MODERN DRAMA: POETS THEATER & PERFORMANCE BEYOND GENRE

COURSE INFORMATION

Course ID: LIT 3043
Instructor: Nick Sturm
Semester: 2014 Fall
Office: WMS 327
Classroom: MON 004
Office Hours: M 1-4pm
Time: M/W 9:30-10:45//11-12:15
Contact: ns12b@my.fsu.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION

What do we mean by the genre “drama”? What does it mean to identify a work as “dramatic”? What is the “tragic” or “tragedy”? What is the distinction between “modern drama” and other conceptions of the theater? What is the role of performance in drama, in theater, in art in general? What is the significance of exploring plays not only as oral and performative events, but as texts in the same way we are taught to close read a poem on the page? This course will begin with these foundational questions and move to explore a range of texts, movements, and multi-genre artists whose work will allow us to surround these questions with a rich array of potential answers. Although primarily a literature course, which means we will do extensive reading and critical writing, this class will also have an important creative component that will require you to write and participate creatively, both individually and collaboratively, a process that is essential to the success of your critical participation with the course material.

Our primary critical text will be Antonin Artaud’s The Theater and Its Double, perhaps the most important aesthetic investigation of theater and performance in the 20th century. Our reading will not be relegated to plays as such, but to a variety of texts in different genres including poems, novels, video, film, photography, dance, and performance/conceptual art, all of which incorporate aesthetic principles derived from and related to drama and the theater. An exploration of Poets Theater, a “minor” yet prismatic and idiosyncratic practice within modern drama, will be our main lens through which to question and participate with theater. The work of Samuel Beckett will also be of importance, along with a variety of authors and movements in different genres, including FLUXUS, Russian Absurdism, the New York School of Poets, and performance theory, among others.

COURSE OUTCOMES

Students will leave this class with a new understanding of the critical and imaginative processes of reading and writing modern drama and a knowledgeable background in the primary issues of 20th and 21st century dramatic movements and practices. Students will reconcile critical responses to a wide variety of readings with a practical understanding of craft to develop their own distinct aesthetic, cultural, and critical tastes. At the end of the semester each student will have a sizable portfolio of material, both critical and creative, from which to cull further academic and artistic projects related to the study of modern drama and performance.

COURSE TEXTS
Antonin Artaud – *The Theater and Its Double*
Samuel Beckett – *The Complete Dramatic Works*
Padgett Powell – *You & Me*
*The Kenning Anthology of Poets Theater 1945-1985*, ed. David Brazil and Kevin Killian
*Various supplementary materials in the form of hyperlinks or PDFs found on Blackboard

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

- Complete all assigned readings and assignments
- Work continually in reading notebook
- Participate actively and civilly in class discussion

**GRADING DISTRIBUTION**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One-Act Plays</td>
<td>100 (20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative Performance</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Essay</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Notebook</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**A** = Outstanding achievement. Student performance demonstrates full command of the course materials and evinces a high level of originality and/or creativity that far surpasses course expectations.

**A-** = Excellent achievement. Student performance demonstrates thorough knowledge of the course materials and exceeds course expectations by completing all requirements in a superior manner.

**B+** = Very good work. Student performance demonstrates above-average comprehension of the course materials and exceeds course expectations on all tasks as defined in the course syllabus.

**B** = Good work. Student performance meets designated course expectations and demonstrates understanding of the course materials at an acceptable level.

**B-** = Marginal work. Student performance demonstrates incomplete understanding of course materials.

**C** = Unsatisfactory work. Student performance demonstrates incomplete and inadequate understanding of course materials.

