
History of American Theatre and Drama

Theater 106
Spring 2022

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Pronouns: he/his/him

Overview and Objectives

This course takes an artist-centered approach to American theater and drama, focusing on the innovators who sparked its evolution. Through readings, viewings, quizzes, and exams, students will

- recognize the significance of expanding our definition of theater;
- redefine the American theater canon to include a diversity that reflects this nation's story;
- gain an understanding of the craft of theater through studying major and under-examined plays, theater groups and practitioners from 1930-2015 (with a few excursions to the more distant past);
- develop the ability to identify techniques used by artists in their work;
- and read artistic innovation as a personal response to significant global, national, and personal events.

This course offers students a variety of perspectives from guest lecturers within UCLA's theater department and beyond.

This is a fully online, fully asynchronous course. All of your lectures will be online through CCLE. You will have weekly benchmarks to hit, but you will be able to set your own pace within each week. You will not have to be online at a specific time, although there will be some live, scheduled Zoom sessions with your TA for extra credit.

Grading

- 30% Quizzes due Thursdays at 11:59 pm to check your comprehension of readings and lectures. 8 total @ 10pts ea. Lowest score dropped.
- 20% Discussion board due Fridays at 11:59 pm to support your engagement. 8 total @ 4pts ea. Lowest score dropped.
- 10% Responses to fellow students' discussion board posts due Sundays at 11:59 pm to encourage interaction with your classmates
- 20% Midterm Exam to confirm your understanding.
- 20% Final Exam to confirm your understanding.

Formats & Assessments

- Lectures provide the critical framework for the readings and videos. While lectures may not always go into the readings/viewings in detail, you will be responsible for the lectures and all required content.
- You will complete a quiz each week to check your understanding and to help you stay on track.
- Your discussion board posts will help you draw connections between the lectures and readings and give you opportunities for creative response. Each week you will respond to a discussion board prompt and respond to two classmates.
- Two open-book take-home exams will complete the course experience.

Late Work

No late work will be accepted except in extreme circumstances described in writing to the TAs and professor. If you know you cannot take the exams on the days offered, or if events may keep you from submitting your work on time, this may not be the class for you.

Workload

This is a five-unit GE course. According to UCLA policy, one unit represents three hours of work per 10-week term by the student. Therefore, you should expect to spend up to 15 hours per week on the course. Be sure plan ahead and schedule how you will complete your work.

Communication & Etiquette

We are here to help. We want you to get the most out of this course – we never want you to feel lost. No question too small!

Please always consult the course website first, your question may already be answered. For grades and grading, contact your TA. For course content, contact the TA before the professor. Contact emails are on CCLE. Technical issues go to the admins at online@tft.ucla.edu. You will generally receive a reply within 24 hours; emails received over the weekend will be answered on the following Monday.

Please note that lesson descriptions flag content that may be triggering to some. This is part of this course's mission – to look at the ways that artists metabolize social and historical forces through theater.

Books etc.

The following books *must* be purchased:

- *An Octoroon* by Branden Jacobs-Jenkins (2014) ISBN 082223226X
- *All My Sons* by Arthur Miller (1947) ISBN 0141185465
- *How I Learned to Drive* by Paula Vogel (1997) ISBN 082221623X

The following books *may* be purchased or read in PDF:

- *Fefu and Her Friends* by Maria Irene Fornes ISBN 155554052X
- *Joe Turner's Come and Gone* by August Wilson ISBN 0452260094

Required books are available through UCLA's bookstore website (https://shop.uclastore.com/t-textbooks_homepage.aspx). Many are also available through online retailers. There is a list on the course site of free e-book versions of all of the readings.

Required video will be available to stream at low resolution from Bruin Learn, however external links may also be available for higher resolution.

Additional texts will be posted on Bruin Learn.

"Backstage Sessions" - An Extra Credit Opportunity

This course will offer several live Zoom sessions for extra credit. Consider these "super office hours," an opportunity (with extra credit benefits) to learn some practical skills for a critical course in theater, as well as deeper engagement with the content of the plays assigned in class. Each session will be one hour, with the last 20 minutes saved for Q&A.

The sessions will have a mini-lesson component that will be recorded and made available for the whole class.

For each Backstage Session, you can earn one point extra credit on your final grade. Due to the way Canvas functions, the extra credit will not appear on the gradebook page until the end of the class. In order to get the extra credit, you need to attend the live session and answer a short reflection question, found on the Bruin Learn site.

