

**Women in American Theatre**  
**ENG408 Fall 2012**  
**Wednesdays, 1:30-4:20**  
**Room 117, Lewis Library**

Prof. Jill Dolan  
113 Dickinson Hall  
258-5697; [jsdolan@Princeton.edu](mailto:jsdolan@Princeton.edu) (preferred)  
Office Hours: Thursdays, 2-4 and by appointment

**Course Description**

“Women in American Theatre” is meant to give students a taste of the rich history, theory, and practice focused on women in American theatre and performance from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century to the present. Though a one-semester course can’t offer an in-depth survey of this broad and diverse field, my hope is that the materials I’ve selected will whet your appetite for more. We’ll read plays; see performances; look at clips and on-line sources; participate in workshops; and engage live with various significant playwrights/artists, historians, and theorists. The course is meant to introduce you to the field; no prior knowledge of theatre and/or of women in American history is necessary. Because we meet only once a week, the reading looks extensive but isn’t difficult. If you pace yourself, getting through it wouldn’t be a problem. I promise that we’ll address and discuss everything I assign.

Some of the themes we’ll address include gender inequality in the arts and how to address it (Should there be quotas? Should theatres be required to produce work by women?); the ways in which gender always intersects with race, class, and sexuality identities; how space and venues influence work by women (its form and content); various forms and formats used by women artists to different effect; audiences; training; popular theatre; experimental theatre; and activism.

**Course Schedule**

(Key: L = ordered a Labyrinth; ER = electronic reserve on Blackboard)

I reserve the right to change the syllabus at any time. Frankly, if anything, reading will be trimmed and/or cut as we go along, depending on how we do.

**Week #1: Introductory History and Experiments**

*Wednesday, September 19 (1<sup>st</sup> meeting)*

- Introduction
- Reading plays together
  - Susan Glaspell, *Trifles*, in Judith Barlow, editor, *Plays by American Women, 1900-1930* (New York: Applause1981): 70-86. (L/ER)
  - Georgia Douglas Johnson, *Plumes*, in Judith Barlow, editor, *Plays by American Women, 1900-1930* (New York: Applause1981): 162-170. (L/ER)
- Scene work
- Writing in class
- A bit of lecturing

## **Week #2: No class, Yom Kippur**

Wednesday, September 26; make up during reading week

## **Week #3: Theoretical Underpinnings of Criticism and Theory**

Wednesday, October 3 (2<sup>nd</sup> meeting)

### **Reading:**

- Jill Dolan, *The Feminist Spectator as Critic* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1989) (L) + new intro to reissued anniversary edition (ER)
- Jill Dolan, intro, *The Feminist Spectator in Action* (forthcoming, Palgrave Macmillan) + how to section (ER)
- Young Jean Lee, *Songs of the Dragons Flying to Heaven* in *Song of the Dragons Flying to Heaven and Other Plays* (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 2009), 31-74. (ER)
- Split Britches, *Split Britches* in Sue-Ellen Case, ed., *Split Britches: Lesbian Practice/Feminist Performance* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 35-57. (ER)
- Sophie Treadwell, *Machinal*, in Judith Barlow, editor, *Plays by American Women, 1900-1930* (New York: Applause 1981), 171-255. (L)

### **Recommended:**

- Jill Dolan, *The Feminist Spectator* ([www.TheFeministSpectator.com](http://www.TheFeministSpectator.com)); to browse through the semester

### **Events:**

- Thursday, October 4, Nezaket Ekici performance installation, 185 Nassau, Matthews Acting Studio <http://fertile-crescent.org/performances.html>
- Nezaket Ekici, performance, 185 Nassau, Matthews Acting Studio, 8 p.m.
- Thursday, October 4, *Critical Encounters*, jointly sponsored by ENG, CAAS, and AMS, presents a reading of Philip Kan Gotanda's new play about Chang and Eng Bunker, the original "Siamese twins," followed by a conversation with the playwright himself in 106 McCormick at 4:30. The reading will be directed by Prof. Bob Sandberg.

