Instructor: Dr. Jocelyn L. Buckner

CATALOG DESCRIPTION:
As a public platform, the stage has long been a site for expressing or challenging individual, national, or group identities. Students will examine primary materials including plays, vaudeville, minstrel, and circus entertainments from the nineteenth to twenty-first centuries, in conjunction with multidisciplinary critical and theoretical scholarship, to develop an understanding of the history of U.S. performance as a tool for political and social agency. 3 credits.

COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES:
- To acquire analytical vocabulary based on exposure to and discussion of varied stylistic, structural, and theoretical approaches to dramatic literature and performance
- To deploy this vocabulary to analyze and critique the structural and thematic content of diverse scripts and cultural performances
- To communicate critical interpretations of dramatic works through written analysis and research, creative projects, and oral presentations
- To engage in philosophical dialogue through creative work, presentations, writing, and class discussion

HONORS PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOMES:
Upon completing a course in the University Honors Program students will have:

a. Obtained a starting point for integrative exploration of the development of cultures and intellectual achievements through a variety of disciplinary and interdisciplinary perspectives;
b. Sharpened their ability to critically analyze and synthesize a broad range of knowledge through the study of primary texts and through engagement in active learning with fellow students, faculty, and texts (broadly understood);
c. Understood how to apply more integrative and interdisciplinary forms of understanding in the advancement of knowledge and in addressing complex challenges shaping the world;
d. Developed effective communication skills, specifically in the areas of written and oral exposition and analysis.

Honors Program Category: Human Sciences

GE Categories: Artistic Inquiry (7AI), Social Inquiry (7SI)

CLASSROOM CONDUCT:
Students are expected to conduct themselves professionally with respect for the instructor, their colleagues, themselves, and the intellectual and artistic works we encounter. Students are expected to attend class prepared to participate in discussion and engage with lecture material. Private conversations should be conducted outside of the classroom. Please limit food and beverages to covered drinks and small snacks. Full meals should be consumed outside of the classroom.

**Students are permitted to use laptops or tablets during class for note taking purposes ONLY. Please silence and store all other devices prior to entering the classroom. Use of such devices is distracting to the user, their neighbors, and the instructor. Such distractions are rude, disrespectful, and inhibit the attention required for full engagement and analysis. Inappropriate use of electronics will result in their confiscation for the remainder of the class period and a deduction of the user’s daily participation grade. Repeated violations will be reported to the Dean of Students.**

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:
Chapman University is a community of scholars that emphasizes the mutual responsibility of all members to seek knowledge honestly and in good faith. Students are responsible for doing their own work, and academic dishonesty of any kind will not be tolerated anywhere in the university. For more information see: http://www.chapman.edu/academics/academic-integrity/_files/academic-integrity-policy.pdf

DISABILITY SERVICES:
In compliance with ADA guidelines, students who have any condition, either permanent or temporary, that might affect their ability to perform in this class are encouraged to inform the instructor at the beginning of the term. The University, through the Disability Services Office, will work with the appropriate faculty member who is asked to provide the accommodations for a student in determining what accommodations are suitable based on the documentation and the individual student needs. The granting of any accommodation will not be retroactive and cannot jeopardize the academic standards or the integrity of the course. For more information see: http://www.chapman.edu/students/student-health-services/disability-services/index.aspx

EQUITY and DIVERSITY:
Chapman University is committed to ensuring equality and valuing diversity. Students and professors are reminded to show respect at all times as outlined in Chapman’s Harassment and Discrimination Policy: http://tinyurl.com/CUHarassment-Discrimination. Any violations of this policy should be discussed with the professor, the Dean of Students and/or otherwise reported in accordance with this policy.
ATTENDANCE:
It is your job to attend class. Any absence or tardy will negatively impact your final grade. Missing 20% or more of class meetings will result in an automatic failure of the class. Attendance will be taken with a sign in sheet. Please sign in as you enter the classroom. If you are late, you may sign in as tardy after class. If you are more than 15 minutes late you will be marked absent for the class period.

