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THTR 101L.50: Introduction to Theatre

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THTR 101L – 01: Introduction to Theatre and Performance

Online Spring, 2014

Instructor: Kelly Bouma – kelly.bouma@umontana.edu

Course Description and Aims:

The purpose of this course is to introduce you to theatre and performance studies. We will:

- Explore all parts of theatre: acting, directing, design, devising and playwriting
- Look at non-Western and non-traditional theatre and performance.
- Examine textual and live performances using posted readings, videos, assignments and an online forum

Outcomes:

By the end of the course you will:

Be able to define the roles and parts of the theatre

Understand theatricality and performance as it pertains to your own life, and what you see on stage, screen, or in line at the grocery store.

Feel comfortable reading and analyzing scripts and critical essays

Articulate ideas concisely in your writing and online discussions

Understand the context of performances from other cultures and your own

Develop a creative performance using your own personal story

Requirements/Assessment:

To earn an A in this online course, your job is fairly straightforward: read the play texts assigned, participate in the online forum, and complete all writing assignments on time. Much of your writing will be your subjective opinion of the dramatic work. However, this is a college-level course and you will be given the tools to make thorough, well-constructed and textually based analysis of what we read and experience.

Procedure/Policy:

You are expected to abide by the following School of Theatre & Dance regulations. Late work is not accepted. Students may, however, apply for an extension on any assignment. An application for an extension involves emailing me a detailed description of the reason for the extension at least one week before the assignment's due date. Acute emergencies will be handled on a case-by-case basis. I am a reasonable person: please do not hesitate to contact me regarding life's circumstances so we can discuss options to make up missed work. If I do not know what has happened, I cannot justify making exceptions.

School Handbook:

All Theatre & Dance students must have an in-depth knowledge of the practices and procedures outlined in the School of Theatre & Dance Student Handbook.

The Handbook is available online at
<http://www.umt.edu/theatredance/about/handbook>.

Academic Misconduct and the Student Conduct Code:

All students must practice academic honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or disciplinary sanction by the University. All students need to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code. The Code is available for review online at
http://life.umt.edu/vpsa/student_conduct.php.

Reading Assignments/Forum Participation:

Each week, you will post a written response to a series of questions I have posted about the text(s). These are subjective reflections based on reading you have done for class and technical writing elements will not be graded. If you are completing the assigned reading, you should be able to demonstrate that you not only read the material, but that you can also offer your own opinion and demonstrate that you are practicing close, critical reading.

Writing Assignments:

All writing assignments, including forum posts will have a due date. Due-dates for the Performance Reviews/Responses to *Miracle Worker*, *Book of Days* and *Midsummer Nights Dream*, your chosen *recorded performance*, and your chosen *outside event* are listed in the course schedule. Each unexplained day any writing assignment goes un-submitted will result in a drop in half of one letter grade for that writing assignment. All formal writing assignments should be typed in the MLA format, double-spaced with 1" margins in Times or a similar Helvetica font.

You will be required to write five 600-word (+ or - 50 words) Performance Reviews/Responses, one for each of the following:

Miracle Worker – By William Gibson

Montana Theatre | January 25, 30-31, February 1, 6, 8, 2014 | 7:30 PM
Saturday Matinee | February 1 | 2:00 PM

Book of Days– By Lanford Wilson

Masquer Theatre | March 4-8, 11-14, 2014 | 7:30 PM
Saturday Matinee | March 15 | 2:00 PM

Midsummer Night's Dream – By William Shakespeare

Montana Theatre | April 29-May 3, 6-10, 2014 | 7:30 PM

*Outside of department event**

Chosen recorded performance^

These pieces can be reviews of the productions, responses to the department's selection of the plays themselves, and/or reflections on the themes of the plays/performances. You should draw from critical theory explored in class and your own analysis of your experience in general. Questions to ask yourself: Based on your reading of the text, was this production successful? Why or why not? Why do you think the department selected the play/performance for production this semester? Did the individual performances fit into the greater production concept for the play? How did the production respond to or reflect our audience/community's perspective? How is the play/performance relevant/irrelevant (both?) in 2014? What does the play/performance say about our culture, time, or society? Why is this event significant? What does it signify? Who does it implicate, involve, or incriminate? These pieces should include an exploration of both the production of the text as well as the text itself. While these writings do not require citations or sources, supporting material only strengthens your ideas and arguments.

* The *outside of department event* can be a review/response of a community theatre or dance production; a Broadway show; a concert (big, small, at the Gorge or the Top Hat); a sporting event you attend in person; a cultural ritual (a wedding, a rodeo, a pow-wow, but no parties – parties don't count for this one and I will explain why), etc. The only rule is that they have to be *live* – no movies or television, please! For this piece, ask yourself the same questions as above.

^One of the recordings of a live performance we watch in class:

Lovesong
Over There
All My Sons
A Doll's House

The Forum Responses: These are reflections on the readings and media available on Moodle. You will post an initial 200-300 word (a paragraph or two) response referencing a reading and at least one video on Moodle. Once others have submitted their posts, you will respond to at least two of them with questions, quandaries, agreements, disagreements, etc. These writings are intended to exercise your writing skills, and to evaluate the quality of your engagement with the material.