## **Week #4: Collectives and Second Wave American Feminism**

Wednesday, October 10 (3<sup>rd</sup> meeting)

### **Clips:**

- It's Alright to be Woman Theatre: *Leading 'Ladies:' Life and Times of It's All Right to Be Woman Theatre*. [www.youtube.com/watch?v=TbX9MVnZzec](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TbX9MVnZzec)
- The website [www.itsallrighttobewomantheatre.com](http://www.itsallrighttobewomantheatre.com)

### **Reading:**

- Maria Irene Fornes, *Fefu and Her Friends* (L)

- Ntozake Shange, *For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow was Enuf* (L)
- Kate Davy, *Lady Dicks and Lesbian Brothers: Staging the Unimaginable at the WOW Café* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010); chapter one, "Introducing WOW: 'A Miracle on E. 4<sup>th</sup> St.'" 1-26; chapter two, "Women are Laughing Again: Allied Farces," 27-58. (ER)
- Excerpt from *Paradykes Lost*, Lisa Kron (ER)
- Rose Malague, *An Actress Prepares: Women and "the Method"* (London: Routledge, 2012); chapter one, "The 'Given Circumstances,'" 1-29; chapter two, "Emotional control: Lee Strasberg as 'Big Daddy' of the Method," 30-71. (ER)
- Deb Margolin, "Mining My Own Business," in David Krasner, ed., *Method Acting Reconsidered: Theory, Practice, Future*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000, 127-134. (ER)

#### Recommended:

- Charlotte Canning, *Feminist Theatres in the USA: Staging Women's Experience* (New York: Routledge, 1996).
- Christine Stansell, *The Feminist Promise: 1792 to the Present* (New York: The Modern Library, 2010); selections, 177-309 (L)

#### Week #5: Solo Performance and Women's Voices

Wednesday October 17 (4<sup>th</sup> meeting)

#### Reading:

- Peggy Shaw, *Menopausal Gentleman* in *A Menopausal Gentleman: The Solo Performances of Peggy Shaw* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2011), 69-98; Dolan, introduction, "A Certain Kind of Successful," 1-38. (L/ER)
- Holly Hughes, *Preaching to the Perverted*. (ER)
- Deb Margolin, *O Holy Night and Other Jewish Solecisms* in *Of All the Nerve: Deb Margolin, Solo*, ed. Lynda Hart (London: Cassell, 1999). (ER)
- Robbie McCauley, *Sugar*, in Bridgforth, Jones, and Moore, eds., *Experiments in a Jazz Aesthetic: Art, Activism, Academia, and the Austin Project* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010) (plus clips on line) (ER)
- Jill Dolan, *Utopia in Performance: Finding Hope at the Theatre* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005), chapter two, "A Femme, A Butch, a Jew: Feminist Autobiographical Solo Performance," 35-62. (ER)
- Deb Margolin, "Count the I's; or, the Autobiographical Nature of Everything," *Women & Performance Journal* 10:1-2: 23-32. (ER)

#### Recommended:

- Deb Margolin, "I'm Just Saying," special section of *TDR: The Journal of Performance Studies* 52:3 (Fall 2008), 95-98. (ER)
- Deb Margolin, *Index to Idioms*, *TDR: The Journal of Performance Studies* 52:3 (Fall 2008), 160-173. (ER)

- Jill Dolan, "Seeing Deb Margolin: Ontological Vandalism and Radical Amazement," *TDR: The Journal of Performance Studies* 52:3 (Fall 2008), 98-117. (ER)

#### Events:

- Wednesday, October 17, Fawzia Afzal-Kahn performance, *Scheherazade Goes West*, Stewart Theatre, 185 Nassau, 7:00; discussion after performance moderated by Prof. Dolan <http://fertile-crescent.org/performances.html>. **Recommended reading:** Fawzia Afzal-Khan, "Scheherazade Goes West," *TDR: The Drama Review* 48.2 (Summer 2004): 15-23.

#### **Week #6: The WOW Café and its Offspring**

Wednesday, October 24 (5<sup>th</sup> meeting; midterm week)

#### Reading:

- Holly Hughes, *The Dog and Pony Show*. (ER)
- Holly Hughes, "A Dog in the Fight," *Women & Performance Journal* 20.2 (July 2010): 173-184. (ER)
- Charles Wilmoth, "The Archaeology of Muff Diving: An Interview with Holly Hughes," *TDR: The Drama Review* 35.3 (Fall 1991): 216-220. (ER)
- Rebecca Schneider, "Holly Hughes: Polymorphous Perversity and the Lesbian Scientist," an interview, *TDR: The Drama Review* 33.1 (Spring 1989): 171-183. (ER)
- Sue-Ellen Case and Holly Hughes, "A Case Concerning Hughes," *TDR: The Drama Review* 33.4 (Winter 1989): 10-17. (ER)

