Contemporary Theatre
Syllabus Spring 2011

Course number: THART 5240  Instructor: Dennis Hassan
Course title: Contemporary Theatre  Phone: 797-3024
Credit hours: 3  Office hours: MWF 10:30-11:20
Class meetings: MWF 9:30-10:20, FA 228
Required texts/fees: Due to the expense of play scripts, students will not be required to purchase the 25 scripts to be studied in contemporary theater, however, a $25 course fee is charged for reproduction of current events materials and for the acquisition of play scripts for use by students taking the contemporary theatre course.

General description of course content: This course explores contemporary theatre repertoire; works currently playing in major theatre centers, the most produced plays in regional theatres and a few landmark plays from the recent past. This exploration will be placed in context with an examination of contemporary playwrights, theatres producing new works, current events in the theatre, and contemporary performance and design artists.

Objectives:
Upon completion of this course, students should:
1. Be familiar with contemporary plays and playwrights,
2. Identify major producers of new works and begin to recognize trends,
3. Be aware of current events influencing the production of theatrical works,
4. Have an increased understanding of the professional theatre environment, and
5. Understand and appreciate contemporary performance theory and design.

Quizzes and tests: Quizzes and tests will include information from student presentations, independent study of the plays, class discussion, handouts and required texts. Regular quizzes will be given. It is the responsibility of the student to read the plays assigned and be present during the lectures to receive information for the test. Because of the time required to present quizzes and exams, no make up quizzes or exams will be offered. One quiz during the semester will be dropped. If a quiz is missed because of an excused absence it may be considered the one that is dropped. If more than one is missed the student will lose the full points. There will be no make up exams offered for the midterms and final. Attendance at the tests is mandatory.

Class Presentations: Students will prepare a 15 minute oral report based on topics such as the following (topics must be approved in advance with the instructor):
Theatrical Awards (compare & contrast Tony, Pulitzer, Olivier, Drama Desk…)
Contemporary Theatre Companies (Performance Garage, Wooster Group, Lincoln Center Theatre, Public Theatre, SITI, Manhattan Theatre Club, National Theatre [Great Britain], New Playwrights Horizons, Shared Experience, LAByrinth, Actors’ Theatre of Louisville, Humana Festival, The Abbey Theatre…)
Physical Theatre (Diavolo, de la Guarda, Mabou Mimes, Jeune Lune…)
Edinburgh Fringe Theatre Festival
Economy and the arts (42nd street development…)
Performance artists
Compare & contrast Equity, SAG…
Movements (Postmodernism, multimedia, physical theatre, nonlinear theatre, adaptations…)

Students will be graded by their peers and instructor (scores averaged) on the following elements:

- Contemporary Theatre 1 -
25 points  Thorough research of topic and use of articles/information pertinent to the subject. Ability of student to answer class questions based on research.

25 points  Clear and easy to follow outline/bibliography handout provided to class members on time.

25 points  Organization and oral presentation

The report will be accompanied by a two page outline for the class which will highlight significant elements of the report and a bibliography of sources cited. Important articles or visuals may be included but may not replace the outline, which should show significant student effort. A copy of the significant articles used for research should be turned in to the teacher by the class period before the presentation. Scholarly sources include the Theatre Journal, ATTHE Journal, Performing Arts Journal, The Drama Review, and American Theatre. Trade and newsletter sources include ATTHE Newsletter, TD&T, Theatre Crafts, and the USITT Newsletter. Other sources include Theatregoer, Theatre Week, Backstage, and Playbill.

**Production Requirement:** Students will attend four live productions of professional contemporary theatre. Contemporary plays are those that premiered within the last ten years. Student productions do not count. Choices other than the following must be cleared with the instructor in advance. You can attend with the class or on your own. Informal, non-mandatory opportunities to attend with others will be arranged in class. Possible productions include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Production</th>
<th>Venue</th>
<th>Dates</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spring Awakening</td>
<td>Kingsbury Hall</td>
<td>Jan 14-15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Last Days of Judas Iscariot</td>
<td>Babcock Theatre</td>
<td>Jan 28-30, Feb 2-6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Black Comedy</td>
<td>Pioneer Theatre Company</td>
<td>Jan 14-29</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Persian Quarter</td>
<td>Salt Lake Acting Company</td>
<td>Feb 2-27</td>
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<tr>
<td>In</td>
<td>Pioneer Theatre Company</td>
<td>Feb 18-Mar 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mesa Verde</td>
<td>Plan B Theatre</td>
<td>Feb 24-Mar 6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Borderlands</td>
<td>Plan B Theatre</td>
<td>Mar 31-Apr 10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Circle Mirror Transformation</td>
<td>Salt Lake Acting Company</td>
<td>April 13-May 8</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Afghan Project: Flying Dolls</td>
<td>Fusion Theatre Project</td>
<td>TBA</td>
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100 points  25 points for each of the four productions attended.

