

## **THEATRST 345S**

**Advanced Acting: Modern Texts**

**TuTh 11:45-1:15**

**Bryan Center Rehearsal Studio 127**

**CLASS START/END : AUGUST 30-DECEMBER 8**

**FINAL : THURSDAY, DECEMBER 15, 2:00-5:00**

Professor Jeff Storer

Page Auditorium Main Office 109D

Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursdays from 9:00-11:00 AM

OFFICE: 919-660-3360 or (cell only if necessary: 919-308-0057)

Prerequisites: Intro to Acting 145S

Permission Required: Consent of Instructors

### **Synopsis of Course:**

Advanced Acting: Modern Texts is an introduction to acting 20th century drama through the examination and development of performance choices through scene/monologue study and performance. This course includes script analysis, exercises, monologue and scene work that lead the actor to discover the “world of the play” as explored by modern dramatists. Readings from Brecht, Churchill, Fornes, Pinter, Shepard and others.

### **Requirements:**

**Participation:** On time attendance to class, attendance to required performances and workshops, collegiality and the willingness to engage in class activities are key to your participation grade (worth 30% of your grade.) Note that there are no approved absences without prior consent of the instructor. If the instructor and student agree upon an approved absence (this includes all religious holidays, dean’s and athletic excuses) all work must still be completed and shown in class. Failure to meet fellow students for scheduled outside of class rehearsals will also affect this grade. When in doubt, ask. In the event you are not able to speak to me you may leave a message on my voice mail (660-3360.)

Attendance and lateness to class will figure prominently in Participation grade.

**-Written Work:** During the course of the semester you will turn in 3 response papers that will be graded. The 4<sup>th</sup> paper will be your self-evaluation and letter grade, due on the last day of class.

**-Response Papers:**

a) **THE UNDERTAKING, THE CIVILIANS-due by**

b) **THE OPEN HOUSE. MANBITES DOG-due by**

c) **One of the following:**

**-A PUBLIC READING OF AN UNPRODUCED SCREENPLAY ABOUT THE DEATH OF WALT DISNEY, MANBITES DOG-due by**

**-The WILD DUCK, DUKE DEPARTMENT OF THEATER STUDIES-due by**

**-DETROIT 67, PLAYMAKERS REP-due by**

**-THE TRUMP CARD, MANBITES DOG-due by**

Each response paper due within 1 week of having seen performance. Each paper should have at least three research resources. (Wikipedia does not count. At least two of these resources must be in print.) All resources must be correctly notated.

Each paper should be approximately 2-3 pages, double-spaced, and word processed (use Microsoft Word for all assignments.) Any late papers will be result in the loss of a letter grade, regardless the quality of the work.

Response papers and final self-evaluation should be turned in BY EMAIL and they are due emailed to the instructor before the class begins BEFORE the last day that response is due.

**-On and Off campus performances:** Students will be required to attend on or off campus performances.

**-Performance Assignments:** Full participation in class exercises and completion of all assigned performance studies is required. Any late work will result in the loss of a letter grade, regardless the quality of the work.

There will be two showings for every scene/monologue. All scenes and monologues must be approved by instructor. Your work will include: 1) reading and discussing

plays, 2) research and text analysis, 3) performance, 4) class feedback sessions, and 5) re-working of scenes.

**-Additional Assigned readings:** To be determined by Instructor.

**-Keep a hand written journal for this class.** Along with your syllabus, bring to class daily. These journals will not be turned in, but you must use them to take notes in class, keep announcements made in class and to keep your rehearsal logs for every outside of class rehearsal. You should show up for every class with this journal and something with which to write.

**-Grade Breakdown:** Grade based on seriousness of approach, ability, effort, growth, the quality of participation, curiosity and passion. A grade will be given for each exercise and written assignment. If students are interested in the grades they are receiving for performance exercises and written work, they should make an appointment to discuss grades with the instructor. As suggested by the University, "A's" will be reserved for "Exceptional" work.

