

TA 201: Theoretical Perspectives in the Performing Arts

San José State University
Spring 2009

Monday
3:30 – 5:45 p.m.
Hugh Gillis Hall 114

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Office hours: **Mondays** and **Wednesdays** 9 –10 a.m.
Wednesdays 1:30 –3 p.m. and 5–6 p.m.
And by appointment
Phone: (408) 924-4535
Website: Link to <http://www.tvradiofilmtheatre.org/amckee/> and click.

Note: The best way to reach me is during office hours and through my email address above; the phone system at SJSU is not always reliable. **If you email me, make sure to include “TA 201” in your subject headline.**

PREREQUISITE

Your presence in this class presumes knowledge of the basic research and method tools covered in TA 200 and required of university graduate students. I will hold your work to graduate standards of conception, argumentation, clear writing, sound research, and originality. Clear writing, a logical presentation of ideas, and creative thinking are not optional in graduate seminars; they are integral ingredients to successful work.

REQUIRED TEXTS

These books are available at the Spartan Bookstore on campus, but they may also be available more inexpensively from Amazon.com or other online sites.

1. Marvin Carlson. Theories of the Theatre: A Historical and Cultural Survey, from the Greeks to the Present. Expanded Edition. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1984. (Abbreviated in course schedule: TT)
2. Bert O. States. Great Reckonings in Little Rooms: On the Phenomenology of Theater. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1987. (Abbreviated in course schedule: GR)
3. Roland Barthes. Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography. Hill & Wang, 1981. (Abbreviated in course schedule: CL)

4. Leo S. Braudy, Marshall Cohen, eds. Film Theory & Criticism: Introductory Readings. Seventh Edition. Oxford and London: Oxford University Press, 2009. (Abbreviated in course schedule: FTC).

Note: A seventh edition was published in January 2009 and is being stocked by the SJSU bookstore. However, the sixth edition may be available from online sources at reduced prices. You may order either, though some of the readings assigned for the course are not in the sixth edition, so you will need to photocopy them from someone else in the class.

In addition:

1. Selected readings on the Internet at the link indicated in the course schedule (WWW)
2. Clips, screenings: As indicated in the course schedule.

You are responsible for obtaining and reading all material prior to the date it is listed on the syllabus and for coming to class prepared to discuss the readings in detail. Unless otherwise noted in the Course Schedule, all readings are required and must be brought to class as they are assigned.

Note: The course is very reading-intensive, so plan to spend several hours a week preparing for seminar (e.g., reading, taking notes, outlining, etc.). Expect the readings to be challenging, and come to class with clearly articulated questions about the material.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This seminar will provide an introductory analysis and exploration of significant theories that address the values ascribed not only to the performing arts in different media but to the ontological difference of different media as well (e.g., theatre, film, television, the internet). It will also consider the ramifications of those differences upon the aesthetic, historical, and cultural constructions of meanings in performance.

Throughout the term we will explore the intellectual and artistic conditions under which certain theories develop, a range of elements that establish the credibility and utility of a given theory (especially at a particular social or cultural moment in performance and media history), and the interdisciplinary, intercultural applicability of different theories. Thus, this class will also focus on the complexities of the processes of performance, representation, and interpretation – the integral relationships among form, content, aesthetic sensibility, cultural milieu, reading strategies, and performance works themselves.

The point of the seminar is not to determine which theory about a particular form is the "best" one, whether a theory is empirically "right" or "wrong." Rather, it is to understand and appreciate what kinds of questions different theories address, how they come into being, and what they have to offer.

This seminar is designed to address TA Student Learning Objectives 2, 3 and 4 in particular.

THEATRE ARTS M.A. PROGRAM - STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

1. Learn research methods appropriate for answering questions and solving problems in the field.
 2. Acquire skills in information gathering, data and text interpretation, performance in different media, and performance technologies.
 3. Evaluate previous research, attitudes, and achievements in performing arts from a critical perspective.
 4. Learn to identify historical, cognitive, aesthetic, or cultural realities governing the evolution of the performing arts.
 5. Develop persuasive research evidence in the format of academic journal publication.
 6. Demonstrate effective pedagogical strategy and teaching effectiveness.
 7. Contribute creative or organizational leadership in performing arts education and culture.
 8. Identify a valid area of new academic inquiry and an appropriate research methodology designed to sustain the attention of an influential, critical audience.
 9. Prepare for competitive entry into doctoral programs or other significant areas of career advancement, arts education and culture.
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ASSIGNMENTS

Your grade for the course will be based on the following assignments which take a variety of forms. All assignments must be completed, graded or ungraded, to receive a letter grade in the course.