If students opt not to attend a specific production due to content another production may be substituted. Students should turn in ticket stubs to receive credit for the production requirement.

**Leading play discussion** Each student will be assigned to lead the discussion on one of the plays during the semester. In preparation for this assignment the student should read reviews, critiques and analysis of both the performance and the text and know of any awards the play has won. When possible, they should read other plays by the playwright and research the production company. Students will submit copies of reviews and critical material to the professor by the class period before the presentation. Students will prepare and distribute a concise 1-2 page outline of important information and discussion points that identifies central themes in the script. The student should also list 5 potential essay questions about the author or text that could be included in a quiz or on a test. Students should arrive prepared and ready to lead the discussion and answer questions from students and the professor about the production, playwright and production company (where significant). Students should be able to identify common themes, ideas, character development and writing style and how the production company contributed to the development of the text. Grade will be based upon research, presentation, submitted material and knowledge of the topic.

Students will be graded by their peers and instructor (scores averaged) on the following elements:
25 points  Thorough research of topic and use of articles/information pertinent to the subject. Ability of student to answer class questions based on research, i.e., demonstrated knowledge of the subject
25 points  Quality, completeness of handout provided to class members on time.
25 points  Class presentation and leading of discussion

Research Paper
Students will write an 8-10 page paper on a contemporary playwright or compare and contrast playwrights that write on similar issues. (Neil Labute, Michael Frayn, Martin McDonough, Jane Martin, Edward Albee, August Wilson, Sara Ruel, Tom Stoppard, Christopher Durang, Caryl Churchill, Paula Vogel, Horton Foote, David Hare, Tony Kushner or others as approved by the instructor. The previous authors are suggested because they have produced a series of significant works and their works are readily accessible through the university and department libraries). Students must read at least three plays by their chosen playwright and consult critical reviews of the productions, text and playwright. The paper should focus on the work of the playwright, not biographical information. The well written paper will contain significant analysis delving beyond timelines and synopses. The paper will be double-spaced in a readable 12-point font. Punctuation, grammar and complete sentences matter. There should be at least seven sources listed in the bibliography, the majority of which may not be online sources. Separate due dates are indicated for thesis/topic statement, outline and final paper.

15 points  Thesis statement, well-defined, turned in on time.
15 points  Outline, logical, organized, turned in on time.
120 points  Final paper, relevant, thoroughly researched, correct punctuation and grammar, with a complete and properly referenced bibliography.

As an alternative to the research paper, students may instead conduct research on live contemporary drama in one of the major theatre centers: New York City, London, Edinburgh, Chicago or Los Angeles. Students selecting this option must attend at least five live contemporary plays and write a four page thoughtful critique of the productions.

Class Schedule
Jan 10  Introduction
Jan 12  Watch Wit part I
Jan 14  Watch Wit part II
Jan 17  HUMAN RIGHTS DAY--NO CLASSES
Jan 19  Class Presentations
  1. Discuss Wit
  2. Theatrical Awards
  3. ____________________________
Jan 21  The Goat or Who is Sylvia? Discussion Leader:__________________________
QUIZ
Jan 24  August/Osage County Discussion Leader:__________________________
Jan 26  Class Presentations

- Contemporary Theatre 3 -
1. __________________________
2. __________________________
3. __________________________

Jan 28  Vagina Monologues Discussion Leader:________________________
QUIZ

Jan 31  The Last Days of Judas Iscariot Discussion Leader:________________________

Feb 2  Class Presentations
1. National Theatre (London)________
2. ________________________________
3. ________________________________

Feb 4  In the Other Room or the Vibrator Play Discussion Leader:________________________
QUIZ

Feb 7  9 Parts of Desire Discussion Leader________________

Feb 9  ACTF—watch Angels in America part I

Feb 11  ACTF—watch Angels in America part I

Feb 14  Angels in America parts I & II Discussion Leader:__________________________

Feb 16  Feminist issues Class Presentations
1. Humana Festival - Jane Martin____
2. SITI Company - Anne Bogart_____
3. ________________________________

Feb 18  How I Learned to Drive Discussion Leader:__________________________
THESIS STATEMENT SDUE
QUIZ

