

DRA 158: Practicing Performance - Shakespeare Fall 2014

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T/Th 10:00 – 11:50am

Wyatt Pavilion Theatre

Office Hours:

T/Th 9:00 – 10:00am

17 Wellman Hall

Course Description

This course is designed to facilitate your own original research via a methodology commonly referred to as “practice-as-research” (PaR). The primary goal of the course will be for you to craft an original research question that you will investigate via practical and scholarly methods, and to articulate the outcomes of your research in both a performance and an academic research paper. Whereas conventional academic research in the humanities primarily calls upon text-based sources for evidence, PaR embraces experimentation and lived experience as equally viable and valuable mechanisms for critical engagement. In dramatic art, this methodology allows those who make art (performers, designers, directors, playwrights, etc.) a vocabulary with which to articulate the critical frameworks that ground their work and the outcomes of their artistic experiments, and allows scholars a chance to apply theories that have been crafted only hypothetically or assessed from experiential distance (i.e. without ongoing access to the practices of rehearsal and performance).

In order to utilize practice-as-research, the researcher needs to have working knowledge of both practical aspects of the theatre and academic terminologies and theoretical platforms. Therefore, this course will expose you to key concepts and techniques in the methodology of PaR, to fundamental training in directorial practice, and to a rigorous scholarly curriculum. As this particular course takes Shakespeare as its focus, we will use his plays as primary source material. We will complement the plays with an array of secondary sources that highlight some of the major areas of critical investigation in contemporary Shakespeare Studies, including postcolonialism, gender and sexuality, reception theory, and the impact of digital culture. Finally, we will engage with each of these topics in conversation with a specific aspect of directorial practice, exploring their intersections through in-class workshops.

Course Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Discuss the central tenets of major critical arguments in contemporary Shakespeare Studies
- Compose provocative original research questions that ground their practical and scholarly exercises
- Direct scenes from Shakespeare’s plays that illuminate aspects of their research questions
- Utilize the outcomes of their research, both scholarly and practical, to craft original, provocative theses and defend these arguments in extended critical papers

Required Texts

- **Primary Sources:** (available at the UCD Bookstore)
 - *Hamlet*: Third Series (Arden Shakespeare)
 - *Macbeth*: Oxford School Edition
 - *The Merchant of Venice*: Third Series (Arden Shakespeare)
 - *Othello*: Third Series (Arden Shakespeare)
 - *Twelfth Night*: Third Series (Arden Shakespeare)
- **Secondary Sources:** (available on SmartSite)
- **Performance Attendance:** at two live Shakespeare productions (to be determined at the time of course offering)

Grading

Your final course grade will be based on the following:

Preparatory Writing and Workshop Presentation: 20%

PaR Scene Performance: 25%

PaR Final Paper: 25%

Final Examination: 20%

Participation: 10%

Practice-as-Research: Performance and Papers

Specific instructions on each aspect of the research project are included in the attached PaR Project Outline. All papers should be turned in via SmartSite before class on the day that they are due *and* hard copies should be brought to class. Papers should be written in Time New Roman, 12 pt. font, with a single-spaced header on the first page (including your name, DRA 158, and the date). Students should follow MLA style and citation guidelines for all submissions.

As director, each student is responsible for the organization and execution of her/his scene rehearsal and production. Directors may recruit anyone (classmates or other students, community members, etc.) to participate in the process. Inability to perform according to the course timeline due to logistical difficulties (e.g. illness, unpreparedness of cast members) will reflect negatively on the director's grade. Please make sure to plan ahead and have adequate safeguards in place.

Final Examination

The final examination will assess you on all aspects of the course (i.e. the exam will be cumulative). The examination will be administered on **Thursday, June 10 at 6pm**, in accordance with the University final examination schedule. The examination will be taken by hand, so students are required to bring bluebooks and writing implements with them that day.

Participation (peer reviews, group work, discussion, etc.)

Students are required to do all required reading **before the class for which they are assigned** and to be able to critically address these texts. It is in your best interest to show up to class prepared and ready to participate – I encourage you to take notes on the reading as you do it and jot down questions in advance. On this note, perfect attendance with minimal participation does not

qualify as A-level participation. An “A” grade requires that you contribute to our group reflections on the readings, and to the activities and discussions we have in class. Similarly, your energetic participation in scenework is an absolute necessity for success in the course.

Attendance and Grading Policies

- Attendance: Each student is allowed one absence with no penalty to her/his grade. Further absences - **for any reason** - will lower your grade by 1/3 of a letter grade.
- Class will begin promptly at 10:00am and end at 11:50am. If you are more than five minutes late or if you leave early, you will be marked absent for the day.
- Graded essays must be submitted before class via SmartSite on the day that they are due. Late papers will be lowered by a full letter grade for each day (not class meeting) that they are late.

