

THEA 304: History of Theatre (A, W)

MW 9:40-11:50am, Fine Arts 209

Instructor: Dr. David Bisaha

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Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday, 12-1pm
and by appointment

Course Description

The content and approach examine primary aspects of theatrical performance from the time of the ancient Greeks to approximately 1870. It traces the development of theater architecture, theatrical design concepts, theater technology, acting styles and playwriting. The concentration is on Western theater, but attention is given to non-Western forms when possible and/or appropriate.

This course balances breadth and depth by encouraging a student's deep engagement with one period of history while also providing a broad survey of major dramatic forms. Toward this former goal, we will also focus on how historians write history – on the historian's tools of evidence, interpretation, argument, and narrative – as we work toward writing our own histories of an event from the period.

Course Objectives

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Identify major movements, styles, figures, and artistic practices of world theater history before 1880, and relate them to each other
- Understand theatre practices in their social, economic, cultural, and philosophical contexts
- Demonstrate historical empathy, that is taking the perspective of a historical figure to understand why historical figures acted as they did, grounded in evidence and analysis
- Design and implement a research plan within a specific period of theater history, including a survey of primary and secondary literature
- Develop, practice, and apply the skills of the historian, including research, writing, discussion, oral presentation, and peer criticism

Format

This course is a lecture/discussion course with a large independent research component. You are responsible for all media presented in class, which will include visual images (slides), audio, video, primary sources including playtexts, and secondary source readings. This course will require significant research work outside of class, both individually and in group settings, and you will share your results both orally in class presentations and discussions, and in several types of written assignments.

Required Texts

Theatre Histories: An Introduction, by Nellhaus et al., 3rd Edition (Routledge, 2016)

A Source Book in Theatrical History, ed. Nagler (Dover, 1952)

Required Plays:

Agamemnon, Aeschylus

Rabinal Achi, Anonymous

The Farce of the Fart, Anonymous

Love Suicides at Amijima, Anonymous

Macbeth, William Shakespeare

Tartuffe, Molière (selections)

The London Merchant, George Lillo

Uncle Tom's Cabin, George Aiken (selections)

*The above plays are required reading, but as many are easily accessible online, they have not been ordered at the bookstore. Many versions have elapsed copyright protection, and are available free of charge. Recommended versions will be placed on reserve at the Newcomb Reading Room and/or provided electronically via Blackboard when possible. You may also purchase any translation/version of these plays for your own use; many are theater history standards that you will come across again.

This syllabus, including the calendar, class topics, and guest lectures, is subject to change at the instructor's discretion at any time during the semester.

In addition to plays and texts, there will also be assigned readings distributed in class or available in PDF format on Blackboard. Whether materials are on reserve, on Blackboard, or accessible via a library database, it is your responsibility to acquire them, make any necessary copies, and incorporate them into your class preparations.

Major Course Elements

Major elements/assessments of the course are described in brief below. More detailed information, including rubrics, will be distributed and discussed in class, and posted on Blackboard.

“Tiny Masters” Research Project: 45%

“Day in the Life” Project: 15%

Quizzes: 25%

Participation/Homework: 15%

“Tiny Masters” Research Project (45% of final grade)

This project will help you develop in-depth knowledge of a particular period of theater history, and is designed to lead you toward a final research paper arguing for a new interpretation of a past historical event. With extended work in a given period, I expect that you will approach the “tiny mastery” of a small area that is the hallmark of focused and productive academic writing.

For this project we will break into six groups. Each group will be responsible for researching and sharing resources on a period of theater history; as the term goes on, and you are each working on a different topic within the same broad area, your group members will serve as your first resource: suggesting useful evidence, helping you to narrow your focus to a provable thesis, and peer-editing drafts of research plans and theses. The groups are:

Roman Theatre, Medieval European Theatre, Edo Period Japanese Theatre, Elizabethan and Jacobean English Theatre, French Neoclassical Theatre, English Restoration Theatre, American Drama Before the Civil War, and Melodrama in the US and Europe

The major components of the project are the following:

Annotated Bibliography (10% of final grade): Each group will compile in a list of 15-20 **PRINT** sources pertinent to your area and potentially useful for your own research. Each entry will contain a 3-4 sentence annotation expressing the nature of the source (primary/secondary), its main argument(s), and some statement of the usefulness or validity of the source. Due October 10.

