

Level: undergraduate upper division
Focus: history
System: semester
Class size: 10-15

Theatre History I: From the Origins of Theatre to the 17th Century

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Office Hours: M 10-11am
F 1-2pm

Course Intro:

Welcome to Theatre History I! This class covers the major movements and traditions in world theatre from the beginning of recorded history to the 17th century. Theatre history is not just learning movements, though—it is a set of skills that enables us to harness our knowledge about the past and apply that knowledge constructively to theatre-making in the present. In this class, we will not only learn the contents of theatre history, but also how to *do* theatre history as a practice and connect it to practical theatre production. While the major skills you will develop in this course center around research and writing, you will deploy those skills in a series of projects that ask you to take on the perspectives of various types of theatre artists (designer, performer, and dramaturg).

The course is split into two distinct halves:

The first half of the course will focus on issues of historical reconstruction, and on the interrelationship between theatre and the surrounding culture. During this part of the course, we will examine a number of discreet performance forms that developed in relative isolation from one another at various points around the globe. This half of the course will culminate in the presentation of group midterm research projects on select theatrical traditions for which we have little surviving documentation (precolombian American, traditional Middle Eastern, and precolonial African performance). Groups and topics will be assigned during the first week of class, and presentations will be given in week 7.

Starting in week 8, the course will shift to an examination of the ways that different performance forms have influenced and shaped one another in a shared historical context. Narrowing our focus to Europe, we will examine the development of Western theatre from the Middle Ages through the early modern period, placing a special emphasis on how each new form borrowed from—or reacted to—previous ones. Following this line of inquiry, the major projects of this half

of the course (a production history and final analytical paper for inclusion in the dramaturgical research file) will focus on tracing lines of influence from these traditions to the present day.

The format of this course is lecture-discussion.

Grade Breakdown and Assignments:

Your grade in this course will be determined as follows:

Attendance and participation – 20%

Reading responses – 15%

Midterm presentation – 15%

Performance lab – 10%

Dramaturgical research file – 40% TOTAL, broken down as follows:

Material conditions report – 10%

Cultural analysis – 10%

Production history – 10%

Program notes – 10%

Each of these components is explained in detail below.

Attendance and Participation:

Theatre-making is a group effort, and requires the presence and active participation of all involved. Even the more “academic” aspects of theater (like dramaturgy) require that you be a team player, show up when you are needed, share your ideas verbally in group settings, and actively engage with the ideas of others. Because these skills are so important to our field, attendance and participation is the largest single portion of your grade in this class. Coming to class on time, committing to being present (i.e. not on your phone), and engaging respectfully with your classmates are practices that you will need to cultivate in order to earn a good attendance and participation grade in this class.

Respectful Engagement: The free and critical exchange of ideas is largely what a university education is all about, and there is no topic that is off-limits in this class. Because of this, and because the plays that we will be reading engage with many aspects of the human experience (some of which may be sensitive or politicized), it is vital that we approach all class discussions with respect for one another. While it is perfectly acceptable to disagree with ideas expressed by your classmates, and to refute those ideas with your own points, you must always direct your criticisms toward the points made and not toward the speaker. There is a difference between a disagreement and a personal attack, and personal attacks or insults toward a classmate will not be tolerated. Furthermore, personal attacks against a classmate that are based in their membership in a protected identity category (on the basis of race, gender, sexuality, ability, etc.) may put the

attacker in violation of the Campus Policy Prohibiting Harassment & Sexual Misconduct (viewable at <https://www.pugetsound.edu/about/offices-services/human-resources/policies/campus-policies/campus-policy-prohibiting-hara/>) and make them subject to official disciplinary action on the part of the university. It is important that you do participate in class discussion and engage with your classmates, but equally important that you do so in a manner that fosters respectful dialogue.

Calculating Attendance and Participation: We have a total of 40 class sessions this semester, each worth 0.5% of your final grade for a total of 20%. Each day that you show up to class on time, stay the whole time, and participate productively in class discussion will earn you the full 0.5%. Days that you are late, leave early, do not participate, or some combination of the three will earn you partial points for the day in proportion to the severity of the partial absence or lack of participation. Days that you are absent will be recorded as zeros, and are equivalent to sacrificing 0.5% of your total grade. That might not sound like much, but it adds up fast, so don't miss class!

