HON 360.01: Performing America(s): Creating, Celebrating, and Contesting Nationhood in U.S. Theatre and Popular Entertainment
Spring 2016, TR 2:30-3:45pm, DeMille Hall 146

Instructor: Dr. Jocelyn L. Buckner
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Phone: 714-289-2084 (office)
        785-764-6665 (cell, 9:00am-9:00pm, including weekends)
Office Location: Moulton Hall 211
Mailbox: Department of Theatre, Moulton Hall 138
Office Hours: By appointment, schedule posted in 2 week increments by my office door on Thursday afternoons.

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:
- Obtained a starting point for integrative exploration of the development of cultures and intellectual achievements through a variety of disciplinary and interdisciplinary perspectives;
- 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);
- 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.

**Everyone sees you when you text or use social media in class. It’s awkward for everyone. Please don’t put us in that position. Students are permitted to use laptops or tablets during class for note taking purposes ONLY. The distracting use of electronics will result in a deduction of the user’s daily participation grade. Do what you need to do (see above) to avoid distractions.****

**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/](http://www.chapman.edu/academics/academic-integrity/)  

**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 negatively impact your final grade, because you are not present to participate. 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 posted at the front of class. Please sign in as you enter the classroom. If you are late, sign in after class.

**LATE ASSIGNMENT POLICY**
Late work will incur a penalty. Assignments turned in late but within 24 hours of the deadline will receive a 5 point deduction (1/2 a letter grade). Any assignment submitted more than a day late will receive a 10 point late penalty (1 full letter grade) for each day that it is late. All assignments must be submitted in hard copy and on Turnitin unless otherwise instructed.

**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:

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:

Optional, but HIGHLY RECOMMENDED: *Clybourne Park*, University of California, Irvine
February 3 - 7:30 pm, February 4 - 8:00 pm, February 5 - 8:00 pm, February 6 - 2:00 pm, February 6 - 8:00 pm, February 7 - 2:00 pm
Tickets and Info: [http://www.arts.uci.edu/event/clybourne-park](http://www.arts.uci.edu/event/clybourne-park)

Required: *Merchant of Venice*
7:30 p.m. - April 15 & 16, 2 p.m. - April 16 & 23, Musco Center for the Arts, Chapman U,
Tickets and Info: [http://www.chapman.edu/copa/theatre/calendar.aspx](http://www.chapman.edu/copa/theatre/calendar.aspx)

Required: *Father Comes Home from the Wars Parts 1, 2, & 3*, Center Theatre Group, Los Angeles, April 29. Info: [https://www.centertheatregroup.org/tickets/father-comes-home/](https://www.centertheatregroup.org/tickets/father-comes-home/) Tickets purchased with Honors Program funding, Travel provided by Chapman Office of Residential Life.

**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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<th>Component</th>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Production Responses to <em>Merchant</em> and <em>Father</em> (2 @ 10%)</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prompt Responses (3 @ 10%)</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Research Project/Presentation</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<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 2/2
Course overview and introductions

R 2/4
Read the following interviews 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, as well as playwrights Suzan-Lori Parks and Lynn Nottage are (re)conceiving notions of American identity in performance:
http://www.tcg.org/publications/at/issue/featuredstory.cfm?story=2&indexID=41
and
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.”

Optional, but HIGHLY RECOMMENDED: See Clybourne Park at University of California, Irvine, February 3 - 7:30pm, February 4 - 8:00 pm, February 5 - 8:00 pm, February 6 - 2:00 pm, February 6 - 8:00 pm, February 7 - 2:00 pm. Tickets and Info at: http://www.arts.uci.edu/event/clybourne-park

Part I: Immigration in Performance

Week Two:

T 2/9

R 2/11
- Blackboard: Elinore Sisters, “Irish 400,” University of Rochester Special Collections.
Week Three:

T 2/16

R 2/18

Week Four:

T 2/23
- Luis Valdez, *Zoot Suit* (1979)
- Jorge Huerta, “Introduction to Zoot Suit”:
  https://books.google.com/books?id=_jpytdTx0TIC&printsec=frontcover&dq=zoot+suit+play+jorge+huerta+introduction&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjn5N3c_thKAhVO2WMKHYKaAR0Q6AEIPDAD#v=onepage&q=zoot%20suit%20play%20jorge%20huerta%20introduction&f=false

R 2/25

Week Five:

T 3/1
- Ayad Akhtar, *Disgraced* (2013)

R 3/3

DUE: Final Project Topic
DUE: Prompt 1: In the first third of HON 360: Performing America(s) we have explored how immigration has both influenced performance and been a subject of performance across time, genre, and context. In 2-3 typed, double spaced pages, explore some fact of America’s immigrant influenced identity that you have learned about from our readings and discussions on vaudeville, the Chautauqua circuit, dramatizations of historic events (Zoot Suit), or the current impact of xenophobia (Disgraced). In what ways do these performance traditions or dramatic literature reflect or complicate the cultural pastiche of the U.S.? Use specific examples from the readings to support your argument. Please cite referenced and quoted sources using MLA formatting. Bring a hard copy to class AND submit to Turnitin on Blackboard under Turnitin Assignments.

