

## SEMESTER AT SEA COURSE SYLLABUS

Discipline: Drama/Theatre Arts  
Spring 2008  
DRAM 292Z: World Theatre and Performance  
Lower Division  
Instructor: Professor Linda Ben-Zvi

**Suggested Pre-requisites:** None.

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

An excellent way to become familiar with a new culture—its myths, rituals, history, and central belief systems—is to study its theatre and performance practices. This introductory course will explore a variety of traditional theatre and performance forms indigenous to the countries we visit. Class discussions and readings will be supplemented, wherever possible, by films in class and attendance at live performances and meetings with international theatre practitioners, when in port. To study the intersection between theatre and national cultures, we will begin by focusing on our own society, reading American classics such as *Trifles*, *Death of a Salesman*, and *A Raisin in the Sun*. We then follow the itinerary of the voyage. In Brazil, we concentrate on ritual and carnival elements in theatre, drawing on our exposure to carnival in Salvador. South African theatre is represented by selected plays of Athol Fugard, and works emerging from life in the post-Apartheid period, including the documentary musical *Truth in Translation*. In India we study Bharatanatyam, the most ancient classical dance form in India and Tamil Nadu theatre. In Malaysia and Vietnam we turn to puppet theatre: the famed Malaysia Shadow Puppets and the unique Vietnam water puppet performances. Classic Beijing Opera will be the central theatre form we study related to Chinese theatre and performance, while in Japan, we investigate the forms and history of Noh, Kabuki, Kyogen, and Bunraku theatre. The course ends by returning to America and reexamining American drama in the context of what we have observed of other national theatre and performance models.

### **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

1. To make students aware of the ways in which theatre reflects a society's values, history, hopes, and fears;
2. To expose students to the richness of theatre and performance forms around the world;
3. To enable students to make contact with other cultures and people through an understanding of national theatre and performance forms and practices;
4. To illustrate the rich American theatre heritage, as reflected in the classic plays we will study, and to better understand our own traditions by placing them in relation to those of other countries.

## TOPICAL OUTLINE OF COURSE

- Class 1      **Introduction**  
Topics:        Theatre history, its relation to myth, ritual and religious practices, points of commonality between world theatre forms
- Class 2      **Theatre in America: Realism Around the Kitchen Table**  
Topics:        The techniques of reading a play, elements of the text, dramatic language, character formation and development, “languages” of theatre, performance possibilities  
Reading:       Susan Glaspell, *Trifles* and "A Jury of her Peers"  
Film:          *A Jury of her Peers*
- Class 3      ***Death of a Salesman, A Raisin in the Sun* and the American Dream**  
Topics:        Modernism and Realism on the American Stage, history of American drama, modern drama and modern society, staging values, reading history through theatrical signs  
Reading:       Arthur Miller, *Death of a Salesman*, Lorraine Hansberry, *A Raisin in the Sun*  
Film:          Excerpts from *Death of a Salesman* and *A Raisin in the Sun*
- Class 4      Topics:        Carnival, Ritual, and Theatre  
Reading:       Selected essays on carnival as performance of myth and ritual  
Film:          Excerpt from *Black Orpheus*
- Class 5      **Theatre in South Africa: The Plays and Theatre Work of Athol Fugard**  
Topics:        Fugard’s work with the Market Theatre in Johannesburg, his stand against apartheid, dramas of everyday life, staging issues concerning race, gender roles, and the ways in which the personal becomes the political in South Africa  
Reading:       Athol Fugard, *Boseman and Lena*  
Film:          *Boseman and Lena*
- Class 9      **Theatre in South Africa: The Plays of Athol Fugard (2)**  
Topics:        Theatrical language, race and family, visual and verbal imagery, staging the play  
Reading:       *Master Harold and the Boys*  
Film:          *Master Harold and the Boys*
- Class 10     **Theatre and Performance in Contemporary South Africa**  
Topics:        New theatre and performance work in Post-apartheid South Africa  
Reading:       *Truth in Translation*  
Film:          Original production of the documentary musical *Truth in Translation*
- Class 11     **Theatre and Performance in Contemporary South Africa**  
Topics:        New theatre and performance work in Post-apartheid South Africa  
Reading:       To be announced (from Baxter Theatre repertoire)

