

STAGE and SCREEN:
Theatre in the Age of Film and Television
[The Evergreen State College]

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Office Hours: Wednesday, 5 – 6 pm
Classroom: SEM II, A1107
Class times: Wednesday, 6 – 10 pm
Saturday, 1 – 5 pm

Optional
screening times: Saturdays, 9 or 10 am – 12:30 pm (depending on length)

Over the past century, film and television have evolved to become the dominant performance mediums and agents of popular culture in the world. Conversely, and in spite of significant innovation, theatre has experienced a decline in output, influence, and attendance. This program will investigate stage and screen in the 21st century. What are these mediums – as separate entities and in relation to one another? What role do they play in our culture? How do they co-exist and, at best, live in creative dissonance? Our readings will include plays, operas, film scripts, literary sources, and critical/historical materials. We will also attend theatre performances in Seattle and screen works created on film and video. Through a series of lectures, workshops, seminars, and performance exercises, we will focus our work to develop both critical perspective on and practical understanding of stage and screen in the modern era.

Central *questions* that form the basis of our *learning goals* include:

- What concepts, conventions, and techniques are involved in reading (and listening to), producing, and viewing plays, musicals, operas?
- What developments, individuals, and works exemplify the art of the stage in the age of film and television?
- What distinguishes film and television from stage performance and how have these distinctions evolved with developments in technology and media?
- How has our perception of and relationship to the stage changed as a result of film and television?
- What is involved when literature is adapted as theatre, opera or film?
- What role does community and culture play in the live stage event versus film and television, which are generally pre-packaged technology?

Given the complexity and scope of this subject, it would be impossible to provide a truly comprehensive picture of stage and screen in just one quarter of study. The specific topics chosen for the program – supported by readings, visual materials, music, and performances – address concepts, developments, techniques, individuals and works that best reveal the art of the stage – in America – in the age of film and television.

Program requirements

- Excellent **attendance** and **full participation** in all program activities
- **Completed assignments** turned in on time:
 - 1.) Weekly response: one paragraph response to one of two weekly topics based on your reading and/or screening assignments. Your paragraph should include a major point or question. During class, we will do ten-minute seminars with a partner to discuss your findings on each topic.
 - 2.) The Cornell box: this is a “handmade” response to one of the first three stage works we study (Vogel, Wilson or Sondheim). The point of creating a Cornell box is to give play analysis a physical form — be it theme, guiding metaphor, character, conflict or other related areas.
 - 3.) Group research projects: in groups of four you will research a topic that examines the stage in relation to the screen, particularly television. As a group you need to formulate a question that will guide your research. You will present your findings in the sixth week of the quarter (Feb. 8 & 12). The work will involve: primary literary sources and screening materials, a group presentation of the topic where each participant will present some *carefully chosen* aspect (supported by a primary source) and interpret it for us.
 - 4.) Reflective essay: this is a 6-8 page reflection that articulates the conclusions you have come to about stage and screen. Using the material we’ve studied, how has your thinking about the stage -- plays, operas and musicals – evolved in context of film and television.
- **Completed portfolio** to include all work: weekly response paragraphs, Cornell box, group research project materials, reflective essay, lecture notes, self-evaluation, and faculty evaluation.
- **Field trips**: attend performances of Ma Rainey's Black Bottom (Jan. 22) and The Secret in the Wings (Feb. 26) at the Seattle Rep. The cost of tickets is \$10 per performance (\$20 total). If you are unable to go on the field trip, you are required to attend a performance BEFORE the class meets to discuss.
- **Evaluation Week**: students should plan to be on campus one evening during the week of March 14-18 for their scheduled Evaluation Conference
- **Optional weekly screenings**: You are required to screen all assigned DVDs and videotapes **prior** to the class when they will be discussed. A simple way to do this is to attend the weekly screening on Saturday mornings. This will save you a trip to campus, allow you to see the material on a large screen, and give you an opportunity to discuss with classmates over lunch before we meet at 1 pm. The screenings will take place in the same room as our classes – A1107.