CONTENT:
Theatre and popular performance have long been sources of community building, political debate, personal expression, patriotism, and controversy. In this course we will examine how these cultural sites have created, contested, or celebrated the notion of identity, and how they contribute to our individual and collective understandings of “America.” We will analyze a variety of works themselves – including plays, minstrel shows, vaudeville sketches, Chautauqua speeches, and docudramas – from the nineteenth to twenty-first century. We will work to understand these pieces as products of their cultural moment and as part of our national legacy, while grappling with our reactions to them from our own particular vantage point. We will also work to understand the scholarly, critical, theoretical, and political conversations informing and surrounding these cultural artifacts through reading and discussing secondary scholarship and developing our own informed, critical responses to these materials.

REQUIRED TEXTS:
The following play scripts are required reading and are available for purchase in the bookstore or online:
Sophie Treadwell, Machinal (1928) ISBN 1-85459-211-4

Additional required critical and theoretical readings are drawn from a variety of sources and will be accessible online via links in the syllabus and/or provided by the instructor via Blackboard.

PERFORMANCE EVENTS:
Students will attend the following productions and develop written production responses to them based on course themes and a directed prompt from the instructor:

A Night of Noh Theatre, Conceived and Directed by Tamiko Washington, Chapman Theatre, Feb. 13-15, 20-22: The beauty of movement comes to life in this innovative and original adaptation of Japanese Noh Theatre, transformed on the stage using Tadashi Suzuki’s captivating movement style. This is a visually intriguing production highlighting the art of expressive storytelling, embracing unique and stunning physical theatre.

Samuel Hunter’s Rest, South Coast Repertory Theatre, March 28 - April 27, 2014: A nursing home in northern Idaho is shutting down. Only three patients remain—and one of them is lost. Gerald, 91 and suffering from Alzheimers, has wandered off, leaving his wife Etta and her friend
Tom. Remaining staff includes a new 20-year-old cook and two longtime employees, women suddenly faced with a crisis of their own. In the midst of a record-breaking blizzard, the search for Gerald takes an unexpected turn—as the others find themselves powerless in the face of an uncertain future. A tender and heartbreakingly funny new work by the playwright who has risen like a meteor on the theatrical scene—author of last season’s play *The Whale*.

Sophie Treadwell’s *Machinal*, Chapman Theatre, April 10-12, 17-19: Trapped first in a dead-end job and then a loveless marriage, Helen longs for a bit of joy and tenderness that her harsh and male-dominated world cannot provide. Sophie Treadwell’s brilliant 1929 expressionistic play explores gender roles and the illusion of choice in contemporary society. With a large cast, integrated media and sonic score, this production is a post-modern examination of how suppression can drive an individual to commit desperate and horrible acts.

Kate Bornstein’s *Hidden: A Gender*, Chapman Theatre, April 28-29: A nineteenth century nun. A turn-of-the-century medicine show Barker-cum-TV show host. A gender confused youth. Explore the hilarity, confusion, and fun of gender in this rollicking show about discovering one’s self in a world that insists we all fit into neatly preordered boxes. (Production response not required, but viewing required for class discussion.)

**INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES:**
- In class discussions
- In class individual and group creative exercises and presentations
- Reading, research, and written assignments
- Attendance at Chapman University and professional performances

**METHODS of EVALUATION:**
- Written assessments of written assignments and research projects
- Oral and written feedback on creative projects and research presentations
- In-class and written feedback on class participation, preparation, and engagement

**GRADING:**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Production Responses (3 @ 10%)</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prompt Responses (3 @ 5%)</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Research Project/Presentation</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
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*I AM HERE TO HELP, but I can’t do so if you don’t tell me you need assistance! Please schedule meetings with me to discuss any questions or concerns throughout the semester.*

*The following class schedule is subject to change at the discretion of the instruction in order to accommodate class discussion or unforeseen conflicts. Changes will be announced in class and in writing. Students are advised that this is a reading and writing intensive course. Please budget your time accordingly.*
CLASS SCHEDULE

