COURSE SYLLABUS

Contemporary Performance Theory (THE 4562)
(Performance Research Colloquium)
University of South Florida
School of Theatre and Dance
Fall Semester, 2016

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Office Hours: Tues. & Thurs. 10-11 AM or by appointment
Seminar Meeting: Tuesday and Thursday, 11 AM-12:15 PM

Note: THE4562 is certified as a Global Citizens course and may be used to fulfill partial requirements of their Global Citizens Awards upon successful completion of the course (final grade of B or higher). This course is part of the University of South Florida’s Foundations of Knowledge and Learning Core Curriculum as a Capstone Course. It is certified for Fine Arts and Humanities and for the following dimensions: Critical Thinking, Inquiry-based Learning, Creative and Interpretive Processes and Human Historical Context and Process. Students enrolled in this course will be asked to participate in the USF General Education assessment effort. This might involve submitting copies of writing assignments for review, responding to surveys, or participating in other measurements designed to assess the FKL Core Curriculum learning.

DESCRIPTION: A course for advanced students focusing on theatrical and dramatic theory in relation to actual stage practice. This course has been revised to enhance our curriculum and engage students in a collaborative and summative learning experience.

Note: GREEN indicates first GCP objective (self-awarenesss)
BLUE indicates second GCP objective (analysis)

GLOBAL OBJECTIVES, OUTCOMES AND ACTIVITIES:

FIRST GCP OBJECTIVE: Self-awareness with regard to values, beliefs, attitudes and behaviors.

Students will define personal values and beliefs by identifying and reflecting upon their own experiences as theatre artists as they examine the dramatic processes and ideas of influential theatre practitioners, directors and theorists of the 20th and 21st centuries.

SECOND GCP OBJECTIVE: Analysis, the ability to analyze global and cultural interrelationships and interdependencies across place and time.

Students will analyze issues and challenges in theatre performance, their histories, and impacts by examining the ways that dramatic processes develop through the global application of aesthetic, philosophical and literary theories.
GENERAL COURSE OBJECTIVES:

Throughout this course we will analyze global and cultural interrelationships and interdependencies across place and time. Students will identify and investigate the major ideas of influential theatre practitioners, directors and theorists of the 20th and 21st centuries that have shaped contemporary theatre performance including the interconnected elements of actor, text, director, setting, space and audience in a global context. Students will explore how theatre theory developed and changed since the early 20th century. Students will make connecting threads between European theatre theory (e.g., Stanislavsky’s system (Russia), Brecht’s epic theatre (Germany), Grotowski’s poor theatre (Poland), Artaud’s total theatre (France)) and later developments in American and British modes of performance (e.g., Strasberg’s method acting, Peter Brook’s Theatre of Cruelty, Bogart’s Viewpoints, The Wooster Group, Théâtre du Complicité). Students will investigate the influence of non-western forms of theatre (Chinese Opera, Japanese Kabuki and Noh, Balinese dance, Suzuki’s “Culture is the Body”) on the theory and practice of Brecht, Artaud and contemporary theatre artists such as Peter Brook and Julie Taymor.

The framework is based upon a coherent structure including the works of major theorists (e.g., Stanislavsky, Meyerhold, Brecht, Artaud, Grotowski) and postmodern cross-currents (semiotics, phenomenology, feminism, LGBT, performance art, digital media) in two or three-week modules. Each module contains one or more seminar sessions (reading/discussion/video), separate break-out sessions with actor’s workshops for performance majors and design workshops for scenographers, and then a presentation session where we all come together to share the results (discussion, scenes/exercises, models or sketches). The student’s self-awareness with regard to values, beliefs, attitudes and behaviors, will expand their own experiences as theatre artists as they examine and explore dramatic processes and ideas of influential theatre practitioners, directors and theorists of the 20th and 21st centuries. This result is a discipline-specific global capstone course.

GENERAL OUTCOMES: The student will become familiar with theories of performance from the beginning of the 20th century to contemporary theatre. The course will also introduce the student to postmodern theories in spectatorship, semiotics, phenomenology, feminism, performance art, clown, circus and comedy. The major goal is to learn about the phenomenon of dramatic art, and to animate the student’s own aesthetic imagination and creative thinking. Students are encouraged to develop a basic understanding of the dramatic experience and be able to make connections with their own personal artistic work as actors, directors and designers.