Final Project: Solo Performance/Presentation:

We will discuss this project as the semester progresses. As an online course, this personal performance may be a video project or a radio piece or any other idea I approve! You will submit a 500-word description of your project idea and also a 500-word reflection of your process and final presentation, which will serve as your final creative project.

Production Attendance:

You are required to attend the three School of Theatre & Dance performances produced this semester. Missing one production will drop your grade one full letter. Missing two productions will drop your grade two full letters. If you do not attend any of the productions you will earn a failing grade in the class. Production attendance is a part of this class - there are no exceptions and there will be papers on the productions. The class fee that you have already paid allows you to get one ticket for these productions at no extra expense. You must pick up your ticket at the box office located in the lobby of the PARTV building in person between 11:30 AM and 5:30 PM, Monday - Friday. You can only pick up your own ticket – you cannot pick up a classmate’s ticket for them. You must present your GRIZ CARD to pick up your tickets and you must identify which class you are in, therefore you must know your section number and instructor’s name. You are in *THTR 101, section 01*. Your instructor’s name is *Cohen Ambrose*. Seating in the Masquer Theater is general admission. Seating in the Montana Theater is reserved. The fee that you have paid does not guarantee you a ticket on a particular night, nor does it guarantee that you will be able to get a ticket if the show sells out, therefore do not wait until the evening of the performance to pick up a ticket.

Evaluation:

Evaluation for the course is based on the following:

Participation/Preparation		30%
In-class discussions/seminars/ reading notes/mask performance	30%	
Writing		40%
Final Group Performance Reflection	5%	
Performance Reviews/Responses	20%	
Forum Responses	15%	
Group Presentations		
Small Group Presentation		10%
Final Group Performance	20%	

Grading:

A = 90-100 B = 80-89 C = 70-79 D = 60-69 F = 59 and below

Course Schedule of Classes:

Week 1 – Jan. 28:

Introductions, course philosophy, schedule, syllabus, Moodle, ground rules and expectations

Presentation: *Introduction to Theatre & Performance: From Aristotle to Neuroscience Part I*

Readings for week 2:

Stephanie Arnold, *The Impulse to Perform*

Week 2 – Feb. 4:

Presentation: *Introduction to Theatre & Performance: From Aristotle to Neuroscience Part II*

Readings for week 3:

Yu-Pao-Tchen, *The Great Bell*
Article on devising

Week 3 – Feb. 11:

Presentation: *Directing/Devising/Dramaturgy Part I*

Devising Activities

Mask Performances

Reading for week 5:

Abi Morgan, *Lovesong*

Week 4 – Feb. 18: President's Day - **no class**

Week 5 – Feb. 25:

Presentation: *Directing/Devising/Dramaturgy Part II: Physical & Dance Theatres*

Devising Activities

Watch *Lovesong*

Readings for week 6:

David Edgar, Act 1 of *Pentecost*
Article

Week 6 – Mar. 4:

Presentation: *Contemporary Western Theatres Part I: Playwriting*

Playwriting Activities

Readings for week 7:

David Edgar, Act 2 of *Pentecost*

DUE: Review/Response: *outside of department event*

Week 7 – Mar. 11:

Presentation: *Contemporary Western Theatres Part II: Acting*

Discuss *Pentecost*

Pentecost Activities

Readings for week 8:

Mark Ravenhill, *Over There*
Mark Ravenhill, *Me, My iBook, and Writing in America*

Week 8 – Mar. 18:

Watch/Discuss *Over There*
Discuss Reviews/Responses: *Jumping into Fire*
DUE: Review/Response: *Jumping into Fire*
Readings for week 9:
Bertolt Brecht, *Mother Courage and Her Children*

Week 9 – Mar. 25:

Presentation: *Theatre and War*
Mother Courage Activities
Watch documentary film *Theatre of War*
Readings for week 11:
Arthur Miller, *All My Sons*
(Forum response for *All My Sons* **due** by 6:10PM, April 8)

Week 10 – Apr. 1: Spring Break - no class

DUE: Final Group Performance Proposal

Week 11 – Apr. 8:

(Cohen away in Toronto)
Watch *All My Sons* (there will be someone setting up the film and taking attendance so you must be present this day).
Readings for week 12:
Henrik Ibsen, *A Doll's House*
DUE: Review/Response: *Pentecost*

Week 12 – Apr. 15:

Presentation: *Realism vs. Naturalism*
Discuss *Pentecost* production
A Doll's House Activities
Watch *A Doll's House*
Readings for week 13:
William Shakespeare, Acts I & II of *Comedy of Errors*

Week 13 – Apr. 22:

Activities: Performing Shakespeare
Readings for week 14:
William Shakespeare, Acts III & IV of *Comedy of Errors*
DUE: Review/Response: *Chosen recorded production*

Week 14 – Apr. 29:

Shakespeare

Readings for week 15:

William Shakespeare, Act V of *Comedy of Errors*

Week 15 – May 6:

Shakespeare

Watch recorded production of *Comedy of Errors*

FINAL – May 13:

Presentation of Final Group Performances

DUE: Final Group Performance reflection and self-assessment papers

DUE: Review/Response: *Comedy of Errors*