



Instructor: M. Revermann

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Course Number: DRE356H5F

Course Title: Theory of Drama

Course description: Why theory? It is true that for many purposes theatre-practitioners (and theatre-goers) can be perfectly happy, and successful, without ever having thought at all about the theatrical event from a broader theoretical perspective. Adopting such a perspective, however, is an enriching experience (as, I hope, this course will demonstrate). It forces people to think harder about what happens in theatrical communication, and how it happens. Put bluntly, it is an eye-opener, creating awareness of what makes the theatrical event ever so fascinating and unique.

The approach adopted in this course will be a systematic rather than historical one. Questions to be addressed will include: -what precisely makes theatre different from other modes of social interaction, especially those that intuitively strike us as highly “staged” and “theatrical” (fashion shows, for instance, or conventions of political parties)? -what is peculiar about theatre/drama as a literary genre (as opposed to epic and lyric poetry or novels, for instance)? -how does theatre differ from other (performative) arts? -how do actors and audiences communicate during the theatrical event, and how can this process be described at an abstract level (i.e. so that it will be useful for analysing theatre across times and cultures)?

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Particular attention will be given to “Theatre Semiotics”, the (in my view) most powerful theoretical approach to drama. Sociological and psychological approaches will complement the picture. As a reality check, we will regularly (re)visit a couple of plays/performances to see whether the theoretical approach actually helps our coming to grips with theatre, or whether it is all “smoke and mirrors”.

Method of Instruction: Lecture and discussion

Method of Evaluation: Participation, mid-term, final exam, research paper