The following dimensions describe additional learning outcomes:

Knowledge: Students will be able to name the major theatre theorists since the beginning of the 20th century. Students will be able to associate key ideas contained in the theoretical writing with the appropriate theatre practitioners. Students will be able to identify the contributions of theatre theorists to theatre practice.
**Comprehension:** Students will recognize elements in historical and performance evidence that demonstrate the basic principles developed by major theatre theorists. Students will learn how major theorists explained their respective concepts of acting, directing and design. Students will have the ability to express those concepts in their own words. Students will review, summarize, paraphrase and explain the characteristic features of each different theatre theory. Students will recognize the influence of global performance theories on innovation in the theatre and its influence on contemporary theatrical productions. Students will comprehend new developments in theatre theory and how it reinforces or departs from established and accepted performance theory.

**Application:** Students will be able to apply the critical methods learned to be able to interpret and explain their own work as theatre artists. Students will be able to use concepts and principles of creative expression learned from the major theorists in their own work including acting, directing and design. Students will be able to assess the ways that theory can inform their own artistic work and apply those theories to animate their artistic imagination.

**Analysis:** Students will have the ability to use analytical and interpretive methods in order to apprehend inherent concepts in the body of critical discourse. Students will be able to use a dialectical method of analysis to weigh contradictory attitudes and positions. Students will be able to argue *ad utramque partem* on both sides of an issue in order to further define and resolve matters pertaining to the critical discourse of performance theory. Students will be able to analyze the interrelationship of the expressive codes that comprise the metalanguage of the stage including the multiple interrelated nodes of acting, directing, audience reception and text. Students will be able to differentiate between diverse and contradictory global approaches to performance theory through comparison and contrast (e.g., Stanislavsky’s psychological emphasis on emotional experience and subtextual superobjective as compared with Meyerhold’s biomechanical movement and acrobatic physicality, and both in sharp contrast to Brecht’s political and sociological paradigm of distancing in a non-empathetic theatre with an intelligent actor historicizing the incidents for critical examination by an audience in a state of analytical calm.).

**Synthesis:** Students will be able to demonstrate integration of their knowledge by writing coherent papers and preparing group presentations. Students will be able to plan, organize, outline, collaborate, modify and edit each other’s writing in order to express ideas clearly and succinctly in work groups. Students will be able to generate a thesis statement as a means of organizing a research paper around a central idea. Students will be able to gather data in their research, analyze and interpret the material and prepare a written or oral report.

**REQUIREMENTS:**

1. The general structure of this course will be a combination of readings, discussion and practical workshops with video viewings to complement the readings and precipitate conversations. It is important that you read the assignments prior to the due dates.
Students are responsible for careful reading of the texts assigned and should be able to participate actively in class, answer questions, identify issues and offer opinions based upon the material presented. Students will be divided into small discussion groups for each topic in order to encourage critical thinking and experiential learning that will then be shared with the class.

2. In addition to voicing your views and opinions in twice weekly classes, each student will lead class discussion either alone or with a partner during the semester. This means that you will lead your group and take the lead in examining the topic for the entire class. You must check the syllabus for dates and readings for your leadership session that fit with your academic, personal and production schedule. **Please mark your selected date in your own calendar and make sure you are prepared to lead the class individually or in a small group on your selected day.**

3. A short paper (3-5 pages) to be delivered orally to the class and designed to last approximately 10-12 minutes on a narrow aspect of one of the large topics outlined in the syllabus. **The presentation should cover background material not read by the class.** There are plenty of websites and books in the Tampa Campus Library containing additional readings that may be used for your report or you could consult books or articles published in one of the following peer-reviewed journals: Theatre Journal, Theatre Survey, Theatre Research International, Performing Arts Resources, The New England Theatre Journal, Performing Arts Journal, The Drama Review, New Theatre Quarterly, American Theatre or Theatre Topics. You may access these online through the University Library home page. The student must prepare a bibliography and distribute to members of the class through Canvas upload. There are **three** components to the oral report: 1.) **Presenting** on the appointed day; 2.) **Distributing** of a bibliography to the class through uploading to a discussion forum on Canvas and 3.) **Submitting** a printed copy to the instructor on the day of presentation. Please do not ask me to printout, copy or staple your report on the day of presentation. There will be a one-letter grade reduction for each item that is missing from the report. **Please take this seriously because I know what obstacles you will face during the semester.**

