

THE 504: Foundations of the American Theatre
Spring 2020
Friday 1:30pm – 4:20pm PST
Shoup 207 and Zoom

Dr. Sarah Alice Campbell

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Office Hours: T/Th 10:00AM – 1:00PM

Phone: _____ (feel free to text/call if you are running late for class, need some help urgently, etc.)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will examine the foundations of the American theatre from the late 18th Century through the mid-20th Century. The goal of the course is to provide students with a firm historical and theoretical foundation for the majority of American plays that they will encounter as contemporary theatre artists. Special attention will be paid to movements and/or plays that established tropes that still predominate in the contemporary American theatre. This course features plays that may be emotionally challenging, racist, sexist, classist, or otherwise frustrating. Contact me if you have concerns or need to chat about this.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- 1) Understand how the myth of exceptionalism informed the works written for the American stage.
- 2) Discuss the major tropes of early American theatre.
- 3) Discuss how historical events are interpreted for the stage.
- 4) Conduct research on a topic, develop a thesis, and argue in support of that thesis statement in a research paper.
- 5) Describe the major developments in the American theatre scene from the mid-18th century to the 1930s.

COURSE TEXTS

Boyer, Paul S. *American History: Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2012. ISBN: 978-0195389142. (Optional).

Dunbar-Ortiz, Roxanne. *An Indigenous Peoples History of the United States*. Beacon Press, 2015. ISBN: 978-0807057834. (Optional).

Jacobs-Jenkins, *An Octoroon* (2014). (Required).

Londré, Felicia H. and Daniel Watermeier. *History of North American Theater*. New York: Continuum, 1998. ISBN: 978-0826410795. (Required).

McConachie, Bruce. *Melodramatic Formations: American Theatre & Society 1820-1870*. Iowa City: Iowa UP, 1992. ISBN: 978-0877453604. (Required).

Walker, *Expressionism and Modernism in the American Theatre: Bodies, Voices, Words*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005. ISBN: 978-0521847476. (Required).

Hobson Quinn, Arthur. *Representative American Plays*. (The following plays can be found in this anthology: Godfrey, *The Prince of Parthia* (1767); Royall Tyler, *The Contrast* (1787); Barker, *Superstition* (1824); Mowatt, *Fashion* (1845); Boucicault, *The Octoroon* (1859); Herne, *Margaret Fleming* (1890); Belasco and Long, *Madame Butterfly* (1900)).

The remaining plays and readings can be found on Blackboard or through the library website.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

A general note on feedback for assignments: I am more than happy to provide feedback in advance of any assignment as long as you send it to me via email (sarahcampbell@uidaho.edu) – do not just upload it to Blackboard – within 48 hours of the due date. If you do not send it via email or you don't get it to me within 48 hours, I can't guarantee a response.

Presentations – There will be two presentations for the course throughout the semester and you will be able to sign up for the day you'd like to present. These presentations will be 8-10 minutes and should focus on a play, historical event, or playwright (or other topic as approved by instructor) from the time period that we are currently studying, but that we aren't addressing directly in the course. It is totally fine to overlap your presentations with your paper topic. I am happy to provide ideas or guidance! 100 points each.

Paper – There will be one 12-18-page paper due at the end of the semester. The topic is completely up to you (within the scope of the class) but could focus on a play, a series of play texts, a playwright, or a theatrical event. I will scatter due dates throughout the semester so that you can build up to this length rather than it being due all at once. This paper will be broken down into the following parts:

1. Abstract – due February 7th 100 points.
2. Annotated Bibliography – due February 28th 100 points.
3. Outline – due March 13th 100 points.
4. First draft – due April 3rd 100 points (should be at least 9 pages ☺).
5. Final draft – due May 15th 200 points.