Week One: Introduction

T 2/4
Course overview and introductions

R 2/6
Read the following interview and commissioning project website to get a sense of how two contemporary U.S. theatres, Asolo Rep in Sarasota FL, and Oregon Shakespeare Festival in Ashland OR, are (re)conceiving notions of American identity in performance:
http://www.tcg.org/publications/at/issue/featuredstory.cfm?story=2&indexID=41
and
For discussion: Bring to class an example of a performance (a script excerpt, song, image, etc.) that, for you, celebrates, contests, or creates an idea of “America.”

Part I: Immigration in Performance

Week Two:

T 2/11

R 2/13
- Blackboard: Elinore Sisters, “Irish 400,” University of Rochester Special Collections.

Attend Chapman’s A Night of Noh Theatre, February 13-15, 20-22

Week Three:

T 2/18
R 2/20

**Week Four:**

T 2/25
- Luis Valdez, *Zoot Suit* (1979)
- Jorge Huerta, “Introduction to Zoot Suit”
DUE: Noh Theatre Production Response

R 2/27
DUE: Final Project Topic

**Week Five:**

T 3/4
- Ayad Akhtar, *Disgraced* (2013)

R 3/6
DUE: Prompt 1: See Blackboard

**Dr. Buckner will present** “‘The History of America is the History of Private Property’: The Politics of Home, Humor, Hate, and History in *Clybourne Park*, and *Beneatha’s Place.*” Articles in Progress Workshop, Mid-American Theatre Conference, 3/7-3/9, Cleveland, OH: [http://matc.us/](http://matc.us/)
Part II: Performing the American Racial Binary

Week Six:

T 3/11
Library Research Meeting with Scott Stone, Performing Arts Librarian

R 3/13

Week Seven:

T 3/18
-In class: view and discuss Ethnic Notions and Bamboozled excerpts

R 3/20

DUE: Final Project Inspirational Materials

Attend Samuel Hunter’s Rest, South Coast Repertory Theatre, March 28 - April 27, 2014

Week Eight: Spring Break – Relax! Make Smart Choices! Work on your Final Project!

Week Nine:

T 4/1
-Lorraine Hansberry, A Raisin in the Sun (1959)

R 4/3
-In class: view excerpts from A Raisin in the Sun

Week Ten:

T 4/8
-Bruce Norris, Clybourne Park (2009)
R 4/10

**Attend Sophie Treadwell’s *Machinal*, Chapman Theatre, April 10-12, 17-19**

**Week Eleven**

T 4/15

**DUE: Final Project Working Bibliography**

R 4/17
- In class: view PBS special: “*A Raisin in the Sun* Revisited: ‘The Raisin Cycle’ at Center Stage”

**DUE: Prompt 2: See Blackboard**

**Part III: Gender in American Performance**

**Week Twelve:**

T 4/22
- Sophie Treadwell, *Machinal* (1927)

**DUE: *Machinal* Response**

R 4/24
- In class: *Machinal* presentation by production dramaturgs Isabelle Grimm and Morgan Green
Attend Kate Bornstein’s *Hidden: A Gender*, Chapman Theatre, April 28-29

**Week Thirteen:**

T 4/29  
- Blackboard: Anna Deavere Smith, *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992*  
**DUE: Rest Response**

R 5/1  
- In class, view: Anna Deavere Smith: *Let Me Down Easy*  
http://www.ted.com/talks/anna_deavere_smith_s_american_character.html

**Week Fourteen**

T 5/6  
- Blackboard: Kate Bornstein: *Hidden: A Gender*  

R 5/8  

**Week Fifteen**

T 5/13  
- Final project group meetings

R 5/15  
- Evaluations  
- Course Wrap Up  
**DUE: Prompt 3: See Blackboard**

**Final Exam: Wednesday May 21, 10:45am - 1:15pm, Final Project Presentations**
Final Project: Performing America(s) (30% of final grade)

Throughout this course we have studied a variety of performances as cultural sites, how they have created, contested, or celebrated the notion of identity, and how they contribute to our individual and collective understandings of "America." For your final project, you will work in groups of 3 to develop a performance (10 minutes) and presentation (20 minutes) about a particular aspect of identity, a major current event/debate, or national issue. The aim of the project is to creatively, critically, and collaboratively explore an idea that speaks to your thoughts and experiences of American life, either now or in a particular historical moment.

