

Theater Now: NYC!
2018 Fall Term

Duke In New York Arts and Media, Fall 2018 (08-25-18)
THEATRST 390A, English 390A

Meeting Time and Place: New York City, Kimmel Center (Room 909.)
Mondays from 2:00-4:30

Instructor: Professor Jeff Storer

Email: bear@duke.edu Cell: 919-308-0057

Office Hours: By Appointment

Course Description:*

This class will focus on immersing the student in the art, study and practice of theater as it is experienced through the lens of NYC. Through research, writing and practical experience students will begin to understand how theater artists collaborate to create critical, relevant, inventive work. Students will explore how artists embrace and reject traditional styles and perceptions of acting, directing, playwriting, dramaturgy and design. The focus of our exploration will include:

- 1) How theater exists as a powerful medium to view contemporary culture and politics in society,
- 2) How the role of performance, design, direction, use of media and management work together in this collaborative process,
- 3) Approaching contemporary performance critique: including research, text analysis, and dramaturgy,
- 4) How to read a play and begin to envision its journey from page to stage,
- 5) Providing an opportunity for you to practically engage in exercises in design, media, management, playwriting or performance/directing.

***Note First Assignments to be completed BY class on Monday, September 3 at 2pm:**

-Read and take “first impression” notes on Craig Lucas’ BLUE WINDOW.
-Physically GO to Drama Book Shop to purchase at least the following two texts (any texts for this course will be at the counter held under the name of “Jeff Storer” and will only be held until our second class, September 3rd:)

LOVE AND INFORMATION by Caryl Churchill

THE EMPTY SPACE by Peter Brook *

(Most of the other texts you need for this course are also available at Drama Book Shop. You may print out digital version or purchase kindle version or order through Amazon Prime for the required, not purchased texts, but you must purchase hard copies of THE EMPTY SPACE and LOVE AND INFORMATION and at Drama Book Shop located at:

The Drama Book Shop, Inc.; 250 West 40th Street; New York, NY 10018. (212) 944-0595; STORE HOURS: Monday—Saturday: 10:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. Thursdays until 8:00 p.m. and Sundays noon until 6:00.

Textbooks or Readings:

The plays:

**BLUE WINDOW by Craig Lucas
TOP DOG UNDER DOG by Susan Lori Parks
THE HUMANS by Steven Karam
LOVE AND INFORMATION by Caryl Churchill**

The Essays:

THE EMPTY SPACE* by Peter Brook (to purchase at Drama Book Shop.)

***NOTE:** As you read THE EMPTY SPACE keep a journal near by. Every time you come across the mention of an artist who you do not recognize, google them and chose a quick explanation of what they are noted for. This will prove very important in our classroom discussions.

The following Readings to be handed out in class or posted on SAKAI:

Excerpts from THINKING LIKE A DIRECTOR by Michael Bloom. *Pages 3-16, Introduction and Chapter 1.*

Theater for Pleasure or Theater for Instruction by Bertolt Brecht (1936)

An Actor's focus questions. (part of syllabus, ADDENDUM B)

Excerpts from *LOVE AND INFORMATION Background Pak*

Critical Response to Process by Liz Lehrman (part of the syllabus, ADDENDUM C)

Multiple Choice in the Twentieth Century by Joseph Mielziner.

Return to Constructivism, Company 1970. THE THEATER ART OF BORIS AARONSON by Frank Rich

Excerpt from THE THEATER AND ITS DOUBLE by Antonin Artaud (1938)

Memory and Terror from A DIRECTOR PREPARES by Anne Bogart

Additional Performances you will be required to attend (mark your calendars NOW:)

Tuesday, September 18 **HERE performance Space**

SOUNDSTAGE

September 13 — September 29 | tickets \$15-45

SOUNDSTAGE is an audio and visual performance poem created by artist Rob Roth. Using the language of cinema, the piece reflects and refracts a 'meditation on the muse' and her remedy for loneliness.

Thursday, October 11 **59 E 59**

HERSHEY FELDER AS IRVING BERLIN

Written and performed by Hershey Felder

Music and Lyrics by Irving Berlin

Book by Hershey Felder

Directed by Trevor Hay

Hershey Felder as Irving Berlin brings the man behind the iconic music to life in an evening reflecting Berlin's remarkable journey from child immigrant to America's most beloved and prolific songwriter, and featuring some of the composer's most popular and enduring songs including "Alexander's Ragtime Band," "Always," "Blue Skies," "God Bless America," "Puttin' on the Ritz,"

