

Jodi Kanter  
Sample Syllabi\*

1. Theatre 642: Dramatic Theory and Criticism
2. Theatre 610: Performance Theory
3. Theatre 310: Performing Literature (The Harlem Renaissance)
4. Theatre 109: Introduction to Performance Studies (Women's Voices)

*\*Note: Equal Opportunity / Non-Discrimination Policies and detailed grading rubrics have been removed from these syllabi to save space.*

# Theatre 642: History of Dramatic Theory and Criticism

Revised 6/13/02

Time: M-TH, 9-11:50  
Room: Craig 312

Dr. Jodi Kanter  
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## Course Description:

This course will provide an overview of the major works of Western dramatic theory and criticism from 500 B.C.E. to the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. We will become familiar with the major principles, philosophies and questions that have influenced theatre artists and critics, audiences and scholars since ancient times. We will also actively explore how these ideas shape the ways we think about and do theatre today.

## Requirements and Assessment:

1. Daily discussion preparation: Because this course will cover a great deal of material in an insanely short amount of time, it is essential that every student actively prepare for each class meeting. To that end, each student will prepare a copy of the following items daily for every class member:
  - a 1-2 paragraph summary of the day's reading or an outline of major points. The summary should include a brief reflection on the relationship between authors assigned.
  - a brief reflection on whether or not this reading seems useful to you as a teacher and, if so, how.
  - one application question which engages the reading, either imagining how another theorist might respond to it or how the reading might be used in production.

*Your preparation for and participation in daily discussions will comprise 33% of your course grade.*

2. Lesson / Presentation: You will be responsible for one 30-40 minute class presentation on a selected author or authors. Your lesson may include an activity and should be aimed at the level of students you teach. Your presentation should also contain material that helps to both explicate and complicate the topic. (We'll discuss why these are not contradictory aims.) When you're done, we should have some sense of:
- authorial context: who is / are the author(s)? Where does this work fit in the body of this author's work?
  - historical context: what was happening in the country / world when this text was written? To what does it seem to be responding?
  - a dramatic link: what dramatic text might be interesting to consider in light of this critical theory? Can you help us do it? Bring in a scene, real or invented.
  - what questions are at stake: your presentation should include three application / implication questions. We'll discuss these further in class.

You should provide an outline of your presentation and a bibliography for each class member. Additional handouts are also welcome. I encourage you to discuss your presentation with me in advance.

*Your presentation(s) will comprise 33% of your course grade.*

3. Term Project: In lieu of a term paper, I am asking you to prepare three things. First, an annotated bibliography of your topic, which may be drawn from any of the assigned readings. Second, a letter from one of the theorists you are considering to one that you are not and a response. Third, a unit plan that incorporates the work in your presentation and bibliography into a high school or middle school course. The unit can be as short as a week or as long as a month, but it should include:
- learning objectives, related to course objectives
  - daily lesson plans
  - assignments
  - plans for assessment

*Your term project will comprise 33% of your grade. It is due Monday, July 8.*

## Course Calendar

### Week One: The Scholar and the Critic: Ancients and Response

- M 6/10 Introduction  
T 6/11 Aristotle, 31-56  
W 6/12 On the Poetics: 56-62, 119-20, 131-149  
R 6/13 Elizabethan / Jacobean 157-59  
Gosson, 162-66; Sidney, 168-77; Jonson, 185-94

### Week Two: Scholar, Critic, Text: Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century Europe

- M 6/17 The French, 207-09  
*Le Cid*  
The Cid, 211-26  
Moliere, 249-53  
Racine, 253-56  
Voltaire, 278-87  
Diderot, 287-93  
Rousseau, 293-97  
T 6/18 Restoration England, 315-17  
*The Way of the World*  
Dryden, 317-334; Congreve, 359-63; Hume, 418-423  
W 6/19 The Germans, 427-29  
Lessing, 429-37; Schiller, 440-57  
R 6/20 *The Visit*  
Goethe, 477-82; Hegel, 522-44