Spotlight Presentation (10% of final grade): Each group will deliver a 25-minute group presentation, shining a “spotlight” on one person, place, or thing from their period. Your group will teach the class; you should explain who/what/where you are spotlighting, how it relates to theater history of your period, and ***why it is worthy of the spotlight***. Why should we, as historians in the 21st century, care? Consider both topics that seem “important” based on your reading and also those which may be less obvious or well-represented but still relevant today a 21st century audience (especially considering gender, race, culture, class/economics, etc...). Each group must discuss the topic with me at least a week before your presentation, assign a short reading to the class (10-15 pages), and submit a lesson plan with bibliography to me on the day of your presentation. Due dates are distributed throughout the semester (see syllabus).

Research Plans: This ½ page assignment will identify the subject of your final paper, that is, the event, figure, or style on which you will write. It may not be the same subject as your spotlight presentation. You will pose two historical questions that interest you and which may guide your paper’s argument, and propose a thesis for your research paper. *There is no grade for this assignment, but you will lose ½ a letter grade off the final paper (A to an A-) if this is not turned in on time.* Due November 9.

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Peer Review (5% of final grade): You will read and give feedback to two of your peers on drafts of their papers in writing, and discuss their work in class on December 8. Your comments will be reviewed for their thoughtfulness and completeness. Written comments due December 8.

Research Paper (20% of final grade): This final 7-9 page paper will argue a new plausible interpretation of an event in history, drawing evidence from primary and secondary sources and engaging with others' analyses to propose your own point of view. Papers should be in MLA format and contain a full bibliography (no annotations necessary). Drafts due no later than December 5. Final papers will be due at the Final Exam.

“Day in the Life” Project (15% of final grade)

This midterm project is designed to develop historical empathy and exercise some creativity. You will select a past theater artist and creatively forge some historical documents. That is, you will create a file of documents that this person might have used, written, or made in their day-to-day artistic practice. You might, for example, fabricate a diary or a day planner from Restoration theater manager Thomas Killigrew, or create a letter from Greek playwright Aristophanes responding to accusations of slander in his plays. Or, you could “re-create” the blog of Christopher “Kit” Marlowe in the days before his murder, or a series of photos and notes from ancient Indian critic Bharata Muni. In total, your documents should demonstrate that you can explain how theatre/art was made in your figure’s time, and also how the society received and responded to it. The length should be about 4-6 pages of text and/or images, or 1500-2000 words, not including bibliography. Each entry should contain at least 200 words. Your selected figure should be from a different period and geography than your Tiny Masters group; I will bring a list of figures to class, but feel free to suggest your own. Figure selection will take place on September 21, and the final project will be due October 24.

Reading & Discussion Quizzes (20% of final grade)

Five quizzes will be given throughout the term, and will consist primarily of short answer questions drawn from concepts discussed in class and covered in the readings. The lowest quiz score will be dropped. There are no makeups for quizzes, except for approved absences discussed with the instructor per the attendance policy below.

Participation and Homework (15% of final grade)

Your participation in lectures, class discussions, and group projects will be an important part of your grade. Effective participation includes listening to others, preparing before class, and contributing to class or group conversations orally and in writing, when appropriate. Learning styles vary, and so this grade will take many venues of participation into account: homework, office hours visits, group meetings, small and large group discussions, and lectures. A rubric is available on Blackboard. Tiny Masters groups will also complete self and peer evaluations of participation at the end of the semester.