**D** = Unacceptable work.

**F** = Failure to complete work.

**READING NOTEBOOK**
This class will encourage you to think of experiments and experience as synonyms, especially in relation to how you encounter the texts we read. Confusion and understanding, the results of both experiments and experience, are often thought of as opposing states; however, this is not true. Both are active terms, implying participation with and curiosity of the world. Your reading notebook will be an informal accumulation of out-of-class notes, writings, sketches, collages, poems, stories, scribbles, erasures, paintings, and any other productive responses to the texts we read, our conversations, our performances, and anything else related to this class and your experience in it. In other words, every time we read something you should be writing/collecting about it in your reading notebook. What do you write? I want the geographical and biological data of the play, manic assemblages, found text, quote lists (any lists), critical digressions, dramatic questions, internal dialogues that chronicle your reading experience, textual weather patterns, tiny lakes, piles of mental furniture, mixtapes to accompany a reading, color recipes, thinking as dreaming, whatever you can imagine as a way of recording/questioning/responding to/extending your experience with a text in the space of excitement/doubt/confusion/proliferation that you inhabit during/after reading that text. This notebook should be only for this class and will be turned in and returned at the end of the semester. Mark all responses with the date and reading. Your notebook should include, at minimum, the following:

- responses to all readings
- responses to 5 cultural/art events: poetry readings, gallery openings, concerts, plays, etc.
- any and all other joys and confusions that demand you take action
- you may include your notes from class but it is not required (note: if you keep your class notes in your reading notebook your class notes do NOT count towards the content of your reading notebook, it just might be easier for you to keep them in the same place).
- Worth 100 points.

### ONE-ACT PLAYS

You will write 5 one-act plays over the course of the semester, one each to be turned in on Monday of Week 4 – Week 8. The purpose of the one-act plays is to allow you to experiment with the material we’re reading as a reader and a writer. Modern drama and performance arts are not passive reading/watching experiences, and to have to respond to the particularities of the forms, styles, and movements we discuss will make you an active participant in these concepts. Each one-act play should be single-spaced, no more than 2 pages, 1-inch margins, printed, and turned in on the 5 dates assigned above. One-act plays will be graded on completion of the assignment, creativity (audacity), and how they show your participation with the material we’ve been reading (they will not be graded on “competence” or “understanding”). The one-act plays will also be practice for the collaborative performance at the end of the semester. Any One-Act Play turned in late (turned in any time other than Monday in class including by email after class) will be penalized 5 points each additional class. Worth 100 points (20 each).
CRITICAL ESSAY

You will write ONE paper this semester: a final (8 pages), to be double-spaced, 12-point Times New Roman, 1-inch margins, MLA style with works cited, and thoroughly proofread. The work is due as noted; plan accordingly. Late papers will be penalized 10 points each additional class. Worth 200 points.

COLLABORATIVE PERFORMANCE

The last four weeks of the semester will be devoted to a series of collaborative performances of plays that you will write, act in, and perform for your peers. About half way through the semester you will be assigned to a group of five – this will be your troupe, your collective, your mess hall, your utopian splinter cell. Together you’ll arrange meetings during which you can talk through, write, and develop your play. Week 12 of class time will be devoted to final preparations and rehearsals of your plays – the rest of your preparation will be done outside of class. Everything about your play – the use of props, dialogue, character, costume, music, dance, lighting, scenery, and where it is performed – is completely up to you. We’ll talk more about this process as the semester moves forward. The collaborative performances will be graded on a peer-grading system that will include input from me on your performance and final script. Worth 100 points.

ATTENDANCE

Attendance in this course is integral to your success and education. Failure to attend deprives you of a chance of developing fundamental skills of reading, writing, and critical thinking. If you accrue more than four unexcused absences you risk failing the course. Excused absences include documented illness, deaths in the family and other documented crises, call to active military duty or jury duty, religious holy days, and official University activities. These absences will be accommodated in a way that does not arbitrarily penalize students who have a valid excuse. Consideration will also be given to students whose dependent children experience serious illness. DO NOT NOTIFY ME OF CASUAL ABSENCES. It is your responsibility to promptly complete readings and assignments for which you are absent.

