

TH 730
Textual Analysis
Fall 2014
T/TH 1:00-2:15

Christopher Baker
Assistant Professor
crbake1@gmail.com
413.575.0363
Office Hours: T 11:30-12:30

This class will explore techniques of play analysis **for production**. While there are many ways to analyze plays, we will always focus on methods that are applicable (and helpful) to the creation of productions and useful to theatre practitioners. One analytical approach does not negate others, so our goal will be to build a repertoire of different ways to approach texts.

Throughout, you will be asked to apply analytical strategies to plays as well as develop your own analytical methods. The class will include lecture, discussions, video examples and projects. Most important is your engagement and participation. You will be working both individually and collectively, in an atmosphere that should be collegial and open.

Each section has some kind of exercise or presentation. Your final cumulative project includes both a paper and a presentation.

Finally, the course is a great opportunity to be a forum for ideas, observations and big questions about the art and profession of theatre.

READING:

1. Two plays to know (I will use them as reference):

Oedipus, Sophocles
Hamlet, Shakespeare

2. A play you like:

A play not on our list that you will use for your first analysis.

3. Ten plays we all will work with (in order) :

The Ether Dome, Egloff (Moodle)
Water by the Spoonful, Hudes. (Avail. as an e-book in the library in Water by the spoonful / Quiara Alegria Hudes. FC E-Resources/E-Book / PS3608.U3234 W38 2012 / Internet)
Twelfth Night, Shakespeare
The Good Person of Setzuan, Brecht
The America Play, Parks
Marie Antoinette, Adjmi (Moodle)
Hedda Gabler, Ibsen
The Yellow Sound, Kandinsky (Moodle)
Don Juan, Molière (on Moodle)
Endgame, Beckett
Orestes, Euripides (Avail as an e-book in the library in The Orestes plays / Euripides ; translated, with introduction and notes, by Cecelia Eaton Luschnig. FC E-Resources / EBook / PA3975 .A2 2013)

4. Essays and articles

These will either be provided by me in class or posted on Moodle or otherwise available online. Some are listed on the syllabus. Some will be added as we go along.

5. Productions

We will see Hartford Stage's production of *Ether Dome* on Sat. 13 Sept. and *Hamlet* on Sat 18 Oct. You also need to see the departmental productions of *The Merchant of Venice* and *A New Brain*. We will discuss all of these in class.

GRADING

1. Analysis description	40
2. analysis	40
3. <i>Water/Spoonful</i> plot bead	50
4. <i>Twelfth Night</i> plot bead	100
5. sensory analysis	80
6. imaging	100
7. spatial analysis	100
8. Staging <i>Orestes</i>	120
9. <i>Don Juan</i> & audience	70
10. Final presentation and paper	200
Discussions	100
Total	1000

Grading Scale

A	930	B+	870	C+	770	D+	670
A-	900	B	830	C	730	D	630
		B-	800	C-	700	D-	600

ASSIGNMENTS

For each of the 10 assignments you will be given specific instructions. Some of the assignments involve some kind of writing. All involve presentation to the class. Preparation and concise communication skills are important in this forum. Do not let the collegial or informal atmosphere of the class lead you to think you need little preparation or that the strength of your ideas will completely negate your poor presentation. When you make your presentations, imagine you are pitching a concept to a producer, interviewing for a job at a theater, or explaining an approach to your artistic team. Your artistic influence will be minimal if you can't communicate effectively and convincingly.

PLAGIARISM

You are responsible for being familiar with the standards of academic honesty of the University. No forms of cheating, fabrication, plagiarism or facilitating dishonesty are acceptable.

SCHEDULE

Everything changes and I have no reason to believe the following schedule of classes will prove to be an exception. The current schedule includes final presentations during exam week, though the course has flexibility built in. If possible, the final presentations will be held the final week of regular classes.

Things underlined are assignments due that class. In most cases you will be sharing your work with the class.

What are we looking for?

We will discuss the ways we each currently analyze plays. You will share your description of your current analytical habits. We will also discuss ideas we want to test or explore. We will begin with fundamental questions: What are we analyzing? What are we looking for? Why are we looking for it?

READ: *Ether Dome*, Egloff

- | | |
|---------|---|
| Sept. 2 | How we analyze
<u>1. Present analysis description. This is the assignment I emailed you in August.</u> |
| Sept. 4 | Reading plays; theories of origin; contexts; production history.
<i>Ether Dome</i> |

What do we do?

What are the processes of analysis? What do we actually do when we are preparing a play for performance? What do we do as we read a play? How do the parts of theatrical production serve as analysis?