### Week Three: Criticism and Pedagogy: Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Europe

- M 6/24 Scandinavia, 549-76  
T 6/25 19<sup>th</sup> / 20<sup>th</sup> Century England and Ireland  
Coleridge, 582-84; Wilde, 624-28; Shaw, 630-35; Yeats, 652-59;  
Esslin, 668-72  
W 6/26 19<sup>th</sup> / 20<sup>th</sup> Century Germany, 773-77  
Brecht and Durenmatt, 847-58; Handout  
R 6/27 19<sup>th</sup> / 20<sup>th</sup> Century France, Italy, Spain  
Zola, 692-718; Ortega y Gasset, 756-60; Artaud, 760-67

### Week Four: Criticism and Pedagogy Continued: What We've Done Lately

- M 7/1 20<sup>th</sup> Century U.S., Russia, Poland  
Miller, 894-97; Frye, 897-902; Chekhov, 913-15; Grotowski, 978-996  
T 7/2 Feminist Criticism  
In Case: Dickerson, 109-118; Reinelt, 150-159; Forte, 251-269  
W 7/3 Shakespeare Criticism and Conclusion  
Johnson, 405-16; Coleridge, 591-96; Shaw, 648-49; Stendahl, 677-82;  
Whitman, 866-68

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*Theatre 610:*

*How to Do Things With Performance*

*A Seminar in Performance Theory*

In this course, we will explore two definitions of performance studies as presented in two major textbooks. As we do so, we will also get acquainted with and begin to explore some of the body of theory that has developed over the last twenty years under the name of performance scholarship.

As we read, discuss, present and perform our way through these texts, some of the questions that I think it will be productive for us to bear in mind are: How is performance theory different from other kinds of theory you may have encountered, including literary theory and, more recently, cultural criticism? What are the different methodologies that performance scholars use? What distinctions seem to exist between “theatre” and “performance”? Do these distinctions just get in the way, or are they in some ways useful? What are the different ways theory is written and why? How might different theoretical lenses actually affect what we choose to do on stage? Backstage??

Course Requirements:

**Weekly Preparation (15%)**

In order to help you with your reading and prepare you for active participation in class discussion, you will prepare the following every week:

- (1) An outline of each assigned reading, typed. This is primarily for your use, but it would be nice if I could follow it. It should be neither a chapter-by-chapter nor a paragraph-by-paragraph outline, but something in between.
- (2) First attempts at answering the following questions, typed:  
For textbooks: What are the key discrepancies between the two versions of the field?  
For scholarly articles: What argument is the author making in this manuscript? How is he or she making it, that is, through what methods of research? How well does the argument seem to be made?
- (3) Three questions about the assigned readings, typed. These can range from the very specific, e.g. I have no idea what this sentence on page 34 means and it seems really important, to the very general, e.g. why does this author concentrate on x when y seems just as important? Ideally, over the course of the semester, you will produce a range of questions.

### **Presentation (15%)**

On each discussion day, one of you will give a presentation to spark discussion on the assigned readings. The presentation should be somewhere between 15 and 25 minutes in length. Longer is not better. If you can provide enough background and raise enough questions in 15 minutes to get us engaged, we will be very happy and you will be too. If you have 25 minutes' worth of juicy things to say, that's fine. I will not give you more than 25 minutes to speak. Presentations should include:

- 1) Basic background on the author or authors. If we are reading a major work and a minor work, presenting material on the major work author. If we are reading several minor or several major works, consult me; I probably will not ask you to present on every author, but I may ask for more than one. By basic background, I mean things like: Where is the author from? When was s/he born? What other key biographical facts might shed light on his or her work?
- 2) A sense of the author's work. Where in his / her work does the text we are reading fall? Is it a development of earlier work? A break from it? What has the author written since this text?
- 3) Your sense of this particular text. Share some of your weekly preparation, in particular: What is the author's central argument? How does s/he go about making it? What big questions arise for you in reading this text?
- 4) A sense of the work in dialogue: What other texts, either theoretical or artistic, does this text seem to be in dialogue with? What basic information can you share with us about those texts? What other texts, including (and particularly) those we've read together, might it usefully be put into dialogue with? How might this text be useful to you in your own work? Taking the last two questions further, try to bring in some text – a poem, a photograph, an excerpt from a play, novel or film – that will help you begin to think concretely about the theoretical work we've read.