Part II: Performing the American Racial Binary

Week Six:

T 3/8
Library Research Meeting with Taylor Greene, Performing Arts Librarian – meet in library instruction room on third floor

R 3/10

Week Seven:

T 3/15
-In class: view and discuss Ethnic Notions and Bamboozled excerpts

DUE: Final Project Inspirational Materials

R 3/17
In-Class Group Work Day, Dr. Buckner at MATC Conference

Dr. Buckner will present the essay “Variations on a Theme: ‘Sister Acts’ on Stage and in Society,” as well as co-convene two articles-in-progress workshops and one book proposal workshop at the Mid-America Theatre Conference in Minneapolis, MN, March 17-20

Week Eight: Spring Break 3/21-25
Relax! Make Smart Choices! Work on your Final Project!
**Week Nine:**
T 3/29
-Lorraine Hansberry, *A Raisin in the Sun* (1959)

R 3/31
-In class: view excerpts from *A Raisin in the Sun*

**Week Ten:**
T 4/5
-Bruce Norris, *Clybourne Park* (2009)

R 4/7

**Week Eleven**
T 4/12

R 4/14
-In class: view PBS special: “*A Raisin in the Sun* Revisited: ‘The Raisin Cycle’ at Center Stage”

**DUE: Final Project Working Bibliography**

**REQUIRED to ATTEND: Merchant of Venice**
7:30 p.m. - April 15 & 16, 2 p.m. - April 16 & 23, Musco Center for the Arts, Chapman U
Part III: Gender and Intersectional Identity in American Performance

Week Twelve:

T 4/19
-Sophie Treadwell, *Machinal* (1927)

R 4/21
-In class: *Machinal* presentation by production dramaturgs Isabelle Grimm and Morgan Green

DUE: Prompt 2: In the second third of HON 360: Performing America(s) we have explored how race has both influenced performance and been a subject of performance across time, genre, and context. In particular, we have examined how theatre has been used to explore how race intersects with the “American” themes of home, hate, and history, and how these issues are reflected on a micro and macro level on stage and within individual homes, communities, and the nation at large. In three typed, double spaced pages, explore some facet of America’s identity or performance history that you have learned about from our readings and discussions on embodied racial stereotypes reflected in minstrelsy and blackface traditions, the most popular American play of the twentieth century, *A Raisin in the Sun* (1959), and the legacy of both prejudicial performance practices, racism, and *Raisin* in the two more recent plays we have read, *Clybourne Park* (2009) and Beneatha’s Place (2013). In what ways do these performance traditions and plays reflect or complicate the cultural pastiche of the U.S.? Use specific examples from the readings to support your argument. Please cite referenced and quoted sources using MLA formatting. Bring a hard copy to class AND submit to Turnitin on Blackboard under Turnitin Assignments.

Week Thirteen:

T 4/26
-Blackboard: Anna Deavere Smith, *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992*

R 4/28

DUE: *Merchant of Venice* Response
REQUIRED, ATTEND: Friday, 4/29: *Father Comes Home from the Wars, Parts 1, 2, & 3* – Mark Taper Forum, Center Theatre Group, Los Angeles – tickets will be purchased with Honors funds, transportation provided by Residential Life.

**Week Fourteen – The Homefront**

T 5/3
- Blackboard: Suzan-Lori Parks’s *Father Comes Home from the Wars, Parts 1, 2, & 3*
- Additional reading TBD

R 5/5
- Additional reading TBD

**Week Fifteen**

T 5/10
- Final project group meetings, in class, attendance will be taken

R 5/12
- Evaluations
- Course Wrap Up

**DUE: Prompt 3:** In the final third of HON 360: Performing America(s) we have explored how gender has both influenced performance and been a subject of performance across time, genre, and context. In particular, we have examined how theatre has been used to explore how gender intersects with the “American” themes of power, status, and belonging, and how these issues are reflected in both public and private stories. In three typed, double spaced pages, explore some facet of America’s identity or performance history that you have learned about from our readings and discussions on gender identities and the themes of power, status, and belonging explored in *Machinal* (1928), *Twilight: Los Angeles* (1992), and *Father Comes Home From the Wars Parts 1, 2, & 3* (2015). In what ways do these plays reflect or complicate the cultural pastiche of the U.S.? Use specific examples from the plays and supplementary readings to support your argument. Please cite referenced and quoted sources using MLA formatting. Bring a hard copy to class AND submit to Turnitin on Blackboard under Turnitin Assignments.

**Final Exam: Wednesday May 18, 8:00-10:30am, 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 be inspired by and extend from assigned readings from the semester, or work from a completely separate topic.

Your piece should include the following:
A title
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 plan to perform outside the classroom so we can coordinate the presentation times appropriately*
At least 3 hand-held props/objects
At least 1 set piece – something in the performance space that you interact with

Questions to consider – Hand in responses during your performance on 5/18

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:

2/25: 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
-an early description of how you envision achieving this in performance

3/15: 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.

4/14: 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.

5/10: 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 three questions for consideration that may be asked of you during the final exam period.
5/18, 8:00am-10:30am, 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. Submit in writing the answers to the guiding questions above. *Groups should also be prepared to answer the three questions that they submitted to the professor 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 (provided below) for each member in their group (including themselves).

-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.
Final Project: Performing America(s)
Group Participation Rubric

Please rate each member of your group (including yourself) based on the following rubric. Detailed comments are very important. Please submit this as directed.

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<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>This member did not participate.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>This member participated at minimal levels but was not consistent in observing timelines for submitting work or occasionally submitted incomplete work.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>This member was prompt and observed timelines for submitting work and responding to others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>In addition to being prompt and observing timelines for submitting work and responding to others, this member’s individual work, participation, organizing, or editing role was significant.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>In addition to being prompt and observing timelines for submitting work and responding to others, this member’s individual work, participation in discussion or organizational/editing role greatly influenced for the better the quality of group interaction.</td>
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<th>Member’s Name:</th>
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