READ: Favorite play; Fornes, "You Have to Learn How to Daydream" (Moodle); *Practical Handbook for the Actor* (Moodle)

- | | |
|----------|---|
| Sept. 9 | Talking about plays
<u>2. Present play analysis of favorite play</u> |
| Sept. 11 | Rehearsal and performance as analysis |
| Sept. 13 | (Sat.) <i>Ether Dome</i> at Hartford Stage |

Structure

What are the ways to find meaning in structure? Aristotelian analysis looks for meaning in chronology: time. What else do we look for in our use and reinterpretations of the *Poetics*? How do other structural models function?

READ: *The Poetics*, Aristotle (Moodle); *Water by the Spoonful*, Hudes; *Twelfth Night*, Shakespeare; *The Good Person of Setzuan*, Brecht, *The America Play*, Parks

- Sept. 16 *The Poetics*, Stanislavsky, Action
Plot Bead: diagramming the action
- Sept. 18 3. *Water by the Spoonful* plot beads
- Sept. 23 Juxtaposition: *The Good Person of Setzuan*
- Sept. 25 **No Class.** (This course only)
- Sept. 30 Rep and Rev: *The America Play*.
- Oct. 2 4. *Twelfth Night* Plot Beads presented.

Patterns and Images

In this section we will use sensory responses to discover visual and aural patterns in the text. How can we create visual response to the text? How can this reveal meaning and inform performance choices?

READ: *Imaging Anne: A Dramaturg's Notebook*, Greg Gunter (Moodle); *Hedda Gabler*, Ibsen; *Marie Antoinette*, Adjmi (Moodle); "Against Interpretation", Sontag (Moodle)

- Oct. 7 Imaging and sensory-based associations
- Oct. 9 Patterns
- Oct. 14 **No Class**—Monday schedule followed.
- Oct. 16 5. Sensory analysis: *Marie Antoinette*, *Hedda Gabler*

- Oct 18 (Sat.) *Hamlet* at Hartford Stage

- Oct. 21 Discussion: *Hamlet* and topic TBA
- Oct. 23 6. Imaging presentations: *Marie Antoinette*, *Hedda Gabler*

Space

All theater deals in some way with bodies (or the representation of bodies) in space. How can we analyze a text spatially? What is the tension between the fictional setting in the play and the actual performance space?

READ: *The Yellow Sound*, Kandinsky; *Don Juan*, Moliere; *Hedda Gabler*, Ibsen; "Methods of Investigation/Ways of Seeing", Smith (Handout); selections from *The Viewpoints Book*, Bogart and Landau (Moodle)

- Oct. 28 **No Class.** (This course only)
- Oct. 30 Space. *The Yellow Sound* .
- Nov 4 Spatial analysis: non-theatrical work
Spatial analysis: *Don Juan*, *Hedda Gabler*, part 1
- Nov. 6 7. Spatial analysis: *Don Juan*, *Hedda Gabler* part 2

Metaphor

How can thinking metaphorically lead to production choices? How do metaphors manifest themselves in texts, in design and in production concepts? How can the phrase “as if” open up theatrical possibilities?

READ: *Endgame*, Beckett; *Orestes*, Euripides; *Don Juan*, Moliere

Nov 11	No Class. Veterans Day.
Nov. 12	Wed. class. Metaphors. <i>Endgame</i> .
Nov. 13	“as if” <i>Orestes</i> , <i>Don Juan</i>
Nov. 18	<u>8. Staging <i>Orestes</i> and <i>Don Juan</i></u>

Audience

A dramatic text is an invitation/instruction/suggestion of performance. How can we acknowledge the vital role of the audience within our analyses? How can we incorporate theories in which the audience is central—Indian Rasa theory, aesthetic reception theory—into our work?

READ: “The Street Scene”, Brecht (Moodle); Bharata, “Natyasastra” (Moodle)

Nov. 20	Rasa and Aesthetic reception Choice of play for final presentation due.
Nov. 25	<u>9. <i>Orestes</i>, <i>The America Play</i> and audience</u>
Nov. 27	No Class —THANKSGIVING

Developing Analysis and Presentations

You will develop a complex analysis of a play, using different techniques explored in this course, with production choices in mind. Your written analysis is due at the end of the semester. Your presentation is a chance to share your ideas with your peers and incorporate feedback into your paper.

This is also an opportunity to develop your own analytic approach. Is there a unique way you look at a text that reveals interesting discoveries and leads to production choices?

Dec. 2	<u>10. Presentations</u>
Dec. 4	<u>Presentations</u>

Papers and Final Presentations

TBD	Presentations if necessary
Dec. 11	Analysis paper due