

UC Center Program Courses - Fall 2011
PCC 130. Theater in France
Prof. Will Bishop

Lecture

Monday 4:00-5:30

Wednesday 4:30-6:00

This course is an introduction to the French theatrical tradition and its different techniques for staging drama from the 17th century to the present. It considers what role theater has played in the political, social, cultural, and aesthetic life of France. We will do this principally in close engagement with translations of several of the most important plays in French in readings, in-class staging, and perhaps semi-public performances of our own. We will also pursue the place of theater in France through class excursions to see two contemporary productions related to the plays we are reading. We will also be interested in theater's relation to film, and will watch and discuss several film versions of or related to the plays we're reading in class. **5.0 credits**

COURSE MATERIALS

We will be using English translations of each of these plays either in books or included in your course reader, which will also include certain critical pieces on the plays.

- Racine, *Phèdre*, translated by Margaret Rawlings
- Molière, *The Miser in Five Plays*, translated by Alan Drury
- Marivaux, *The Game of Love and Chance*, trans. by John Fowles [CR]
- Ionesco, *The Bald Soprano*, trans. by Donald M. Allen
- Beckett, *Endgame*
- Genet, *The Maids*, trans. by Bernard Frechtman
- Bernard-Marie Koltès, *Black Battles With Dogs*, trans. by David Bradby and Maria M. Delgado [CR]

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Attendance at lectures and excursions is mandatory. It is essential that students attend all classes and participate actively. Any unexcused absence automatically lowers your final grade by a notch (for example, a final grade of B+ becomes a B).

Reading assignments are critical. Students are expected to read the material as it is assigned and come to class prepared. As a class, we will be attending a performance of Molière's *L'Avare* at the Comédie Française on Monday October 3 at 8:30 p.m. and a performance by Didier Galas on Tuesday October 18 at the Théâtre de la Cité Internationale at 8 p.m. Galas's performance is a contemporary reflection on the Arlequin character, whose 18th century avatar we will have encountered in Marivaux's *Lottery of Love*. All students will write two of their four response papers to these performances.

In class, we will draw on certain films of or related to the plays we are studying: scenes from Patrice Chéreau's production of *Phèdre*; the César winning *L'ésquive* by Abdellatif Kechiche which portrays students in the suburbs of Paris working on a production of Marivaux's play; Jean-Luc Lagarce's staging of Ionesco's *Cantatrice Chauve*; a 2009 production of Koltès's *Combat de nègres et de chiens* by the German director Michael Thalheimer. Students should choose two of these films as a basis for a well-argued response to the interpretation of the play found in these films. **Response papers are due the Monday following the film or performance. No late papers will be accepted.**

Grading

- Weekly Readings and Class Participation (25 %)
- Writing Assignments (25 %)
 - 4 response papers (3 pages each) to performances and films
- Mid-term exam (25 %)
- Final exam (25 %)

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1. September 12 & 14

Reading: *Phèdre*

Week 2. September 19 & 21

In class screening of Chéreau's production of *Phèdre*

Reading: *Phèdre*

Barthes, Roland, "From On Racine" in *A Barthes Reader*, ed. by Susan Sontag, New York: Hill and Wang, 1983, pp. 169-184 [CR]

Week 3. September 26 & 28

Reading: *The Miser, The Misanthrope*

In-class screening of scenes from Mnouchkine's *Molière*

Week 4. October 3 & 5

Reading: *The Miser*

In-class preparation for performance of *L'avare* at the Comédie Française

Performance: October 3 at the Comédie Française

Week 5. October 10 & 12

Reading : Marivaux, "The Lottery of Love" trans. by John Fowles in *Landmarks of French Classical Drama*, London: Meuthen, 1991, pp. 252-305 [CR]

Week 6. October 17 & 19

In-class screening and discussion of *L'esquive* by Abdelattif Kéchiche

Reading: "Marivaux in the 'Hood:.' An interview with Adelatif Kéchiche." [CR]

Performance: Tuesday October 18 at the Théâtre de la Cité Internationale

Week 7. October 24 & 26

Mid-term Review and Exam

MIDTERM BREAK

Week 8. November 7 & 9

Reading: Beckett's *Endgame*

Leo Bersani and Ulysse Dutoit, selection from "*Inhibited Reading*" in *Arts of Impoverishment*, Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1993. [CR]

Week 9. November 14 & 16

Reading: Ionesco's *The Bald Soprano*, *The Chairs*

Esslin, Martin, selections from *The Theatre of the Absurd*, London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1963, pp. 13-21 & pp. 94-107 [CR]

In-class screening of Lagarce's staging of *The Bald Soprano*

Week 10. November 21 & 23

Reading : Jean Genet, *The Maids*

Week 11. November 28 & 30

Reading: Koltès, *Black Battles With Dogs*

Week 12. December 5 & 7

Reading: Koltès, *Black Battles With Dogs*

In-class screening of Thalheimer's 2009 staging of the play at the Théâtre de la Colline in Paris

Week 13. December 12 & 14

Review and Final Exam