Required Texts and CD (available at TESC bookstore):

- Hare. The Hours
- Kushner. Angels in America (Millennium Approaches and Perestroika)
- O'Neill. The Emperor Jones
- Shakespeare. Titus Andronicus
- Vogel. How I Learned to Drive
- Weidman/Sondheim. Sunday in the Park with George (audio CD & libretto)
- Wilson. Ma Rainey's Black Bottom
- Zimmerman. The Secret in the Wings

Required DVDs and Videotapes (on reserve in TESC library):

- Angels in America (DVD of Nichols film)
- Dead Man Walking (DVD of Robbins film)
- Dead Man Walking (SF Opera videotape)
- Emperor Jones (video of The Wooster Group stage production)
- The Hours (DVD of Daldry film)
- The Regard of Flight (video of Bill Iwrin stage production)
- Sunday in the Park with George (DVD of New York production)
- Titus Andronicus (DVD of Taymor film)
- Titus Andronicus (video excerpts of Taymor stage production)

Suggested readings/viewings (on reserve in TESC library):

- Aaronson. American Avant-Garde Theatre
- American Theatre magazine — recommended articles:
 - "A Star-Spangled Sondheim Summer," (July/August 2002)
 - "The 5th Element" (April 2004)
 - "Making Shakespeare New" (May/June 2001)
 - "Homeward Bound" and "Blowin' Up the Set" (November 1999)
 - "Fragments from the Age of the Self" (December 1999)
 - "Understanding Critics" (December 2001)
- Bazin. What is Cinema?
- Blau. Audience
- Brook. The Empty Space
- Blumanthal. Playing with Fire
- Bordman, Film Art
- Gordon. Art Ain't Easy: The Achievement of Stephen Sondheim
- Hurt. Focus on Theatre and Film
- Miller. Death of a Salesman
- Marill. More Theatre: Stage to Screen to Television
- Murray. The Cinematic Imagination
- Styan. The Dramatic Experience
- Treadwell. Machinal
- Vardac, A. Nicholas. Stage to Screen
- Waldman. Joseph Cornell: Master of Dreams
- Wilson. The Theatre of Images

CALENDAR

WEEK ONE

Wednesday, January 5

STAGE AND SCREEN

Handouts: Syllabus, Calendar, Cornell Box images, Covenant

Workshop: The art of transformation

Saturday, January 8

READING AND MAKING PLAYS

Handout: Play analysis for directors and active readers

Readings: How I Learned to Drive by Paula Vogel

"Rough Theatre" from The Empty Space (website)

"Driving Ms. Vogel" - American Theatre, Oct. '98 (website)

Writing: Response paragraph to How I Learned to Drive

Seminar: "Rough Theatre" and How I Learned to Drive

WEEK TWO

Wednesday, January 12

FILM AND TELEVISION IN CONTEXT

Handout: Film and television

Workshop: Staging plays/staging for the camera

Readings: The Hours (screenplay by David Hare)

Eisenstein: "Through Theatre to Cinema" (website)

Saturday, January 15

CINEMATIC TIME AND SPACE

*10 am: optional screening time for The Hours

Reading: Cunningham: excerpt from The Hours novel (website)

Writing: Response paragraph to The Hours screenplay and novel

Seminar: Literature to screenplay to film

Screen: The Hours

WEEK THREE

Wednesday, January 19

REALISM IN THEATRE AND FILM (& GLIMPING "REALITY" ON TV)

Handout: The Realist tradition

Workshop: film clips from Kazan and others

Readings: Ma Rainey's Black Bottom by August Wilson

"Salvation in the City of Bones" – American Theatre,
May/June '99 (website)

Writing: Response paragraph to Ma Rainey

WEEK THREE (cont'd)

Saturday, January 22

MA RAINEY'S BLACK BOTTOM at Seattle Rep (**NO AFTERNOON CLASS**)