Academic Integrity

Any written assignment must be solely the work of the student who turns it in. Compiling a written assignment by pasting together extracts from websites is unacceptable and is a form of plagiarism. Exams must be submitted through Turnitin. The course website will explain how to do this. Ignorance of UCLA policy is not an excuse for academic dishonesty, so always ask if you have concerns. UCLA's policies on academic integrity

and student conduct may be found at:

<http://www.deanofstudents.ucla.edu/Student-Conduct-Code>

Submissions are screened for improper citations and potential plagiarism.

Quotes or ideas paraphrased from other work must be properly cited.

Lastly, information may be available online about the assigned topics or readings. Please resist any temptation to use such info as a *substitute* for having your own experience with the materials.

Services Available to All Students

Advocacy and Confidential Services

Please note that Title IX prohibits gender discrimination, including sexual harassment, domestic and dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking.

If you have experienced sexual harassment or sexual violence, you can receive *confidential* support and advocacy at the CARE Advocacy Office for Sexual and Gender-Based Violence, 1st Floor Wooden Center West, CAREadvocate@caps.ucla.edu, (310) 206-2465.

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) provides *confidential* counseling to all students and can be reached 24/7 at [\(310\) 825-0768](tel:310-825-0768).

Reporting and Nonconfidential Services

Your professor is required under the [UC Policy on Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment](#) to inform the Title IX Coordinator should he become aware that you or any other student has experienced sexual violence or sexual harassment.

In addition, You can also report sexual violence or sexual harassment directly to the University's Title IX Coordinator, 2241 Murphy Hall, titleix@conet.ucla.edu, (310) 206-3417. Reports to law enforcement can be made to UCPD at (310) 825-1491.

Disability

Students needing academic accommodations based on a disability should contact the Center for Accessible Education (CAE) at (310) 825-1501 or in person at Murphy Hall A255. When possible, students should contact the CAE within the first two weeks of the term as reasonable notice is needed to coordinate

accommodations. For more information visit www.cae.ucla.edu. Disability accommodations needs should be communicated to the instructor and/or Teaching Assistant before assignments are due unless there are extenuating circumstances. These policies apply to both matriculated UCLA students and visitors in Summer Session.

Names and Pronouns

We acknowledge that being addressed correctly and respectfully is essential to a healthy learning environment. If, during the course of the quarter, you wish to go by a different name or by different pronouns, let us know and we will adjust without hesitation.

Schedule

Subject to change

PART I: FOUNDATIONS 1600S -1940S (+ 2014 *bonus*)

WEEK ONE

Lesson Lecture Videos + Readings

General Period

- | | | |
|---|---|-----------------------------|
| 1 | Introduction
Professor Oswald introduces himself and the course, especially the key question on which we will center our studies: <i>Why do artists make certain choices at certain moments in history?</i>
>View Lecture 1: Introduction (19 min) | OVERVIEW |
| 2 | Early American Forms
A brief survey of important phases in the development of theater in the United States. Starting with Indigenous Ritual Performance and including Parades, British Knockoffs, Popular Entertainments, Minstrelsy, and Vaudeville.

> View Lecture 2: Early American Forms (27 min)
> View Excerpts of PBS Vaudeville Documentary (includes images of minstrelsy) Introduction 00:00:00 - 00:15:05 (15 min); Immigrants and Blacks in Vaudeville (images of blackface, racial epithet used) 1:05:00 - 1:29:20 (24 min) | PRE-1619 – EARLY 1900s |
| 3 | Minstrelsy, Melodrama & <i>An Octoroon</i>
What role does race play in American Theatre History? A discussion of Branden Jacobs-Jenkins 2014 play, <i>An Octoroon</i> , an adaptation of Dion Boucicault's 1859 play <i>The Octoroon</i> . Two lectures provide historical background on minstrel performance and 19th century melodrama. (This week includes discussions of racism and racially charged images.)

> View Lecture 3.1: Minstrelsy, Melodrama (24 min)
> Read <i>The Octoroon</i> by Dion Boucicault (1859), Act I only - [PDF]
> View Lecture 3.2: <i>An Octoroon</i> (16 min)
> Read <i>An Octoroon</i> by Branden Jacobs-Jenkins (2014) [BOOK] | 1850s – EARLY 1900s (+2014) |

Backstage Session #1: Welcome and introduction to studying theater.

Thursday, March 31 @ noon PT

Led by Sylvan Oswald on Zoom and recorded for those who can't attend (although we strongly recommend you attend live). You may earn one point of extra credit for attending and submitting a reflection on the Bruin Learn site. See site for details.