"There's No Business Like Show Business," and "White Christmas." **"RICHLY ENTERTAINING AND TOUCHING."** - *Los Angeles Times* **[HERSHEY FELDER] MAY INDEED RIGHTFULLY BE CONSIDERED A LEGEND IN OUR TIME."**

- *Broadway World* **"A MOVING, INSPIRING AND THOROUGHLY ENJOYABLE EVENING OF STORY, SONG AND NOSTALGIA."**

- *Times of San Diego*

Wednesday, November 7 **Classic Stage Company**

THE RESISTIBLE RISE OF ARTURO UI

By Bertolt Brecht

(Translated by George Tabori)

In 1930s Chicago, mobster Arturo Ui will stop at nothing to control the cauliflower trade. Terror and bloodshed follow. Can anyone stop him? Brecht's skewering of Adolf Hitler and totalitarianism is given renewed significance in a production directed by John Doyle. Written in 1941, the play was one of the Berliner Ensemble's greatest box office successes.

Wednesday, December 5th Park Avenue Armory

THE HEAD AND THE LOAD

"Today's art world is powerfully drawn to Kentridge because he's mastered one of our period's greatest challenges: how to create an art of cultural authority, one that takes the moral measure of our time." — *New York Magazine*

Renowned South African artist **William Kentridge** synthesizes elements of his practice to conjure his grandest and most ambitious production to date, commissioned by the Armory. The large-scale new work expressively speaks to the nearly two million African porters and carriers used by the British, French, and Germans who bore the brunt of the casualties during the First World War in Africa and the historical significance of this story as yet left largely untold.

DINY Final celebratory dinner on Thursday, December 6

Class Calendar

ALL CLASSES WILL TAKE PLACE AT THE KIMMELL CENTER ON MONDAYS from 2:00-4:30.

WEEK #1:

This class will meet back at EHS housing facility after Brooklyn Heights tour and lunch. Plan on Approximately 2pm-3pm.

August 27 Review syllabus, Assignment: Read BLUE WINDOW, "*Deadly Theater*" from THE EMPTY SPACE by Peter Brook, and make a trip to DRAMA BOOK SHOP and pickup texts needed for class

WEEK #2:

READINGS (Due Prior to this class:)

Playscript, BLUE WINDOW by Craig Lucas
"*Deadly Theater*" from THE EMPTY SPACE by Peter Brook

September 3 Discuss BLUE WINDOW, *Deadly Theater* and The Art of Collaboration and The Elements of Form.

WEEK #3:

READINGS (Due Prior to this class:)

"*Holy Theater*" from THE EMPTY SPACE by Peter Brook
TOP DOG UNDER DOG by Susan Lori Parks

September 10 Create, Connect, Collaborate: “The World of the Play.”
Beginnings of text analysis for the theater. Discuss **TOP
DOG UNDERDOG** by **Susie Lori Parks** and *Holy Theater*.

WEEK #4:

READINGS (Due Prior to this class:)

“Rough Theater” from THE EMPTY SPACE by Peter Brook

Return to Constructivism, Company 1970. THE THEATER ART OF BORIS
AARONSON by Frank Rich

September 17 The Essential Optics and Aurals: Set, Costume, Sound and
Video Design. **Mini essay #1** Due by the time class starts.
(described below) Discuss *Return to Constructivism,*
Company 1970. THE THEATER ART OF BORIS
AARONSON by Frank Rich and *“Rough Theater”*.

Tuesday, September 18 **HERE performance Space**
SOUNDSTAGE

WEEK #5:

READINGS (Due Prior to this class:)

“Immediate Theater” from THE EMPTY SPACE by Peter Brook

LOVE AND INFORMATION by Caryl Churchill

An Actor’s focus questions. (part of syllabus, ADDENDUM B) and *Critical
Response to Process by Liz Lehrman* (part of the syllabus, ADDENDUM C)
Excerpts from LOVE AND INFORMATION *Background Pak* (to be determined by
instructor)

September 24 On your feet: The art of the scene. **LOVE AND
INFORMATION by Caryl Churchill.** (Excerpts from LOVE
AND INFORMATION *Background Pak*) **Discuss** *An Actor’s
focus questions.* (part of syllabus) and *Critical Response to
Process by Liz Lehrman* (part of the syllabus)

WEEK #6:

READINGS (Due Prior to this class:)

Multiple Choice in the Twentieth Century by Joseph Mielziner.

Excerpts from THINKING LIKE A DIRECTOR by Michael Bloom

October 1 Places. How do different theater spaces in NYC inform the productions? Discuss the spaces we have seen performance. Architecture and Ground plan. *Multiple Choice in the Twentieth Century* by Joseph Mielziner. Discuss Excerpts from THINKING LIKE A DIRECTOR by Michael Bloom. **Mini Essay #2 Due** by email before class starts.

