**2016 Syllabus**

**Theater 10a: Theater as Performance**  
Tuesday 9:00 a.m. – 11:50 a.m.  
Spingold Theater Center – Merrick Theater

**Instructors:**  
Adrienne Krstansky  
Ryan McKittrick

**Contact:**  
krstansk@brandeis.edu  
mckitr@brandeis.edu

**Office Hours:**  
Tuesday Noon – 2:00 pm (Krstansky)  
By appointment (McKittrick)

‘The nature of a work of art is to be not a part, nor yet a copy of the real world (as we commonly understand that phrase), but a world in itself, independent, complete, autonomous, and to possess it fully you must enter that world, conform to its laws, and ignore for the time the beliefs, aims, and particular conditions which belong to you in the other world of reality.’  
-- Oxford Lectures on Poetry: Professor Bradley: 1901

**Course Description:**  
This is an experiential learning course. This course develops the student's ability to read a theatrical text through the lens of the directorial mind, the voice/body/imagination of the performer, and the eyes and ears of an active audience member as an introduction to the art of making theater. We will also explore theater architecture, asking how space informs both the performance style and the relationships between actors and audiences. Reading, discussions, papers and exercises about acting, directing, dance, performance art, and devised work will constitute the bulk of this course.

**Course Objective:**  
The course will focus on discovery, analysis and experience.

Students will be introduced to texts and performance pieces written and conceived by major theater artists. They will learn how theater has changed over time and what is considered classical, modern, contemporary and experimental work. This discovery will be done by reading/studying texts, and by viewing performances either in person or recorded.

Students will then be introduced to methods of analysis for these works. They will be given tools to analyze text for performance as well as an introduction into the methodologies and values of the individual creative artist. This can take the form of reading and discussion groups, papers and experiential exercises.

Students will then put their analytical work into action by creating small theater pieces or participating in class exercises that allow them to connect performance methodologies to text. This final step is the vital culminating learning experience in how to approach text as a performer. Projects and exercises will be devised as an introductory experience, rather than as
training method for performance.

**Class Guidelines:**
Please have all visitors to the class approved by the instructor. Our first priority is to maintain an environment that is conducive to risk.

Students are responsible for finding, bringing and safely storing any props, costumes, and music to be used in their projects.

We must be responsible for cleaning up the space after each class.

**Assignments**

**Readings:**
The Suppliant Women by Aeschylus ([http://classics.mit.edu/Aeschylus/suppliant.html](http://classics.mit.edu/Aeschylus/suppliant.html))
Father Comes Home From the Wars by Suzan-Lori Parks
Big Love by Chuck Mee ([http://charlesmee.org/big-love.shtml](http://charlesmee.org/big-love.shtml))
The Empty Space by Peter Brook
Three Sisters by Anton Chekhov
Death of a Salesman by Arthur Miller
The Humans by Stephen Karam
Bootycandy and Barbeque by Robert O'Hara
Intimate Apparel by Lynn Nottage
The Colored Museum by George C. Wolfe
4.48 Psychosis by Sarah Kane
For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When The Rainbow is Enuf, by Ntozake Shange
Edith Can Shoot Things and Hit Them, by A. Rey Pamatmat
Fun Home, by Alison Betchdel
Martyr, by Marius von Meyenburg
Twelfth Night, by William Shakespeare

**Papers:**
Students are required to complete the following writing assignments:
  - First paper assignment (5 pages)
  - Second paper assignment (5 pages)

**Oral Communication and Performance Projects:**
Each student will participate in the following discussions and performance exercises:
  - One group project inspired by a play during the semester
  - Memorization of short sections of text from the plays to be used in class workshops
  - Acting workshop exercises
  - A final ensemble project

You are expected to be honest in all of your academic work. Please consult Brandeis University Rights and Responsibilities ([http://www.brandeis.edu/studentlife/srcs/rr/](http://www.brandeis.edu/studentlife/srcs/rr/)) for all policies and procedures related to academic integrity.

Success in this 4 credit hour course is based on the expectation that students will spend a minimum of 9 hours of study time per week in preparation for class (readings, papers,
discussion sections, preparation for exams, etc.). Success in this course requires nine hours of work for every three hours of in class time.

Requirements

Attendance:
If you are unable to meet every class session, please deeply consider taking this class another semester. Students are greatly dependent on each other for the quality of their work and their grade. Each unexcused absence will result in the lowering of the final grade one half letter grade. An unexcused absence on the day of a performance assignment will result in a failing grade for that assignment.

Late policy:
Two late arrivals will equal one absence and lower your final grade one-half letter grade.

