action (a common characteristic of plays from this period). In the Post Modern period, student might explore how the playwright's (character's) use of language “fragments” the grand narrative of the play.

Early in the semester the professor will teach a brief unit on the form and style of writing required for the course papers. Students will also receive handouts listing various principles of content and organization and examples of the most common errors of grammar, punctuation, and style that are to be avoided. The professor will also inform students of specific grading criteria as they relate to the contents and organization of papers as well as the form and style of the writing.

For most papers, after the professor has read first drafts, each student will be required to attend a one-on-one writing tutorial session for feedback prior to beginning revisions for the final draft. Appropriate written comments will also appear on the first draft to reinforce notes that students take during the tutorial session. For some papers, the instructor may provide written feedback with student-initiated tutorials being optional.

Depending on the instructor and the topic, each paper will constitute between 15% and 20% of the course grade with the total of all writing assignments equaling 50%-70% of the course grade. The course syllabus will contain the following statement : “Under no circumstances can a student pass Drama 235W without having received a passing grade in the writing component of the course. ”

SYLLABUS:

Online URL: (https://web2.uconn.edu/senateform/request/course_uploads/evg02003-1251919621-syllabus%20Drama%204135W.docx)

Dramatic Arts – Fall 2009
DRAMATIC LITERATURE 4135/4135W
THE CONTEMPORARY PERIOD

Assoc. Prof. Michael Bradford

Office Hours: Tue/Thu. 9:30am-10:30am and 5pm-6:30pm (also by appointment)

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Required Texts: *“Cloud Tectonics”* by Jose Rivera; *“The Black Eyed and Architecture”* by Betty Shamieh; *“Prodigal Kiss and Perdita,”* by Caridad Savich; *“Eat The Runt,”* by Avery Crozier.
Handouts: *“Clean Alternatives,”* by Brian Dykstra; *“She Like Girls,”* by Chisa Hutchison; *“Wider Than the Sky,”* by Jessica Litwak; *“Aliens With Extraordinary Skills,”* by Saviana Stanescu; *“Freedom High,”* by Adam Kraar; *“Bony and Kin,”* (translated by Charles Philip Thomas) by Carlos Canales.
Newspaper: The New York Times Entertainment Section (either the Saturday or the Sunday, Connecticut Edition)

Course Content and Goals

Although any one definition of any one genre is rarely agreed upon in its entirety, what constitutes “Contemporary Drama” is particularly difficult to nail down. Storytelling, Performance Art, Guerilla Theatre, the “theatrical” dance pieces of the Bill T. Jones/Artie Zane Dance Company, have all defined themselves as “theatre.” I doubt there is anyone willing to so narrowly define the scope of theatre as to argue against the validity of these claims. An additional difficulty, if one considers such definitions necessary, is the fact that genre is defined after the movement with the benefit of hindsight and a wider view of the spectrum of work in a given period. And of course we are right in the midst of the “Contemporary “ period, will always be in the midst of the contemporary period of theatre. So for us, this course is not as concerned with defining the *parameters* of contemporary theatre. Rather, we will focus on a few of what I will call “now” issues. We will do our best to deconstruct the work to understand the elements that are reminiscent of traditional theatre and what elements are new creations. We will try to find the personal, social, and political motivators for the work. And finally we will try to take the wider perspective and discuss current theatre’s relationship to its legacy and attempt the more difficult, maybe impossible discussion, of what kind of theatre this period may be driving towards. As in all of my courses, we will deal with the plays as pieces of living drama, as specific blueprints for actions that take place on the stage. And whether the plays we will study are published, or work in progress, we will treat them all to the same dramaturgical conversation.

