

**English 369 (34955), CL 323 (33295),  
and REE 325 (45505)  
Tu Th 12:30-2, Parlin 101**

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❖ **Twentieth Century Drama** ❖  
🌸 **Spring 2010** 🌸

Art in the theater is a ripening, an evolution, an uplifting which enables us to emerge from darkness into a blaze of light.

(Jerzy Grotowski, "Statement of Principles," *Towards a Poor Theater*)

❖ **Intent of the Course:**

Drama is necessarily public and commercial, paid for and solicited by bourgeois patrons and therefore interacts dynamically with culture and society. The aim of this course will be two-fold: to give an acceptable overview of the rich textuality and performance potential of modern European Drama and to situate its production within the context of the politics and aesthetics of world literature more generally.

The course will focus on the work of six playwrights: Ibsen, Chekhov, Pirandello, Brecht, Beckett, and Pinter. Each of these major playwrights will be paired with other playwrights whose work either continues or disrupts his imperatives. We will begin by looking at the great theatrical explosion of the turn of the century in Ibsen and Chekhov, who will be read, along with Wilde and Shaw, in the context of fin-de-siècle aesthetics and politics. We will then trace the development in the 1920s and 1930s of absurdist theatre in the plays of Pirandello, who will be paired with Ionesco, and of "epic" and political theatre in Brecht, who will be read together with Bulgakov. A selection of Beckett's plays will be read in the contexts of the two World Wars and the deconstruction of a confident European political or artistic order. The canon will be completed with Ionesco's and Pinter's plays, Artaud and a selection of recent radical political plays, including those of Genet, Soyinka, Petrushevskaya, and Fugard, that reflects the creation and dissolution of the European empires in Latin America and Africa especially.

Much of the excitement of looking at theatrical texts derives from their multi-mediality, and we shall pillage the UT and on-line resources for performance material and footage. No previous familiarity with drama is expected or even solicited, and I will provide those introductions to theatre and performance theory that I think might be provocative.

❖ **Texts**

The following texts are required for the course:

Reader, available from Speedway, Dobie Mall, Lower Level (478-3334)  
Walter Levy, ed., *Modern Drama: 1879-Present*, available at the Coop

Most musical pieces, paintings and films are all available online or from local movie rental stores.  
In addition:

- Most films are “On Reserve” in the Audio-Visual Library (FAC 340, 495-4467).
- Most music is “On Reserve” at the Fine Arts Library (FAB 3.200, 495-4480).

### ◆ **Policy Statement**

1. The oral, attendance, and participation requirements for the class include the following:

§ Attendance of the class meetings is required, and participation and questions are encouraged. Active class participation may assist in improving the student’s final grade in borderline cases. Students who do not participate in class discussions should expect to receive as their grade for the course as a whole the grade that they have earned for the written work. Attendance will be taken regularly at the start of each class. Each student will be allowed **three** unexcused absences in the course of the semester. Any further absences will lower the student’s grade by a half grade (i.e. a B becomes a B-, and a B- becomes a C+). Tardiness counts as absence. Any special circumstances or additional absences must be discussed with the instructor and approved *in advance* of the days to be missed.

§ Students are expected to come to class prepared. Careful reading of all assigned texts and viewing of all films are required for the day on which they are assigned. The written texts, films, and multi-media-materials together form the content of the course. Students are expected to have done the required work and to come to class with comments and questions about the material.

§ Students are expected to behave in a collegial and polite manner during class. Texting, answering email, talking outside the class discussion, or in any way being disruptive of the sessions or disrespectful to other students is not permitted. Students who do not pay attention in class will be asked to leave class and will be counted absent for the day.

§ Each student will give a 15-minute oral report, together with one or two other members of the class. At least 24 hours in advance of each report, the presenters for that day will post three questions for the class on Blackboard and will prepare a handout and/or .ppt presentation for the class. **(10%)**.

