

## **DRAMATIC THEORY & CRITICISM**

Spring 2015  
THEA 4363.01 CRN 21374  
MWF 1:00-1:50 pm  
PAC 240

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Sign-up for Appointments on Office Door

### **Catalogue Description**

A study of the principles of various styles and periods of dramaturgy, involving a history of criticism from Aristotle to the present. Representative plays will be analyzed for theme, structure, characterization and dialogue with a view to their influences on contemporary theatre. Emphasis is placed on written student criticism and evaluation of plays. Writing Enhanced. Credit 3.

### **Course Description**

This is a lecture-discussion course on dramatic theory and criticism. (Note: Last semester we implemented a new, required course in Text Analysis.) While we will read and discuss numerous play excerpts, our primary focus is not, nor needs to be, script analysis but, rather, *theory* (why theatre is the way it is—its conventions of writing and production) and *criticism* (how we perceive, understand, and judge theatre). Our study of criticism will be based on the critical perspectives surveyed in Lois Tyson's book, *Critical Theory Today*. On Mondays, we will explore many different forms of criticism. On Wednesdays, we will focus on theoretical issues, particularly those most relevant to current theatre practice. Fridays will be dedicated to special interest topics as well as providing time for students to share the best of their projects.

### **Course Objectives**

- To understand how and why current conventions of writing and production exist.
- To understand a variety of critical perspectives and apply them in analyzing and evaluating scripts and productions.
- To understand and appreciate how subjective the perception and evaluation of theatre/art is and how these subjective differences, be they individual or cultural, past or present, enrich our art and allow it to evolve continuously.
- To understand current theoretical and practical issues facing American theatre.

### **Textbook (Optional)**

Lois Tyson, *Critical Theory Today: A User-Friendly Guide*, 2nd Edition. The first edition also is acceptable.

### **Graded Components**

5 individual projects, each worth 20% of your final course grade. (See attached "Projects Overview".)

- Project #1: due Friday, January 30, beginning of class
- Project #2: due Friday, February 20, beginning of class
- Project #3: due Friday, March 20, beginning of class
- Project #4: due Friday, April 10, beginning of class
- Project #5: due Friday, May 1, beginning of class

### **UTC Productions**

You are asked to see all five of the UTC season productions this semester. Your attendance will enrich you and cover any days that I may have to miss due to professional or personal reasons.

## **Final Exam**

Students have the option of taking a written, comprehensive exam during the final exam period: Wednesday, May 6, 2:30-4:30. This exam counts 20% of your final course and exists to makeup (or substitute) for any one of the five projects that you did not complete (or fared poorly on). If you have completed all five projects and are content with your grades, then you do not need to take the final.

## **Attendance**

By university policy for classes that meet three times each week (MWF classes), you may not be penalized for up to 3 absences, nor for any absence due to pre-approved religious observance; beyond that depends on the instructor's discretion.

After 3 absences, you will be penalized -3 points from your final course grade for each excess absence, unless there is written intervention from the Office of the Dean of Students (located in the LSC).

For each day of class that you arrive on time, you will be rewarded with 1/13th of a point (a "tasty treat") to be added to your final course grade. Don't scoff, 39 of these treats will raise your final grade +3 points!

## **Late Work**

Any project submitted late will be penalized one letter grade (-10 points) for each week overdue.

## **Classroom Conduct**

Food and candy are not permitted in the classroom. Beverages are permitted, if they are in spill-proof containers. Unless otherwise instructed, laptops and tablets are not permitted. Cell phones and electronic devices must be turned off and stored out of sight. You may audio record class; however, you may not use an electronic device to take notes.

## **Academic Dishonesty**

Any incident of academic dishonesty, most notably submitting someone else's work with your name on it, will result in a grade of zero for the project as well as a report to the department chair. Any subsequent incident will result in automatic course failure and a report to the Dean of the College of Arts & Sciences and the Dean of Students. Please know in advance that some of your writing assignments will be accepted only through TurnItIn on Blackboard.

## **Final Course Grade**

In percentages: 90-100 = A, 80-89 = B, 70-79 = C, 60-69 = D, 0-59 = F

In points: 900-1000 = A, 800-899 = B, 700-799 = C, 600-699 = D, 0-599 = F

Note: The grades on Blackboard will be posted as points (with letter grade equivalent).

## **Students with Disabilities**

SHSU adheres to all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and guidelines with respect to providing reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. If you have a disability that may affect adversely your work in this class, you should register with the SHSU Counseling Center and then talk with me about how I can best help you. All disclosures of disabilities will be kept strictly confidential. Please note that no accommodation will be made until you register with the Counseling Center.

## PROJECTS OVERVIEW (TENTATIVE)

### Project #1: Materials (Genres)

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*What is being produced in professional theatre now?*

Categories: 1) Broadway, 2) Off-Broadway, 3) Regional/LORT, 4) Regional/Non-Lort, 5) Tours or Summer Stock

For each of the above categories, create a list that includes play titles and genres for the current season. Then submit an appr. 500-word essay written in your own words that summarizes and synthesizes your findings.

Format: Composite List (50%) plus TurnItIn Paper (50%). Due and share in class on Friday, January 30.

### Project #2: Methods (New To Me)

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*What recent productions, conventions, technologies, and/or philosophies are being produced, used or developed that seem new, innovative, different, unconventional, etc.?*

You will create a Prezi, Powerpoint, or blog that presents images and information covering at least five (5) different phenomenon. Original writing should be appr. 500 words total.

Format: Digital presentation: visuals and formatting (50%) and descriptive writing (50%). Due and share in class on Friday, February 20.

### Project #3: My Future (After Sam)

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*What are my options and opportunities after graduating?*

You will build a (new) website or blog with pages (or posts) covering the following: 1) professional theatre, 2) grad school or additional training, 3) teacher certification.

Format: Online website or blog. Formatting (50%) and content/writing (50%). Due and share in class on Friday, March 20.

### Project #4: Issues & The Future of Theatre

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*What current issues are having the most effect on theatre and its future?*

Topics: 1) non-traditional casting, 2) funding, 3) education and training, 4) unions, 5) competition with other media, 6) censorship, etc.

Format: TBA but probably another digital presentation: visuals and formatting (50%) and descriptive writing (50%). Due and share in class on Friday, April 10.

### Project #5: Production Criticism

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*Use everything you've learned this semester to write a theatre review of Cabaret.*

Your 800-1000 word review should follow the guidelines established by *Theatre Journal* or Dave's handout.

Format: TurnItIn Paper (100%). Due on Friday, May 1, at the beginning of class.

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
January 11 Auditions Begin	12	13	14 Classes Begin	15	16 Symposium	17
18	19 MLK Holiday	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29 TETA Begins	30 Project #1 DUE	31
February 1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18 Fences Opens	19	20 Project #2 DUE	21
22	23 Go to KCACTF	24	25	26	27	28
March 1 Return to SHSU	2 Clinics Begin	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
SPRING BREAK						
15	16	17	18 USITT Begins	19	20 Project #3 DUE	21
22	23	24	25 Arabian Opens	26	27	28
29	30	31	April 1	2	3 Good Friday	4
5 Easter	6	7	8	9	10 Project #4 DUE	11
12	13	14	15 Cabaret Opens	16	17	18
19	20	21 Debuts Open	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	May 1 Classes End Project #5 DUE	2
3 Convocation	4 Finals Begin	5	6 TBD Final Exam 2:30-4:30	7	8	9 Graduation