### **Performances (3, 45%)**

For each of the first three units, you will create a performance of approximately five minutes (approx. ten if you choose to work with a partner). The performance should explore either theoretical or practical questions raised in the unit. If you choose to explore a theoretical question, (e.g. Can the Subaltern Speak?) you should bring to bear upon it texts we have not studied together. If you choose to explore a practical question (e.g. how to adapt a text, how to study a text as a performance, how to listen for cultural knowledge in a personal narrative, how to study identity as performance), you should present a fragment of the project that is appropriate to the length of time allotted. It would be nice to see you explore each option at least once.

### **Final Paper and Presentation (25%)**

For your final paper, you may either continue with one of the performance projects you've begun earlier in the semester or explore one of the authors we've read in greater detail. If you choose the latter, you should pick an author whose work you think is likely to be useful to you in the writing of your master's thesis. Papers should be approximately 15-20 pages. Again, longer is not better. You will present a ten-minute version of this paper in class.

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**Theatre 109: Introduction to Performance Studies**  
Women's Performance Traditions  
Spring 2001

**Course Description:**

What is a performance? In this course, we will learn about the work of a dozen major 20<sup>th</sup> century performance artists who have expanded ideas about what performances *are* and what they're *for*. We will conduct this exploration in three equally important ways: by reading and watching existing work; by developing our own performances; and by participating in each other's work as active, supportive and responsive audience members.

**Textbooks:**

Course Reader and additional readings on reserve.

**Course Requirements:**

Performances: 45.5 %. Four Performances, described below.

Midterm, Final, Essays and Scripts: 45.5%. You will be asked to practice careful attention to each other's work, and will learn to evaluate both each other's and your own work in writing. All written assignments should be typed, double-spaced, stapled, and carefully proofread. (Excessive errors will reduce your grade.) Where applicable, scripts will be due in class on the day of your performance.

Participation and Preparation (includes quizzes): 5%. This course is about doing. The only way to get what it has to offer -- and to give what I expect you to give to your classmates -- is to be present in every sense all the time. This is also the only way to make the course really fun for yourself and for us as a group. I will therefore strictly enforce the departmental attendance policy, which affects this course as follows: Class will begin on time every day. If you miss class four times, your final grade will be reduced by one letter. For each two times thereafter that you miss class, your final grade will be reduced by one letter. Being more than five minutes late twice and being more than ten minutes late once will be considered absences. Small, daily writing assignments will be considered part of your participation and may not be made up.

Please note, too, that I will occasionally ask you to redo your performance, or part of it, to try it in a slightly or, sometimes, an extremely different way. I do this because, just as I believe we can learn a lot from revising our writing, I believe that we can learn a lot from revising our performances. The bad news about this is that I don't consider your job in class to be done when your performance is over. The good news is that in

evaluating the performance, I take into account not only what you brought in, but the extent to which you were able to use class time to develop the work, to learn more.

### **Major Performance / Writing Assignments:**

1. Reading Performance / Performance as Reading
  - a) Performance: Using your own description of the performance excerpt as a guide, explore and extend the possibilities of your own voice and body by recreating the performance as specifically as possible. Pay very careful attention to the ways the performer speaks, pauses, walks, sits, gestures, uses her face, uses the space, etc. (approx. 3 minutes)
  - b) Writing: At the beginning of class on the day of your performance, turn in a close reading or description of an excerpted performance we have studied in class. (approx. 2-4 pp., typed, double-spaced.)
  
2. Interpreting Performance / Performance as Interpretation
  - a) Performance: In groups of 2 or 3, chose an image you take to be particularly important in the written text and create a scene that highlights that image. Use a range of performance tools to make the performance as sensorily rich as possible. (approx. 5 minutes)
  - b) Writing: At the beginning of class on the day of your performance, turn in an interpretation of the full written text from which your performance text has been excerpted. The focus of the writing should be on what you take the text to be, fundamentally, about. You should draw on at least three different examples from the written text to support your argument, one of which (though not necessarily the most important of which) should be the material of your performance text. (approx. 4-6 pp., typed, double-spaced.)
  