4. You must complete a critical research paper of at least 10 typed pages (MLA style sheet format) on a topic approved by the instructor. Please make sure that you do not limit yourself to the “quick search” Internet for your research (i.e., Wikipedia as a major reference source). You must use books and journal articles combined with your own experiential perspective (e.g., performing, designing or comparing and critiquing productions you have seen). You will find more details about the format and content of your research paper in the file titled “Research Paper Guidelines,” including fonts, margins and citation format. I will go over this with you in class well in advance of the due date.

**Please note:** Another alternative is to read and write a report on one of the books on the list Books for Theatre Studies on and Canvas. Many of them are available as eBooks through the USF library. The format is the same as indicated above. The book must be approved by me prior to your report.
5. Mid-term examination. 40% of the midterm will consist of short questions and identification. 60% of the midterm will consist of the following written essay:

### Global Citizens Assignment

As 21st century global citizens, we live in a complex world replete with interconnected issues, challenges and problems. Historicizing past events through performance can help us make sense the world’s most pressing problems and more importantly to devise solutions to them. *The Conquest of Mexico* is Artaud’s first spectacle of the Theatre of Cruelty, chosen because of its immediacy and the allusions to problems of vital interest for the world. Your task is to identify a global issue or problem from this work and describe how you would stage it based upon your analysis of the source material and experience in the laboratory workshop dedicated to exploring various techniques of performance. You may refer to the theory of Brecht’s epic theatre of social change or Artaud’s model of total theatricality or other forms that you have learned through readings, workshops, videos and discussion as long as you use specific examples to support your vision for the play. Students who successfully complete this assignment will perform both Global Citizens learning outcomes in that they are required to bring together experiential self-awareness as theatre artists in an informed analysis of global issues and challenges, their histories and impacts.

6. Final examination.

**GRADES:**

- Report/short paper 10%
- Discussion leadership 10%
- Research paper 20%
- Mid-term 25%
- Final exam 25%
- Class participation 10%

**ATTENDANCE:** Attending class is not simply showing up to class or logging into CANVAS (for online courses). The new definition requires a student to show a conscientious effort to participate or submit coursework as well. The university auditors have stated that a student must demonstrate some form of *academic activity* in order for their "present" or "here" to count as attendance. This is particularly important for students on financial aid. There are two categories of excused absences according to USF Policy: scheduled and unscheduled. ([http://www.ugs.usf.edu/policy/GeneralAttendance.pdf](http://www.ugs.usf.edu/policy/GeneralAttendance.pdf))

“Scheduled absences involve time conflicts that are known in advance, for which students have notified their instructors. Acceptable reasons for scheduled absences include observation of religious holy days, court imposed legal obligations (e.g., jury duty and subpoenas), special requirements of other courses and university sponsored events (e.g., performances, athletic events, judging trips), and requirements of military service. **Employment schedules and personal appointments are not valid reasons for scheduled absences.** Unscheduled absences involve unforeseen emergencies such as
illness, injury, hospitalization, death in the immediate family, consequences of severe weather, and other crises. Care will be given to schedule required classes and examinations in view of customarily observed religious holy days. No student shall be compelled to attend class or sit for an examination at a day or time prohibited by his or her religious belief.”

You are permitted a total of three scheduled or unscheduled absences in this course. If you have perfect attendance and straight As in your assignments, you will receive 100 points for attendance (10% of your final grade) and be exempt from the final exam. Your class participation grade correlates directly with your attendance in class as follows:

- 0 absences = 100
- 1 absences = 95
- 2 absences = 92
- 3 absences = 90
- 4 absences = 85
- 5 absences = 80
- 6 absences = 75
- 7 absences = 70
- 8 absences = 65

Chronic tardiness will count as an absence. Arriving late for class and leaving early will adversely affect your grade. You may not request an incomplete unless you are passing the course at the time of the request.