There will be extensive outside group work for this class – you must be able to communicate your schedule and be responsible for showing up for all rehearsals prepared and on time.

Other Requirements:
Commitment and Participation
Courage
Curiosity
Being afraid and doing it anyway
Asking many questions
Knowing when to find the answer for yourself
Never pretending to know something that you don’t because you think everyone else does
Listening deeply
Responding deeply
Being articulate about your own work
Articulating how you are affected by what we do in class
Being an essential participant in all group projects
Being mentally, emotionally, physically present.

Evaluation:
First paper assignment: 20%
Second paper assignment: 20%
Group presentation: 20%
Final presentation: 20%
Attendance, collaboration and participation: 20%

Criteria for projects and papers:
We will discuss this in more detail for each particular assignment. Briefly, your grade will reflect your commitment to the project and your peers, your understanding of the theatrical tools, how much mental, emotional and creative (and sometimes physical) sweat you put into your performance piece or a paper, personal risk and your own final assessment of the work and the process. We can meet at anytime to discuss your progress.

In addition to the writing/research/performance assignments and class participation/attendance, students will be evaluated on their commitment to the ensemble format, their dedication to
taking risks and trying new things, their consistency in offering creative ideas and solutions in class, and their abilities in collaboration.

August 30 Introduction: What is Theater? What is Acting?

Exploring the Nature of Performance
Observation Exercise


September 6 Classical Acting, Greek Theater, and The Festival of Dionysus

Voice/Body Workshop

Assignment for 9/13: Read Father Comes Home From the Wars Parts 1, 2, & 3 by Suzan-Lori Parks and Big Love by Chuck Mee (http://charlesmee.org/big-love.shtml)

September 13 Greek Theater in Adaptation: Father Comes Home From The Wars Parts 1, 2 & 3 and Big Love

Found Text Workshop

Assignment for 9/20: Read The Empty Space, by Peter Brook
Paper 1 due in class September 20th.

September 20 Deadly, Holy, Rough, and Immediate Theater

Ensemble Workshop

Assignment for 9/27: Read Three Sisters by Anton Chekhov.

September 27 Three Sisters

Stanislavski/Action Workshop I

Group Project/Presentation
Assignment for 10/11: Read *Death of a Salesman* by Arthur Miller and *The Humans* by Stephen Karam. By October 23rd: see *Big Love* at Spingold Theater: [http://www.brandeis.edu/departments/theater/productions/1617season/biglove.html](http://www.brandeis.edu/departments/theater/productions/1617season/biglove.html)

October 4 NO CLASS

October 11 *Death of a Salesman* and *The Humans*

Stanislavski/Action Workshop II

Group Project/Presentation

Assignment for 10/18: Read *Bootycandy* and *Barbeque* by Robert O’Hara. By October 23rd: see *Big Love* at Spingold Theater: [http://www.brandeis.edu/departments/theater/productions/1617season/biglove.html](http://www.brandeis.edu/departments/theater/productions/1617season/biglove.html)

October 18 *Bootycandy* and *Barbeque*

Meisner Technique Workshop

Group Project/Presentation

Assignment for 11/1: Read *Intimate Apparel* by Lynn Nottage.

October 25 NO CLASS

November 1 *Intimate Apparel* and *Big Love*

Status Workshop

Group Project/Presentation


November 8 *The Colored Museum*

Stereotype/Gender Workshop

Group Project/Presentation

Assignment for 11/15: read *4.48 Psychosis* by Sarah Kane and *For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When The Rainbow Is Enuf* by
Ntozake Shange. By November 20th, see Martyr at Spingold Theater: http://www.brandeis.edu/departments/theater/productions/1617season/martyr.html

November 15 Stage Poetry: 4.48 Psychosis and For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When The Rainbow is Enuf

Rhythm/Viewpoints Workshop

Group Project/ Presentation


November 22 Edith Can Shoot Things and Hit Them and Fun Home

Discuss Martyr

Group Project/ Presentation

Assignment for 11/29: Read Twelfth Night.

Group Project/Presentation

November 29 Twelfth Night: Language as Character and The Elizabethan Playhouses

Shakespeare Workshop

Group Project/Presentation

Assignment for 12/6: Prepare final project.

December 6 FINAL PROJECT PRESENTATIONS

If you are a student who needs academic accommodations because of a documented disability, please contact us and present your letter of accommodation as soon as possible.

If you have questions about documenting a disability or requesting academic accommodations, you should contact Beth Rodgers-Kay in Academic Services (x6-3470 or brodgers@brandeis.edu.)
Letters of accommodation should be presented at the start of the semester to ensure provision of accommodations. Accommodations cannot be granted retroactively.