1) Active participation in seminar (20%)

A seminar is only as good as its instructor *and students* make it. Come to class having read and/or watched and formulated considered questions about the assigned texts (e.g., primary texts, articles, films, etc.). I expect serious graduate students to attend all class meetings. If you aren't present you can't participate, and thus lateness and absence inevitably affect your grade. Email me in the event of any absence.

2) Occasional presentations of course readings and/or key theoretical terms (15%) – scheduled throughout term

Such presentations will involve presenting the main thesis of a day's reading, or a concise introduction to a key theoretical concept (to be assigned in class). In succinct and direct fashion, identify the central argument or theoretical perspective and, in your view, the strengths and weaknesses of that argument, and any questions you may have. The one hitch: When presenting on a specific article, you

may not quote from it during your presentation; you must paraphrase its primary points in your own words. Length of article intros: 5-10 minutes .

3) **Group or individual performance project (25%)**

- Create a live performance individually or within a group that **illustrates, comments upon, or reimagines** a key theoretical concept as articulated in various course texts and/or seminar discussions.

- Your performance must be accompanied by a formal 1,500-word report that summarizes its critical approach, documents its evolution, and reflects upon the process of its creation. If you are working in a group, all group members must contribute written sections of the report, with their portions of the report clearly marked.

4) **Oral presentation: statement of intent/annotated bibliography for term paper topic (part of participation grade)**

In a 250-word statement, construct a clear and concise statement of intent for the term paper you will write this semester. Attach an annotated bibliography summarizing each entry and indicating its actual or anticipated relevance to your project.

5) **Term paper (40%)**

- Length: 10-12 pages, excluding Works Cited page.

GRADING GUIDELINES FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS

An **"A"** student:

- Completes all required assignments and meets all deadlines.
- Achieves excellent marks on assignments.
- Asks questions and joins discussions frequently.
- Contributes new knowledge regularly.
- Participates indispensably in group efforts.

A **"B"** student:

- Completes all required assignments and meets nearly all deadlines.
- Achieves respectable scores on assignments.
- Asks questions and joins discussions regularly.
- Contributes new knowledge occasionally.
- Participates in group efforts.

A **"C"** student:

- Does not complete most assignments and misses deadlines.
- Achieves less than satisfactory marks on assignments.
- Asks questions and joins discussions rarely.
- Does not contribute new knowledge or perspective.
- Participates only minimally in group efforts.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

A. Academic Integrity Statement

"Your own commitment to learning, as evidenced by your enrollment at San José State University and the University's Integrity Policy, require you to be honest in all your academic course work. Faculty members are required to report all infractions to the Office of Judicial Affairs." The policy on academic integrity can be found at:

http://sa.sjsu.edu/judicial_affairs/index.html

"One form of academic dishonesty is plagiarism--taking ideas, writing, or work from another person or source and representing them as one's own. Plagiarism includes both having someone else write your papers and cutting and pasting from the Internet." For advice on how to avoid plagiarism, consult the following site:

http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/r_plagiar.html

B. Campus policy in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act

"If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, or if you need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible, or see me during office hours. Presidential Directive 97-03 requires that students with disabilities register with the DRC to establish a record of their disability."

C. Dropping and Adding

Students are responsible for understanding the policies and procedures about add/drops, academic renewal, etc. [Information on add/drops are available at http://info.sjsu.edu/web-dbggen/narr/soc-fall/rec-324.html](http://info.sjsu.edu/web-dbggen/narr/soc-fall/rec-324.html) . [Information about late drop is available at http://www.sjsu.edu/sac/advising/latedrops/policy/](http://www.sjsu.edu/sac/advising/latedrops/policy/) . Students should be aware of the current deadlines and penalties for adding and dropping classes.

COURSE SCHEDULE AND SEMINAR MEETINGS (subject to almost certain revision)

WEEK 1: JANUARY 26

Course syllabus, assignments, expectations
Distribution, collection, and discussion of student data sheets
Start reading!