LATENESS: I am extremely unsympathetic on late term papers and reports. You should not ask for an extension within 48 hours of the due date. Plan your time wisely, because late papers will suffer one letter grade deduction for each day beyond the due date. There will be no exceptions due to printer problems, computer crashes or disk storage confusion. Weekends count for three days. Incompletes are only given if you are passing the course and have a valid, documented medical reason.

NOTE OF NON-PERMISSION: The student is not permitted to sell class notes or recordings of class lectures. The student is not permitted to burn copies of the old course CD to distribute to other students. This is a violation of copyright law.

MISSED ASSIGNMENTS: If you do not complete your assignments by the deadlines, it will affect your grade by one letter grade for each day it is overdue. This includes quizzes, group assignments and the research paper.

RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE: Students who anticipate being absent from class due to religious observance should inform the instructor by the second class meeting of the term.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES: Any student with a disability is encouraged to meet with me privately during the first week of class to discuss accommodations. Each student must bring a current Memorandum of Accommodations from the Office of
Student Disability Services, a prerequisite for receiving accommodations. Accommodated examinations through the Office of Student Disability Services require two weeks notice. All course documents are available in alternate format if requested in the student’s Memorandum of Accommodations.

BOOKS

Note: Texts available at USF Tampa Campus bookstore:

Required:

Brook, *The Empty Space*
Fortier, *theory/theatre: an introduction*

Selected readings included in PDF format on the Modules:
Stanislavsky, *Creating a Role*
Pitches, *Meyerhold*
Braun, *Meyerhold on Theatre*
Bogart, *The Viewpoints Book*
Willet, *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*
Heineman, *How Brecht Read Shakespeare*
Artaud, *The Theatre and Its Double*
Pronko, *Artaud and the Balinese Dream*
Grotowski, *Towards a Poor Theatre*
Richards, *At Work With Grotowski on Physical Actions*
Elam, *Semiotics of Theatre and Drama*
States, Bert, *Great Reckonings in Little Rooms: On the Phenomenology of Theatre*
Jenkins, *Acrobats of the Soul*
Murray, *Jacques Lecoq*

The material assigned for this class may be purchased in a reader available only at ProCopy, 5209 E. Fowler Ave., Tampa 813-988-5910 (or on Canvas eReserve):

Finelli, *Reader for Contemporary Performance Theory* (custom collection of readings) contains the following works:

1. Stanislavski, *Creating A Role*
2. Braun, *Meyerhold on Theatre*
3. Pitches, *Meyerhold*
4. Bogart, *The Viewpoints Book*
5. Willet, *Brecht on Theatre*
6. Heineman, *How Brecht Read Shakespeare*
7. Artaud, *The Theatre and Its Double*
8. Pronko, *Artaud and the Balinese Dream*
9. Grotowski, *Towards a Poor Theatre*
10. Richards, At Work with Grotowski on Physical Actions
11. Elam, Semiotics of Theatre and Drama
12. States, Bert, Great Reckonings in Little Rooms: On the Phenomenology of Theatre
14. Jenkins, Acrobats of the Soul
15. Murray, Jacques Lecoq

Recommended Supplementary Books:

Jenkins, Acrobats of the Soul Comedy and Virtuosity in Contemporary American Theatre
Waugh, An Acrobat of the Heart
Murray, Jacques Lecoq
Bogart, A Director Prepares
Bogart and Landau, Viewpoints
Hirsch, A Method to Their Madness: The History of the Actors Studio
Meisner, Sanford Meisner on Acting
Hornsby, The End of Acting: A Radical View
Sontag, Antonin Artaud: Selected Writings
Schmidt, Meyerhold at Work
Pitches, Vsevolod Meyerhold (Routledge Performance Practitioners)
Osinski, Grotowski and His Laboratory
Kumiega, Theatre of Grotowski
Wolford, The Grotowski Sourcebook
Pronko, Theater East and West: Perspectives Toward a Total Theater
Taylor, The Eisenstein Reader
Mamet, Three Uses of the Knife: On the Nature and Purpose of Drama
Mamet, True and False: Heresy and Common Sense for the Actor
Mamet, On Directing Film
Schechner, Environmental Theater
Schechner, Performance Studies: An Introduction
Turner, The Anthropology of Performance
Schechner, The Future of Ritual
Fortier, Theory/Theatre
Wiles, The Theatre Event
Dolan, The Feminist Spectator As Critic
Goffman, The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life
Brook, The Shifting Point: 1946-1987
Boal, Theatre of the Oppressed
Schechner, Between Theater and Anthropology
Turner, From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play
Barba, A Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology: The Secret Art of the Performer
Elam, The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama
Gombrich, Art and Illusion
Arnheim, Visual Thinking
Course Schedule

