

THA 11A-1 - European Theater Texts and Theory I
T/W/R 11:10 AM-1:40 PM

paulmasters@Brandeis.edu

Office Hours: By Appointment

Zoom:

<https://brandeis.zoom.us/j/4680193989?pwd=ZWQ1QmhLTWdWS0V1eHBtZ2lmSGRPUT09>
Password: Ebkaf4

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Brandeis resides on the ancestral homeland of the Pawtucket, Massachusetts, Nipmuc, and Wampanoag tribal nations. We honor these communities and the elders of these nations—past, present, and future—whose practices and spiritualities are tied to the land.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

“What is theatre?”

This is the question that will begin and end this class. The question is critical, because it relates directly to why you’re here, sitting in a theatre history class. Ultimately, your answer to this question will become a part of who you are and your trajectory as an artist. Coincidentally, this question is also critical to theatre history; in some sense it *is* theatre history.

You might earnestly ask at this point, “but why do I need to study what other people thought theatre was in order to do theatre now?” I could give many different responses to this question. I could talk about building a shared vocabulary that you can use with other theatre professionals, knowing something about plays you may be cast in in the future, or even something ambiguous about the human condition. All of this might be true, but it isn’t really relevant to you, sitting there, right now.

My theory is that this topic is relevant, not necessarily because of what theatre is, but because of why humans do it. Theatre is about storytelling, and storytelling is about survival. The stories we tell each other, and ourselves, are vital to our continued existence. Stories give us creative ways of surviving catastrophe, facing down great odds, and envisioning the future. We learn about and ask questions about these stories, not to learn factoids about history but to understand, and bear witness to, how stories can save us.

So we study what theatre is, and has been, so we can learn how past generations have gone about telling *their* life-saving stories. And of course those stories aren’t dead. They are being breathed over and over throughout the world as we speak. The echoes reverberate and layer and intermingle as we revise, and adapt, and steal, and reimagine. And that’s why we study theatre history.

So, what is theatre?

ACCOMMODATIONS

Brandeis seeks to create a learning environment that is welcoming and inclusive of all students, and I want to support you in your learning. If you think you may require disability accommodations, you will need to work with Student Accessibility Support (SAS) (781-736-3470, access@brandeis.edu). You can find helpful student FAQs and other resources on the [SAS website](#), including guidance on how to know whether you might be eligible for support from SAS. If you already have an accommodation letter from SAS, please provide me with a copy as soon as you can so that I can ensure effective implementation of accommodations for this class. In order to coordinate exam accommodations, ideally you should provide the accommodation letter at least 48 hours before an exam.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. Differentiate and grasp defining elements of past ideologies and perspectives of, for, and about the theatre
2. Analyze performance from acting, directing, spectatorial, and dramaturgical perspectives
3. Engage in informed, investigative discourse about differing theatrical forms
4. Be capable of viewing contemporary theatre through the perspective of past narratives, aesthetics, and material culture
5. Understand and appreciate the process of cultural adaptation, appropriation, and signification.

COURSE MATERIALS*

Living Theatre: A History of Theatre. New York: WW Norton. (Ebook available)

<https://wnorton.com/books/Living-Theatre>

Dukore, Bernard ed. *Dramatic Theory and Criticism*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc. (PDF ebook provided)

(All other materials will be made available on LATTE)

GRADING/PROJECTS

This course is going to work a little differently than most of the others you've taken; you will receive extensive feedback from me on all of your projects, but—because much of the work we do in college (and in life) is invisible to the teachers (and bosses, and coworkers and so on) who only get to see your final product—YOU will be responsible for helping me evaluate your progress before any grades are recorded.

To be clear, you will still receive a letter grade for the course. This is a requirement of Brandeis. However, that letter grade will be a collaborative effort related directly to your own assessments of progress, engagement, and learning.

I know that this may feel weird or even a little anxiety-inducing for some of you. That's OK. We'll work through it together. As a start, here's the work you'll be responsible for completing this semester, and the extent to which each aspect will contribute to your final grade.

Participation (attendance, engagement, preparedness for class, self assessments)	50%
Journals (completeness, content, depth of response)	25%
Presentations (quality/depth of research, organization, clarity)	25%

