

HONR 204: F/ SEMINAR IN FINE ARTS: SOCIAL ACTION THEATRE

Fall 2011

Class: TR 11:30-12:45

Office Hours: MW 11, TR 1

Dr. Melanie Blood, Departments of English and Theatre

Classroom: Brodie 121

Office: Brodie 214

Course Summary:

We will first look at various models for the relationship between art and society, reading material from the Ancient Greeks, contemporary US policy, Bertolt Brecht, Augusto Boal, and performance studies. Then we will turn to two discrete theatre traditions in two different societies: 1) pre- and post-apartheid plays in South Africa, and 2) recent documentary theatre in the US. We will look at historical factors, apply specific theoretical frameworks, read plays, and look at performance conventions for each. As a short conclusion to the course, we will look at the war in Iraq and look at recent theatrical and cultural performances around it.

Student Learning Outcomes:

The successful student will:

1. Read and analyze (using a variety of methods) primary and secondary sources in social action theatre.
2. Examine various styles and definitions of theatre for social change and evolve his/her own theory of the relationship between (theatre) art and society.
3. Understand how various literary and social theories can be applied to theatre art.
4. Analyze performance, not only in a traditional theatrical context, but in broader cultural contexts.

Required Texts:

Blank, Jessica, and Erik Jensen. *The Exonerated*. Dramatists Play Service.

Brecht, Bertolt. *The Threepenny Opera*. Grove Press.

Fugard, Athol. *Master Harold and the Boys*. Penguin Books.

Kaufman, Moises and Tectonic Theatre Project. *The Laramie Project*. Vintage Books.

Mtwa, Percy, Mbongeni Ngema, and Barney Simon. *Wozza Albert*. Methuen Drama.

Smith, Anna Deveare. *Fires in the Mirror*. Dramatists Play Service.

Required Performance:

“Under the Veil: Being Muslim [and Non-Muslim] in America since 9/11”

by T'ea Project, NYC. Fri-Sat 9/16-17, 7 pm, Alice Austin Theatre, free. Talkback after each show.

Course Requirements:

- 1) **Three position papers** of approximately 8 pages each; 45%, or 15% each
- 2) **Lead a class discussion**. You should have at least 5 open-ended questions to prompt class discussion. Turn in your notes and prepared questions at the end of the class; 10%
- 3) **Group presentations on web sites/other introductory research**. There will be three potential assignments; one on US theatre today and how political theatres fit into overall US theatre and one to introduce each of the two case studies; 10%

4) **Term paper.** Select one of the two genres covered, research further some area that interested you, and apply a specific historiographic or theoretical approach to your material. Or, you can see me to select another area related to social action theatre; 25%

5) **Participation.** You should be present and prepared for each class. A great deal of what you can learn in this class you learn from one another, but this will not work if you do not attend and do assigned readings before we are scheduled to discuss them; 10%