FALL BREAK FROM OCTOBER 5-OCTOBER 10

WEEK #7:

READINGS (To be read during Fall Break and due prior to this October 11 performance:)

Excerpt from THE THEATER AND ITS DOUBLE by Atonin Artaud (1938)

Memory and Terror from A DIRECTOR PREPARES by Anne Bogart

THE HUMANS by Steven Karam

Thursday, October 11 59 EAST 59th
HERSHEY FELDER AS IRVING BERLIN

WEEK #8:

READINGS (Due Prior to this class:)

Excerpt from THE THEATER AND ITS DOUBLE by Atonin Artaud (1938)

Memory and Terror from A DIRECTOR PREPARES by Anne Bogart

THE HUMANS by Steven Karam

October 15 Discuss Excerpt from THE THEATER AND ITS DOUBLE by Atonin Artaud (1938) *Memory and Terror* from A DIRECTOR PREPARES by Anne Bogart
THE HUMANS by Steven Karam

WEEK #9:

READINGS (Due Prior to this class:)

T.B.A.

October 22 “Art of the scene (acting, playwrighting, design, promotions or directing)” assignment and feedback in class.

WEEK #10:

READINGS (Due Prior to this class:)

T.B.A.

October 29 The blueprint of Action: Playwriting. **Mini essay #3.**
Due by the time class starts. (described below)

WEEK #11:

READINGS (Due Prior to this class:)

Theater for Pleasure or Theater for Instruction by Bertolt Brecht (1936)

November 5 Discuss *Theater for Pleasure or Theater for Instruction*. And prep for ARTURO UI.

Wednesday, November 7 Classic Stage Company
THE RESISTIBLE RISE OF ARTURO UI

WEEK #12:

READINGS (Due Prior to this class:)

Love and Information by Caryl Churchill

November 12 Short discussion on Arturo Ui. Discussion of
LOVE AND INFORMATION. Putting it Together: The
art of collaboration. **Mini essay #4.** Due by the time
class starts. (described below)

WEEK #13:

READINGS (Due Prior to this class:)

November 19 Putting it Together: The art of collaboration.

THANKSGIVING BREAK FROM NOVEMBER 20-25

WEEK #14:

READINGS (Due Prior to this class:)

November 26 Final exercises in design, playwriting, media,
management or performance.

WEEK #15:

READINGS (Due Prior to this class:)

December 3 Final exercises in design, playwriting, media, management or performance. (All written work due.)

Wednesday, December 5th Park Avenue Armory

THE HEAD AND THE LOAD

DINY Final celebratory dinner on Thursday, December 6.

DUKE CLASSES END December 7

Requirements:

-Attendance: A record will be kept of attendance. Any absences must be approved with instructor prior to the class. In the event you are not able to contact instructor you may leave a message on his voice mail (919 660-3360) **prior** to the class you will miss.

Attendance will figure prominently in Participation grade.

-Written Work:

Students will prepare a two-page "mini essay" **with the following prompts (to be elaborated on in class.) These assignments are designed to integrate class discussions, readings, live performances and your NY experience.**

- **All Mini Essays should be emailed to the instructor BEFORE the class in which they are due. *PLEASE NOTE: MINI ESSAY RESEARCH. Each essay will require three sources to be noted at the end of the essay. At least two of your sources must originally have appeared in print even if read online.**

Mini essay #1 My Theater Today.* **Due 09/17**

Prompts:

- 1) What purpose does theater serve in the current society?
Give examples.
- 2) How has a piece of theater fundamentally changed the way you look at the world around you? Be specific.
- 3) How can theater be used to motivate social change?
Give examples.

Mini essay #2 The World of the Play.* **Due 10/01**

Prompts:

- 1) Go into details about how you would create “The World of the Play” in TOP DOG UNDERDOG, BLUE WINDOW, or LOVE AND INFORMATION.
- 2) Choose a play we have seen this semester (I WAS MOST ALIVE WITH YOU, GIRL FROM THE NORTH COUNTRY, HAMILTON OR HARRY POTTER.) Discuss in detail how the collaborators have created “The World of the Play.” Use the vocabulary established by The Elements of Form.
- 3) Pick a script we have either read or seen. Propose an alternative way in which the world of the play could be created.

Mini essay #3 Intention. Action. Deed. Day to Day. ***Due 10/29**

Prompts:

- 1) Write the backstory in first person for a character from one of the scripts we have either read or seen this fall.
- 2) Using the “*Actor’s Homework*.” Chose a specific character and using text analysis to discuss how the character stays active in the action throughout the text.
- 3) Using “*Memory*” (*Bogart*) as a departure point discuss a specific character and your approach to researching that role as an actor.