9 am: optional screening time for Sunday in the Park with George

5 pm: Class leaves Olympia for field trip to Seattle

WEEK FOUR

Wednesday, January 26

CORNELL BOX (**due with presentations**)

SONDHEIM AND THE AMERICAN MUSICAL THEATRE

Readings: Sunday in the Park with George (libretto from audio CD)

Introduction to Art Ain't Easy (website)

Writing: response paragraph to Sondheim materials

Seminar: Ma Rainey performance

Screen: Sunday in the Park with George

Saturday, January 29

MUSIC AND OPERA

10 am: optional screening time for Dead Man Walking (Robbins film)

Workshop: musical theatre with composer/lyricist Scott Warrender

Seminar: Dead Man Walking: novel to film to opera

Readings: Excerpt from Dead Man Walking novel and

Libretto from audio CD of opera

Screen: Dead Man Walking (Robbins film)

WEEK FIVE

Wednesday, February 2

SHAKESPEARE ON THE PAGE AND ON THE STAGE

Handout: reading and performing Shakespeare

Workshop/screening: on playing/staging Shakespeare

Readings: Titus Andronicus

"What's that Puppet Doing in my Play?" – American Theatre,
Feb. '04 (website)

Writing: Paragraph response to Titus Andronicus

Saturday, February 5

SHAKESPEARE ON FILM

9 am: optional screening time for Titus Andronicus (Taymor film)

Readings: Titus Andronicus

"The Possession of Julie Taymor" – American Theatre,
Sept. '98 (website)

Seminar: Titus in three mediums

Screen: Titus Andronicus (Taymor film)

WEEK SIX

Wednesday, February 9 AND Saturday, February 12

STUDENT PROJECTS:

Considering television (screenings/readings TBA)

WEEK SEVEN

Wednesday, February 16

NEW YORK AND REGIONAL THEATRE

Workshop/screening: Bill Irwin and The Regard of Flight

Readings: Emperor Jones by Eugene O'Neill

Murray: "Eugene O'Neill, Expressionism and Film" (website)

Writing: Paragraph response to readings

Saturday, February 19

THE AMERICAN AVANT-GARDE

9 am: optional screening time for Emperor Jones (Wooster Group)

Reading: Aaronson chapter excerpt (website)

Seminar: Emperor Jones

Screen: Emperor Jones (Wooster Group)

WEEK EIGHT

Wednesday, February 23

MYTH AND FAIRY TALES ON STAGE

Readings: Secret in the Wings (by Mary Zimmerman)

"The Zimmerman Touch" – American Theatre, March 2002

and Secret source materials (website)

Writing: Paragraph response to Zimmerman readings

Seminar: Secret in the Wings

Saturday, February 26

THE SECRET IN THE WINGS at the Seattle Rep (**NO AFTERNOON CLASS**)

9 am: optional screening time for Angels in America: Millennium

Approaches (Nichols film)

5 pm: Class leaves for field trip to Seattle Rep

WEEK NINE

Wednesday, March 2

SECRETS AND ANGELS

Readings: Angels in America (by Tony Kushner)

"The Angels Decade" (website)

Writing: Paragraph response to Angels materials

Screen: Angels in America: Millennium Approaches

Seminar: Secret in the Wings performance and Angels

WEEK NINE (cont'd)

Saturday, March 5

ANGELS AND THE AMERICAN THEATRE LANDSCAPE

9 am: optional screening time for Angels in America: Perestroika

Reading: "Angels Takes Flight as a Film" (website)

Writing: **Draft** of Reflective Essay due (partners work in class)

Screen: Angels in America: Perestroika

WEEK TEN

Wednesday, March 9

CONSIDERING STAGE AND SCREEN: CREATIVE DISSONANCE?

Program Review

Readings: "A Critic's Summit" – American Theatre, May/June '99 and
Frank Rich lecture (website) TBA

****Reflective Essay Assignment due**

Saturday, March 12

POTLUCK LUNCH AND DISCUSSION