**Senior Thesis: Theatre and Community (ENG 190)**

Fall 2018 • COB 209, Fridays 11:30-2:20

Instructor: Dr. Katherine Steele Brokaw, [kbrokaw@ucmerced.edu](mailto:kbrokaw@ucmerced.edu)

Office: COB2 375 • Office hours: Mondays & Wednesdays 1:45-3:00 pm & by appointment.

***“Art is not merely contemplation, it is also action,***

***and all action changes the world, at least a little.” –Playwright Tony Kushner***

As the capstone for the English major, this course asks you to demonstrate, to extend, and to reflect on your learning. You will do those things by producing a senior thesis. Normally 25 pages, the senior thesis is a time-honored part of the academy, one that asks English majors to apply what they have learned in a more sustained and rigorous way than they may have done before. Additionally, English 190 asks you to present your work orally, and to reflect on your learning by writing a short reflective essay that asks you to discuss what you think your work in the major has done for you.   
  
The main learning outcome for this course is that you will demonstrate your ability to apply what you’ve learned throughout your course of literary study. In that sense, the learning outcomes for this course are the same as the outcomes for the English major. Reading and writing are crucial to being an English major, and thus, the senior thesis acknowledges this, asking you to engage in the richest component of literary studies. Bringing your ideas into a written form is the heart of your major, and allows you to demonstrate that you have not simply learned in your classes, but you have become ready to step into a world of critical correspondence with others who also inhabit that world; at the same time, writing is the most democratic of institutions, and thus, writing is a way for you to join the broader community of others who care about ideas, are interested in current and historical realities, and whose attitudes and politics, even if different than yours, entitle them to engage with what you are saying.

After completing this course, you will have proficiency in the program learning outcomes for the English major. Your thesis should thus demonstrate your ability to:

* Interpret texts with due sensitivity to both textual and contextual cues;
* Appreciate the aesthetic qualities of texts and the cultures from which they’re drawn;
* Demonstrate historical, geographic, and culture empathy;
* Apply interpretive strategies developed in literary study to other contexts;
* Articulate, cogently and with sensitivity to context, in both speech and writing, your interpretations and evaluations.

Additionally, this course is focused on the topic of Theatre and Community. Thus in this seminar, you will consider the ways in which theatrical performance can make a difference to various communities, and you will generate research questions related to this topic. These research questions might lead you to study performances across the world, or right here in Merced. You will read, view, and interpret various literary dramatic texts (plays), and will also read and discuss accounts of various ways in which performance has been applied around the world to address issues of inequality, power, and social justice. To this end, this course has the following additional course goals:

• Identify and evaluate plays and accounts of performance and synthesize and analyze them.

• Consider the ways in which performance of drama has been used in communities around the world to address issues of difference and inequality, including those related to class, colonialism, race, gender, citizenship, and sexuality.

• Consider the specific social justice needs of Merced as well as in your home communities, and contemplate the ways in which performance is or could be used to address these issues.

• Engage with the performance organizations of Merced and/or your home communities to study the ways in which they do or do not contribute to the public good.

• Reflect on the ways in which we can learn from and perhaps model the best practices of artists and organizations that have and do make a positive impact on their communities.

***Grades***:

Participation, in-class writing, and quizzes\* 15%

Presentation on one text related to research topic 5%

Writing process (5% each for proposal, bibliography, draft workshop) 15%

Reflective essay 10%

Final presentation on research 10%

Final thesis 45%

\*You may receive 5 extra credit points for viewing responding to a live performance, up to 20 points total.

**Texts:**

*Applied Theatre Reader*, edited by Tim Prentki and Sheila Preston

Sophocles, *Antigone,* translated by Richard Emil Braun

William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*

Bertolt Brecht, *Mother Courage and Her Children*, translated by Eric Bentley

Luiz Valdez, *Zoot Suit*

Eve Ensler, *Vagina Monologues*

Moises Kaufman and Tectonic Theatre, *The Laramie Project*

Cherríe Moraga, *Heroes and Saints* (online)

Suzan-Lori Parks, *The America Play*

Caryl Churchill, *Top Girls*

In addition, students need to purchase a ticket to see *Top Girls* presented by Playhouse Merced in late November.

Other reading materials will be posted on CatCourses online.

***Schedule:***

**Theatre and Community**

Week 1: Antigone and Applied Theatre I

*Friday, August 24:* Sophocles, *Antigone*;

*Applied Theatre Reader*: Prentki and Preston, “Applied Theatre: An Introduction,” 9-15.