Excused Absences: I grant excused absences for illness or family emergency only, and even then you must e-mail me *in advance* of the class you are going to miss. Absences will not be excused retroactively. Excused absences earn half credit for the day missed.

Reading Responses:

For each day that reading is assigned, you will send me your (quick and informal) first impression of the reading over Moodle. These impressions need not be long; in some cases just a sentence will do. In whatever number of sentences you need, tell me your gut reaction to the reading and why you felt that way. This is a subjective exercise, so there are no "wrong" reactions. If you find something particularly interesting, tell me about it! If you were bored to tears, tell me about it! If you found the reading confusing, frustrating, and deliberately obtuse, tell me about it! In each case, though, remember to include a "because" that relates back to the reading itself (interesting because that was an unusual plot twist, boring because there was no narrative, etc.). Reading makes up the bulk of the work that you will do in this course, and these responses will ensure that you receive concrete grade credit for having done it.

Calculating Response Credit: There are 32 class days for which reading is assigned, and for each you will send me a response worth 0.5% of your final grade. Because it is important for discussion that you come to class having already completed the day's reading, I only give credit for responses sent *before* the start of class on the corresponding day. However, at the end of the semester I will drop two zeros from each student's response grades. This means that if you forget to send your reaction on time, you will still be able to earn the full 15%—provided that you do not do so habitually. Responses are not graded; each is a full- or no-credit assignment. Be forewarned that if your response is not grounded in the reading (i.e. missing the "because" portion), you will not receive credit for that response.

Projects:

There are three major projects in this class: two presentational group projects and one individual written project spaced out over the course of the semester. Each requires the use of different skills which connect the study of theatre history to practical aspects of theatrical production.

Group Projects:

1) **Midterm Research Project** (3 groups):

This project is a formal presentation of research done on what historians have been able to guess or reconstruct about a performance form (or forms) for which we have few surviving documents. Given as a mock first rehearsal information session, this project requires that the presenters engage creatively with historiographical research and connect it to production practices used by designers in contemporary theatre-making. A full project description and rubric are available on Moodle.

Schedule: On the first day of class, I will ask each student to rank the three possible presentation topics in order of their interest. On the second day of class, I will assign groups based on these rankings. After this, you may work at your own pace until week 6, the week before midterm presentations. On the Wednesday of week 6 (October 4), the group will turn in a written presentation plan (details on Moodle). In week 7 you will give your presentations to the class and turn in any visual aids used.

Topics: Pre-Columbian American drama, traditional Middle Eastern drama, or precolonial African performance.

2) **Performance Lab** (2 groups):

In this project, you will undertake an actual historical reconstruction of a performance form, culminating in the presentation of a scene or scenes from the play the class has read for that day. Taking on the role of an acting troupe or company from the era involved, all members of the group will both act in the scene(s) and work behind the scenes to make the play a success. Each performance lab will include both a performance and a talkback, in which the group will justify the performance decisions they made in light of their historical research. Full project description and rubric on Moodle.

Schedule: On the first day of class, students will choose which topic they would rather work on and we will record the resulting groups. Groups may work at their own pace until the day of performance. The *commedia dell'arte* group will perform on Wednesday, November 1. The Spanish *loa* group will perform on Friday, December 1. Performance locations should be e-mailed to me a week in advance of the performance. There is no written component for this project.

Topics: *Commedia dell'arte* or Spanish *loa*.

Individual Project:

Dramaturgical Research File

For this project, you will adopt the role of production dramaturg to undertake and compile historical research on a famous pre-1700 play that is still performed today. The complete file will consist of four major components, to be turned in separately at different points during the semester:

- 1) **Material Conditions Report**—this section of the file details what we know about the material conditions of the theatre for which the play was written and uses this information to theorize how the play might have originally been staged. This section is due on Monday, September 18.
- 2) **Cultural Analysis**—this section of the file examines how the cultural ideas and practices of the time influenced the writing and interpretation of the play in its original performance context. This section is due on Monday, October 23.
- 3) **Production History**—this section tracks the major production history of this play from the time of its original writing to the present, touching on major influential productions and detailing how they affected subsequent productions. This section is due Monday, November 20.
- 4) **Program Notes**—this section, written in the form of the dramaturg's program notes for a theoretical contemporary production of this play, takes the wealth of historical knowledge you have uncovered and uses it to help bridge the gap between this old play and the modern audience watching it. This section is due by 2pm on Wednesday, December 13.