Grading will usually be done on a letter scale (A-F). Where translations between percentage and letter grades need to be done, they will follow this scale:

Grades scored between	Will equal
95% and 100%	A Excellent
90% and less than 95%	A-
87% and less than 90%	B+
83% and less than 87%	B Good
80% and less than 83%	B-
77% and less than 80%	C+
73% and less than 76%	C Satisfactory
70% and less than 73%	C-
65% and less than 70%	D Barely Passing
Less than 65%	F Failing

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Expectations and Course Policies

Attendance:

Like theatre itself, the best learning involves active participation. Discussions, group work, and interactive exercises make up a substantial part of our work, and there is no substitute for attending class. Therefore, you are permitted 3 absences from this class. There are no “excused absences” in this course. If you have exhausted your absences and experience an emergency later in the term, the fourth absence will count against you. Plan ahead for the unexpected. The only exceptions to this policy are for religious observances, or approved university or professional activities, such as conferences. These must be discussed with me at least one week ahead of the absence. In any case, students are responsible for material covered during their absence.

Late arrival (arriving after the start of class at 9:40) or leaving early interrupts the focus of those students who are on time; and will count as one-third of an absence. Each absence or pair of lates past three (or 2 absences and 2 lates, etc...) will lower your final grade by five percentage points, which is approximately a half-letter grade.

Written Assignments:

Hand in your written assignments in hard copy, in class, on the day that they are due. Be sure to back up your work as you go; lost files, unavailable emails, and corrupted documents are not a sufficient excuse for late work. Where necessary, use the MLA format with parenthetical in-text citations:

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>

The best way for me to receive late work is by email. This is so that both you and I have a date and time stamp on your assignment. Please inform me as soon as possible if you will turn in a later paper, and email your late paper to me as soon as possible, as an attachment in MS Word format (.doc or .docx) or PDF. Each calendar day that an assignment is late lowers your final grade by one full letter (e.g. A- to B-). Assignments over three calendar days late will receive a zero.

Communication

The fastest way to contact me outside of class is through email. I will do my best to respond within 48 hours. Similarly, I expect you to frequently check your Binghamton email and Blackboard.

Technology & Conduct

Cell phones, iPods, and other electronic entertainment devices are not permitted in class. Please silence cell phones before class begins and keep them out of sight. Laptops and tablets may be used for research or notetaking purposes during group work and specific class exercises, but not during general class lectures or discussions. Please respect your peers and the classroom environment by using technology appropriately in class; those who do not follow this guideline will be asked to leave and will be marked absent for the day.

Per university policy, any behavior whose behavior is seriously damages the class' ability to achieve its objectives will be excluded from attending class. Details on this policy, including an appeal procedure, are available in the Binghamton *Bulletin*.

To ensure the free and open discussion of ideas, students may not record classroom lectures, discussion and/or activities without the advance written permission of the instructor, and any such recording properly approved in advance can be used solely for the student's own private use.

Respect for Diversity

In this course, each voice in the classroom has something of value to contribute to class discussion. Please respect the different experiences, beliefs and values expressed by your fellow students and instructor, and refrain from derogatory comments about other individuals, cultures, groups, or viewpoints. This course welcomes individuals of all ages, backgrounds, citizenships, disabilities, education, ethnicities, family statuses, genders, gender

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identities, geographical locations, languages, military experience, political views, races, religions, sexual orientations, socioeconomic statuses, and work experiences. (Adapted from the Texas A&M Department of Anthropology Diversity Statement, [http://anthropology.tamu.edu/images/Statement for Syllabi.pdf](http://anthropology.tamu.edu/images/Statement_for_Syllabi.pdf))

University Policies

“A” and “W” Designations

This course carries General Education Requirement A (Aesthetics) and Harpur School of Arts and Sciences W (Writing) designation. *Aesthetics* (A) courses enhance students' understanding of the creative process and the role of imagination in it. Students study or practice artistic expression and production in such fields as art, art history, cinema, creative writing, dance, graphic design, music and theater. Writing (W) courses provide considerable experience in and feedback on writing as a tool of college-level teaching and learning. Written assignments in W courses constitute 30 to 100 percent of the basis for the grade in the course and typically consist of a minimum of 10 pages of writing.