Mini essay #4 Telling the story, “putting it together.” The Art of Collaboration.***Due 11/12**

Prompts:

- 1) Propose a final exercise in acting, directing, playwrighting, criticism, dramaturgy, media or design.

-In-class Assignments:

Full participation in class exercises and completion of all assigned collaborative exercises.

-Assigned readings:

Readings will come from Reading List and other handouts to be determined by Instructor.

-Participation:

Grade based on seriousness of approach, ability, effort, growth and quality of participation, curiosity and passion.

Please Note:

Please be in class on time. Pagers, computers, I-pads and cell phones must be turned off before class begins. Classroom courtesy includes the full participation of every student. If you must leave the room during class, do so quietly and unobtrusively.

Participation is graded as follows: A student who receives an “A” enlivens the classroom with her/his engaging questions and discussions. Her/his remarks are very insightful encouraging people to think (comes to class with information gleaned from other classes, their research, experience etc.). A “B” grade for participation is accorded to a student who participates, but does so in a passive fashion. Raises questions, but sometimes may not be attentive to the participation of others. Or waits for others to start the ball rolling.

-Grade Breakdown:

Participation	25%
Written Work	25%
In Class Exercises	25%
Final	25%

Please note this syllabus had been approved by the DUS of Theater Studies and can be counted toward Theater Studies Major and Minors in place of Theater Today.

ADDENDUM A

On Giving Feedback:

Some suggestions on "how to give"

- Be specific.
- Focus on what is changeable.
- Speak directly to the receiver of the feedback.
- Speak for yourself (I.)

Some suggestions on "how to receive"

- Listen, be open.
- Ask for examples.
- "understanding" does not equal "agreement"
- What did you see?
- How did you feel about what you saw?

ADDENDUM B

THE ACTOR'S HOMEWORK

FOCUS QUESTIONS

A. SITUATION (Given Circumstances; The "moment before.")
What just happened?

B. PREPARATION
How does that make me feel?

C. OBJECTIVE
What do I need/or want? (based on how I feel about this situation.)

D. ACTION (The How; Tactics)
How am I going to get what I want?

E. URGENCY (Literally and Emotionally)
What will happen to me if I don't get what I want?

F. OBSTACLE
What is in the way of my getting what I want?

G. RELATIONSHIP
In what ways do I know this other person? (family, lovers, acquaintances, business, brought together by a crisis, first meeting.) How does this affect TACTICS and URGENCY

ADDENDUM C

Liz Lerman's Critical Response Process

This widely-recognized method nurtures the development of artistic works-in-progress through a four- step, facilitated dialogue between artists, peers, and audiences.

The Process engages participants in three roles:

1. The artist offers a work-in-progress for review and feels prepared to question that work in a dialogue with other people;
2. Responders, committed to the artist's intent to make excellent work, offer reactions to the work in a dialogue with the artist; and
3. The facilitator initiates each step, keeps the process on track, and works to help the artist and responders use the Process to frame useful questions and responses.

The Critical Response Process takes place after a presentation of artistic work in any discipline. Work can be short or long, large or small, and at any stage in its development.

The facilitator then leads the artist and responders through four steps:

1. Statements of Meaning: Responders state what was meaningful, evocative, interesting, exciting, striking in the work they have just witnessed.
2. Artist as Questioner: The artist asks questions about the work. After each question, the responders answer. Responders may express opinions if they are in direct response to the question asked and do not contain suggestions for changes.
3. Neutral Questions: Responders ask neutral questions about the work. The artist responds. Questions are neutral when they do not have an opinion couched in them. For example, if you are discussing the lighting of a scene, "Why was it so dark?" is not a neutral question. "What ideas guided your choices about lighting?" is.
4. Opinion Time: Responders state opinions, subject to permission from the artist. The usual form is "I have an opinion about _____, would you like to hear it?" The artist has the option to decline opinions for any reason.

ADDENDUM D

The Elements of Form (Paul Baker, THE INTEGRATION OF ABILITIES)

- 1) SPACE**
- 2) LINE (DIRECTION)**
- 3) COLOR**
- 4) TEXTURE**
- 5) SILHOUETTE**
- 6) SHAPE**
- 7) RHYTHM (TIME)**
- 8) SOUND (SILENCE)**
- 9) LIGHT (DARKNESS)**
- 10) PHYSICAL GESTURE**
- 11) ARCHITECTURE**
- 12) TOPOGRAPHY (GROUNDPLAN)**

How are these elements inter-dependent on one other?