**Brave New World: Contemporary Theatrical Adaptations of Belief**

Meeting Times TBA

Spring 2013

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**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

Throughout history, myths and legends have populated our world, providing guidance and comfort to those who weave them and those who witness them. In order to explain how we got here, who we are, and why we are here, humans have created their own narratives that provide a valuable framework that informs their specific religion, culture, and society as a whole. There are stories that tell how the world was created - - some say by a magic turtle, others describe a very busy six days of creation, followed by a peaceful seventh day of rest. Others speak of ancient heroes and their awe-inspiring adventures through unknown lands, like Homer’s *The Odyssey*. Some give us moral imperatives, similar to stories in the Torah or the New Testament. Others are there simply to fill us with wonder at the beauty, mystery, and terror inherent in our world. These form the very foundation of theatre and performance.

This course will follow the beginnings of myths and legends, what kind of characters populate these stories, and how a singular core story can have many adaptations that inform us of each particular culture that appropriates it. We will look at retellings of Greek myths, Middle Eastern and Asian epic stories, English folklore, Aboriginal stories, among others. In these, and perhaps all, stories there are archetypal characters that we can identify in each story, such as the Hero/Martyr, the Earth Mother, the Damsel in Distress, and so on. Do these stock characters change from the origin story to the adaptation, or do they remain the same? How do they change from culture to culture, if at all? We will also identify contemporary examples in order to solidify our understanding of character, utilizing Jungian archetypes as a foundation. Joseph Campbell will be of pivotal importance to this class as well.

In exploring these origin stories and their contemporary adaptations, we will look at the history and culture surrounding them. Is there a correlation between historic events or movements and the adaptation? Does the adaptation address contemporary issues and problems, or highlight viewpoints, subjects or cultures that are rarely discussed today? Do any of these adaptations have a sociopolitical, religious, or cultural agenda? Is that different from the aims of the original story?

While studying these adaptations, we will also put into practice the themes, forms and motifs we have studied. Students will create their own short staged adaptation of an origin story in groups of three to five. Each group member’s individual cultural background, experiences, and ideas will influence the finished work, which will be performed for the class during the final exam period. Occasional guest lectures and in-class workshops on devising theatre, improvisation and playwriting will help guide you and your group to create exciting, theatrically diverse, unique works.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES:**

* To strengthen critical reading and script analysis skills
* To develop creative writing skills through peer collaboration, which will synthesize the semester’s knowledge and lead to the creation of an original work with significant ties to a carefully selected origin story, myth or legend.
* To establish and/or strengthen public speaking skills, a useful skill for theatre and for the working world as well.

**COURSE STRUCTURE:**

This class will be largely discussion based, and as such, you are expected to engage in respectful discussion. This includes listening to your colleagues, respecting all ideas and/or opinions, and refraining from any distracting activity that can prevent others from learning. Cell phones are to be turned off during class periods. Covered drinks are permitted, but please do not eat in class.

The creative component towards the end of the semester is equally important; mutual respect and trust are critical for successful artistic creation. Your colleagues’ personal culture, history, and experiences are just as valuable as your own. You are expected to work together equally to select your origin story (approved by the instructor) and craft your adaptation.

There will be a lecture for each grouping of plays, outlining basic facts about the cultures represented, including visual art, music, history and other elements. This will supplement your understanding of the texts, and help you when creating and staging your adaptations. As this is a course with a significant creative element, I reserve the right to make minor changes to the syllabus in order to fit the needs and interests of the class as a whole. These changes will be announced in class, and posted in OnCourse.

**GRADING STRUCTURE:**

Grading is on a scale from 0 – 100 points:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| A+ = 97 – 100 points | A = 93 – 96 points | A- = 90 – 92 points |
| B+ = 87 – 89 points | B = 83 – 86 points | B- = 80 – 82 points |
| C+ = 77 – 79 points | C = 73 – 76 points | C- = 70 – 72 points |
| D+ = 67 – 69 points | D = 63 – 66 points | D- = 60 – 62 points |
| F = 59 points or lower |  |  |