A full project description and rubric for the dramaturgical research file—including each of its separate components—is available on Moodle.

Grading: Each component will be graded separately when it is turned in and returned to you within two weeks. If you are unhappy with the grade you received on any of the first three components, you will have the opportunity to improve it by revising that section before turning in the complete dramaturgical research file on the day of the final. At that point, any changes or improvements you have made to the file will be taken into account and your grade will be updated accordingly.

Topics: Play options for this project include *Agamemnon* by Aeschylus, *Antigone* by Sophocles, *Medea* by Euripides, *The Bacchae* by Euripides, *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus* by Marlowe, *Hamlet* by Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night; or, What You Will* by Shakespeare, *The Duchess of Malfi* by Webster, *Life is a Dream* by Calderón, *The Country Wife* by Wycherley, or *The Rover* by Behn. All are available in the Norton Anthology. If you have a wild hair to do a particular play/time period outside this list, you may, provided that A) it falls within one of the places and times we cover in this class, B) it has an ongoing production history stretching into the present, and C) you meet with me during office hours at the beginning of the semester so that we can agree on an appropriate translation or edition for you to work from. Play selections are to be finalized by the end of the first week of class.

Required Reading:

The required course materials for this class are the following:

- Gainor, J. Ellen, Stanton B. Garner Jr., and Martin Puchner, eds. *The Norton Anthology of Drama, Second Edition: Volume One*. New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company (2014). ISBN: 978-0-393-92151-9
- Gerould, Daniel, ed. *Theatre/Theory/Theatre: The Major Critical Texts from Aristotle and Zeami to Soyinka and Havel*. New York: Applause Theatre & Cinema Books (2000). ISBN: 1-55783-527-6
- Course reader (available in the bookstore)

You will additionally be conducting independent historical research for which you will need to utilize outside resources through Collins Library or Summit. Our department liaison librarian is Lori Ricigliano (ricigliano@pugetsound.edu). She is available to help you with any research questions pertaining to theatre, and is the person you will report to for the class library day (November 17).

Copyright and Fair Use: Course materials are for educational purposes only and limited to students enrolled in the course. They are protected by copyright law and may not be copied, downloaded, stored, transmitted, shared or changed in any way.

Policies:

Turning in work:

Moodle: I prefer to receive assignments electronically. Please turn in all papers, bibliographies, and other written assignments via email, not in hard copy. I will return assignments with corrections and comments by email. You will be able to track your grade progress on Moodle.

Late Work: All assignments are due by the start of class on the due date. *With the exception of the final*, I do accept late work, but all late assignments will be graded down by **half a letter grade per day that it is late**. This means that an assignment that would have earned a B+ but is one day late would earn a B-, if two days late a C, etc. Assignments that are turned in on the due date but after the start of class time count as one day late already.

Extensions: If there is some urgent reason you will not be able to get me your work by the deadline (family emergency, technological failure, etc.), please email me *before the deadline* to explain your situation and request an extension. Extensions exist at my discretion. Extensions will not be issued retroactively, so be sure to email in advance of the deadline.

Email: I check my email once per business day. If you send me an email, please allow me at least 24 hours to respond. Also, please read through the syllabus and any available prompts before emailing me. It may be that your question has already been answered there.

Plagiarism: All students are expected to be familiar with policies against plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty as laid out in the Academic Handbook (<https://www.pugetsound.edu/files/resources/academichandbook2017-2018.pdf>).

If I discover an instance of plagiarism, including failure to cite sources, the student will receive a zero on the assignment in question, be required to attend a meeting with me and possibly the department chair, and may be subject to further disciplinary actions on the part of the university. If you are confused about what constitutes plagiarism, both the Writing Center and Collins Library can be helpful resources. Their pages on plagiarism are a good place to start:

Writing Center: <https://www.pugetsound.edu/academics/academic-resources/cwlt/writing-advisor-schedule/writing-resources/plagiarism/>

Collins Library: <http://research.pugetsound.edu/academicintegrity>

Student assistance:

Office of Accessibility and Accommodations: If you have a physical, psychological, medical or learning disability that may impact your course work, please contact Peggy Perno, Director of the Office of Accessibility and Accommodations, 105 Howarth, 253.879.3395. She will determine with you what accommodations are necessary and appropriate. All information and documentation is confidential.

