

Rachel Parish, Theater Studies, 2017

Sustainability is typically associated with environmental issues. Theatre is not immediately linked to this, except if it deals with the subject as a content. The Piedmont Project, while it does explore environmental issues in a fascinating and illuminating way, engages with sustainability in a broader scope that is particularly helpful for teachers of theatre.

Some questions you might find yourself with interesting answers to include:

- How do we explain the relevance of theatre training to other disciplines?
- How do we let students understand how much theatre, both in historical and in contemporary incarnations, relates to their everyday lives?
- What are the transferable skills of theatre and the training we provide through this medium (such as how the body and mind linked together in a dynamic system)?

This course should engage you with thinking about how to imbue a layer of interdisciplinary content in your theatre classes. It should also enable you to articulate some of the power and application of theatre training in for other areas of study and work. The lens of sustainability is most relevant to instructors of theatre in how it articulates interconnectedness. By highlighting texts from the world of conflict resolution and medical practice in addition to texts from theatre and performance, the class incorporates the interdisciplinarity that sustainability uplifts.

We remember how others make us feel rather than what they tell us. My class unfolds using principles of sustainability as pedagogical tools. I have chosen to use the principles of sustainability more in *form* than in content. You will see from the flow of the class structure that rather than having a stylistic or historical approach, we start with the person and the place, the 'here and now.' Attention is paid to listening and dynamic human systems as the starting point for crafting all genres of performance. This understanding of interconnectedness and liveness is the basis upon which the rest of the introduction to theatre unfolds. This draws directly from the learning in the piedmont project.

Emory University
Introduction to Theatre
THEA 100-001
Instructor: Rachel Parish
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Fall, 2017

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Welcome, to your introduction to theatre class!

Theatre is basically the exploration of human experience, so you'll be happy to know that whatever your exposure to the art form, you've got many years of experience under your belt in the subject already! That said, there are some ways that the discipline and practice of theatre has developed over time that are unique, profound, and deeply insightful, which I am looking forward to introducing to you.

Syllabus

This syllabus is a guide for what we will be going through during the term. It gets less specific as it goes along, because it will respond to a degree to what I see your particular interests are. I may find it useful to change the order of a few things around as well, if it will fit the flow of your learning better. If at any point you need more clarity on something, please ask me immediately!

Learning objectives

This class will observe how the elements of theatre exist in the world around you already. You will focus on the 'here and now' as the starting point for all theatre.

You will understand several methods that artists use to break down the world around them to craft stories that tell us about their contemporary life.

You will understand the different spaces and places where performances take place and you will understand a range of different ways that people collaborate to make theatre.

You will understand that theatre and the craft of making theatre contains many useful transferable skills for different disciplines.

Learning methods

You will participate in creative writing, playing games, making performance, reading, watching plays, in-class discussion, written analysis and critique, and more.

Grading

- 15% Attendance
- 15% Discussion and Participation
- 10% Unit 1
- 10% Unit 2
- 10% Unit 3
- 10% Unit 4
- 15% Unit 5
- 15% Unit 6

Grading Rubric:

- 20% Completion—did you do the assignment to completion?
- 20% Promptness—did you turn in the assignment on time?
- 30% Technique—how skillfully and attentively did you address the assignment? Did you work well with others to support a collaborative project?
- 30% Originality—does your work demonstrate new, applied and creative thinking? Did you demonstrate a “yes, and” attitude in your individual and group work?

Attendance and Tardiness

Attendance at all class sessions is a requirement of this course. Each student is allowed to miss **two classes** without any adverse effect on their grade. This includes illness or family emergencies, so do not use

up these days. Even if you tell the instructor ahead of time about an illness or an emergency, more than two absences **will lower your attendance grade**. Absences for religious holidays must be communicated to instructor well in advance. If you have an unavoidable situation arise that will require you to miss multiple classes, please contact instructor ASAP.

Every third instance of class tardiness will be treated as one absence.

Your instructor is not obliged to warn you any further about this although she may choose to do so; she will go over the attendance/promptness requirements on the first class but will not necessarily call you out for tardiness at each class. You may be assured, however, that it is being recorded.

Honor Code

The Emory Honor Code is in effect throughout the semester. By taking this course, you affirm that it is a violation of the code to cheat on exams, to plagiarize, to deviate from the teacher's instructions about collaboration on work that is submitted for grades, to give false information to a faculty member, and to undertake any other form of academic misconduct. You agree that the teacher is entitled to move you to another seat during examinations, without explanation. You also affirm that if you witness others violating the code you have a duty to report them to the honor council.