The format of this assignment is fairly open – we have a variety of students, talents, and majors in this class, thus each group’s piece will inevitably be a reflection of the group members’ abilities, experiences, and interests. The piece may, for example, be site specific, multi-media, or text based. It may draw upon readings from the semester, or work from a completely separate topic.

Your piece should include the following:

Text – both found (via research, reading, observation) and self-created
Music or singing
Composition – a consideration of shape, levels, spatial relationship
Gesture – movement that is expressive & social
Color
Vocal variety
An element of surprise
A specific world/environment – where are you?
A beginning, middle, and end
Costume/wardrobe
A defined performance space – *tell me in advance if you are performing outside the classroom*
At least 3 props
At least 1 set piece
A title

Questions to consider – Hand in responses during your workshop performance on 5/13

What is your piece based on – an image, a piece of music, a memory, a novel, your imagination….

What is the theme or message?

What is the story/ What happens?

Who’s in the story?

Who are they to each other?
Where are they?
What time period?
What’s unique about this world, these people?
Why do you want to tell this story? Why now? What excites you about it?
Is it based on a particular art form – impressionism, westerns, tango…
Where is the audience and what role do they play?
What is the conflict? What are the obstacles?
What is the climax?
Where is the love, the humanity, magic, drama?

To help you to shape and me to evaluate your process, the following are required:

2/27: Topic selection (5%) – Each group should submit in writing for approval a 2-3 page project proposal that includes:
-the topic, theme, idea, or issue you want to address in your piece
-an initial thesis for your piece that articulates your perspective or argument about the topic
-an explanation of what you want the piece to communicate/achieve (awareness? action? emotional connection?) and why
-a early description of how you envision achieving this in performance

3/20: Inspirational materials (5%) – Each group will share with the entire class materials that are proving inspirational, informative, or foundational to the development of their performance piece. Each group member should contribute at least two items. The group should submit in writing a 2-3 page statement explaining how the materials are contributing to the development process, discuss what productive discoveries have been made, and what challenges the group has encountered thus far.

4/15: Working bibliography (5%) – Each group will submit an annotated working bibliography of at least 6 primary and secondary sources that have contributed to the development of their performance piece. Citation information + explanation of the source’s influence/usefulness to your project = an annotated entry.

5/13: Workshop performance and meeting with instructor (5%) – Each group will meet with the professor for 20 minutes to show the performance piece in process, ask questions, and receive feedback on the project for use in finalizing the piece for performance and presentation during the final exam period. Please also submit answers to the guiding questions above.

5/21, 10:45am-1:15pm, Final Exam Period: Performance and Presentation, ALSO Individual Reflection Paper, Peer Evaluations, and Group Bibliography (10%) – Each
group will have 30 minutes to present their 10 minute performance piece, followed by a 20 minute presentation outlining their process, intent/thesis for the piece, and what influences, challenges, and research informed the work. **Groups should submit three questions that they will be prepared to answer about their work, and anticipate additional questions from the audience.**

Additionally:
- individually, each group member should write a 3 page reflection paper articulating 1) your own involvement and contribution to the piece, 2) your analysis of the efficacy of the work, and 3) what research/resources you found that were most engaging for you in the process of developing this piece
- each group member should complete and submit a peer evaluation form for everyone in their group (including themselves). The form will be provided by the instructor.
- each group should submit a final group annotated bibliography of at least 10 primary and secondary sources that ultimately were used, influenced, or inspired your performance piece and informed your presentation. Again, citation information + explanation of the source’s influence/usefulness to your project = an annotated entry.