**ASSIGNMENTS:**

* **One oral presentation, 5 – 10 minutes (15 points) – DUE DATE VARIES**
  + You will select one of the plays to read closely and you’ll begin that class’ discussion with your interpretation of the play, what surprised you about the play, and other thoughts on the topic. Visual aids and/or outside research is encouraged. These will be assigned to each student over the course of the term. Your talking points need to be typed and turned in to me at the end of the class period.
* **Short Writing Assignments (15 points) – DUE DAILY**
  + There are thirteen 1 – 2 paragraph responses, one for each set of plays, and two mini-plays, each 1 – 2 pages. These need to be typed, double-spaced, 12pt. Times New Roman font, single-sided and stapled.
* **Short paper (20 points) – DUE WEEK 9 DAY 2**
  + Write a 2 – 3 page paper on the play(s) you were assigned to present on in class. Discuss the structure, thematic elements, and imagery, analyze important passages, and demonstrate a thorough understanding of the play(s). This needs to be typed, double-spaced, 12pt. Times New Roman font, single-sided and stapled.
* **Rough Draft of Final Project (10 points) – DUE WEEK 16 DAY 1**
  + This should be a fully fleshed out rough draft, with completed dialogue, stage directions, notes regarding scenic and costuming elements, etc. This needs to be typed, double-spaced, 12pt. Times New Roman font, single-sided, and stapled. Each group turns in one copy.
* **Final Project (30 points) – DUE ON THE FINAL EXAM DATE** 
  + A polished, well-rehearsed performance of a 10 – 15 minute theatrical adaptation of a carefully selected myth/legend/fairytale/story, etc. This should utilize all the concepts you have learned over the past sixteen weeks, including visual elements, and should show your understanding and command of the material.
  + The 10 – 15 minute play should be correctly formatted, typed, 12pt Times New Roman font, single-sided, and stapled. This will be turned in at the end of the final exam testing period. Each group turns in one copy.
* **Final Reflection Paper (10 points) – DUE ON THE FINAL EXAM DATE** 
  + A 1 – 2 page paper reflecting on the process of working in your group, what you learned in the class, and some of your favorite moments, stories, or plays you discovered during the class.
* **Extra Credit (5 points) – DUE DATE VARIES**
  + One way to make up points if you’ve failed to turn in reading responses, or have more than two absences, is to attend a mainstage show in the IU Theatre department. There are four shows per semester (usually one musical), and if you turn in your ticket stub, stapled to a reflection paper, you will get up to five points of extra credit. One page gets up to 2.5 points, two pages gets up to 5 points, depending on the quality of the writing, understanding of the play, etc. I may be able to get you reduced price tickets, but talk to me early on, if you can.

**REQUIRED TEXTS:**

1. *Something* by Joseph Campbell
2. *Electra* by Sophocles (any edition)
3. *Electricidad* by Luis Alfaro (available in the course reader)
4. *The Hungry Woman: A Mexican Medea* by Cherríe Moraga
5. *Medea* by Euripides (any edition)
6. passages from the King James Bible (available in the course reader)
7. *Angels in America: Millennium Approaches* and *Perestroika*, both by Tony Kushner
8. *Marísol* by José Rivera
9. *Metamorphosis* by Ovid (http://classics.mit.edu/Ovid/metam.html)
10. *The Love of the Nightingale* by Timberlake Wertenbaker
11. *Metamorphoses* by Mary Zimmerman
12. *The Arabian Nights*. Husain Haddawy translation; based on the text edited by Muhsin Mahdi; Norton Edition
13. *The Arabian Nights* by Mary Zimmerman
14. *The Bacchae* by Euripides (any edition)
15. *Strong Breed* by Wole Soyinka
16. *English Folktales* eds. Amy Douglas and Dan Keding
17. *The Skriker* by Caryl Churchill
18. *The Mahabharata* translated by John D. Smith
19. *Collected Plays: Girish Karnad* by Girish Karnad
    1. *The Fire and the Rain* by Girish Karnad
20. *Aboriginal Stories of Australia* by A.W. Reed
21. *The Dreamers* by Jack Davis
22. *Something on Devised Theatre? CHECK ARTICLES*
    1. *Devising Theatre: A Practical & Theoretical Handbook* (Oddey)
23. *Articles on Playwriting? Theatre? LOOK AT PLAYWRITING BOOK I HAVE ALREADY*
    1. *The Playwright's Guidebook: An Insightful Primer on the Art of Dramatic Writing* (Stuart Spencer)

**Films and Film Clips Screened:**

1. *La Dernier Caravanserail* directed by Ariane Mnouchkine (Théâtre du Soleil, France)
2. *O Brother Where Art Thou* directed by Joel & Ethan Coen (clips; USA)
3. *Angels in America* directed by Mike Nichols (clips; USA)
4. *Peter Brook’s Mahabharata* directed by Peter Brook (clips; U.K. and world tour)
5. Something with Joseph Campbell on Netflix (?)