Also note: no electronic devices are to be used in the classroom: no cell phones, no computers, etc., unless I have granted you specific permission.

CIVILITY CLAUSE

This class is a critical and creative academic environment in which respect towards the course material, intellectual concepts, instructor, and your peers is required. Any behavior otherwise, either overtly or in the content of your assignments, will be addressed promptly and directly.
Repeated insubordinate and/or disrespectful behavior will result in a failing grade for the course and possible referral to a third party authority.

**ACADEMIC HONOR POLICY**

The Florida State University Academic Honor Policy outlines the University's expectations for the integrity of students' academic work, the procedures for resolving alleged violations of those expectations, and the rights and responsibilities of students and faculty members throughout the process. Students are responsible for reading the Academic Honor Policy and for living up to their pledge to “. . . be honest and truthful and . . . [to] strive for personal and institutional integrity at Florida State University.” (Florida State University Academic Honor Policy, found at [http://dof.fsu.edu/honorpolicy.htm](http://dof.fsu.edu/honorpolicy.htm).

**GORDON RULE**

In order to fulfill FSU's Gordon Rule “W” Designation (writing) credit, the student must earn a “C-” or better in the course, and in order to receive a “C-” or better in the course, the student must earn at least a “C-” on the required writing assignments for the course. If the student does not earn a “C-” or better on the required writing assignments for the course, the student will not earn an overall grade of “C-” or better in the course, no matter how well the student performs in the remaining portion of the course.

**ADA STATEMENT**

Students with disabilities needing academic accommodation should: (1) register with and provide documentation to the Student Disability Resource Center; and (2) bring a letter to the instructor indicating the need for accommodation and what type. This should be done during the first week of class.

This syllabus and other class materials are available in alternative format upon request.

For more information about services available to FSU students with disabilities, contact the:

Student Disability Resource Center 874 Traditions Way 108 Student Services Building Florida State University Tallahassee, FL 32306-4167 (850) 644-9566 (voice) (850) 644-8504 (TDD) sdrc@admin.fsu.edu [http://www.disabilitycenter.fsu.edu/](http://www.disabilitycenter.fsu.edu/)

**READING WRITING CENTER**

The RWC offers one-on-one help for students with their writing, whether they need help with a writing problem, understanding what their teacher wants, or just want to do better on their writing assignments. The Center is staffed by teaching assistants who are trained in writing and teaching. Make an appointment by calling ahead (644-6495) or stopping in – room 222C of the Williams Building.

*Standardized Essay Grading Rubric for Gordon Rule, Y, and X courses*
## BASIC CRITERIA

### THESIS and CONTENT (Development)
The essay has a thesis—a single, central point that is interesting, original, striking and substantial. The central idea is developed in the essay through well-chosen, appropriate, concrete details that show originality and freshness. Author shows rather than merely tells. Generalizations and assertions are defended. Arguments are logical.

### ORGANIZATION
The essay is organized and well structured (there is a beginning, a body, and a conclusion). The essay exhibits a clear strategy for persuasion and development. The organization works with the thesis so that the thesis and the organization serve the purpose of the essay. Essay does not digress from central point. Transitions help the paper flow smoothly. Introductory paragraph(s) is (are) interesting and appropriate. Concluding paragraph is clear and convincing.

### PARAGRAPHS
Paragraphs are organized, unified and coherent. Each supporting paragraph has a controlling idea. In supporting paragraphs, topic idea helps further the thesis.

### STYLE
Sentences are well constructed. Writer avoids modifier problems. Sentences show variety of pattern and are rhetorically effective. The essay is written in a style and tone appropriate to the audience, topic and purpose. Words are appropriate and well chosen. Writer avoids jargon and sexist language.

### GRAMMAR, SPELLING, MECHANICS
Writer avoids errors in grammar, spelling, and mechanics.

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### COURSE SCHEDULE

Except for changes that substantially affect implementation of the evaluation (grading) statement, this syllabus is a guide for the course and is subject to change with advance notice.