4 Credit Course Designation

This course is a 4-credit course, which means that in addition to the scheduled lectures/discussions, students are expected to do at least 9.5 hours of course-related work each week during the semester. This includes things like: completing assigned readings, participating in lab sessions, studying for tests and examinations, preparing written assignments, completing internship or clinical placement requirements, and other tasks that must be completed to earn credit in the course.

Academic Integrity

Plagiarism, copying of assignments, cheating, and other breaches of academic integrity will not be tolerated. Violations of the University-wide policy on academic integrity will result in automatic failure of the assignment and possible failure of the course. Binghamton University's Academic Honesty Code and infraction procedures are found in the *Bulletin*, <http://bulletin.binghamton.edu>. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism or academic dishonesty, schedule a meeting with me.

Accommodations

Students wishing to request academic accommodations to insure their equitable access and participation in this course should notify the instructor as soon as they are aware of their need for such arrangements. Authorizations from Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) are generally required. We encourage you to contact SSD at (607) 777-2686 (for voice and TTY) to schedule an appointment with the Director or Learning Disabilities Specialist. The [SSD website](http://www.binghamton.edu/ssd) (www.binghamton.edu/ssd) includes information regarding their Disability Documentation Guidelines. The office is located in UU – 119.

Personal or Academic Stress

If you are experiencing undue personal or academic stress at any time during the semester or need to talk with someone about a personal problem or situation, I encourage you to seek support as soon as possible. I am available to talk with you about stresses related to your work in my class. Additionally, I can assist you in reaching out to any one of a wide range of campus resources, including:

1. Dean of Students Office: 607-777-2804
2. Decker Student Health Services Center: 607-777-2221
3. University Police: On campus emergency, 911
4. University Counseling Center: 607-777-2772
5. Interpersonal Violence Prevention: 607-777-3062
6. Harpur Advising: 607-777-6305
7. Office of International Student & Scholar Services: 607-777-2510

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Course Calendar

M Aug 29: Introduction to the Course // History, Historiography, and History of the Recent Past

W Aug 31: The Stakes of Theatre History // Historiography through *Hamilton*

For This Class (FTC): Reread syllabus, Read *Theatre Histories* (TH) pp. 1-16, and *Hamilton* articles (posted on Blackboard, BB)

FTC: Read synopsis of *Hamilton* and listen to: “Alexander Hamilton,” “History Has Its Eyes on You,” “Burn,” and “Who Lives, Who Dies, Who Tells Your Story?”

M Sep 5: LABOR DAY, NO CLASS

W Sep 7: The Origins of Theater // Mesoamerican Performance and the *Rabinal Achi*

FTC: Read TH 25-32, 37-50, and *Rabinal Achi* (BB)

FTC: Email Tiny Masters Group Preferences by 9pm on Tuesday, September 6

M Sep 12: Greek Festival Performance

FTC: Read TH 50-65 and Nagler I #1-6 (pp. 3-15)

W Sep 14: *Agamemnon* and Greek Playwriting // Historiography of Greece

FTC: Read *Agamemnon* by Aeschylus, and Sections from *The Poetics* (BB)

FTC: Read Documents on Greek Performance Evidence (BB)

M Sep 19: QUIZ #1 // Roman Theatres & Theatre Architecture

In Class: Quiz #1

FTC: Read TH 67-81, Nagler I #8, 10-14 (pp. 17-28)

W Sep 21: Roman Playwriting and Aesthetics // Spotlight Presentation #1

In Class: Spotlight #1 (Roman Theatre)

FTC: Read Selections from Plautus and Horace (BB)

FTC: Read Spotlight Reading (BB)

FTC: Submit Day in the Life Topic in Class

M Sep 26: Sanskrit Drama & Performance

FTC: Read TH 81-90, Selections from *Natya Sastra*, and Kutiiyattam Case Study (BB)

W Sep 28: Noh Theatre and Zeami's Aesthetics

FTC: Read TH 90-96 and Selections from Zeami, *Fushikaden* (BB)

M Oct 3: ROSH HASHANAH – NO CLASS

W Oct 5: Medieval Religious Performance

FTC: Read TH 101-106, and Nagler II #4-7 (pp. 45-54)