- Class 12 Theatre in India: Bharatanatyam Classical Dance**
- Topics: The history of Bharatanatyam dance, its expressive and symbolic features, relation to yoga, and to other classical Indian dance forms and performances
- Reading: Shobana Jeyasingh, "Bharatha Natyam: Understanding Indian Classical Dance." *New Dance* 23 (1982): 3–5.  
O'Shea, Janet, "'Traditional' Indian Dance and the Making of Interpretative Communities." *Asian Theatre Journal* 15.1 (2000): 45–63.  
Janet O'Shea, "At Home in the World? The Bharatanatyam Dancer as Transnational Interpreter." *TDR The Drama Review* 47.1 (Spring 2003): 176-88.
- Film: On Bharatanatyam dance
- Class 12 A Theatre by Any Other Name: the Tamil Nadu Theatre**
- Topics: Indian theatre and language, geographical local and performance elements, Tamil theatre forms, exploring kattaikkuttu theatre
- Reading: Hanne de Bruin. "Naming a Theatre in Tamil Nadu." *Asian Theatre Journal* 17.1 (2000): 98-122.  
*Water!:* A Tamil Play by Komal Swaminathan. *Asian Theatre Journal* 18.2 (2001) 123-173.
- Class 13 Theatre on Film: The Case of India**
- Topics: Blending of tradition and modernity; Bollywood /Hollywood and theatre adaptations
- Films: Excerpts from *Maqbool (Macbeth)*, *Omkara (Othello)* and *Shakespeare Wallah*
- Class 14 Puppet Theatres in Malaysia and Vietnam: Shadow and Water Puppets**
- Topics: The history of theatre in Malaysia, puppet theatre, modern versions, influence on puppetry around the world; unique nature of Vietnam water puppets, performance styles, puppet forms, attempts to revive the traditional forms in modern Vietnam, relation to modern and contemporary history in country
- Reading: Selected essays on Malaysia puppet theatre; Kathy Foley, "Vietnamese Water Puppetry as a Representation of Modern Vietnam." *TDR: The Drama Review* 45.4 (2001): 129-141.  
Theodora Skipitares, "Figures: Vietnam Journal." *Performing Arts Journal* 19.2 (1997) 64-80.

- Class 15      **Theatre in China: Beijing Opera Past and Present**  
 Topics:        Discussion of what is Beijing Opera, Shanghai and other variations, history of the forms, techniques, acting styles, traditional stories, connections to societal issues, music, movement, audience reception  
 Reading:       Elizabeth Wichmann-Walczak, "Reform at the Shanghai Jingju Company and Its Impact on Creative Authority and Repertory." *TDR: The Drama Review* 44.4 (2000) 96-119.  
 Film:           Extracts from famous Beijing and Jingju Opera productions
- Class 16      **Theatre in China: *huaju* (modern spoken drama)**  
 Topics:        The political implications of spoken drama and its relation to historical events, repertoire of plays international and Chinese, topics, styles of acting, popularity, audience reactions, theatres, schools of acting, proliferation of *huaju* in recent years, direction of spoken theatre today, new playwrights  
 Reading:       Xiaomei Chen, "A Stage in Search of a Tradition: The Dynamics of Form and Content in Post-Maoist Theatre." *Asian Theatre Journal* 18.2 (2001) 200-221.  
                     Haiping Yan, "Theatre and Society: An Introduction to Contemporary Chinese Drama." *Theatre and Society: An Anthology of Contemporary Chinese Drama*. Ed Yan Haiping. Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 1998. IX-XVI.  
                     Gao Xingjian, *The Bus Stop*  
 Film:           Examples of *huaju* theatre
- Class 17      **Theatre in Japan: Noh and Kyogen Theatre**  
 Topics:        The history of Noh, traditional acting styles, stories, performance elements, types of Noh and Kyogen plays, the Noh and Kyogen stages, masks, costumes, body movements, properties and fans, roles, repertoire, Noh and Buddhism, Noh and Kyogen today  
 Reading:       Introduction to Noh and Kyogen, Japanese Arts Council  
                     <http://www2.ntj.jac.go.jp/unesco/noh/en>  
                     Excerpts from selected classical Noh and Kyogen plays  
 Films:         Videos of famous Noh and Kyogen performances
- Class 18      **Theatre in Japan: Kabuki Theatre**  
 Topics:        Defining Kabuki theatre, its origins, evolving history, repertoire, roles, costumes, properties, the Kabuki stage, music, dance, makeup, masks, actor preparation, family dynasties  
 Reading:       Excerpts from Earl Ernst, *Kabuki Theatre*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1974.  
                     Selected Kabuki texts  
 Film:           video of Introduction to Kabuki acting; excerpts from famous plays

- Class 19      **Theatre in Japan: Bunraku**  
 Topics:        Bunraku and storytelling, the chanter (Tayu), the music (Shamisen Player), stories and repertoire, puppet types, the relation between puppets and puppeteers, mechanisms of puppets, wigs, costumes,  
 Reading:        Theodora Skipitares, "The Tension of Modern Bunraku." PAJ 26.1 (2004): 13-21.  
 Film:            Videos of Bunraku performances
- Class 20      **Contemporary Japanese Theatre**  
 Topics:        Modern and contemporary Japanese theatre since WWII, themes, playwrights, staging, acting styles, relation to earlier theatre forms, influence of international theatre, famous directors, the work of Tadashi Suzuki, the plays of Minoru Betsuyaku  
 Reading:        Yukihiro Goto, "The Theatrical Fusion of Suzuki Tadashi." *Asian Theatre Journal* 6.2 (Autumn 1989): 103-123.  
                     Selected reading from the plays of Minoru Betsuyaku  
 Film:            Excerpt from Minoru Betsuyaku, *A Scene with a Red Bird*
- Class 21      **Rethinking American Theatre and Performance**  
 Topics:        Discussion of American theatre today, as reflection of the changing racial and ethnic mix, influences of international forms on contemporary American drama and theatre practices, the hegemony of American culture  
 Reading:        David Henry Hwang, *M. Butterfly*  
 Film:            M. Butterfly
- Class 22      Summary        Discussion of theatre practices around the world
- Class 23      Final Examination