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**WEEK ONE – August 25/27 – INTRODUCTION TO COURSE**

- **M** Modern Drama as Joy and Plague, read Beckett background information (hyperlink) and “Not I” in *Beckett*
W Watch “Not I” in class / Affect and Logorrhea: Not Western Positivism, read “Waiting for Godot,” watch “Waiting for Godot” on YouTube, read Artaud pg 7-32

WEEK TWO – September 1/3 – THE THEATER AND ITS DOUBLE: SPECTACLE

M Labor Day: No Class

W Read Artaud pg 33-88

WEEK THREE – September 8/10 – ARTAUD’S THE THEATER AND ITS DOUBLE: CRISIS

M Continue Artaud via Fred Astaire, Bas Jan Ader, John Cage, Pina Bausch

W Continue Artaud via Lady Gaga, Maya Deren, Peter Weiss, Francesca Woodman, Read Powell pg 1-74

WEEK FOUR – September 15/17 – YOU & ME: NOVEL DRAMA

M Read Powell pg 75-99

W Read Powell pg 100-157

WEEK FIVE – September 22/24 – YOU & ME NOVEL DRAMA

M Read Powell pg 158-194

W Read “Endgame” in Beckett, Ruth Krauss “Poem-Plays” PDF, and Gertrude Stein “What Happened” PDF

WEEK SIX – September 29/October 1 – POET’S THEATER: EVENT OR TEXT?

M Read “Introduction: Why Poets Theater” in Kenning Anthology and Corina Copp’s “Threat is Deep” PDF on BB

W Read John Ashbery “The Heroes” and V.R. Lang “At Battle’s End” in Kenning

WEEK SEVEN – October 6/8 – NEW YORK SCHOOL THEATER

M Read Kenneth Koch “The Construction of Boston” and Ron Padgett “The Kiss Behind the Smile” in Kenning
Read Helen Adam “Initiation to the Magic Workshop” and Hannah Weiner “RJ (Romeo & Juliet)” in Kenning

WEEK EIGHT – October 13/15 – NEW YORK SCHOOL THEATER

M Read Frank O’Hara “The House at Falling Hanging” and Joe Brainard “The Gay Way” in Kenning, SUGGESTED: Watch Kenneth Anger “Scorpio Rising” via BB link

W Read “Act Without Words I and II” in Beckett and Lorenzo Thomas “Two One-Act Plays” in Kenning

WEEK NINE – October 20/22 – THEATER WITHOUT THEATER: STAGED AS (IM)POSSIBLE

M Read Donald Barthelme “City Life” and Daniil Kharms “Pushkin and Gogol,” “The Mathematician and Andrei Semyonovich” (OBERIU plays) PDFs

W Read Amiri Baraka “Dutchman” in Kenning

WEEKS TEN – October 27/29– POLITICAL THEATER: PERFORMANCE AND PROTEST

M Watch “Dutchman” (1967), Read Joyelle McSweeney “The Contagious Knives” PDF

W Discuss McSweeney, Street Theater, Protest Theater

WEEK ELEVEN – November 3/5 – POLITICAL THEATER: QUEER THEORY

M Watch Derek Jarman’s adaptation of Marlowe’s “Edward II”

W Continue “Edward II”

WEEK TWELVE – November 10/12 – WORK GROUPS FOR PERFORMANCES

M In-class writing and rehearsals

W In-class writing and rehearsals

WEEK THIRTEEN – November 17/19 – COLLABORATIVE PERFORMANCES

M [Group sign-ups]

W [Group sign-ups]
WEEK FOURTEEN – November 24/26 – COLLABORATIVE PERFORMANCES

M  Schedule TBA
W  Thanksgiving Break: No Class

WEEK FIFTEEN – December 1/3 – COLLABORATIVE PERFORMANCES

M  [Group sign-ups]
W  [Group sign-ups]