2. The written requirements for the class, for which detailed instructions will be provided later, include the following (All assignments may be rewritten any time prior to the due date of the next written assignment. Grades for the rewrites will be averaged with the grade assigned to the original draft submitted.):

§ A book of “Director’s Notes” (one 100-word entry for each reading assignment). These notes will be completed while doing the assigned readings and should not be based on class discussion. Their goal is two-fold: 1) to demonstrate that the student has

done the reading carefully and on time; 2) to share individual responses to the texts in a less formal environment. The entries will be collected in two halves. **Due on 4 March and 4 May (5% + 5%)**

§ A short assignment which considers a single play (5 pages). For the first short essay a topic will be suggested, although any topic that has been approved by the instructor in advance of submission will be encouraged and accepted. **Due on 16 February. (20%)**

§ A research report and commentary (2 pages), on Internet and library resources for a topic of the student's choice in preparation for the writing of the research paper. **Due on 2 March. (5%).**

§ A formal prospectus (100 words), which describes the area of focus and initial ideas for the research paper. This prospectus must be submitted to the instructor for approval. **Due on 13 April. (5%)**

§ A longer research essay (10 pages), on a topic of the student's choice. **Due on 22 April. (35%)**

§ A third assignment (3 pages), which may involve creative writing, performance or a collaboration between students, or may be a short essay. **Due on 6 May, (15%)**

All work is expected to be the student's own and is governed by UT's policy on academic honesty:

<http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/academicintegrity.html>

The final grade for the course will be cumulative and based upon the percentages indicated. There will be no final examination. **In order to pass the course all four assignments must be completed.** Failure to complete any one of the assignments will constitute failing the course. All special circumstances must be discussed with the instructor in advance of the due date. Any assignments submitted late will be held to a higher standard, because the student has had the unfair advantage of more time to prepare, and will be marked more severely as a result. The written assignments will be graded for form and style as well as content. **No assignments will be accepted after 5 PM on Friday the 7<sup>th</sup> of May.**

#### ◆ Students with Disabilities

The U. S. Federal Government defines someone with disabilities as “any person who (i) has a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities [and] (ii) has a record of such impairment. University regulations stipulate that students with disabilities may seek “reasonable accommodations,” but they “must first register with Services for Students with Disabilities [,] provide appropriate documentation regarding [their] disability, [and] meet instructor expectations concerning attendance, class participation, performance and work standards.”

◆ **Course Schedule: Spring 2006**

19 January      Beginnings

▼ **Provocations: Anticipating the Modern**

- 21 January      “All about Squirrels and Macaroons”  
Reading: Henrik Ibsen, *A Doll's House* (Norway, 1879) Act I  
In class: What is a play? Melodrama, Realism and Naturalism
- 26 January      “The Slamming Door Heard Around the World”  
Reading: *A Doll's House*, Acts II-III  
In class: Two Noras (Joseph Losey (1973) and Patrick Garland (1989))
- 28 January      “Does Mama Always Know Best?”  
Readings: Ibsen, *Ghosts* (Norway, 1881)\*  
In class: Edvard Munch and David Cunliffe's version (1993)
- 3 February      “Abandoned Children and Cucumber Sandwiches”  
Reading: Oscar Wilde, *The Importance of Being Earnest* (Britain, 1895), Act I  
In class: John Singer Sargeant's portraits
- 4 February      “Having Your Cake and Eating It Too”  
Reading: *The Importance of Being Earnest*, Acts II-III  
In class: Rupert and friends (Oliver Parker's version (2002))
- 9 February      “What Really Frightens Victorian Men?”  
Reading: Wilde, *Salomé* (Britain and France, 1893)\*  
In class: Aubrey Beardsley's illustrations, Fin-de-siècle Art and Steven Berkhoff's version (2000)
- 11 February      “Why Life with a Professor is Such a Pain”  
Reading: Anton Chekhov, *Uncle Vanya* (Russia, 1897), Acts I-II\*  
In class: Stanislavsky's “System,” Stuart Burge's version (1963) and MXAT's version (1980s)
- 16 February      “To Miss Once is Heroic. To Miss Twice Looks Like a Joke”  
Reading: *Uncle Vanya*, Acts III-IV\*  
In class: Louis Malle's *Vanya on 42<sup>nd</sup> Street* (1995)

**FIRST ASSIGNMENT DUE**

▼ **Now We Are “Modern,” or, at least, Modernist**

- 18 February      “Snapping Violin Strings and the End of an Age”  
Reading: Chekhov, *The Cherry Orchard* (1904)  
In class: Michael Cacoyannis' version (2002) and MXAT version (1980s)