## **FIELD COMPONENT**

Twenty percent of the contact hours for each course are provided by field work. You are required to complete three practica for this course that relate to theatre forms around the world that we will be studying. Two of your required writing assignments for the course relate to these field experiences. In assignment #1 you will be asked to write a brief critique of a performance you see or presentation/lecture you attend in relation to a particular type of theatre practice in that country( 3-4 pages). In assignment #2 you will be asked to choose a theatre form or a performance element which is used in various countries (for example puppet theatres) and write a short research paper (5-7) based on a performance and/or lecture you have attended, and/or research on this type of theatre practice..

The following are the proposed Field Programs from which you are to choose 3. You may also choose to fulfill the requirement by attending individually a relevant performance during the voyage.

### **Suggested Practica:**

**Brazil:** Carnival activities, Salvador, (IND)

**India:** Theru Koothu theater performance, Chennai, (FDP)

**Malaysia:** Welcoming Reception and Shadow Puppet Performance, Penang (IND)

**Viet Nam:** Water Puppet Performance, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam (FDP)

**In all countries visited:** Attendance at a traditional theatre performance (IND)

## **METHODS OF EVALUATION**

1. Class participation: preparation and ability to discuss class reading assignments and to discuss productions visited and lectures attended	10%
2. One theatre or lecture review (3-5 pages)	10%
3. On short analysis research paper (5-7 pages) on a particular theatre form studied in class	20%
Final Examination	60%

## REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS

**AUTHOR:** Arthur Miller  
**TITLE:** *Death of a Salesman*  
**PUBLISHER:** Penguin  
**ISBN #:** 0 14 048 134 6  
**DATE/EDITION:** 1987  
**COST:** \$6.00

**AUTHOR:** Lorraine Hansberry  
**TITLE:** *A Raisin in the Sun*  
**PUBLISHER:** Vintage  
**ISBN #:** 0679755330  
**DATE/EDITION:** 1994  
**COST:** \$4. 00

**AUTHOR:** Athol Fugard  
**TITLE:** *Selected Plays*  
**PUBLISHER:** Oxford  
**ISBN #:** 0192819291  
**DATE/EDITION:** 1987  
**COST:** \$5.00

**AUTHOR:** David Henry Hwang  
**TITLE:** *M. Butterfly*  
**PUBLISHER:** Penguin  
**ISBN #:** 0452264669  
**DATE/EDITION:**1989  
**COST:** \$5.00

## SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS

Susan Glaspell, *Trifles*  
Project Guttenberg  
<http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/10623>

Linda Ben-Zvi, "'Home Sweet Home': Deconstructing the Myth of the Frontier in Modern American Drama." *The Frontier Experience and American Dream*. Ed. David Mogen et al. College Station, TX: Texas A & M University Press, 1989: 98-113.

Fernando Peixoto, Susana Epstein, and Richard Schechner, "Brazilian Theatre and National Identity." *TDR The Drama Review* 34.1 (Spring 1990): 60-69.

Shobana Jeyasingh, "Bharatha Natyam: Understanding Indian Classical Dance." *New Dance* 23 (1982):3-5.

O'Shea, Janet, "'Traditional' Indian Dance and the Making of Interpretative Communities." *Asian Theatre Journal* 15.1 (2000): 45-63.

Janet O'Shea, "At Home in the World? The Bharatanatyam Dancer As Transnational Interpreter." *TDR The Drama Review* 47.1 (Spring 2003):176-88.

Hanne de Bruin. "Naming a Theatre in Tamil Nadu." *Asian Theatre Journal* 17.1 (2000): 98-122.

*Water!*: A Tamil Play by Komal Swaminathan. *Asian Theatre Journal* 18.2 (2001) 123-173.

Kathy Foley, "Vietnamese Water Puppetry as a Representation of Modern Vietnam." *TDR: The Drama Review* 45.4 (2001): 129-141.

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Elizabeth Wichmann-Walczak, "Reform at the Shanghai Jingju Company and Its Impact on Creative Authority and Repertory." *TDR: The Drama Review* 44.4 (2000) 96-119.

Xiaomei Chen, "A Stage in Search of a Tradition: The Dynamics of Form and Content in Post-Maoist Theatre." *Asian Theatre Journal* 18.2 (2001): 200-221.

Haiping Yan, "Theatre and Society: An Introduction to Contemporary Chinese Drama." *Theatre and Society: An Anthology of Contemporary Chinese Drama*. Ed Yan Haiping. Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 1998. IX-XVI.

Introduction to Noh and Kyogen, Japanese Arts Council

<http://www2.ntj.jac.go.jp/unesco/noh/en>

Theodora Skipitares, "The Tension of Modern Bunraku." *PAJ* 26.1 (2004): 13-21