3. Critiquing Performance / Performance as Criticism
  - a) Performance: Using the performers we have studied in this section as inspiration, design and share your own critical performance. The performance might be a satire of an existing text; an interview of someone whose views or voice you take to be important; a dialogue, drawing on multiple texts, around an issue you care about; or something else of your own design. You may work alone or with one or two others. The length of the performance should be approximately five minutes per participant. Many projects may require more time and space; in these cases, you should share an excerpt from the full performance. Scripts for all final performances must be typed, double-spaced, and should be turned in to me in class on the day you perform.
  - b) Writing: On the last day of class, turn in a paper on the work of a performance artist whose work intrigues you. The paper should describe the artist's work, provide a sense of its history and its place in the larger history of performance art, and explain what is particularly valuable about

this artist to you, given your interests and priorities. (approx. 4-6 pp., typed, double-spaced.)

## **Calendar**

Below is a schedule, subject to minor adjustments, of what we will do in class most days. Readings are not included on this breakdown; they will be assigned on a weekly basis. (If you wish to read ahead, come see me and I will help make this possible.) You will also have short but regular and important writing assignments that will be due according to a staggered schedule we will set together at the beginning of each unit. *You are responsible for keeping informed about these assignments, and about any work/handouts/information we cover in class. I will not keep track of what you miss.* For those very rare occasions when you must miss class, please find a reliable buddy who can help fill you in. Also, please keep up to date on class schedules and assignments by checking online (TBA).

Important notes on the performance schedule: Once the performance schedule for each round is set, it will not be possible for me to accommodate changes. Therefore, you should check your calendars / syllabi NOW and let me know well in advance of any anticipated scheduling conflicts. In case of emergencies, you should call me at home or leave a message for me at work as early as possible the previous day. Performances missed because of emergencies may be rescheduled at my discretion. Performances missed for other reasons may not be made up.

Unless otherwise noted in class, all performances must be fully memorized.

### **PART ONE: Performance as “Reading”**

#### **Weeks 1-5: Funny Ladies**

Th 1/18 – Introductions

T 1/23 – Discussion: Evaluating performance: Reading

Th 1/25 – Ruth Draper

T 1/30 – Lily Tomlin

Th 2/2 – Whoopi Goldberg

T 2/6 – Rehearsal Day

Th 2/8 – “Reading” Performances 1

T 2/13 – “Reading” Performances 2

Th 2/15– Revisions, Discussion of Performances

## **PART TWO: Performance as Interpretation**

### **Weeks 6-10: Image Makers**

T 2/20 – Discussion: Evaluating Performance: Interpretation

Th 2/22 – Laurie Anderson

T 2/27 – Adrienne Kennedy

Th 3/1 – Adrienne Kennedy

T 3/5 – Rehearsal Day

Th 3/7 – Interpretive Performances 1

T 3/13 – Interpretive Performances 2

Th 3/15 - MIDTERM EXAM

T 3/20 – MIDTERM EVALUATIONS / Revisions, Discussion of Performances

Th 3/22 – Discussion: Evaluating Performance: Criticism

## **SPRING BREAK**

## **PART THREE: Performance as Evaluation**

### **Weeks 11-16: Critics**

T 4/3 – Interview topics due. Anna Deavere Smith and Robbie McCauley.

Th 4/5 – Critical performance discussion / workshop.

T 4/10 – Interview questions due. ADS continued, Peggy Shaw

Th 4/12 – Rehearsal Day

T 4/17 – Rehearsal / Workshop Day

Th 4/19 – Interview Performances 1

T 4/24 – Interview Performances 2

Th 4/26 – Intertextual performance topics due. Discussion of final projects.

T 5/1 – Workshop Final Performances 1 – turn in script drafts

Th 5/3 – Workshop Final Performances 2 – turn in script drafts

T 5/8 – Course Review

Th 5/10 – Fun, Games, Film; Final Papers Due – no late final papers will be accepted.

The final exam will consist of a short (35 minutes or so) multiple choice and short answer test. We will spend the remainder of the final exam time viewing your final performances. Please let me know in advance if you need to leave promptly at the end of the exam period.