Deadlines

- > Quiz 1: Due Thursday at 11:59 pm PT
- > Discussion board 1: Initial responses due Friday at 11:59 pm PT.
- > Responses to two fellow students due Sunday at 11:59 pm PT.
- > Extra credit reflections due Sunday at 11:59 pm PT

FOUNDATIONS Cont'd

WEEK TWO

<i>Lesson</i>	<i>Lecture Videos + Readings</i>	<i>General Period</i>
4	The Federal Theatre Project A look at politics in American Theatre History. A lecture on the Federal Theater Project, its founder Hallie Flanagan, and how, in the midst of the great depression, the first red scare set a new kind of censorship in motion. > View Lecture 4: Federal Theatre Project (39 min) > Read "The Federal Theater Project" by Hallie Flanagan (1935) - [PDF]	1930s
5	Aristotle, Well-Made Plays & <i>All My Sons</i> How does the American Dream's cruel optimism enter our psyches through dramatic forms? These two key lectures will introduce the concept of the Well-Made Play, one of the most contentious forms in this course. We will look at the Well-Made's origins in Aristotle's <i>Poetics</i> and its evolution through Arthur Miller's play <i>All My Sons</i> . > View Lecture 5.1: Aristotle and Well-Made Plays (31 min) > Read <i>All My Sons</i> by Arthur Miller (1947) [BOOK] > View Lecture 5.2: Arthur Miller's <i>All My Sons</i> (22 min)	1940s

Backstage Session #2: How to Read a Play

[See course site for date and time.]

Led by one of the TAs on Zoom and recorded for those who can't attend. See site for details. One point of extra credit, with a cap of three points over the course.

Deadlines

- > Quiz 2: Due Thursday at 11:59 pm PT
- > Discussion board 2: Initial responses due Friday at 11:59 pm PT.
- > Responses to two fellow students due Sunday at 11:59 pm PT.
- > Extra credit reflections due Sunday at 11:59 pm PT

PART 2: ALTERNATIVE STRUCTURES
1950s - 1980s

WEEK THREE

Lesson Lecture Videos + Readings

General Period

6 **The Avant-Garde, Gertrude Stein & *Saints*** 1930
Over three lectures, we define the innovations of the Avant-Garde and locate its context in the conflicts of the early 20th century; Gertrude Stein; and her formal discoveries through the lens of the seminal production of *Four Saints in Three Acts* (1934).

- > View Lecture 6.1: The Avant-Garde (8 min)
- > View Lecture 6.2: Gertrude Stein (15 min)
- > View Lecture 6.3: *Four Saints in Three Acts* (14 min)
- > Read *Four Saints in Three Acts* libretto by Gertrude Stein (1934) - [PDF]
- > View “Prepare for Saints” from CT Public Television (25 min)

7 **Method Acting** 1930s -40s
We are joined by Professor Judith Moreland today for a return to the realistic theater to discover how *the* quintessential American acting style began. We will follow the journey of “The Method” from Russian import to its complete integration into American playwriting, directing, and scenography.

- > View Lecture 7: Method Acting (60 min)
- > Read “The Actors Studio” by Lee Strasberg (1947) - [PDF]
- > Read “The Group Theater” by Harold Clurman (1930) - [PDF]
- > View clips of of *Streetcar Named Desire*, dir. Elia Kazan (1951) via [A.O. Scott of the New York Times](#).
- > Homework: Open “Hagen Six Steps” and, in the space specified on your weekly quiz, write out your answers to the questions. For additional help, you can watch the Method Homework video or read Hagen’s chapter, our source.

Deadlines

- > Quiz 3: Due Thursday at 11:59 pm PT
- > Discussion board 3: Initial responses due Friday at 11:59 pm PT.
- > Responses to two fellow students due Sunday at 11:59 pm PT.

WEEK FOUR

Lesson Lecture Videos + Readings

General Period

8 **Happenings and the Living Theater** 1950s-60s
Professor Oswald discusses how mid-century artists created performances outside of theater spaces in a reaction to war and a stifling political climate.

- > View Lecture 8.1: Happenings (33 min)
- > View Lecture 8.2: The Living Theater (26 min)
- > Read "Off-Broadway, Happenings, and The Living Theater" by Arnold Aronson from *American Avant-Garde Theater* p. 42-68 - [PDF]
- > Read *18 Happenings in 6 Parts* by Allan Kaprow p.53-65 (1958) - [PDF]

9 **Amiri Baraka's *Dutchman* & *The Toilet*** 1960s
Professor Dominic Taylor walks us through interpreting two plays by the poet/playwright Amiri Baraka, a significant figure in the Black Arts Movement of the 1960s.