Attendance/Participation – Attendance is expected in the course. Since we only meet 15 times throughout the semester, it is critical that you don't miss a session. That being said, there are of course times when attending class is not possible. If this does happen, you can watch the recorded session and send a brief summary of your thoughts/impressions/questions from that class period and from the readings. These responses are due within a week of the missed class period. Students are expected to participate in the class discussions. Aim for contributing to the discussion at least once per class period. **For distance students who aren't able to attend the class period**, these summaries will count toward your attendance participation grade for the course. 200 points.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Below you will find the schedule of readings to be completed for the course. Readings are subject to change (plenty of notice will be given if this does happen!).

Part 1: Theatre on Turtle Island and in the Colonies

- F 1/17 **Introduction to the Course: Why Study History? What is Historiography?**
Reconstructing the Historical Event and the Theatrical Event
Read: Postlewait, "Chapter 3: The Historical Event," p. 89-116.
Postlewait, "Chapter 4: The Theatrical Event," p. 116-153.
- F 1/24 **Pre-Columbian Performance**
Read: Londré, "Chapter 1: Pre-Columbian Performance," p. 15-38.
McConachie, "American Theatre in Context," p. 111-126.
Opt. – Boyer, "Chapter 1: Beginnings: Pre-history to 1763," p. 1-14.
Opt. – Dunbar-Ortiz, "Introduction," and "Chapter 1: Follow the Corn," p. 1-31.
- F 1/31 **Theatre in the Colonies**
Read: Londré, "Chapter 2: Theater in New Spain, the American Colonies, and New France," p. 39-80.
McConachie, "American Theatre in Context," p.126-147.
Godfrey, *The Prince of Parthia* (1767)
Warren, *The Group*, p. 29-53.
Opt. – Dunbar-Ortiz, "Chapter 2: Culture of Conquest," "Chapter 3: Culture of the Covenant," "Chapter 4: Bloody Footprints," p. 32-77.
Opt. – Boyer, "Chapter 2: 1763-1789: Revolution, Constitution, a New Nation," p. 15-29.

Part 2: The Long 19th Century

F 2/7

Early National Stages

Read: Londré, "Chapter 3: National Stages," p. 81-110.

Nathans, "Chapter 3: Strangers in a Strange Land," p. 83-110.

Royall Tyler, *The Contrast* (1787)

Murray, *The Traveller Returned*, p. 103-152.

Opt. – Dunbar- Ortiz, "Chapter 5: Birth of a Nation," p. 78-94.

Opt. – Boyer, "Chapter 3: 1789-1850: The Promise and Perils of Nationhood," p. 30-44.

F 2/14

Romanticism in the Americas

Read: Londré, "Chapter 4: Romantic Enactments: 1825-1870," p. 111-167.

McConachie, "American Theatre in Context," p. 147-175.

McConachie, "Part I: A Spirit of Locomotiveness," p. 5-63.

Barker, *Superstition* (1824)

Opt. – Dunbar-Ortiz, "Chapter 6: The Last of the Mohicans and Andrew Jackson's White Republic," p. 95-116.

F 2/21

Melodrama and the Romantic Impulse

Read: McConachie, "Part II: Theatre of Yeoman Independence for Jacksonians, 1830-1855," p. 65-155.

Stone, *Metamora* p. 3-40.

Barnes Conner, *The Forest Princess*, p. 322-368.

Opt. – Dunbar-Ortiz, "Chapter 7: Sea to Shining Sea," p. 117-132.

F 2/28

The Minstrel Tradition

Read: Hornback, "From Allegorical Type and Sartorial Satire to Minstrel Dandy Stereotype, Zip Coon, Jim Crow, and Blackface-on-Black Violence," p. 109-143.

Johnson, Selections from *Burnt Cork: Traditions and Legacies of Blackface Minstrelsy*, p. 1-9 (Introduction); 73-103 (Chapter 3).

Traylor, "Two Afro-American Contributions to Dramatic Form," p. 45-60.

F 3/6

Melodrama and Escaped Slave Narratives

Read: Hopkins, *Peculiar Sam, or the Underground Railroad*, p. 96-123.