Student Intervention Services: Students typically encounter a great deal of stress during their college years. If you, or someone you know, is experiencing emotional, physical, or developmental challenges, you can find help by contacting the Student Intervention Services Team at sisteam@emory.edu; www.emory.edu/campus_life/sis; or 404- 430- 1120.

Class Materials:

All class materials other than the two listed required texts are available at Emory library (either online or on class reserve), or will be provided as by the instructor (as handouts or available on Canvas as links or downloadable documents).

Required Shows

You will be required to see two shows and write assignments on them. There are productions you could watch presented by Theater Emory, the Alliance Theatre, Actor's Express, True Colors, and Synchronicity to name a few. You are strongly encouraged to see as many shows as you can this semester, so whilst you are only required to watch two live performances, I hope you enjoy going to see many many more!

Required Texts

Impro: Improvisation and the Theatre by Keith Johnstone

The Actor and The Target by Declan Donnellan

Books/Ebooks available via Emory Library

The Moral Imagination, Lederach

<http://site.ebrary.com/lib/emoryac/reader.action?docID=10103667&ppg=20>

A Doll's House by Henrik Ibsen (on reserve at Woodruff Library)

Romeo and Juliet by William Shakespeare (on reserve at Woodruff Library)

Waiting for Godot by Samuel Beckett (on reserve at Woodruff Library)

Fun Home by Lisa Kron and Jeanine Tesori, adapted from the graphic novel by Allison Bechdel (on reserve at Woodruff Library)

Selections from *The Viewpoints Book: A Practical Guide to Viewpoints and Composition*, by Anne Bogart and Tina Landau, pp. 7-20 and 199-210 (scanned selections on course reserve via Woodruff Library)

Uploaded on Canvas

Perspective: Serious Play: Teaching Medical Skills With Improvisational Theater Techniques, Katie Watson, JD

Selection from *The Archive and the Repertoire* by Diana Taylor, pp. 16-33

Unit 1: The Creative Impulse

This unit focuses on theatre as fundamentally an exploration of the human experience. We look at why people tell stories and what stories are important to us as a cohort. We look at ways in which theatre makers break down their world to both make sense of it, and to craft a journey for an audience. We will begin to address who is involved in making theatre.

Class 1: Introductions and Syllabus

Class 2: Attention Activated

Class 3: Action (and stillness) in Context

Class 4: Embodied knowledge

Unit 2: Contemporary trends

This unit looks at several contemporary performance pieces and asks the students to analyze them drawing from and building upon the tools covered in Unit 1. We will deepen our understanding of the different people and places who participate in making theatre. Students will have the opportunity to engage with two current plays that were created locally and to engage with and learn from members of the creative team.

Class 5: Exploring the parameters

Class 6: Exploring the parameters

Class 7: Starting from yourself, learning to collaborate

Class 8: Locally made—highlighting theatre created for specific sites in Atlanta

Class 9: Locally made—highlighting theatre made by communities in Atlanta

Unit 3: Reading, watching, critiquing

This unit will have students reading and attending performances of classic and contemporary plays. Discussions and exercises will investigate what the plays tell us about the time and culture in which the piece was created. Throughout the unit students will practice critical analysis of both scripts and live performance. We will reconnect with local ‘culture’ that has a different form, and practice reading, watching, and critiquing the performance experience as a theatre piece.

Class 10: Realism then and now

Class 11: Overview of genre and style

Class 12: Realism then and now

Class 13 : Local politics as theatre

Class 14: Local food as theatre

Unit 4: Playing and performance

This unit focuses on performance techniques. Connections will be drawn between performance practices and work in fields including conflict resolution and medicine.

Class 15: The mind
Class 16: The body, The voice
Class 17: Listening, Risk and Serendipity
Class 18: Returning to attention

Unit 5: Writing and Staging

This unit focuses on the crafts of writing, dramaturgy, design and direction. Whilst still drawing from some new theory, practical exercises will dominate this section to prepare the cohort for the next stage of the unit.

Class 19: Writing
Class 20: Dramaturgy
Class 21: Design
Class 22: Directing

Unit 6: Creating Original Work

Building on the previous unit and from the methods learned throughout the semester, students will work in small groups to create original pieces of performance.

Class 23: Creating performance script/text

Class 24: Rehearsals
Class 25: Presentation and critiques in peer groups
Class 26: Rehearsals
Class 27: Presentation and critiques in peer groups
Class 28: Presentation and discussion of the final work