General Course Policies:

- UC Davis has a zero tolerance policy for cheating and plagiarism. Plagiarism is the practice of claiming someone else’s work as your own, whether in the form of unacknowledged quotations or ideas. If you have any questions about the University’s policy on plagiarism, please read the academic policies at: <http://sja.ucdavis.edu/> Respect yourself, respect your instructors, and respect each other. All potential plagiarism cases will be turned directly over to Student Judicial Affairs. If convicted of plagiarism by the SJA, you will receive an “F” on the assignment.
- Incompletes, by university policy, are only allowed in cases of documented true emergencies, such as a serious illness or death in the family. If such an emergency arises, please bring it to my attention immediately.
- Finally, this syllabus is our course contract. Read it carefully and thoroughly. I do reserve the right to change the course material or schedule at any time in the quarter; if I do so, I will let you know in advance.

Class Etiquette:

- Given that a central topic of this class is interpretation, the dramatic literature that we cover may provoke quite controversial opinions in class. Please be respectful of your fellow students and refrain from making generalized or insensitive comments regarding gender, race, sexual orientation, class, etc. Discussion and debate are key to this level of analytical thinking, so all students should enter this class prepared to have arguments articulated with which they disagree.
- I ask that all students **refrain from using cell phones and laptops** during class. Please make sure to have all required materials physically available to you when attending class. These include copies of the texts, a notebook and a writing implement.

- While you do not need to wear rehearsal blacks to class, please do dress to move. We will regularly engage in movement exercises and you may be asked to be on your feet at any time in any class.
- Please refrain from eating or drinking anything but water in class as it may be distracting (or hunger-inducing!) to your classmates.

Email Communication

Please check your email frequently because I will communicate with you often. Please also familiarize yourself with the course SmartSite. **I will respond to emails within 24 hours during the school week.** E-mails sent over the weekend will be responded to on Monday. This means that you must plan ahead and not expect a response overnight (or hours before an assignment is due). Also, while I am happy to answer brief clarification questions via e-mail, if you have more extensive questions, or would like me to read a draft of your work, please come to office hours. Please make sure that you have reviewed the syllabus and SmartSite before sending questions regarding due dates, reading assignments, class policies, etc.

Campus Resources

1. Student Academic Success Center
<http://www.success.ucdavis.edu>
2. University Library Instruction at Shields:
<http://www.lib.ucdavis.edu/dept/instruc>
3. Student Recruitment and Retention Center:
<http://srrc.ucdavis.edu>
4. Student Disability Center
<http://sdc.ucdavis.edu>

Course Schedule

Weeks 1 & 2: Introduction to Practice-as-Research

4/1 – Course Intro

4/3 – Text: *The Merchant of Venice*

4/8 – Criticism: “Practice-as-Research: An Introduction,” by Baz Kershaw; “Retracing Antonio,” by Diego Arciniegas

4/10 – Practice: Engaging With a Text

Weeks 3 & 4: Postcolonialism

4/15 – Text: *Othello* (**Scene Proposals Due**)

4/17 – Criticism: “‘Ay, there’s the rub’: Race and Performance Studies,” by Ayanna Thompson

4/22 – Practice: Auditioning and Casting

4/24 – Workshop: Presentations on *The Merchant of Venice* and *Othello*

Weeks 5 & 6: Gender & Sexuality

4/29 – Text: *Twelfth Night*

5/1 – Criticism: “Unsex Me Here: Male Cross-Dressing at the New Globe,” by James C. Bulman

5/6 – Practice: Early Rehearsals – Putting the Action to the Word

5/8 – Workshop: Presentations on *Twelfth Night*

Week 7 & 8: Representation & Reception

5/13 – Text: *Macbeth*

5/15 – Criticism: “Making Sense of the Stage,” from *Shakespeare and Audience in Practice*, by Stephen Purcell

5/20 – Practice: Later Rehearsals – Refining Choices, Opening Interpretation

5/22 – Workshop: Presentations on *Macbeth*

Week 9 & 10: Liveness & Media/tion

5/27 – Text: *Hamlet*

5/29 – Criticism: “*Hamlet* at Ground Zero: The Wooster Group and the Archive of Performance,” by W.B. Worthen

6/3 – Presentations on *Hamlet*

6/5 – Final Scene Performances

Thursday, 6/10 at 6:00 pm – Final Examination

Final Reflection Paper and Journals of Process Due Friday, 6/11 by Midnight on SmartSite