Module 1 --- Critical Overview: Performance Theory and Practice
(August 23-30)

Introduction and overview
Brook, Peter, *The Empty Space*

Module 2 --- Russian Innovators
(September 1-6)

Stanislavski, *Creating a Role*, pp. 27-37, 57-93

Braun, *Meyerhold on Theatre*, pp. 23-34, 197-206, 221-230
Pitches, *Meyerhold*, pp. 111-154

Video: *Meyerhold's Biomechanics Workshop*
Video: *Meyerhold's Etude: Throwing the Stone*

Thursday, September 8 – Stanislavski Workshop

Tuesday, September 13 -- Class presentation/discussion workshop

Thursday, September 15 – Meyerhold Workshop

Tuesday, September 20 - Bogard, *Viewpoints*, pp. 21-63

Thursday, September 22 – Viewpoints Workshop

Module 3 --- Brecht's political paradigm for the theatre
(September 27 – October 4)

Heineman, “How Brecht Read Shakespeare”

DVD: “The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny”
(*Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*)
Selections from two DVDs, one American the other Austrian.
DVD:*Theatre of War* (Meryl Streep)
DVD:*The Threepenny Opera*

Thursday, October 6 – Brecht Workshop
Module 4 --- **The Theatre of Cruelty**
(October 11)

Artaud, Antonin, *The Theatre and Its Double*, pp 30-37, 68-73, 79-83, 93-100
Pronko, “Artaud and the Balinese Dream”
DVD: *My Life and Times with Antonin Artaud*
Video: *Marat/Sade*
Video: *Changing Stages*

Thursday, October 13 – **Artaud Workshop**

**Mid-term examination** (October 18)

Module 5 --- **Poor theatre, Physical action, Facial masks, Impulse**
(October 20-25)

Grotowski, *Towards a Poor Theatre* (pp. 15-26, 101-124, 143-172)
Richards, *At Work with Grotowski on Physical Actions* (25-32, 49-70, 93-99)
DVD: *Akropolis*

Thursday, October 27 – **Grotowski Workshop**

Module 6 --- **Semiotics and Phenomenology**
(November 1)

Fortier, *theory/theatre*, Chapter 1
Elam, *Semiotics of Theatre and Drama*

States, Bert, *Great Reckonings in Little Rooms: On the Phenomenology of Theatre* (Chapters 1 & 4)

Thursday, November 3 – **Physical/postmodern theatre workshop**

Filter Theatre
Frantic Assembly
Théâtre de Complicité
Kneehigh Theatre

Module 7 --- **Subjectivity and Gender Theory**
(November 8)

Fortier, *theory/theatre*, Chapter 2

Case, *Performing Feminisms: Feminist Critical Theory and Theatre*
Module 8 --- **Performance Art/Comedy/Clown**
(November 10 - 15)

Jenkins, Ron, *Acrobats of the Soul* (selections)
DVD: *Cirque Reinvente*
DVD: *La Nouba*
DVD: *Varekai*
DVD: *Regard of Flight*
Video: *Comedy of Errors*
Video: *Rowan Atkinson*
YouTube: *Paul Zaloom, Avner the Eccentric, Penn and Teller, Bill Irwin, Spalding Gray*

**Research Paper** Due November 17 at 11 a.m.

Thursday, November 17 – **Comedy Workshop**

Module 9 – **World and Theatre**
(November 22 – 29)

Fortier, *theory/theatre*, Chapter 3
Murray, *Jacques Lecoq* pp. 97-126

**Final Exam** Tuesday, December 6, 11 a.m. (or Exam Matrix)