🡪 Research proposal assigned.

[Extra credit theatre option: *Titanic the Musical* at Playhouse Merced opens. 7:30 Fridays and Saturdays, 2:00 Sundays through September 16 (playhousemerced.com, tickets $10 per student).]

Week 2: Antigone and Applied Theatre II

*Friday, August 30*: Read: “Introduction” and “The Practice of Citizenship” from Helen Nicholson, *Applied Drama,* 1-27 online;

Jan Cohen-Cruz, from *Local Acts*, online. Review: *Antigone*.

**Representation, Politics, Ethics**

Week 3: Dream, Play, Clown

*Friday, Sept 7:* William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*;

*Applied Theatre Reader*: Prentki, “Intro to Poetics of Representation,” 19-21;

Bakhtin, “from *Rabelais and His World*,” 22-27;

Salverson, “Clown, Opera, The Atomic Bomb, and the Classroom,” 33-40.

[\*Recommended extra credit theatre options: Free performances of *Merry Wives of Windsor* at Applegate Park, September 8-9, 15-16 (mercedshakespearefest.org); all-female *Romeo and Juliet* at Center Stage Conservatory, Modesto, until September 23.]

Week 4: Applied and Political Shakespeare

*Friday, Sept 14:* Read: *Applied Theatre Reader*:Watson, “‘Lift Your Mask,’” 47-54;

Weaver, “Doing Time,” 55-61;

Andrew Hartley, “The Politics of the Stage” and “Place and Pedagogy” from *Shakespeare & Political Theatre in Practice*, online. Review: *Dream.*

🡪 Annotated bibliography assigned.

Week 5: Reading, Researching, and Writing

*Friday, Sept 21*: Read: “Writer as Reader,” “Reader as Writer,” “Focus on Primary Sources,” and “Writing a Research Paper” from *A Short Guide to Writing About Literature*;

“Research: Methods and Materials” from *A Short Guide to Writing About Theatre,* online.

By today: complete all online modules.

🡪Library Day: Meet in Library Instruction Room, KOL 371.

Week 6: Mother Courage, War, and Brechtian Theatre

*Friday, September 28:* Read:Bertolt Brecht, *Mother Courage*;

Brecht, “Theatre for Pleasure and Theatre for Instruction,” online;

*Applied Theatre Reader:* Preston, “Intro to Ethics of Representation,” 65-69;

Bond, “Commentary on the War Plays,” 70-76;

Representation case study as assigned.

[Extra credit theatre options: *Pride and Prejudice* at Merced College through October 3;

*The Wolves* at Fresno State through October 6]

**Participation**

Week 7: Zoot Suit and Theatre of the Oppressed

*Friday, Oct 5:* Luis Valdez, *Zoot Suit*;

*Applied Theatre Reader:* Preston, “Intro to Participation,” 127-29;

Boal, “Theatre of the Oppressed,” 130-37. 🡪 Research proposal due.

[Extra credit theatre options: *Little Shop of Horrors* at Playhouse Merced, through October 31; *Under Milk Wood* at Cal State Stanislaus through October 14.]

Week 8: Vagina Monologues

*Friday, Oct 12:* Read: Eve Ensler, *Vagina Monologues*;

*Applied Theatre Reader:* Participation case study as assigned;

“Incorporating Reading into Thinking” from *A Short Guide* online.

**Intervention and Border Crossing**

Week 9: Laramie Project and Social Change

*Friday, Oct 19:* Moisés Kauffman and Tectonic Theatre Project, *Laramie Project*;

*Applied Theatre Reader:* Prentki, “Intro to Intervention,” 181-83;

Kagan, “Laramie in Uganda,” online;

McKenna, “Creating Community Theatre for Social Change,” online.

🡪 Annotated bibliography due.

Week 10: Theatre, Community, Performance Studies

*Friday, Oct 26:* Read: *Applied Theatre Reader:* Healthcote, “Drama as a Process for Change,” 200-206; Somers, “Theatre as Communal Work,” 207-16;

Intervention case study as assigned;

“Narratives of Community and Place,” in Helen Nicholson, *Applied Drama*, 85-109, online.

Review: *Zoot Suit, Vagina Monologues, Laramie Project*.

[Extra credit theatre option: *Just Like Us* at Fresno State through November 3]

Week 11: Heroes and Saints and Borders

*Friday, November 2:* Cherríe Moraga, *Heroes and Saints*, online;

*Applied Theatre Reader:* Prentki, “Intro to Border Crossing,” 251-3;

Thion’o, “Decolonizing the Mind,” 261-67.