WEEK 2: FEBRUARY 2 – THE ORIGINS OF WESTERN THEATRE AND FILM AESTHETICS

Reading:

WWW: Aristotle, *Poetics* (<http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/poetics.mb.txt>)

TI: Preface, Chapters 1 through 8 (15-111)

FTC: André Bazin, "Theater and Film"

WEEK 3: FEBRUARY 9 – POLITICIZING THEATRE AND FILM FORM

Assigned:

Term Paper and Annotated Bibliography -- assignments distributed in seminar

Reading:

TI: Chapters 9 through 12 (112-218)

FTC: Sergei Eisenstein, "Dickens, Griffith, Film Today," "Beyond the Shot [The Cinematographic Principle and the Ideogram]" "The Dramaturgy of Film Form [The Dialectical Approach to Film Form]"

Clips: Griffith, Eisenstein

WEEK 4: FEBRUARY 16 – REALISM AND ITS DEBATES

Reading:

TI: Chapters 13 through 16 (pp. 218-301)

FTC: Andre Bazin, "The Evolution of the Language of Cinema," "The Ontology of the Photographic Image"

Leo Braudy, "Acting: Stage vs. Screen"

Clips: Brando, Dean

WEEK 5: FEBRUARY 23 – QUESTIONS OF AUTHORSHIP IN THEATRE AND FILM

Assigned:

Performance Projects – assignment distributed in seminar

Reading:

TI: Chapters 17 through 18 (302-410)

FTC: Andrew Sarris, "Notes on the Auteur Theory in 1962"

Peter Wollen, "The Auteur Theory [Howard Hawks and John Ford]"

Roland Barthes, "The Face of Garbo"

Clips: Garbo, Hawks, Ford

WEEK 6: MARCH 2 – CONCEPTS OF GENRE

Reading:

Review Aristotle from Week 2

FTC: Leo Braudy, "Genre: The Conventions of Connection"

Thomas Schatz, "Film Genre and the Genre Film"

Robin Wood, "Ideology, Genre, Auteur"

Clips: Mel Brooks

WEEK 7: MARCH 9 – CONSTRUCTING AND READING MEANING(S) IN THEATRE AND FILM

Assigned:

Seminar members who wish to work in a group for the Performance Project declare group members.

Reading:

TI: Chapters 19 through 22 (411-540)

FTC: Jean Comolli and Jean Narboni, "Cinema/Ideology/Criticism"

Christian Metz, "Some Points in the Semiotics of Cinema," "Problems of Denotation in the Fiction Film"

Gilbert Harman, "Semiotics and the Cinema: Metz and Wollen"

WEEK 8: MARCH 16 – THE SCENE

Reading:

FTC: Stanley Cavell, "Photograph and Screen"

Camera Lucida: Part One

GR: Part One: Introduction through Chapter 3 (1-118)

***** MARCH 23-27 SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS ******

WEEK 9: MARCH 30 – THE STAGE

Reading:

Camera Lucida: Part Two

GR: Part Two: Chapters 4 through 5 (118-206)

Screening: La Jetée (Marker, 1962)

WEEK 10: APRIL 6 -- TA 201 PERFORMS

Due:

Performance Projects/1,500-Word Reports

WEEK 11: APRIL 13

Due:

Oral presentation: statement of intent/annotated bibliography for term paper topic

Make enough copies of your annotated bibliography to distribute to all class members on the day you are scheduled to present.

WEEK 12: APRIL 20 -- IDEOLOGY/APPARATUS/PSYCHOANALYSIS

Reading:

Christian Metz, "Identification, Mirror"

Jean-Louis Baudry, "Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus"

Clips: Woody Allen

WEEK 13: APRIL 27 -- -- FEMINIST READINGS, FEMINIST FILM THEORY, AND BEYOND

Reading:

Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema"

Linda Williams, "Film Bodies: Gender, Genre, and Excess"

Clips: Gentlemen Prefer Blondes (Hawks, 1952)

WEEK 14: MAY 4 – IMAGE/SOUND/VOICE

Reading:

WWW: Joan Hawkins, "When Bad Girls Do French Theory: Deconstructing National Trauma in the Wake of 9/11" (<http://ctheory.net/articles.aspx?id=308>)

FTC: Mary Ann Doane, "The Voice in the Cinema: The Articulation of Body and Space"

Sound clips: Welles, "Fish Sticks"

WEEK 15: MAY 11– CONCLUSION/CURTAIN/FADE TO BLACK

Concluding remarks/final business

***** TERM PAPERS DUE ON FRIDAY, MAY 15, 2009 AT NOON IN MY BOX IN HGH 100. *****