Participation	30%
Written Work	20%
Performance Assignments	30%
Final Project	20%

**REQUIRED READING (to be purchased at Duke Textbook Store or LENT by instructor):**

*Laramie Project* by Moises Kaufman

*A Kind of Alaska* by Harold Pinter

*Old Times* by Harold Pinter

*Fefu and Her Friends* by Marian Irene Fornes

*True West* by Same Shepard

*Cloud Nine* by Caryl Churchill

*Love and Information* by Caryl Churchill

**In Addition:**

Excerpt from Artaud's *The Theater and Its Double* (1938). Pages A1-A7

*The Proust Questionnaire* by Marcel Proust, Answered by Tony Kushner (1995) Q82-Q84

**The Class will be divided into 5 UNITS:**

**1) BERTOLT BRECHT/THE LARAMIE PROJECT**

Required Reading:

*Chronology of life and work and introduction* vii-xxxvii

*Theatre for Pleasure or Theatre for Instruction* Bertolt Brecht (1936)

*Street Scene: A Basic Model for Epic Theatre* Bertolt Brecht

**2) HAROLD PINTER/OLD TIMES and A KIND OF ALASKA**

Required Reading:

*The Prime of Harold Pinter* by Mel Gussow Pages 15-21

*The Writer on His Work: Pinter* Pages 101-106

Re: *Old Times* Pages 41-48

Re: *The New World Order* Pages 93-94

*The New World Order: A Sketch by Harold Pinter* Pages 28-30

*Writing for the Theater* (1962) Pages P37-P39.

*Portrait of Deborah: A Kind of Alaska* Pages P69-P76

**3) MARIA IRENE FORNES/FEFU AND HER FRIENDS AND SAM SHEPARD/TRUE WEST**

**MARIA IRENE FORNES**

Required Reading:

*Maria Irene Fornes Interview (1987)* Pages F52-F59

*Preface* by Susan Sontag Pages 7-10

*The State of Grace: Maria Irene Fornes at Sixty-Two* xxiby Bonnie Maranca Pages 24-31

## **SAM SHEPARD**

Required Reading: T.B.A.

## **4) CARYL CHURCHILL**

Required Reading:

*Casebook on Churchill: Introduction to Cloud Nine* (1983) C40-C45

*Rethinking Brecht: Deconstruction, Feminism, and the Politics of Form* (1990) C46-C51

*The Writer and Her Work* Pages 85-95

Re: *Cloud Nine* Pages 41-54

## **5) LOVE AND INFORMATION- GROUP FINAL PROJECT**

## BRECHT ASSIGNMENT

Prepare a story to tell the class. Using the assigned reading as a source, employ at least four techniques that might be considered "Brechtian". No more than five minutes in length.

This should be a story about something you witnessed. The story should have some social significance. You should have a strong opinion about some aspect of the story. Some form of research should figure into your presentation. You will be asked to share in writing and verbally at least three research sources when you complete your piece.

Some of the ideas you might explore (and there are many more):

- imitation
- transportation to the third person ("he said, she said".)
- transportation into the past.
- charts, graphs, labels, visual aids.
- CAREFULLY selected props and costumes- less is better  
("workman-like props" that have a very specific purpose to what  
you want to communicate to us).
- demonstration
- repetition
- focus on rhythm, time or space
- re-enactment (as in "crime re-enactment")
- ritual
- circus, vaudeville, cabaret, or song

Remember for both the preparation of your monologue/scene and this assignment: You should be both entertaining AND instructive. You must UNDERSTAND what you are doing in order to be UNDERSTOOD. You must be able to justify any choice in terms of its purpose. You must start with a desire to communicate a PERSONAL point of view.

## The following excerpts are from the dramaturgical notebook of Jules Odendahl-James for The Laramie Project

*This week's bit of Brecht comes from a poem titled "Speech to Danish Working-Class Actors on the Art of Observation" written between 1934 and 1936 around the time of the writer's exile to Denmark in the wake of Hitler's rise to power in Germany. (Brecht's German citizenship was revoked in 1935.) I believe this piece could be classified as something in the vein of Brecht's "Lehrstück" or "[learning plays](#)," which are imagined, and conducted, as quite literally **political** theater. Audiences are encouraged to engage the stories directly, suggesting actions or commenting upon events (like a Greek chorus), even asked to prepare their "roles" before a production as co-actors, co-producers of the "on-stage" scenes. [Augusto Boal's forum theater](#) would be considered as another step in the evolution of this kind of theater.*

*In their introduction to Bertolt Brecht Poems 1913-1956 John Willett and Robert Manheim note that Brecht's exile poetry was based on "politically-grounded private experience" (xviii) with a strict adherence to dealing with "precise tangible facts" (xx).*

*Such a use of the imagination to explain and expand bald reality is one of Brecht's genuinely scientific gifts. (xxi)*

*Because Brecht sees himself as educating worker/actors), this piece smacks a bit of paternalism and is threaded through with Brecht's Marxist idealism. That said, I think his description of observation is a fruitful and his image of the actor as a worker is one that I hold as valuable even if he's addressing a very different kind of worker-actor in 1930s Denmark.*

*This poem is 7 pages long. I'm beginning about 1/3 of the way in and will make cuts (referenced by the [...] markings) intermittently.*

You, actor Must master the art of observation Before all other arts.