As you can see from the reading list, the course load is quite full. I must stress the obvious and tell you that if you want to keep up, and get your money's worth, it is crucial to come to class, but even more crucial to **read the plays**. Discussions during class are infinitely more beneficial if you are prepared to critically deal with the text. Your understanding of the work is something you come to through critical thought and discussion, the same as if you were in the rehearsal process. If you must miss class for production reasons, there will normally be a note from the appropriate faculty member informing me as such, but I would also appreciate your communication in this area. All assignments and completion dates are noted below. Please also note, I will ask for essay work at the **beginning** of the class it is due. If you are late to class, your essay is late as well. “I have it right here on this gorgeous, stylish, flash card,” does not qualify as a viable excuse. “I don't have a printer,” does not qualify as a viable excuse. Essays will lose a letter grade per class they are late. Late papers can not be re-written. As difficult as it can sometimes be, it is always in your best interest to have a conversation about a difficult or possible late paper **BEFORE** the due date. After the due date, I am a rainstorm in the Amazon, I am the noonday sun in the middle of the Mojave, I am...you get the picture! This is crucial information for “W” students

since you **cannot** pass this course without completing all of the assigned essay work. Let me be clear, missing **one** paper will constitute a failing grade, no matter how wonderful your other papers have been. Revisions are encouraged for non-"W" students, and **required** for "W" students. **All revisions must be completed no later than three weeks from the return date.** I suggest a quick turn around, as it prevents you from losing the critical subtleties associated with the work that you have come to through our conversations. **Do not, I repeat, do not place completed assignments in my University mail box or send them to me via e-mail unless we have spoken about the situation before hand.**

Classroom Decorum

In order for you to get the most out of this course, and for the purpose of being respectful to your fellow classmates, the following guidelines will stand you in good stead. Please: 1) do all the reading in order to fully participate in the discussions; 2) come to class promptly and regularly; 3) be courteous and respectful to one another, including the age old practice of carrying on private conversation in private places, as the classroom is a public marketplace for the consumption of public, intellectual fare.

Academic Dishonesty

Academic dishonesty in any form is, of course, not tolerated and any attempt to represent another's work as your own will result in an automatic E(0). In this technological age, it does appear that where essays are concerned, there is room for interpretation. For example, I prefer the MLA notation method, but I will accept another method if the author is consistent. There is one non-negotiable point, though. If you use a direct quote consisting of four or more words from a copyrighted text, the quote must be in quotation marks and the source must be cited. We will continually discuss issues of structural and content concerning the essays you will be writing, but if you have any questions about the necessity or the proper method of citing a source, or what constitutes paraphrasing, please ask before the assignment is due.

Course Requirements

Journal: I will expect you to keep a journal consisting of comments, insights, and reactions to the discussions of the plays we read. There should be, at the very least, one journal entry for each play we discuss. The journal should be dedicated to the plays we deal with and NOT your class notes. I will collect the journals once before the midterm and once before the final day of class.

Group Assignments: Students will be divide themselves into groups and will prepare a presentation on a play, playwright, or pertinent theory connected to the work. The scope of the presentation is wide. In this case it is probably easier to say what is not acceptable. Please do not present a scene from the play, unless you have found a new intention or a "vehicle" to deliver the scene. Please do not present an author biography and/or a synopsis of the play. These areas will part of the class discussion.

Participation: The successful student will attend class regularly, will contribute to the discussions, and will not detract others from the learning experience. Although participation has been given a small number of points in the scheme of the total grade, it is to your own benefit that you are prepared and thoughtfully engaged in class as this will affect all aspects of your assigned work.

Midterm Essay: The Midterm for this course will be a 4-5 page essay.

Final Essay: The Final for this course will be a 5-7 page essay.

Note: "W" Students

"W" students will complete **three** 4-5 page essays, **one** 5-7 page paper, and revise at least 15 pages of writing. Please note essay due dates on the syllabus.

Note on Absences

I do not take roll, except for a few classes at the beginning of the semester. I do this in order to learn your names. I fully expect that you will come to class, be prepared, and participate in the discussions. I do not take calculate your absences in your grade. It has been my experience that it is the rare, rare students who can be consistently absent and still submit quality work.

Grading Pts. "W"

Journal #1	10
Journal #2	10
Group Presentations	20
Participation	10
Essay #1	25 ("W" only)
Midterm Essay	50("W" and non "W")
Essay #3	25("W" only)
Final Essay	50("W" and non "W")

Scale "W"

200-180	A
179-160	B
159-140	C
139-120	D
Below 120	(Bad Science!)