**Absences and Late Work:**

* Regular attendance cannot be emphasized enough
  + You have made the choice to move on to higher education, and I expect that you will attend class regularly, participate frequently in class discussions, and complete your assignments thoughtfully and promptly. Please respect your colleagues, yourself, and me by adhering to these standards.
  + **If you miss more than two classes, your final grade will drop five points for every absence beyond two*.*** If there are extenuating circumstances, please communicate these to me as soon as possible via email, stopping by my office hours, or speaking to me after class.
* Assignments will not be accepted after the due date
  + It’s my expectation that by this point in your education, you will have the skills to manage your workload appropriately. I would be more than happy to help you with those skills outside of class if you feel you need improvement, but late work is not acceptable. If there are extenuating circumstances, which you should communicate to me as soon as possible, via email, stopping by my office hours, or speaking to me after class. I may choose to give you an extension at my discretion.
  + There are a few exceptions to this policy:
    - Religious Holidays: please notify me *two weeks in advance* of your anticipated absence, and turn in your assignments *before* they are due, if they are due when you will be absent. You will not penalized for these absences, *unless* you fail to notify me and/or turn in your assignments before your absence.
    - Documented Illness – please send me an email **before** **class** to alert me to your absence, and in order to get full credit, you must turn in the assignment the first day you are back. If there is no assignment due the day you are sick, you will not be penalized, as long as it is your first or second absence.

**WEEK ONE: Introduction to Theatrical Concepts, Storytelling and Myth**

* Readings
  + Joseph Campbell
  + articles on myth
  + Storytelling book?
  + Theatrical concepts

**WEEK TWO: Ovid Twice Transformed**

* Readings
  + passages from Ovid’s *Metamorphosis* – electronic resource
  + Timberlake Wertenbaker’s *The Love of the Nightingale*
  + Mary Zimmerman’s *Metamorphoses*

**WEEK THREE: Hellenized Borderlands – Greek Theatre at the Crossroads of the U.S. and Mexico**

* Readings
  + Sophocles’ *Electra*
  + Luís Alfaro’s *Electricidad* (short)
  + Euripides’ *Medea*
  + Cherríe Moraga’s *The Hungry Woman: A Mexican Medea*

**WEEK FOUR: The Middle East Meets the Midwest**

* Readings
  + passages from *The Arabian Nights*, translated by Hussein Hadawwy
  + Mary Zimmerman’s *The Arabian Nights*

**WEEK FIVE: Adaptation in Groups**

* Assign groups for adaptations
* Choose belief/myth/legend/origin story to adapt
* Start work on this project

**WEEK SIX: Foundational Belief in the Abrahamic Religions**

* Readings
  + passages from the King James Bible, the Talmud, the Book of Mormon, and the Qu’ran
  + Sarah Ruhl’s *Passion Play* <<MAYBE DO ONLY SECTIONS OF PART ONE??>>

**WEEK SEVEN: Christianity, Judaism, and Mormonism Hit Modern Culture**

* Readings
  + Tony Kushner’s *Angels in America: Part One – Millennium Approaches* and *Part Two – Perestroika*
  + articles on 1980 – 1995 America, Mormonism, AIDS, Magical Realism, etc.

**WEEK EIGHT: Approaches to Understanding Minority Religions in America**

* Readings
  + *Book of Mormon: The Musical*
  + *Approaching the Qu’ran* by Victoria Rue

**WEEK NINE: English Folklore: A Truly Grim Tale**

* Readings
  + passages from *English Folklore*, eds. Amy Douglas and Dan Keding
  + Caryl Churchill’s *The Skriker*
  + articles on avant-garde theatre, the UK in the 1980’s/1990’s

**WEEK TEN: SPRING BREAK**

* No homework
* Check in on group work
* Something due

**WEEK ELEVEN: India from Multiple Perspectives**

* Readings
  + passages from *The Mahabharata*, translated by John D. Smith
  + *The Fire and the Rain* by Girish Karnad
  + *The Mahabharata*, directed by Peter Brook (DVD)

**WEEK TWELVE: Dreamtime in Australia**

* Readings
  + *Aboriginal Stories* ed. A.W. Reed
  + *The Dreamers*  by Jack Davis
  + additional articles

**WEEK THIRTEEN: Post-Colonial Africa Takes on Athens**

* Readings
  + Euripides’ *The Bacchae*
  + Wole Soyinka’s *The Strong Breed*

**WEEK FOURTEEN: Preview of Our Adaptations – Adaptations in Performance**

* In-Class Performances
* Contemporary Productions of Older Scripts using Ibsen’s *Peer Gynt*
* What to Revise?

**WEEK FIFTEEN: Mayan’s Post-Calendar**

* Readings
  + Selections from *Popol Vuh*
  + Selections from Cherrie Moraga’s *Heart of the Earth*
  + Watch El Teatro Campesino’s *Popol Vuh*

**WEEK SIXTEEN: Operatic Explorations by Philip Glass**

* Readings
  + View and listen to portions of *Mattogrosso*, *Akhnaten*, *Satyagraha,* and *Einstein on the Beach*

**WEEK SEVENTEEN:**

* Final Exam – final presentation of group projects