THTR 8: MULTICULTURAL THEATRE ARTS IN MODERN AMERICA

Foothill College Course Outline of Record

Heading	Value
Effective Term:	Summer 2025
Units:	4
Hours:	4 lecture per week (48 total per quarter)
Advisory:	Not open to students with credit in DRAM 8.
Degree & Credit Status:	Degree-Applicable Credit Course
Foothill GE:	Area 3: Arts & Humanities
Transferable:	CSU/UC
Grade Type:	Letter Grade (Request for Pass/No Pass)
Repeatability:	Not Repeatable

Student Learning Outcomes

- Connect the development of a variety of world theater traditions with social, political, and artistic movements of the time and describe each tradition within a diverse modern cultural context.
- Distinguish between the commercial Broadway theater, the non-profit regional theater, and theaters with a multicultural focus and identify less visible, mission-driven theater companies in the Bay Area

Description

A comparative study of the important post-modern American theatre movements from the 1950s to the present day examining the specific cultural traditions of these performances. Focus will be on the performance artists and major influences of African Americans, Asian Americans, Native Americans, European Americans, and Chicano/Latino Americans and the cultural movements that inspired these performances.

Course Objectives

The student will be able to:

1. Identify the roots of performance and use the language of global theatre
2. Compare and contrast at least four major theatrical traditions within the limits of the assigned time frame
3. Correlate contemporary American performance with appropriate cultural specific performance foundations
4. Relate how performance traditions were influenced by other forms of artistic expression as well as important social and political movements
5. Illustrate the cultural diversity of contemporary American theatre
6. Analyze the relationship between cultural movements and performances in the time frame
7. Assess the effects of art and performance as a vehicle for cultural assimilation and change
8. Provide examples of the differences between performance styles developed through varied cultural heritages

Course Content

1. Context
   a. Multicultural diversity and the global influence of performance in post-WWII America to the present (focus on theatre and dance theatre)
      i. Performance drawing on a renewed interest in cultural "roots" as well as mirroring the political instability beginning with the Civil Rights movement
      ii. The beginnings of racial pride and interest in cultural roots that started in the 1950s and continues to the present day
   b. The language of the theatre and specific vocabulary essential for understanding the evolving nature of modern multicultural performances
      i. Related to play production (including style, setting, lighting, costume, special effects) and the personnel involved (director, actors, producers, designers)
      ii. Terms used in examining dramatic literature (including style, climax, rising action, character, dialogue)
      iii. Terms used in relation to any type of public presentation (including performance space, marketing, demographics)
2. African American performance from 1950 to 1980
   a. The theatre before and after the social change of the Civil Rights movement and the national exposure it received on television; African American theatre companies and playwrights are recognized and Broadway is transformed
   b. Historical and social context including African storytelling and dance and the transformation of performance
   c. The major literary voices of the period, including Lorraine Hansberry, James Baldwin, Leroi Jones, August Wilson
3. Chicano/Latino Americans from 1950-1980
   a. The Civil Rights movement allows this formerly fringe group to come to the forefront and a new theatre married to political and social change is realized
   b. The Latino culture and influence
   c. The Chicano culture and influence: 1965—Luis Valdez forms Teatro Campesino during the Great Delano Grape Strike
4. Asian American performance from 1950-1980
   a. Influence of Chinese Americans and Japanese Americans and the inappropriate clustering of all "oriental" ethnicities; formation of Pan Asian Repertory in New York and Asian American Theatre Company in San Francisco
   b. Performance traditions reinvented for contemporary western performance from Japan
   c. Historical and social context; the strong traditional theatre of Japan, China and others influence the style and content of contemporary performance; the roles of family and religion on performance
5. Native Americans from 1950-1980
   a. U.S. government policy shifts from maintenance to assimilation with the Termination Resolution of 1953 that granted equality for all Native Americans with resulting activism by college educated young people inspired by the Civil Rights movement; the American Indian Theatre (AIT) is born in 1975

   b. Historical foundation of Native American performance; lack of written material and importance of ritual including music and dance
6. Other important performance traditions that have influenced contemporary American performance
   a. Jewish Americans and the Yiddish American Theatre and its influence on vaudeville traditions in American theatre
   b. Other smaller subgroups including Puerto Rican Americans and immigrants from Europe
7. American theatre since 1980
   a. Shift in nation's racial and ethnic composition; Asian American population has doubled since 1980, Hispanic (Chicano, Latino) has grown by 53 percent and an increase in people identifying themselves as Native Americans; California has more than a third of the nation's Hispanic population and nearly half of the Asian population
   b. A "commingling" of text, style and to form a "new" American theatre evident in the new plays as well as new diverse readings of the classics
   c. Effects of media on live performance
   d. Non-traditional casting does not imply that ethnicity doesn't matter, inclusion and acknowledgment of differences is needed for the "new" diverse theatre
   e. Major historical and contemporary influences from abroad on American actor training, design, directing
   f. Major literary and artistic voices of the last thirty years, including August Wilson, Ntozake Shange, Maria Irene Fornes, Jose Rivera, Octavio Solis, Manuel Puig, David Henry Hwang, Phillip Kan Gotanda, Tony Kushner, Lynn Nottage, Sarah Ruhl

Lab Content

Not applicable.

Special Facilities and/or Equipment

1. When taught on campus: access to DVD/VCR, screen, media station and/or slide projector as well as performance space.
2. When taught via Foothill Global Access: on-going access to computer with email software and capabilities; email address; internet browsing software.

Method(s) of Evaluation

Methods of Evaluation may include but are not limited to the following:

Viewing and written analysis of performances
Individual research and oral presentations
Group research and presentations
Midterm and final examinations

Method(s) of Instruction

Methods of Instruction may include but are not limited to the following:

Lecture presentations using the language of theatre to assess the cultural and social impacts of particular pieces of theatrical literature
Group presentations of projects to create an artistic vision for theatre literature in the current social context
Individual and group presentations addressing correlations between differing art forms responding to current events
Class readings of portions of dramatic texts by instructors, students and guest artists to prompt discussions of possible interpretations and cultural analysis
Field work
Field trips

Representative Text(s) and Other Materials

Course reader and selected materials. Course reading content is drawn from major works of the latter half of the 20th century and early 21st century. Some possible samples currently include "Ma Rainey's Black Bottom" by August Wilson, "Day of Absence" by Douglas Turner Ward, "Los Vendidos" by Luis Valdez, "Bowl of Beings" by Culture Clash, "Bengal Tiger in the Baghdad Zoo" by Rajiv Joseph, "In the Next Room" by Sarah Ruhl.

When taught via Foothill Global Access, supplemental lectures, handouts, tests and assignments delivered through online course platforms; feedback on tests and assignments delivered online; class discussion delivered in online forums, listservs and newsgroups.

Types and/or Examples of Required Reading, Writing, and Outside of Class Assignments

1. Reading from course reader
2. Targeted written analyses of readings

Discipline(s)

Theatre Arts