Scale Non-"W"

150-135	A
134-120	B
119-105	C
104-90	D
89-75	(Bad Science!)

Syllabus:

Sep. Tu. 1 Course Description / Requirements / Discussion
 Th. 3 "Cloud Tectonics" by Jose Rivera

(The tradition of Spanish Realism from de la Barca to Marquez to Rivera)

- Tu. 8 New York Times / *"Cloud Tectonics"* by Jose Rivera (cont.)
Th. 10 Action: *"Cloud Tectonics"*
- Tu. 15 *"Prodigal Kiss and Perdita,"* by Caridad Savich
(The nature, structure, and intention of poetic drama, past and present.)
Th. 17 *"Prodigal Kiss and Perdita,"* by Caridad Savich
- Tu. 22 Action: *"Prodigal Kiss and Perdita"* / New York Times / *"Clean Alternatives,"* by Brian Dykstra (The social and political bite of Satire in the modern theatre.)
Th. 24 *"Clean Alternatives,"* by Brian Dykstra (cont.)
(First "W" essay due)
- Tu. 29 Action: *"Clean Alternatives"*
"Aliens With Extraordinary Skills," by Saviana Stanescu
(Elements of traditional absurdist structure as a vehicle for in the modern discussion of social and political aspects of a current, volatile issue, immigration.)
- Oct. Th. 1 *"Aliens With Extraordinary Skills,"* by Saviana Stanescu (cont.)
- Tu. 6 Action: *"Aliens With Extraordinary Skills"* / New York Times
Th. 8 *"Wider Than the Sky,"* by Jessica Litwak
(The use of the actor as a tool beyond the traditional embodiment of the character. What does this add to the meaning/content/aesthetic of the work.)
- Tu. 13 *"Wider Than the Sky,"* by Jessica Litwak (cont.) **(Non-"W" Essay Due)**
Th. 15 Action: *"Wider Than the Sky"* / Design Project
- Tu. 20 *"Freedom High,"* by Adam Kraar ("But a fact is like a sack. When it's empty, it won't stand up. To make it stand up you must first pour into it the reasons and feelings by which it exists." The character, "Father," in Luigi Pirandello's, *Six Characters in Search of an Author*. We will explore the History, facts, truth, and the use of theatre to explore/question important moments time)
(Journal due)
- Th. 22 *"Freedom High,"* by Adam Kraar (cont.) / **("W" Essay Due)**

- Tu. 27 Action: *"Freedom High"* / The New York Times
- Th. 29 *Eat The Runt,"* by Avery Crozier
 (We will focus on the perception of gender, age, and race as it concerns social/political/professional roles. And theatre as a venue to explore/manipulate that perspective.)
- Nov. Tu. 3 *"Eat The Runt,"* by Avery Crozier (cont.)
- Th. 5 Action: *"Eat The Runt"* /
- Tu. 10 *"The Black Eyed and Architecture"* by Betty Shamieh
 (Here we will focus on the relationship between the story and the structure of the plot. Can we distinguish the seams of development? Does the structure support the intention of the work.)
- Th. 12 *"The Black Eyed and Architecture"* by Betty Shamieh (cont.)
- Tu. 17 Action: *"The Black Eyed and Architecture"* / New York Times
- Th. 19 *"Bony and Kin,"* (translated by Charles Philip Thomas) by Carlos Canales.
 (We will explore the long tradition of using the "philosophical question" as the center of a theatrical action on the modern stage. We will also focus on a particularly European, versus the American aesthetic, if it is at all possible to narrow down this concept for discussion!)
("W" essays due)

Thanksgiving Break Nov. 22-28

- Dec. Tu. 1 New York Times / *"Bony and Kin,"* by Carlos Canales.(cont.)
- Th. 3 Action: *"Bony and Kin,"*
"She Like Girls," by Chisa Hutchison
 (We will discuss the Aristotelian elements of plot construction as a template for contemporary content and plot structure.)
- Tu. 8 *"She Like Girls,"* by Chisa Hutchison (cont.)
- Th. 10 Action: *"She Like Girls,"* by Chisa Hutchison / **(Journal due)**

Final TBA (last non-"W" and "W" essays due)