

**290-C THEATER ARTS GRADUATE SEMINAR
Performance Analysis and Re-creation (62362)**

Dr. Michael M. Chemers
Office: J-18 Theater Arts
831.502.7571
chemers@ucsc.edu

Meets: T TH 4:00-5:45 pm
Location: J-101
Office Hours: W 10-12
and by appt.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

In the first half of this course we will become familiar with new ways of reading some of the most important stories our civilization tells, and analyze, to some degree, how theatre artists have adopted and adapted those stories into important dramatic works. We will look at both mainstream theatricals and more radical and vanguard works from across the Western canon. The purpose of this examination is to develop an understanding of how critical stories are told and retold, manifested in new ways for new times and social contexts. That accomplished, the second half of the class focuses on building upon these observations to engage in a creative process for a similar exercise. The class will divide itself into working groups, and each will engage in a creative but rigorously researched adaptation project.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Upon successful completion of this course, the student will be able to:

- Demonstrate a general comprehensive understanding of how dramatists employ foundational mythologies for aesthetic purposes.
- Develop an understanding of how theatre responds to, reflects, and challenges sociopolitical conditions.
- Develop a dramaturgical theory that guides a process of adaptation.
- This course is also an appropriate place to discuss matters of importance to the graduate student body of the Department of Theater Arts.

Texts Required

Martin, Charles, and Ovid. *Metamorphoses* (Norton 2005)
Van Itallie, Jean-Claude. *THE SERPENT* (Dramatists 1998)
Soyinka, *THE BACCHAE OF EURIPIDES* (Norton 2004)
Iizuka, *POLAROID STORIES* (Dramatic Pub. Co., 1999)
Fitts, Dudley and Sophocles: *THE OEDIPUS CYCLE* (Harvest 2002)
Euripides, *BACCHAE* (Cambridge 2000)
Ruhl, Sarah. *EURYDICE* (Samuel French 2008)
Birtwhistle, Harrison. *MINOTAUR* (Libretto; Boosey and Hawkes, London)

Other readings will be available on the e-commons site

NOTE ON TEXTS: Ultimately, you are responsible for acquiring the books, even if the bookstore doesn't have them! I ordered enough, but that's not always what happens. You may retrieve all of these books at *The Literary Guillotine, 204 Locust Street, Santa Cruz CA 95060, 831-457-1195.*

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

1. *Attendance.* I do not take attendance in this class. Much of the material necessary to do well in the course will be covered in the class sessions. If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to get the notes from a classmate, not from the professor.

2. *Reader Responses.* For THREE of the plays we read, you will craft a response paper of no fewer than 1,250 words (5 pages). You choose the plays. The specific topic of the paper is up to you, but you will be graded on how well you incorporate the ongoing class discussions, history, and theoretical works we read into your response. I am looking for evidence of your ability to critically engage with the material you read. You will also be graded on clarity and style, which are professional practice skills in whatever field you may pursue. Consider this a research assignment: pose a question and answer it (see below). Do not summarize the reading. Do not narrate your personal feelings about the reading. It is very likely that you will be given your first submission back to be revised and re-graded, you lucky devils.
3. *Adaptation Project.* The class will be divided into teams and choose a story from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, which they will then adapt into a new play, to be performed in the final days of the class. As the project forms, objectives for adaptors include:
1. What was the social/political context of the earliest known telling of the myth?
 2. What story can we tell that is indicated or adumbrated by this text but relevant for a modern audience (WHY THIS PLAY NOW)?
 3. What aspects of the original storytelling context are to be enhanced, and what discarded? How do we create a new, single storyline on this pattern?
 4. How can we adapt outmoded tropes and narrative conventions to a modern performance sensibility?
 5. How do we express these notions in design?
 6. What new innovations can come from this basic source material?
- Adaptation teams will ultimately provide a script of 15-20 minutes' length, and a summary of the adaptation process. Concept teams will provide visual referents as per a typical design launch presentation, including a storyboard if necessary and a summary of the production concept in general and design concepts in particular. These will be presented in the final weeks of class.

GRADING			
Responses (x3)	300	450-500	A
Participation	100	400-449	B
Final Project	100	350-399	C
TOTAL	500	300-350	D

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES (subject to change)

WEEK ONE

4.2 Introduction

4.4 Read: Doty, Chapters 2 and 3 [ecommons]. Discussion: Myth and Society

WEEK TWO:

4.9 Read: Genesis 2, 3 [ecommons]

4.11 Read: Van Itallie, *The Serpent*

WEEK THREE

4.16 Read: Bertwhistle, *Minotaur*

4.18 In-class: film, *The Minotaur*

WEEK FOUR

4.23 Read: Sophocles, *Oedipus at Colonus*

4.25 In-class: film: *The Gospel at Colonus* (Mabou Mines)

WEEK FIVE

4.30 Read: Euripides, *Bacchae*

5.2 Continued

WEEK SIX

5.7 Read: Soyinka, *The Bacchae of Euripides*, including the INTRODUCTION

5.9 Read: Iizuka, *Polaroid Stories*

WEEK SEVEN:

5.14 In class: film: *Rocky Horror*

5.16 Discussion: *The Rocky Horror Show*. Read "Wild and Untamed Thing," by Chemers [e-commons]

WEEK EIGHT:

5.21 Read: Ruhl, *Eurydice*. **LAST DAY TO HAND IN RESPONSE PAPERS.**

5.23 In class: Watch Brook's *Mahabarata*

WEEK NINE:

5.28 Read: Chaudhuri, Una. "Working Out (of) Place: Peter Brook's *Mahabarata* and the problems of intercultural performance"*

5.30 **MORE READING!**

WEEK TEN

6.4 **TBA**

6.6 **TBA**

Your final projects will take place during the final exam time: June 11, 4-7 pm

* This entire article is available on Google Books' *Staging Resistance: essays on Political Theater*, pp 77-97.