Emergency Preparedness: Please review university emergency preparedness, response procedures and a training video posted at www.pugetsound.edu/emergency/. There is a link on the university home page. Familiarize yourself with hall exit doors and the designated gathering area for your class and laboratory buildings.

If building evacuation becomes necessary (e.g. earthquake), meet your instructor at the designated gathering area so she/he can account for your presence. Then wait for further instructions. Do not return to the building or classroom until advised by a university emergency response representative.

If confronted by an act of violence, be prepared to make quick decisions to protect your safety. Flee the area by running away from the source of danger if you can safely do so. If this is not possible, shelter in place by securing classroom or lab doors and windows, closing blinds, and turning off room lights. Lie on the floor out of sight and away from windows and doors. Place cell phones or pagers on vibrate so that you can receive messages quietly. Wait for further instructions.

If you have special medical or emergency-related information you need to share with me (EpiPen, special evacuation needs, etc.), please see me privately after class or during office hours as soon as possible, so that I can be adequately prepared to assist you if need be.

Trigger Warnings: Because what triggers any given individual is highly variable and subjective, I do not issue specific trigger warnings in this class. In a general sense, students should be aware that this course covers stories from many different societies on many different topics, some of which are violent, sexual, religious, or otherwise highly charged. If you would like to discuss this policy or your individual needs with me surrounding trigger warnings, you are welcome and encouraged to schedule a meeting with me or to come see me during office hours.

Schedule:

Week 1: Course Intro

- Aug 28 M – Course intro: practical theatre history and historiography
30 W – Origins of theatre
Readings: “Drama and Theater” & “A Short History of Theater” (Norton pp. 1-4)
Teeter, “Festivals of Osiris” (Reader pp. 1-6)
Homer, “Book IX” from the *Odyssey* (Reader pp. 7-18)
- Sept 1 F – Intro to Greek theatre
Readings: “Greek Theatre” (Norton pp. 4-12)
Goldhill, “The Audience of Athenian Tragedy” (Reader pp. 19-26)

Week 2: Classical Greece

- Sept 4 M **LABOR DAY – NO CLASS**
6 W – Tragedy
Readings: Aristotle, *Poetics* (T/T/T pp. 43-67 or alternate translation)
Sophocles, *Oedipus the King* (Norton pp. 138-186)
- 8 F – Old Comedy
Reading: Aristophanes, *Lysistrata* (Norton pp. 308-345)

Week 3: Classical Rome

- Sept 11 M – Intro to Roman theatre
Readings: “Roman Theatre” (Norton pp. 12-16)
Horace, *The Art of Poetry* (T/T/T pp. 68-83)
Kragelund, “Senecan Tragedy: Back on Stage?” (Reader pp. 27-35)
- 13 W – New Comedy
Reading: Plautus, *Pseudolus* (Norton pp. 346-393)
- 15 F – (Closet?) Tragedy
Reading: Seneca, *Thyestes* (Norton pp. 394-423)

Week 4: Classical India

- Sept 18 M – Intro to Sanskrit theatre **Material Conditions Report Due**
Readings: “Classical Indian Theater” (Norton pp. 16-19)
“Natyasastra” (T/T/T pp. 84-95)
- 20 W – *Nataka*
Reading: Kalidasa, *Shakuntala and the Ring of Memory* (Reader pp. 36-74)
- 22 F – *Prakarana*
Reading: Shudraka, *The Little Clay Cart* (Norton pp. 424-489)

Week 5: Medieval China

- Sept 25 M – Intro to Chinese theatre
Readings: “Classical Chinese Theater” (Norton pp. 19-22)

Hsu, selections from *The Chinese Conception of the Theatre* (Reader pp. 75-89)

27 W – *Zaju*

Reading: Guan, *Snow in Midsummer* (Norton pp. 501-522)

29 F – *Nanxi*

Reading: Genius of Hangchow, *Grandee's Son Takes the Wrong Career* (Reader pp. 90-106)

Week 6: Medieval Japan

Oct 2 M – Intro to Japanese theatre

Readings: “Classical Japanese Theatre” (Norton, pp. 22-25)

“Zeami Motokiyo” (Norton, pp. 523-528)

Zeami, *On the Art of the Nō Drama* (T/T/T, pp. 96-107)

4 W – *Noh*

Presentation Plans Due

Reading: Zeami, *Atsumori* (Norton, pp. 528-538)