Wells Brown, *The Escape, or Leap for Freedom*, p. 38-95.

Opt. – Boyer, "Chapter 4: 1850-1865: Slavery and the Civil War," p. 44-59.

Opt. – Dunbar-Ortiz, "Chapter 8: Indian Country," p.133-161.

F 3/13

Business-Class Society on the Stage

Read: McConachie, "Part III: Business-Class Theatre for the Respectable, 1845-1870," p. 157-257.

Marra, "Taming America as Actress," p. 52-72.

Daly, *Under the Gaslight* (1867)

Mowatt, *Fashion*, p. 5-71.

Opt. – Dunbar-Ortiz, "Chapter 9: US Triumphalism and Peacetime Colonialism," p. 162-177.

Opt. – Boyer, "Chapter 5: 1866-1900: Industrialization and its Consequences," p. 60-74.

F 3/20

NO CLASS – Spring Break

F 3/27

Tradition and Transformation

Read: Londré, "Chapter 5: Tradition and Transformation: 1870-1900," p. 168-259.

Londré, "Chapter 6: Entertainment and Art: 1900-1945," p. 260-360.

Herne, *Margaret Fleming* (1890)
Moody, *The Great Divide*, p. 3-167.
Opt. – Dunbar-Ortiz, “Chapter 10: Ghost Dance Prophecy: A Nation is Coming,” p. 178-196.
Opt. – Boyer, “Chapter 6: 1900-1920: Reform and War,” p. 75-89.

Part 3: Innovation and Tradition – Tensions, Movements, and Reconsiderations

F 4/3 European Modernism on the American Stage: O’Neill, Rice, and Treadwell

Read: Walker, “The ‘Unconscious Autobiography’ of Eugene O’Neill,” p. 123-154.
Walker, “Elmer Rice and the Cinematic Imagination,” p. 155-187.
Walker, “Sophie Treadwell’s ‘Pretty Hands,’” p. 211-238.
O’Neill, *The Hairy Ape*, p. 250-308.
Rice, *The Adding Machine* (1923)
Opt. – Boyer, “Chapter 7: 1920-1945: From Conflict to Global Power,” p. 90-105.

F 4/10 Folk Modernism: Willis Richardson and Zora Neale Hurston

Read: Thompson, “The Lafayette Players, 1917-1932,” p. 211-230.
Peterson, “Willis Richardson: Pioneer Playwright,” p. 113-125.
Diamond, “Folk Modernism: Zora Neale Hurston’s Gestural Drama,” p. 112-134.
Gray, “The Mirror and the Mask: An Overview of African-American Drama During the 1920s,” p. 33-54.
Richardson, *The Chip Woman’s Fortune*, p. 164-185.
Hurston, *Color Struck*, p. 33-50.

F 4/17 Staging Domesticity in the Early 20th Century

Read: Miller, “Chapter 5: Realism and American Drama,” p. 136-184.
Pick any two below!
Crothers, *A Man’s World*, p. 77-143.
Chapman Tillman, *Aunt Betsy’s Thanksgiving*, p. 124-133.
Burrill, *Aftermath*, p. 134-151.
Hellman, *The Children’s Hour*, p. 177-237.
Kaufman and Hart, *You Can’t Take it With You* (1936)

Part 4: Past Meets Present: Reinventing the Canon

F 4/24 East/West: West Writes East

Read: Said, Selections from *Orientalism*.
Belasco and Long, *Madame Butterfly* (1900)
Hwang, *M. Butterfly*, p. 1-100.

F 5/1 Re-Writing Race: The/An Octoroon

Read: Hoxworth, “Minstrel Scandals; or, the Restorative White Properties of Blackface,” p. 8-19.
Boucicault, *The Octoroon* (1859)
Jacobs-Jenkins, *An Octoroon* (2014)
Opt. – Dunbar-Ortiz, “Chapter 11: Doctrine of Discovery,” and “Conclusion,” p. 197-236.