- Readings
 - For each class, you will have readings (and/or videos/audio, or etc) assigned. Doing the readings prepares you for a substantive class discussion, allowing us to create deep, sustained discourse about the work at hand. Your level of engagement with the reading will radically affect your ability to participate in discussion, and doing so will create a richer experience for your classmates as well. Doing the readings/other daily work is a large part of your overall grade, indicating your willingness to engage with, and think about, the material being discussed.
- Digital Journal
 - In most class sessions we will begin with a guiding question designed to prompt a one-paragraph response. You will collect these responses in a digital "journal" (a Google Drive file) that you will share with me. Your responses may include thoughts, questions, or considered reactions to the work for that day. These responses are *critical* to your grade because they allow me a glimpse into your thoughts, responses, and level of preparation for the day's material.
- Mini Presentations
 - Starting in Week Two, you will be responsible for a rotating slate of topics relevant to our readings/discussions for that day. These should be related to the readings in a broad sense (e.g. when we read about Roman Performance, you might give a presentation on Roman philosophical schools, or Roman visual arts, or etc.). These presentations should be approximately 10-20 minutes in length. These are informal opportunities to present a small piece of outside research to the class. I will expect you to submit a Works Cited page for each presentation.
- Self-Assessment/Process Letters
 - At two points during the session (Week 3, Week 5) you will write a self-assessment of your work in the course. These "process letters" will describe your progress in the course, how you feel about learning the material, and ultimately provide me with the grade you feel you deserve. You will be provided with more detail on these letters in a separate document. These process letters provide a way for you to reflect on

your methods and processes of working/learning/engaging with the course and material, and provide me with detailed insight into efforts that may or may not be evident in the products produced for class. These letters represent a large part of your grade, *and* your recommended grade is seriously taken into account.

COURSE CALENDAR *LT=Living Theatre

Week I

Tuesday, June 6, 2023

Topic: Syllabus overview, classroom format and discussion, what is theatre?, classroom working agreement

Reading:

Due: Journal Link/Journal entry

Wednesday, June 7, 2023

Topic: Historical narratives and bias, primary vs. secondary sources, evidence-based research in theatre history, peer review and article databases, The origins and purposes of theatre and performance, ritual and performance

Reading: <https://tinyurl.com/yyn6fyud>, <https://tinyurl.com/v8puurn>

Due: Journal entry

Thursday, June 8, 2023

Topic: African Ritual and Performance/Storytelling/Oral Culture and Aristotelian Theatre

Reading: * LT: 3-24, <https://tinyurl.com/yyq3x6dv>,

<https://collections.dma.org/essay/9Q27Y8Ke>, Sophocles–*Oedipus The King*, Aristotle–*The Poetics* (Dukore 31-56)

Due: Journal entry

Week II

Tuesday, June 13, 2023

Topic: Greek theatre and the politics of adaptation, production practices, whitewashing and Western history

Reading: *The Hungry Woman*--Cherie Moraga, LT: 34-69, *Medea*--Euripides, [*The Gospel at Colonus*](#), (synopsis of *Oedipus at Colonus*)

Due: Journal entry, Mini-Presentation

Wednesday, June 14, 2023

Topic: Greek theatre and the politics of adaptation, production practices

Reading: One play from *The Antigone Project*--various authors, *Antigone*--Sophocles, Plato--*The Republic* (Dukore 12-31)

Due: Journal entry, Mini-Presentation

Thursday, June 15, 2023

Topic: Roman Theatre: comedy, tragedy, popular entertainment, production practices

Reading: LT: 71-93, *Pseudolus*--Plautus, *Thyestes*--Seneca, Horace--*The Art of Poetry* (Dukore 67-76)

Due: Journal entry, Mini-Presentation

Week III

Tuesday, June 20, 2023

Topic: *Thyestes* as Adaptation: *Titus Andronicus*

Reading: (In-Class viewing of Julie Taymor's *Titus*)

Due: Journal entry, Mini-Presentation

Wednesday, June 21, 2023

Topic: Medieval Europe and Medieval Theatres, antitheatricalism, production practices

Reading: LT: 125-155, *Everybody*--Branden Jacobs Jenkins, *The York Crucifixion*, Tertullian--*On the Spectacles* (Dukore 85-94), Saint Augustine--*The City of God* (Dukore 94-99)

Due: Journal entry, Mini-Presentation

Thursday, June 22, 2023

Topic: Medieval Europe and Medieval Theatres, Antitheatricalism, Production

Reading: *Dulcitius*--Hrotsvitha, *The Play of Antichrist*

Due: Journal entry, Self Assessment I, Mini-Presentation

Week IV

Tuesday, June 27, 2023

Topic: The European Renaissance and Italian Commedia,

Reading: Civilizations S1:E5 (in-class), Giraldo Cinthio--*Discourse on Comedies and Tragedies* (Dukore, 121-125), Julius Caesar Scaliger--*Poetics* (Dukore, 138-143)

Due: Journal entry, Mini-Presentation

Wednesday, June 28, 2023

Topic: Innovations in Theatrical Architecture and Technology, Acting and Rhetoric, Spectacle and Didacticism

Reading: LT: 157-189, Lodovico Castelvetro--*On Aristotle's Poetics* (Dukore 143-150)

Due: Journal entry, Mini-Presentation

Thursday, June 29, 2023

Topic: Early Modern England and the Shakespearean Theatre

Reading: LT: 191-229, *peerless*--Jiehae Park, *Macbeth*--William Shakespeare, Sir Phillip Sidney--*The Defence of Poesy* (Dukore, 168-177), John Northbrooke--*A Treatise Against Dicing, Dancing, Plays, and Interludes* (Dukore, 159-162)