- 23 February “What Does Shaw Want?”  
Reading: G. B. Shaw, *Pygmalion* (Britain, 1913)  
In class: George Cukor’s *My Fair Lady* (1964)
- 25 February “Life at the Moscow Art Theater under Uncle Joe”  
Reading: Mikhail Bulgakov, *Zoya’s Apartment* (Russia, 1926)\*  
In class: Phone Call to Stalin
- 2 March Futurism in Russia and Italy, selected short texts (handout in class)  
Reading: None  
In class: *Lights!*
- RESEARCH REPORT DUE**
- 4 March “What to Do if Your Writer Abandons You”  
Reading: Luigi Pirandello, *Six Characters in Search of an Author* (Italy, 1921)  
In class: Stacy Keach’s version (1976)
- FIRST HALF OF “DIRECTOR’S NOTES” DUE**
- 9 March “From Berlin Cabaret to Bobby Darin”  
Reading: Bertolt Brecht, *The Threepenny Opera* (Germany, 1928), Act I  
In class: Kurt Weil’s music and G. W. Pabst’s version (1931)
- 11 March “Can a Musical be Political?”  
Reading: *Threepenny Opera*, Acts II-III  
In class: *Phantom of the Opera* and *Rent*

❖ 15-20 March SPRING BREAK ❖

❖ After the Great Divide: Post Modernism

- 23 March “Theater as Ritual from Mexico to Bali”  
Reading: Antonin Artaud, from *The Theater and Its Double* (France, 1938)\*  
In class: Making a Play
- 25 March “Modern Wastelands”  
Reading: Samuel Beckett, *Endgame* (Britain, Ireland and France, 1957), pp. 390-  
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In class: René Magritte and Yves Tanguy
- 30 March “What Is Are the Minimum Qualifications for Being a Human?”  
Reading: *Endgame*, pp.404-421  
In class: Beckett’s version (1990-92) Tony Coe’s version (2003)
- 1 April “Peer Pressure and Bestiality”  
Reading: Ionesco, *Rhinoceros* (Romania and France, 1959)  
In class: Ely Landau’s version (1974)
- 6 April “A Nice Day the English Seaside”  
Reading: Pinter, *The Birthday Party* (Britain, 1958)

- 8 April In class: Postwar Britain  
“Following *Pinteresque* Orders”  
Reading: Pinter, *The Dumb Waiter* (Britain, 1960) \*  
“In class: Robert Altman’s version (1987) and Quentin Tarrantino

### 🍷 Empires End, but Archetypes Are Forever

- 13 April “Casting and Passing”  
Reading: Jean Genet, *The Blacks* (France, 1959) \*  
In class: Algeria and Civil Rights  
**PROSPECTUS FOR LONG ESSAY DUE**
- 15 April “The Empire Writes Back”  
Reading: Wole Soyinka, *The Lion and the Jewel* (Nigeria, 1959)  
Reading: African English and the uses of satire
- 20 April “Playing with Shakespeare”  
Reading: Stoppard, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* (Britain, 1967)  
In class: Stoppard’s version (1990)
- 22 April “What Will You Do For Love? Of Country, of Self, of the Other”  
Reading: Manuel Puig, *Kiss of the Spider Woman* (Argentina, 1976) \*  
In class: Hector Babenco’s version (1985)  
**LONG RESEARCH ESSAY DUE**
- 27 April “Apartheid’s Legacy”  
Reading: Athol Fugard, *Master Harold... and the Boys* (South Africa 1982) \*  
In class: Michael Lindsay-Hogg’s version (1986)
- 29 April “The Long Skirt of the British Empire”  
Reading: Caryl Churchill, *Cloud Nine* (Britain, 1979) \*  
In class: Camping
- 4 May “Great Russian Women in Small Soviet Spaces, or Learning How to Swing”  
Reading: Ludmila Petrushevskaya, *Music Lessons* (Russia, 1983) \*  
In class: Images from Soviet to Post-  
**SECOND HALF OF “DIRECTOR’S NOTES” DUE**
- 6 May Endings  
**LAST ASSIGNMENT DUE**

\* indicates texts from Speedway reader