

Theater and Theology
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A. Course Description

This course looks closely at Christianity through the lens of theatrical performance, as both have developed in Western traditions. This includes study of performance theory, theoretical approaches to theatre, liturgical theology, and dramatic texts. Topics addressed include the construction of the self through communal performance, embodied interpretation of texts, conventions of normativity and liminality, and creation of communal hermeneutics.

B. Requirements

Students should be aware that the course not only requires reading texts and writing papers, but also attending out-of-class events (such as performances) and participating in group projects that will necessitate out-of-class meetings (such as rehearsals).

1. Read assigned texts. Close reading of primary sources is central to this course.
2. Attend and actively participate in seminar.
3. Each student will briefly summarize one of the readings for the class and offer 3-4 carefully considered, thought-provoking questions. This entails examining the argument and communicating the necessary steps effectively. At the same time, the presenting student will teach and lead the class in an appropriate acting exercise that fits the readings.
4. Attend three out-of-class events (two theatrical productions and one service of Christian worship).
5. Write three short (3-4 page) papers analyzing these events. Specific guidelines for each paper will be handed out in class.
6. Participate in a small group performance and presentation. This will happen during class time, although preparing for it will require a considerable amount of time spent out of class. The performance will be a short piece of a play; the presentation will provide the class an opportunity to learn more about the play and interact with it. While this final project will require some members of each group to act, there will also be other components of staging this event such that everyone will not have to act.

Papers and projects are due in my inbox or under my office door by 5PM on the due date. Students with serious medical problems or major family emergencies may contact me BEFORE a paper is due to discuss extensions. Late papers (without extension granted) will be marked down one third of a grade (for example, A- to B+) every 24 hours for three days. Without an extension granted, papers turned in more than 72 hours after the due date will not be accepted.

C. Grading

Grades will be determined in the following manner: class participation and attendance (10%), seminar presentation (15%), paper#1 (15%), paper #2 (15%), paper #3 (15%), final project (30%).

D. Books

1. Constantin Stanislavski, *An Actor Prepares*, trans. Elizabeth Reynolds Hapgood (New York, NY: Routledge, 1936). 0878309837
2. Peter Brook, *The Empty Space* (New York, NY: Atheneum, 1987). 0689705581
3. Marvin Carlson, *Performance: A Critical Introduction*, 2nd ed. (New York, NY: Routledge, 2004). 0415299276
4. Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1959). 0385094027
5. William Shakespeare, *Measure for Measure: The Oxford Shakespeare Measure for Measure* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2008). 9780199535842
6. Samuel Beckett, *Waiting for Godot* (New York, NY: Grove Press, 1954). 0802130348
7. Tony Kushner, *Angels in America* (New York, NY: Theatre Communications Group, 1995). 1559362316

Additional texts will be available on CAMS.

E. Learning Outcomes

Relevant M. Div. Program Goals and SLOs include:

SLO 15: Students will be able to talk intelligently and articulately about what they believe to others.

SLO 16: Students will be able to reason, write, and speak clearly.

Course Learning Outcomes

Students will:

1. recognize and explain major theories in theatre studies, performance studies, narrative theology, and liturgical theology
2. examine theatrical performances and worship services through both theatrical and theological lenses
3. integrate theological, theatrical, and performative approaches to textual interpretation
4. analyze a given theatrical text in a multi-faceted way, and

5. dramatize this analysis in a collaborative performance and presentation

F. Schedule

5/31 Introduction

6/1 Stanislavski, *An Actor Prepares*

6/2 Ignatius of Loyola, Ignatian Exercises, on CAMS

6/3 Brook, *The Empty Space*

6/6 Brecht, "On Experimental Theatre," Artaud, "The Theatre of Cruelty,"

6/7 Boal, "Theatre of the Oppressed," Grotowski, "The Theatre's New Testament," on CAMS

6/8 Carlson, *Performance*, p.1-80.

6/9 Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, p. 1-76, Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution," on CAMS

6/10 Placher, "Postliberal Theology," Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative*, p. 1-16; Saliers, *Worship as Theology*, p.139-190; Wolterstorff, "The Grace that Shaped My Life," on CAMS

6/13 Adams, "Eucharistic Drama, Sacramental Effects," Wells, *Improvisation*, p. 33-70, on CAMS

6/14 Rehearsal

6/15 Shakespeare, *Measure for Measure*

6/16 Beckett, *Waiting for Godot*

6/17 Kushner, *Angels in America*

G. Policy Statements

Use of Inclusive Language

In accordance with seminary policy, students are to use inclusive language in class discussions and in written and oral communication by using language representative of the whole human community in respect to gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, age, and physical and intellectual capacities. Direct quotations from theological texts and translations of the Bible do not have to be altered to conform to this policy. In your own writing, however, when referring to God, you are encouraged to use a variety of images and metaphors, reflecting the richness of the Bible's images for God. See for more information, see:

<http://www.lpts.edu/academics/academic-resources/academic-support-center/online-writing-lab/avoiding-gender-bias>

Academic Honesty

All work turned in to the instructors is expected to be the work of the student whose name appears on the assignment. Any borrowing of the ideas or the words of others must be acknowledged by quotation marks (where appropriate) and by citation of author and source. Use of another's language or ideas from online resources is included in this policy, and must be attributed to author and source of the work being cited. Failure to do so constitutes plagiarism, and may result in failure of the course. Two occurrences of plagiarism may result in dismissal from the Seminary. Students unfamiliar with issues related to academic honesty can find help from the staff in the Academic Support Center. For more information, see the Policy for Academic Honesty in the Student Handbook.

Special Accommodations

Students requiring accommodations for a documented physical or learning disability should be in contact with the Director of the Academic Support Center (kmapes@lpts.edu) during the first two weeks of a semester (or before the semester begins) and should speak with the instructor as soon as possible to arrange appropriate adjustments. Students with environmental or other sensitivities that may affect their learning are also encouraged to speak with the instructor.

Citation Policy

Citations in your papers should follow Seminary standards, which are based on these guides:

American Psychological Association. *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*. 6th ed. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2010.

Turabian, Kate L., Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams. *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations: Chicago Style for Students and Researchers*. 8th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013.

The Chicago Manual of Style. 16th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010.

Copies of these guides are available at the library and in the Academic Support Center.

Attendance Policy

According to the Seminary catalog, students are expected to attend class meetings regularly. In case of illness or emergency, students are asked to notify the instructor of their planned absence from class, either prior to the session or within 24 hours of the class session. Six or more absences (1/4 of the course) may result in a low or failing grade in the course.