Due: Journal entry, Mini-Presentation

Week V

Tuesday, July 4, 2023

Holiday

Wednesday, July 5, 2023

Topic: Early Modern England and Jacobean Drama, The Masque and Spectacle

Reading: John Webster--*The Duchess of Malfi*, Ben Jonson--[The Masque of Blackness](#)

Due: Journal entry, Mini-Presentation

Thursday, July 6, 2023

Topic: Reflection and Summation

Reading:

Due: Journal entry, Self Assessment II

POLICIES AND RESOURCES

Credit Hours:

“Success in this four-credit course is based on the expectation that students will spend a minimum of nine hours of study time per week in preparation for class (readings, papers, discussion sections, preparation for the exams, etc.”

Academic Integrity

Every member of the University community is expected to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity. A student shall not submit work that is falsified or is not the result of the student's own effort. Infringement of academic integrity by a student subjects that student to serious penalties, which may include failure on the assignment, failure in the course, suspension from the University or other sanctions. Please consult [Brandeis University Rights and Responsibilities](#) for all policies and procedures related to academic integrity. Students may be required to submit work via TurnItIn.com or similar software to verify originality. A student who is in doubt regarding standards of academic integrity as they apply to a specific course or assignment should consult the faculty member responsible for that course or assignment before submitting the work. Allegations of alleged academic dishonesty will be forwarded to the Department of Student Rights and Community Standards. Citation and research assistance can be found at [Brandeis Library Guides - Citing Sources](#).

Classroom Health and Safety

- Register for the Brandeis Emergency Notification System. Students who receive an emergency notification while attending class should notify their instructor immediately. In the case of a life-threatening emergency, call 911. As a precaution, review this active shooter information sheet.
- Brandeis provides this shuttle service for traveling across campus or to downtown Waltham, Cambridge and Boston.
- On the Brandeis campus, all students, faculty, staff and guests are required to observe the university's policies on physical distancing and mask-wearing to support the health and safety of all classroom participants. Face coverings must be worn by all students and instructors in classes with in-person meetings. Students and faculty must also maintain the appropriate 6 feet of physical distance from one another when entering, exiting, or being in the classroom and continue to sit in seats assigned by the professor to assist the university in its contact-tracing efforts. All faculty and students must also clean their work areas before and after each class session, using the sanitizing wipes provided by the University. (Classrooms will also be professionally cleaned by Brandeis custodial staff multiple times per day.) Review up to date COVID-related health and safety policies regularly.

CONTENT WARNINGS

Theater explores a range of complex human experiences, and this course may include the study of plays with sensitive topics such as sexual, political, racial, religious, or violent situations or themes. Sometimes the goal of the author is to make us feel uncomfortable or challenge our ideas and beliefs. When discussing dramatic texts and their themes, our language should reflect both academic freedom and a respectful commitment to inclusion. Charged language regarding racial, ethnic, religious, and gender identities will not be used casually. If such language or topics are included in the text, they will be discussed for their specific cultural and historic context.

If you suspect that specific material is likely to be emotionally challenging for you, please share your concerns with me before the subject comes up in class. Likewise, if you ever wish to discuss your personal reactions to course material within class or with me independently, such discussions are welcomed as an appropriate part of our classwork. If you should feel the need to step outside during a class discussion you may do so. You will, however, be responsible for any material you miss. If you leave the room for a significant time, please make arrangements to get notes from another student or see me individually to discuss the situation.

Course Materials/Books/Apps/Equipment

If you are having difficulty purchasing course materials, please make an appointment with your Student Financial Services or Academic Services advisor to discuss possible funding options, including vouchers for purchases made at the Brandeis Bookstore.

LATTE

LATTE is the Brandeis learning management system. Login using your UNET ID and password. For LATTE help, contact Library@brandeis.edu.

Library

The Brandeis Library collections and staff offer resources and services to support Brandeis students, faculty and staff. Librarians and Specialists from Research & Instructional Services, Public Services, Archives & Special Collections, Sound & Image Media Studios, MakerLab, AutomationLab, and Digital Scholarship Lab are available to help you through consultations and workshops.

Privacy

To protect your privacy in any case where this course involves online student work outside of Brandeis password-protected spaces, you may choose to use a pseudonym/alias. You must share the pseudonym/ alias with me and any teaching assistants as needed. Alternatively, with prior consultation, you may submit such work directly to me.

Student Support

Brandeis University is committed to supporting all our students so they can thrive. If a student, faculty, or staff member wants to learn more about support resources, the Support at Brandeis webpage offers a comprehensive list that includes these staff colleagues you can consult, along with other support resources:

- The Care Team
- Academic Services (undergraduate)
- Graduate Student Affairs
- Directors of Graduate Studies in each department, School of Arts & Sciences
- Program Administrators for the Heller School and International Business School
- University Ombuds
- Office of Equal Opportunity.