- > View Lecture 9.1: Baraka's *Dutchman* (46 min)
- > View Lecture 9.2: Baraka's *The Toilet* (29 min)
- > *The Dutchman* by Amiri Baraka (1964) - [PDF]
- > *The Toilet* by Amiri Baraka (1967) - [PDF]

Backstage Session #3: A close read on Week 3&4 materials and midterm Q&A
[See course site for date and time.]

Led by one of the TAs on Zoom and recorded for those who can't attend. See site for details. One point of extra credit, with a cap of three points over the course.

Deadlines

- > Quiz 4: Due Thursday at 11:59 pm PT
- > Discussion board 4: Initial responses due Friday at 11:59 pm PT.
- > Responses to two fellow students due Sunday at 11:59 pm PT.
- > Extra credit reflections due Sunday at 11:59 pm PT

WEEK FIVE / MIDTERM

Lesson *Lecture Videos + Readings*

General Period

10 **Teatro Campesino (1960s)**

1960s

Luis Valdez launched the California-based Teatro Campesino to tackle issues of race, class, and gender that white theater ignores. Professor Oswald provides an overview.

- > View Lecture 10: Teatro Campesino and *Los Vendedos* (32 min)
- > Read “*Los Vendedos*” by Luis Valdez (1967) - [PDF]
- > View “*Los Vendedos*” video (TV version) https://archive.org/details/cusb_000236
- > Read “Notes on Chicano Theater,” and “Actos” by Luis Valdez - [PDF]

Deadlines

THERE IS NO QUIZ OR DISCUSSION BOARD THIS WEEK.
Material from lessons 1 through 10 will be included on the midterm.

- > ***MIDTERM*** Available Monday at 8 am. Due Sunday by 11:59 pm.
The exam is open book, open note, open website. You will have 4 hours from the time you open it to complete it, so be prepared to complete it in one sitting.

ALTERNATIVE STRUCTURES cont'd

WEEK SIX

Lesson Lecture Videos + Readings

General Period

11 **Adrienne Kennedy** 1960s/90s
Adrienne Kennedy's seismic retrofitting of the American Play. Or maybe *she* was the earthquake?
Together we will look at Kennedy through essential essays by playwright Suzan-Lori Parks.

- > View Lecture 11: Adrienne Kennedy's *The Owl Answers* (20 min)
- > Read *The Owl Answers* by Adrienne Kennedy (1965) [PDF]
- > Read three short graphic essays by Suzan-Lori Parks from *America Play and Other Works* [file titled "Parks Essays" p.3-22] [PDF]

12 **Robert Wilson & *Einstein on the Beach*** 1970s
The image-driven apocalypse of Robert Wilson and Philip Glass's *Einstein on the Beach*.
Gertrude Stein's influence yields an influential abstract opera.

- > View Lecture 12: Robert Wilson and *Einstein on the Beach* (29 min)
- > View *The Changing Image of Opera* (59 min)
- > View *Einstein on the Beach* excerpt (First hour: 60 min total)
- > Peruse Philip Glass/Robert Wilson *Einstein on the Beach* libretto [PDF] + images

Deadlines

- > Quiz 5: Due Thursday at 11:59 pm PT
- > Discussion board 5: Initial responses due Friday at 11:59 pm PT.
- > Responses to two fellow students due Sunday at 11:59 pm PT.

WEEK SEVEN

Lesson Lecture Videos + Readings

General Period

13 **Fornes, *Fefu*, & Feminism**

1970s-80s

Playwright Maria Irene Fornes wrote plays that circumvented realism and psychology, and resonated with the feminist movement in art.

- > View Lecture 13.1: Fornes and *Fefu* (25 min)
- > View Lecture 13.2: *Fefu* and Feminism (21 min)
- > Read *Fefu and Her Friends* by Maria Irene Fornes (1977) [[Book](#) *or* [PDF](#)]
- > Read “Playwright as Director” Fornes interviewed by Bonnie Marranca from *Conversations about Art and Performance*

14 **August Wilson**

1980s-90s

Professor Taylor takes us through August Wilson’s play, in a reading that looks at the spiritual effects of slavery on the American psyche.

- > View Lecture 14.1: August Wilson - Introduction (13 min)
- > View Lecture 14.2: August Wilson’s *Joe Turner’s Come and Gone* (46 min)
- > View Lecture 14.3: August Wilson - Conclusion (10 min)
- > Read *Joe Turner’s Come and Gone* by August Wilson (1984) [[Book](#) *or* [PDF](#)]

For further study (optional):

- > Read or View *Slavery by Another Name* (Book and PBS Documentary, 2012)
- > Read: [“The Ground on Which I Stand,”](#) speech given by August Wilson about the importance of recognizing and funding Black theaters from the 11th biennial Theater Communications Group national conference, published 2001.

