

Theater and Theology  
Shannon Craigo-Snell  
Office: 200 Schlegel  
Office hours by appointment  
[scraigo-snell@lpts.edu](mailto:scraigo-snell@lpts.edu)

#### 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. This will involve not only discussion but also theater exercises and performances.
3. Each student will briefly summarize one of the readings for the class and offer 3carefully considered, thought-provoking questions. This entails examining the argument and communicating the necessary steps effectively. This presentation will be limited to 30 minutes, including discussion.
4. Attend two out-of-class events (one theatrical production and one service of Christian worship).
5. Write two short (3-4 page) papers analyzing these events. Specific guidelines for each paper are found at the end of the syllabus.
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 (25%), seminar presentation (20%), paper#1 (15%), paper #2 (15%), final performance event (25%).

#### 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*, 2<sup>nd</sup> 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

M DIV SLO 3: Students will be able to think theologically and ethically in relation to particular traditions and contemporary needs.

MAR SLO: Students will demonstrate the ability to think theologically, strategically, imaginatively, and contextually about ethical issues.

#### 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

6/17 **Whole-Personed Formation**

Introduction

Stanislavski, *An Actor Prepares*

Ignatius of Loyola, *Ignatian Exercises*, on CAMS

6/18 **Theater Theory**

Brook, *The Empty Space*

Brecht, "On Experimental Theatre," Boal, "Theatre of the Oppressed," on CAMS

Grotowski, "The Theatre's New Testament," on CAMS

6/19 **Performance Theory**

Carlson, *Performance*, p.1-80.

Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, p. 1-76, on CAMS

Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution," on CAMS

6/20 **Theater and Theology**

Adams, "Eucharistic Theology," Johnson, "Doing God's Story," on CAMS

Saliers, *Worship as Theology*, p.139-190; Wells, *Improvisation*, p. 33-70, on CAMS

6/21 **Final rehearsal, performances:**

*Waiting for Godot*

*Angels in America*

*Measure for Measure*

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](mailto: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.

**The assignments for seminar presentations are as follows:**

Davis and Traylor, Stanislavski. (I suggest splitting the book in half.)

Beaver, Ignatius

Berry, Brook

Bussey, Brecht

Cress, Boal

Green, Grotowski

Lowe, Carlson

Park, Goffman

Rojas, Butler

Sears, Adams

Spearman, Johnson

Veliquette, Saliers

Williams-Beaver, Wells

**Instructions for seminar presentations:**

Summarize the reading, including tracing the major steps of the argument and defining key terms. Raise a few open-ended questions about the reading.

**The groups for final performance/presentation are as follows:**

*Measure for Measure*: Davis, Berry, Green, Rojas, Veliquette

*Waiting for Godot*: Traylor, Bussey, Low, Sears, Williams-Beaver

*Angels in America*: Beaver, Cress, Park, Spearman

**Instructions for the final performance/presentation:**

The group should select a portion of the play to rehearse during the week and perform during the final class. In addition, the group should lead a discussion of the play that draws connection between the play, at least one of the theatre theorists, at least one of the performance theorists, and at least one of the theologians on the syllabus. Each performance/presentation is allotted an hour and a half (90 minutes).

**Instructions for papers:**

Paper one: attend a Christian worship service in which you are not participating in any leadership role. Be respectful of the community in all interactions. Pick a theater theorist and use their work as a lens through which to analyze the worship service. Write a 3-4 page paper in which you describe the worship, describe the main points of the theater theorist's argument, and use the theory to analyze the worship. This assignment asks you to interpret a worship service AS theater.

Paper two: attend a theatrical production in which you are not participating. Be respectful of the community in all interactions. Pick a theologian and use their work as a lens through which to analyze the performance. Write a 3-4 page paper in which you describe the performance, describe the main points of the theologian's argument, and use the theology to analyze the performance. This assignment asks you to interpret a performance AS worship.

Both papers are due by 5PM on July 21. Please submit them through email.