For what matters is not how you look but What you have seen and can show us. What's worth knowing Is what you know. People will observe you to see How well you have observed. The man who only observes himself however never gains Knowledge of men. He is too anxious To hide himself from himself. And nobody is Cleverer than he himself is.

So your schooling must begin among Living people. Let your first school Be your place of work, your dwelling, your part of the town. Be the street, the underground, the shops. You should observe All the people there, strangers as if they were acquaintances, but Acquaintances as if they were strangers to you.

[...]

Nor should you forget the pictures on screen and newspaper page. See how they walk and speak, those rules Who hold the threads of your fate in their white and brutal hands. You should inspect such people exactly. And now Imagine all that is going on around you, all those struggles Picturing them just like historical incidents For this is how you should go on to portray them on the stage: The fight for a job, sweet and bitter conversations Between the man and his woman, arguments about books Resignation and revolt, attempt and failure All these you will go on to portray as historical incidents.

[...]

In order to observe One must learn how to compare. In order to compare One must have observed. By means of observation Knowledge is generated; on the other hand knowledge is needed For observation. And He observes badly who does not know How to use what he has observed. The fruit grower Inspects the apple tree with a keener eye than does the walker But no one can see man exactly unless he knows it is Man who is the fate of man.

The art of observation Applied to man is but a branch of the Art of dealing with men. Your task, actors, is to be Explorers and teachers of the art of dealing with people. Knowing their nature and demonstrating it you teach them To deal with themselves. You teach them the great art Of living together.

[...]

**And already Many of you are studying the laws of men's life together, already Your class is determined to master its problems and thereby The problems of All mankind. And that is where you The workers' actors, as you learn and teach Can play your part creatively in all the struggles Of men of your time, thereby Helping, with the seriousness of study and the cheerfulness of knowledge To turn the struggle into common experience and Justice into a passion.**

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**Portrayal of Past and Present in One\*\***

Whatever you portray you should always portray As if it were happening now.  
Engrossed The silent crowd sits in the darkness, lured Away from its routine affairs.  
Now The fisherman's wife is being brought her son whom The generals have killed.  
Even what has happened In her room is wiped out. What is happening here  
is Happening now and just the once. To act in this way Is habitual with you, and now I  
am advising you To ally this habit with yet another: that is, your acting should At the  
same time express the fact that this instant On your stage is often repeated; only  
yesterday You were acting it, and tomorrow too Given spectators, there will be a  
further performance. Nor should you let the Now blot out the Previously and  
Afterwards, nor for that matter whatever Is even now happening outside the theatre and  
is similar in kind Nor even things that have nothing to do with it all – none  
of this Should you allow to be entirely forgotten. **So you should simply make the  
instant Stand out, without in the process hiding What you are making it stand  
out from.** Give your acting That progression of one-thing-after-another, that attitude  
of Working up what you have taken on. **In this way You will show the flow of events  
and also the course Of your work, permitting the spectator To experience this  
Now on many levels, coming from Previously and Merging into Afterwards, also  
having much else now Alongside it.** He is sitting not only In your theatre but also In  
the world.

**\*\*John Willett, translator. Attributed to poems Brecht wrote between 1947-1953.**

### **Weigel's Props\*\***

Just as the millet farmer picks out for his trial plot The heaviest seeds and the poet The  
exact words for his verse so She selects the objects to accompany Her characters  
across the stage. The pewter spoon Which Courage sticks In the lapel of her  
Mongolian jacket, the party card For warm-hearted Vlassova and the fishing net For  
the other, Spanish mother or the bronze bowl For dust-gathering Antigone. Impossible  
to confuse The split bag which the working woman carries For her son's leaflets, with  
the moneybag Of the keen tradeswoman. Each item In her stock is hand picked: straps  
and belts Pewter boxes and ammunition pouches; hand picked too The children and  
the stick which at the end The old woman twists through the draw-rope The Basque  
woman's board on which she bakes her bread And the Greek woman's board of  
shame, strapped to her back With holes for her hands to stick through, the  
Russian's Jar of lard, so small in the policeman's hand; all Selected for age, function  
and beauty By the eyes of the knowing The hands of the bread-baking, net  
weaving Soup-cooking connoisseur Of reality.

