

THTR 430: Women in 20th Century American Theater

Seminar Class

PLH

Class Information and Expectations:

Professor: Rachel Kinsman Steck

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Office: Playhouse 304

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Office Hours: appointment only

Course Overview:

This course is a special topics course concentrating on women in American theater during the 20th Century. This term will concentrate on the developments women have brought to theater in design, directing, producing, and criticism. And while we will concentrate on work being produced and performed in the United States, it will be possible to look to the rest of the Americas for influences.

Ultimately, the value of this course lies in our (both the lecturers and students) ability to draw upon the material presented and explored in order to better understand current trends in theater arts as well as the development of our own presences and aesthetics. Therefore, each of us is expected to actively participate in class through proper preparation of readings and regular and prompt class attendance.

The structure of this course will consist of both lecture and classroom discussion. Students will be evaluated through discussion of assigned readings and response papers.

Note: If you have a documented disability and anticipate needing accommodations in this course, please make arrangements to meet with me as soon as possible. Please request that the counselor for students with disabilities send a letter verifying your disability.

Course Objectives:

The course is a study of 20th century theater history. Mastery of the material will include both objective knowledge of important ideas, people, places, methods, and technology and the ability to relate theatrical practice to the general culture. Course objectives include:

- a. knowledge of important facts
- b. identify similarities and differences in theater production both within a specific period and between different periods
- c. relate dramatic texts¹ to the culture of the periods in which they were performed
- d. identify concepts and practices from specific aesthetics/epochs that are evident in the 20th Century American Theater

Text Book and Materials:

Students are expected to have **carefully read** all assigned readings **by the date listed on the syllabus**. These readings can be found online at blackboard, the University's library, and the University's bookstore. You may access blackboard with your registered email account from the

¹ Dramatic texts in this context can mean anything from the actual play to the directing, design, and acting techniques/methods used in performance.

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University's internal web (<http://www.willamette.edu/internal/>). All articles will be in Adobe PDF format.

Attendance:

Due to the length of this course, class attendance is mandatory. A missed class will constitute a severe drop in one's grade. Prompt attendance is also required.

Participation:

As stated above, active participation in class discussion is expected and will be a factor in each student's grade. The participation grade will be based upon thoughtful contributions in discussion and other class exercises.

Assignments:

Students will be expected to complete thirteen (13) of fifteen (15) response papers for this class. Each response paper will be due at the beginning of class. Response papers will answer a specific question relating to the readings and class discussions from the previous week. The question will be handed out on the Thursday prior to its due date. Students may hand in all fifteen (15) papers but only the best thirteen (13) grades will be accepted. Papers shall be no shorter than two (2) double spaced pages and no longer than (3).

The purpose of these essays is to dig into the theoretical and the practical elements of the work studied and to clearly and concisely communicate and process what has been read/discussed.

Grading Policy:

Please note: all work is due at the beginning of the class period. **No late work will be accepted except through *prior* arrangement.**

Grading of response papers will be based on clarity and organization of thought, use of specific supporting evidence, and pertinence of conclusions. These factors, along with quality of research, careful analysis, and general writing skills will constitute the basis for grading.

I will use the grade descriptions outlined in the CLA Catalogue: (A) excellent; (B) good; (C) satisfactory; (D) below standard; and (F) failing.

The following is the breakdown of grading for this term:

Class Attendance:	25%
Class Participation:	25%
Response Papers:	50%

Class Assignments:

Part 1: INTRODUCTION

What is feminism?

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Feminist aesthetics?	hooks
Women's Place is in the house?	Miles & Howe
Feminist Canon?	Solomon

Part 2: DIRECTING/ACTING

Beginning in Harlem	Smith & Gill
Actors and/or Teachers	Rotte, Le Gallienne & Diamond
	Schiffman, Hayes, & McKittrick
Bogart & Taymor	Bogart & Rodriguez

Part 3 3: DESIGN/PRODUCING

Costumes	Ballard
Set & Costumes	Lampert-Greaux
Set	Peggy Clark Kelly
Lighting	Jean Rosenthal

Part 4: PRODUCING/CRITICISM²

The Producers	Flanagan & Anderson
The Critics	Goldman & Gilder
The Theorists	Case & Dolan
What's Next?	TBD

² The Critics: Professional Critics, Academics, and Educators (women who have participated in the above discourses – these women who consider themselves to be practitioners and not theorists; although I hope to dispel the myth that we are merely one or the other).