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M Oct 10: Medieval Secular Performances // Spotlight Presentation #2

Due in Class: Annotated Bibliography

In Class: Spotlight #2 (Medieval Theatre)

FTC: Read *The Farce of the Fart* (BB)

FTC: Read Spotlight Reading (BB)

W Oct 12: YOM KIPPUR – NO CLASS**M Oct 17: QUIZ #2 // Conquest, Capitalism, Modernity**

In Class: Quiz #2

FTC: Reading TH 147-150, 151-158

W Oct 19: Commedia Dell'Arte // Developments in Italy

FTC: Read TH 158-161 and Nagler V #1-5 (pp. 71-86)

M Oct 24: English and Spanish Professional Theatres

Due in Class: Day in the Life Project

FTC: Read TH 161-171 and Nagler III #2-5 (pp. 60-65)

W Oct 26: Kabuki, Bunraku, and Edo Period Japan // Spotlight Presentation #3

In Class: Spotlight #3 (Edo Period Japanese Theatre)

FTC: Read TH 172-183 and *Love Suicides at Amijima* (BB)

FTC: Spotlight Reading (BB)

M Oct 31: Elizabethan Theatre

FTC: Read TH 185-192 and Nagler V #3-4 and 7-9 (pp. 116-118, 120-132)

FTC: Read Article on Original Practices (BB)

W Nov 2: Shakespeare and Early Modern Playwriting // Spotlight Presentation #4

In Class: Spotlight #4 (Elizabethan and Jacobean English Theatre)

FTC: Read *Macbeth* and Spotlight Reading (BB)

M Nov 7: QUIZ #3 // French Neoclassicism

In Class: Quiz #3

FTC: Read TH 201-204, 229-234, and Readings on Neoclassicism (BB)

W Nov 9: Moliere and the *Tartuffe* Controversy // Spotlight Presentation #5

Due in Class: Research Plans for Final Paper

In Class: Spotlight #5 (French Neoclassicism)

FTC: Read Selections from *Tartuffe*, Documents on *Tartuffe* (BB)

M Nov 14: Absolutist Theatres in England and France // Court Masques and Restoration Comedies

FTC: Read TH 213-219, 224-238, and Nagler VII #17-22 (215-230)

FTC: Read Selected Scenes from Restoration Comedies (BB)

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W Nov 16: Spotlight Presentation #6 // Enlightenment and Revolution

In Class: Spotlight #6 (English Restoration)

FTC: Read TH 242-245 and Spotlight Reading (BB)

FTC: Read Enlightenment Documents (BB)

M Nov 21: 18th Century Theatres and Style

FTC: Read TH 256-272 and *The London Merchant*

W Nov 23: QUIZ #4 // Sentiment, Acting, and David Garrick

In Class: Quiz #4

FTC: Read TH 276-287, and Nagler X #12-21 (361-381)

M Nov 28: American Drama Before the Civil War

Read: Early American Theatre Reading and Selections from *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (BB)

W Nov 30: American Entertainments: Minstrelsy and Variety // Spotlight Presentation #7

In Class: Spotlight #7 (American Pre-Civil War Group)

FTC: Read TH 313-322 and Spotlight Reading (BB)

M Dec 5: Romanticism in Europe // 19th Century Acting

Due in Class: Drafts of Final Papers, 3 Copies

FTC: Read TH 291-307 and Nagler XII #6-14, XIII 21-23 (pp.455-475, 545-549)

W Dec 7: Melodrama // Spotlight Presentation #8

In Class: Spotlight #8 (Melodrama in the US and Europe)

Read: Reading on Melodrama and Spotlight Reading (BB)

R Dec 8: Peer Review of Essays // Class Wrap-Up

FTC: Bring Written Comments on 2 Peers' Papers

FTC: Bring Completed Tiny Masters Peer Evaluations

FINAL EXAM: TBA

- *Please note that the University will not give us our final exam schedule until mid-semester. Plan on being here through the end of finals period (December 16) until we hear otherwise. The final exam will consist of Quiz #5 and turning in your finished research paper. And, perhaps, treats.*