**\*\*Translated by the late Brecht scholar [John Willett](#), this poem appears in his  
edited volume *Bertolt Brecht Poems: 1913-1956* (1979). I've not found a specific**

year for the original text; Willett attributes it to poems written by Brecht between 1947-1953

**Fall 2016 Dates: Acting Tuesday/Thursday 1145-115**

**UNIT ONE-BERTOLT BRECHT/THE LARAMIE PROJECT (All reading done before September 1<sup>st</sup>)**

**Week One**

Tuesday, August 30 Discuss Syllabus, Plays and Articles, Read LARAMIE

Thursday, September 1 Discuss PERFORMING BRECHT-Choose LARAMIE Monologues

**Week Two**

Tuesday, September 6 Brecht Exercises

Thursday, September 8 Brecht Exercises/ LARAMIE 1st showings

Friday, September 9 DROP/ADD Ends

**Week Three**

Tuesday, September 13 LARAMIE 2<sup>nd</sup> showings

Thursday, September 15 LARAMIE Scenes/Monologue shared class with Professor Lambert. THE THEATER TODAY

**A Public Reading of an Unproduced Screenplay About the Death of**

**Walt Disney, MANBITES DOG, September 16-October 1**

**UNIT TWO-HAROLD PINTER (All reading done before class on September 20<sup>th</sup>)**

**Week Four**

Tuesday, September 20 Discuss Plays and Articles about Pinter

Thursday, September 22 Work Independently on Pinter Scenes 1<sup>st</sup> showintg in Class: JEFF IN CHICAGO

**Week Five**

Tuesday, September 27 THE CIVILIANS GUEST IN CLASS!

**THE CIVILIANS PERFORMANCE (required)**

**THE UNDERTAKING**, Sheaffer Lab Theater

Thursday, September 29-Saturday, October 1 (matinee also at 3pm)

Performances 8pm each night

Thursday, September 29 Pinter Scenes 1<sup>st</sup> showing

**Week Six**

Tuesday, October 4 Pinter Scenes 1<sup>st</sup> showing

Thursday, October 6            Work Independently in Class on Pinter Scenes 2<sup>nd</sup> Showing:  
JEFF IN LOS ANGELES

Friday, October 7-Tuesday, October 11 FALL BREAK

**Week Seven**

Thursday, October 13        Pinter Scenes 2<sup>nd</sup> showing

**UNIT THREE-Maria Irene Fornes and Sam Shepard (all reading done before class on October 18<sup>th</sup>).**

**Week Eight**

Tuesday, October 18        Discuss Play and Articles, Choose scenes

Thursday, October 20        Begin work on Fornes/Shepard scenes in class.

**THE OPEN HOUSE, MANBITES DOG, October 27-November 12 (required)**

**Week Nine**

Tuesday, October 25        Fornes/Shepard Scenes 1<sup>st</sup> showing

Thursday, October 27        Fornes/Shepard Scenes 1<sup>st</sup> showing

**Week Ten**

Tuesday, November 1        Fornes/Shepard Scenes 2nd showing

Thursday, November 3        Fornes/Shepard Scenes 2nd showing

**UNIT FOUR-CARYL CHURCHILL (all reading done before class on November 8)**

**Week Eleven**

Tuesday, November 8        Discuss Plays and Articles

**Registration Begins November 2-16**

Thursday, November 10 Work Churchill Scenes in class.

**DEMAN WEEKEND. Friday, November 11. Lunch at Geer Street at 11:30.  
Panel of alums: Taty Mott (NYC), Wanda Jin (Chicago) Tom Brady (LA)  
On the stage of Page 230-400 (required)**

**Week Twelve**

Tuesday, November 15 CLOUD NINE Scenes 1<sup>st</sup> showings  
Thursday, November 17 CLOUD NINE Scenes 1<sup>st</sup> showings

**Week Thirteen**

Tuesday, November 22 CLOUD NINE Scenes 2nd showings \*

**\*NOTE: EVERYONE MUST BE IN CLASS THIS TUESDAY BEFORE OUR  
THANKSGIVING BREAK**

THANKSGIVING Wednesday 23-Sunday November 27

**UNIT FIVE-FINAL PROJECT: LOVE AND INFORMATION**

**Week Fourteen**

Tuesday, November 29 **LOVE AND INFORMATION-CHURCHILL; Catch-up,  
Assign Love and Information**  
Thursday, December 1 Work LOVE AND INFORMATION

**Week Fifteen**

Tuesday, December 6 **LOVE AND INFORMATION-CHURCHILL**  
Thursday, December 8 **LOVE AND INFORMATION-CHURCHILL**

**FINAL**

**FINAL : THURSDAY DECEMBER 15, 2:00-5:00  
LOVE AND INFORMATION-Churchill**