6 F – *Kyogen*

Reading: Anonymous, *The Snail* (Reader 107-118)

Week 7: Midterm week

Oct 9 M – **Midterm group presentation:** pre-Columbian drama of the Americas

11 W – **Midterm group presentation:** traditional Middle Eastern drama

13 F – **Midterm group presentation:** pre-colonial African drama

Week 8: Shifting Gears

Oct 16 M **FALL BREAK – NO CLASS**

18 W – Shifting gears: historiography part II and Europe (the long view)

20 F – Intro to Medieval Europe

Readings: “Medieval European Theater” (Norton pp. 25-31)

Schnusenberg, selections from *The Relationship Between the Church and the Theatre* (Reader pp. 119-122)

Arnott, selection from *An Introduction to the French Theatre* (Reader pp. 123-128)

Week 9: Medieval Europe

Oct 23 M – Miracle plays

Cultural Analysis Due

Reading: Hrotsvit, *The Martyrdom of the Holy Virgins Agape, Chionia, and Hirenna* (Norton pp. 490-500)

25 W – Mystery plays

Reading: The Wakefield Master, *Second Shepherds' Play* (Norton pp. 539-570)

27 F – Morality plays

Reading: Anonymous, *Everyman* (Norton pp. 571-596)

Week 10: Renaissance Italy

- Oct 30 M – Intro to Italian theatre
 Readings: “Theater in Early Modern Europe 1500-1700” (Norton pp. 31-38)
 Castelvetro, *The Poetics of Aristotle* (T/T/T pp. 108-116)
- Nov 1 W – *Commedia dell’arte* (**Performance Lab**)
 Readings: Richards, “The *Commedia dell’Arte* Acting Companies” (Reader pp. 129-138)
 Scala, *The Dentist* (Reader pp. 139-143)
- 3 F – Pastoral tragicomedy
 Readings: Guarini, *The Compendium of Tragicomic Poetry* (T/T/T pp. 128-134)
 Guarini, selections from *Il Pastor Fido* (Reader pp. 144-195)

Week 11: Renaissance England

- Nov 6 M – Intro to English theatre
 Readings: “English Theater, 1576-1642” (Norton pp. 38-42)
 Smith, selections from *Ancient Scripts and Modern Experience on the English Stage 1500-1700* (Reader pp. 196-203)
- 8 W – Revenge Tragedy
 Reading: Kyd, *The Spanish Tragedy* (Norton pp. 597-671)
- 10 F – City Comedy
 Reading: Jonson, *Volpone* (Norton pp. 887-989)

Week 12: Early Modern France

- Nov 13 M – Intro to French theatre
 Readings: “French Theater, 1630-1700” (Norton pp. 45-48)
 d’Aubignac, *The Whole Art of the Stage* (T/T/T pp. 146-152)
 Corneille, *Of the Three Unities of Action, Time, and Place* (T/T/T pp. 153-167)
- 15 W – Neoclassical Tragedy
 Reading: Racine, *Phèdre* (Norton pp. 1456-1512)
- 17 F – Library day

Week 13: Early Modern France cont’d

- Nov 20 M – Farce **Production Histories Due**
 Reading: Molière, *Tartuffe* (Norton pp. 1225-1282)
- 22 W **TRAVEL DAY – NO CLASS**
- 24 F **THANKSGIVING BREAK – NO CLASS**

Week 14: The Spanish Golden Age

- Nov 27 M – Intro to Spanish theatre **Course evals**
 Readings: “Spanish Theater, 1580-1700” (Norton pp. 42-45)
 Lope de Vega, *The New Art of Writing Plays* (T/T/T pp. 135-145)
- 29 W – Comedia Nueva
 Reading: Lope de Vega, *Fuenteovejuna* (Norton pp. 1081-1144)

Dec 1 F – Auto Sacramental (**Performance Lab**)

Reading: Sor Juana, *Loa for the Auto Sacramental of the Divine Narcissus*
(Norton pp. 1513-1529)

Week 15: Wrap-Up

Dec 4 M – Catch-up day

6 W – Course wrap-up and review

8 F **READING PERIOD – NO CLASS**

Complete dramaturgical research file, including brand-new Program Notes section, is due by 2pm on Wednesday, December 13, the day of our scheduled final. There will be no sit-down final exam.