Deadlines

- > Quiz 6: Due Thursday at 11:59 pm PT
- > Discussion board 6: Initial responses due Friday at 11:59 pm PT.
- > Responses to two fellow students due Sunday at 11:59 pm PT.

WEEK EIGHT

<i>Lesson</i>	<i>Topics Covered + Readings</i>	<i>General Period</i>
15	Spiderwoman Theater Native American collective Spiderwoman Theater created performances that broke with assumptions about Native People. First of all, they were from Brooklyn. Professor Oswald provides a take on one of their plays and a look at their influences Joe Chaiken and the Open Theatre. > View Lecture 15: Spiderwoman Theater (26 min) > Read <i>Reverb-ber-ber-erations</i> by Spiderwoman Theater (1990) - [PDF]	1970s -90s
16	Reza Abdoh Guest Lecturer <u>Eleanor Skimin</u> introduces us to the short, fierce career of Iranian-American writer/director Reza Abdoh and his LA-based company's bombastic shows. How does this "maximalist" artist reference the cultural crises of the late 20 th century? > View Lecture 16: Reza Abdoh (47 min) > Read <i>Quotations from A Ruined City</i> by Reza Abdoh (1993) - [PDF]	1990s

Deadlines

- > Quiz 7: Due Thursday at 11:59 pm PT.
- > Discussion board 6: Initial responses due Friday at 11:59 pm PT.
- > Responses to two fellow students due Sunday at 11:59 pm PT.

PART 3: BLUEPRINTS FOR THE FUTURE
1990s - 2010s

WEEK NINE

<i>Lesson</i>	<i>Topics Covered + Readings</i>	<i>General Period</i>
17	<p>Paula Vogel, <i>Drive</i>, & Brecht Professor Oswald, himself a student of Paula Vogel's, provides an essential introduction to Vogel and her artistic predecessors, with a focus on Bertolt Brecht. (Please note, in this play, Vogel confronts the sexual abuse of a minor.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">> View Lecture 17.1: Vogel, <i>Drive</i> and Epic Theater (15 min)> View Lecture 17.2: Vogel and Brecht (19 min)> View Lecture 17.3: Aristotle and Brecht Roundup (2 min)> <i>How I Learned to Drive</i> by Paula Vogel (1997) [BOOK]> "What is Epic Theater?" By Walter Benjamin (1973)- [PDF]	1990s
18	<p>Young Jean Lee <u>Professor Sean Metzger</u> introduces the work of writer/director Young Jean Lee, whose plays confront essentialist narratives and questions of race and gender head-on. Metzger then walks us through <i>Songs of the Dragons Flying to Heaven</i>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">> View Lecture 18: Young Jean Lee's <i>Songs of the Dragons Flying to Heaven</i> (58 min)> Read <i>Songs of the Dragons Flying to Heaven</i> by Young Jean Lee (2006) - [PDF] <p>For further study (optional):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">> View Hitting Video by Young Jean Lee - this is the video described in the first sequence in the assigned play and discussed by Professor Metzger.> View view entire production of <i>Songs of the Dragons</i> online (1 hr 18 min)	2000s

Backstage Session #4: Final Exam Review

[See course site for date and time.]

Led by your TA on Zoom and recorded for those who can't attend. See site for details. One point of extra credit, with a cap of three points over the course.

Deadlines

- > Discussion board 8: Initial responses due Friday at 11:59 pm PT.
- > Responses to two fellow students due Sunday at 11:59 pm PT.
- > Extra credit reflections due Sunday at 11:59 pm PT

BLUEPRINTS Cont'd

WEEK TEN / FINAL

Lesson Topics Covered + Readings

General Period

19

Queer Theater and Sylvan Oswald's *Pony*

2010s

Professor Oswald is in the hot seat during a visit from Professor Miriam Felton-Dansky of Bard College, an expert on Oswald's plays. After a discussion of queer theater history, Felton-Dansky interviews Oswald about his play *Pony*, the queer and trans issues it illuminates, and the future of LGBTQ theater.

- > View Lecture 19: Queer Theater and Sylvan Oswald's *Pony* (65 min)
- > Read *Pony* by Sylvan Oswald (2011) - [PDF]

Deadlines

> THERE IS NO QUIZ OR DISCUSSION BOARD THIS WEEK.

> Material from lessons 11-19 will be included on the final, however you may need to refer back to lesson 5.

> FINAL EXAM: Available Monday at 8 am. Due Sunday by 11:59 pm. The exam is open book, open note, open website. You will have 4 hours from the time you open it to complete it, so be prepared to complete it in one sitting.