Feb 21  PRESIDENT’S DAY--NO CLASSES

Feb 22  (Tuesday—follow Monday schedule)
Ruined Discussion Leader:__________________________

Feb 23  Class Presentations
1. ________________________________
2. ________________________________
3. ________________________________

Feb 25  Putnam County Spelling Bee Discussion Leader:__________________________
QUIZ

Feb 28  Reasons to Be Pretty Discussion Leader:__________________________

Mar 2  MID-TERM EXAMINATION

- Contemporary Theatre 4 -
Mar 4  USITT—guest presentation

Mar 7  No class—spring break

Mar 9  No class—spring break

Mar 11 No class—spring break

Mar 14 The Color Purple Discussion Leader ____________________________

Mar 16 Class Presentations
1. __________________________
2. __________________________
3. __________________________

Mar 18 Next to Normal Discussion Leader ____________________________
QUIZ

Mar 21 God of Carnage Discussion Leader: ____________________________
OUTLINE OF FINAL PAPER DUE

Mar 23 Racial issues in Theatre Class Presentations
1. __________________________
2. __________________________
3. __________________________

Mar 25 Anna in the Tropics Discussion Leader: ____________________________
QUIZ

Mar 28 Radio Golf Discussion Leader: ____________________________

Mar 30 Class Presentations
1. __________________________
2. __________________________
3. __________________________

Apr 1 Red Discussion Leader ____________________________
QUIZ

Apr 4 Take Me Out Discussion Leader: ____________________________

Apr 6 Class Presentations
1. __________________________
2. __________________________
3. __________________________

Apr 8 Laramie Project Discussion Leader: ____________________________
QUIZ

Apr 11 Lieutenant of Inishmore: Discussion Leader ____________________________

- Contemporary Theatre 5 -
Apr 13  Class Presentations
  1. The Abbey Theatre
  2. Edinburgh Festival & Fringe Festival
  3. __________________

Apr 15  Stones in His Pockets Discussion Leader: _____________________________

QUIZ

Apr 18  TBA Discussion Leader ________________________________

Apr 20  Guest Presentation

Apr 22  TBA Discussion Leader ________________________________

QUIZ

Apr 25  TBA Discussion Leader: ________________________________

Apr 27  Guest Presentation

Apr 29  Final Review/Jeopardy

FINAL PAPER DUE

FINAL EXAMINATION
WEDNESDAY, MAY 4, 9:30-11:20 a.m.

Evaluation Procedures:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Points possible</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quizzes (10x30)</td>
<td>300</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm</td>
<td>150</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class Presentation</td>
<td>75</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leading Play Discussion</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Production Requirement (4x25)</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Paper</td>
<td>150</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Incomplete Grades:  
Only illness or extenuating circumstances (usually family concerns) requiring the student to be absent from campus for a lengthy period will be reasons for granting an Incomplete grade, not poor performance. Usually, the grade will be an ‘IF.’ Students expecting to earn an Incomplete must consult with the instructor. Normally, the grade must be made up by the end of the next quarter the student is enrolled. The grade will be frozen one year from the end of the quarter in which the course is taken. This is university policy.

Plagiarism Statement: Plagiarism includes knowingly “representing, by paraphrase or direct quotation, the published or unpublished work of another person as one’s own in any academic exercise or activity without full and clear acknowledgement. It also includes the unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or agency engaged in the selling of term papers or other academic materials” (Code of Policies and Procedures for Students, Article V, Section 3A.1). The penalties for plagiarism are severe. They include “#1 warning or reprimand and #2 grade adjustment” (see: Article VI, Section 1A): Other penalties may also be imposed at the Dean’s discretion. These include probation, suspension, expulsion, withholding of transcripts, denial or revocation of degrees, referral to psychological counseling, and other appropriate
disciplinary actions.

Students with Disabilities Statement: Reasonable accommodation will be provided for all persons with disabilities in order to ensure equal participation within the program. If a student has a disability that will likely require some accommodation by the instructor, the student must contact the instructor and document the disability through the Disability Resource Center (797-2444), preferably during the first week of the course. Any request for special consideration relating to attendance, pedagogy, taking of examinations, etc., must be discussed with and approved by the instructor. In cooperation with the Disability Resource Center, course materials can be provided in alternative format, large print, audio, diskette, or Braille.

Note for theatre majors: In order for this class to count as part of your degree program you need to earn at least a B-. A grade lower than a B- will require retaking the class in order to fulfill graduation requirements.