Week 12: The America Play, Margins, and Race

*Tuesday, November 6:* Election Day: if you’re an American citizen, VOTE!

*Friday, Nov 9:* Suzan-Lori Parks, *The America Play*;

*Applied Theatre Reader:* hooks, “Choosing the Margin as a Space of Radical Openness,” 80-85; Nicholson, “Re-Locating Memory,” 268-75;

Border crossing case study as assigned;

Emer O’Toole, “White Actors Singing Slave Songs?,” online.

[Extra credit theatre option: *Silent Sky* at Cal State Stanislaus through November 18.]

Week 13: Workshops

*Friday, Nov 16:* 🡪 Thesis drafts due for students workshops and instructor feedback.

Watch: Anna Deavere Smith, *Fires in the Mirror.*

[Extra credit theatre options: *Annie* at Playhouse Merced, 7:30 Fridays and Saturdays, 2:00 Sundays, November 16—December 9; and *Watch on the Rhine* at Prospect Theatre Project (Modesto), November 16–December 2.]

Week 14:

*Friday, Nov 23*: NO CLASS for Thanksgiving

**Transformation**

Week 15: Top Girls in Performance

*Friday, Nov 30:* Caryl Churchill, *Top Girls;*

*Applied Theatre Reader:* Preston, “Intro to Transformation,” 303-06;

Transformation case study as assigned.

🡪Required attendance: *Top Girls* presented by Playhouse Merced at the Merced Multicultural Arts Center (MAC), November 28—December 2.

Week 16: Presentations

*Friday, Dec 7:* Read: *Applied Theatre Reader:* Bond, “Theatre Poems and Songs,” 307-09; Prentki, “Applied Theatre in a Global Village,” 363-7.

🡪 Student presentations and wrap-up discussion

🡪Final thesis due on CatCourses: December 11, 2018 by midnight.

🡪Reflections due December 12 by midnight.

Course Policies:

**Special Needs:** I welcome all students into this class. If you have any special needs, please speak to me and to Student Services as soon as possible so that we can outline the best ways to promote your success in this course.

**Writing Help:** Students who would like help with their writing are encouraged to visit the Writing Center in Kolligian 260. Please check their (http://library.ucmerced.edu/research/students/writing-center) for details.

**Plagiarism Policy:** As a simple guideline, if you submit your own work, you will avoid all serious types of plagiarism. Nevertheless, a responsible student should also consider the less obvious variants of plagiarism, especially when writing research papers. Be sure to avoid:

• Paraphrasing or summarizing a written source, including text from the Internet, without footnoting or otherwise referencing the source.

• Copying a written source, including text from the Internet, without using quotation marks or block indentation.

For serious instances of plagiarism, such as submitting an essay obtained from an online “paper mill,” students in this course will automatically fail the assignment, receive a final grade of F, and be recommended for dismissal from the university. There is no excuse for serious plagiarism.

We will also regard unattributed citations – verbatim copying of another’s person’s work without some indication of the source – as a serious form of plagiarism. In other words, don’t insert any text in a paper that is not your own without also noting the source.

For help with how to use sources, or consult this website: <http://www.beyondplagiarism.sweetland.lsa.umich.edu>

It’s your responsibility to comply with principles of academic honesty; it’s our responsibility to see that every student receives a fair and accurate grade.

**Technology:** I strongly recommend using only pen and paper to take notes in class. Laptops and tablets are strongly discouraged, unless you take notes on them far better than with paper and pen. If you must use a laptop or tablet, put it in “notebook mode”: turn off WiFi and maximize a word processing program on your screen. Any deviations from Word Processing—or any texting on your phone or computer—will be penalized as an absence for that day’s class; the use of translation programs is OK.

**Participation:** Arrive to class on time and do not leave early unless you have emailed the instructor in advance with regards to an urgent prior commitment. Try to use the restroom before coming to class. Please do not read other materials during class, or bring food into the classroom (save it for the break).

This is a small and important class that only meets once a week, and it is strongly advised that you never miss class. If you miss **two or more** classes, your participation grade will suffer significantly, unless there is an unavoidable reason for your absences. You will be unable to make up quizzes and in-class writings, but you can earn extra credit for attending plays and writing reviews of them, or performing a scene or monologue from one of the plays we read in class.