#### Workshop: Holly Hughes.

#### Events:

- Public interview, Dolan/Hughes, 7:00 (stay tuned)

#### **Week #7: Fall recess**

Wednesday, October 31

#### **Week #8: Do Vaginas Really Monologue? The Case of Eve Ensler**

Wednesday, November 7 (6<sup>th</sup> meeting)

#### Reading:

- Eve Ensler, *The Vagina Monologues* (L)
- Eve Ensler, *Emotional Creature* (L)
- Srimati Basu, "V is for Veil, V is for Ventriloquism: Global Feminisms in *The Vagina Monologues*," *Frontiers* 31:1 (2010): 31-62. (ER)
- Kim Hall, "Queerness, Disability, and *The Vagina Monologues*," *Hypatia* 20:1 (Winter 2005): 99-119. (ER)

- Eve Ensler, "Dear Mr. Akin, I Want You to Imagine . . ." *Huffington Post* August 20, 2012, 2012; [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/eve-ensler/todd-akin-rape\\_b\\_1812930.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/eve-ensler/todd-akin-rape_b_1812930.html), accessed September 5, 2012. (ER)
- Ariel Levy, "The Space in Between," *The New Yorker*, September 10, 2012; 96-100.

### Recommended reading:

- Christine Stansell, *The Feminist Promise*, chapter 10, "Politics and the Female Body," 313-351. (L)

**Workshop:** Ideas for final projects.

### Events:

- Monday, November 5, 5:30 at Rutgers, Betty Shamieh, *The Alter-Ego of an Arab-American Assimilationist* (performance); <http://fertile-crescent.org/performances.html>. Bus provided back and forth. See <http://www.bettyshamieh.com/>.

### Week #9: Next Generation of Feminist Queers

Wednesday, November 14 (7<sup>th</sup> meeting)

### Clips/sites:

- Split Britches, <http://splitbritches.wordpress.com/>
- Dixon Place, <http://www.dixonplace.org/>
- Susan Miller webisodes and new media, <http://www.susanmillerplaywright.com/>

### Reading:

- *In the Pony Palace* (script) (ER)
- Holly Hughes, *The Well of Horniness*, in Don Shewey, ed., *Out Front: Contemporary Gay and Lesbian Plays* (New York: Grove Press, 1988). (ER)
- *Room for Cream* <http://www.twoheadedcalf.org/shows/cream/cream.html>
- Jessica Del Vecchio essay (TK; ER)
- Material from C&H WOW book (TK; ER)

**Workshop:** Jessica Del Vecchio and *Room for Cream* women.

### Week #10: Thanksgiving holiday, no class

Wednesday, November 21

Make up during reading week

### Week #11: Stories Told By and About Women: Pulitzer Prize Winners

Wednesday, November 28 (8<sup>th</sup> meeting)

### Reading:

- *The Heidi Chronicles* (L) (1989)

- *How I Learned to Drive* (L) (1998)
- *Ruined* (L) (2009)
- Jill Dolan, "Ruined," *The Feminist Spectator*, <http://www.thefeministspectator.com/2009/03/16/ruined-by-lynn-nottage/>.
- Jill Dolan, "Feminist Performance Criticism and the Popular: Reviewing Wendy Wasserstein," *Theatre Journal* 60.3 (2008): 433-57. (ER)
- Anne Bogart, "Paula Vogel," *Conversations with Anne* (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 2012), 87-108. (ER)
- Alexis Greene, "Lynn Nottage," interview in *Women Who Write Plays: interviews with American Dramatists* (New York: Smith & Kraus, 2001), 336-361.

**Workshop: Lynn Nottage visit.** [www.lynnnottage.com](http://www.lynnnottage.com)

**Week #12: Domestic and Global: The Universal and the Particular**

Wednesday, December 5 (9<sup>th</sup> meeting)

**Reading:**

- Danai Gurira, *Eclipsed* (L)
- Paula Vogel, *The Long Christmas Ride Home* (L)
- Lillian Hellman, *Little Foxes* (in Barlow, 1930-1960), 155-234. (ER/L)
- Alice Childress, *Trouble in Mind* (in Barlow, 1930-1960), 467-542. (ER/L)

**Recommended:**

- Christine Stansell, *The Feminist Promise*, chapter eleven, "Global Feminism: The Age of Reagan and Beyond," 354-394. (L)

**Week #13: The Austin Project and the Jazz Aesthetic**

Wednesday, December 12 (10<sup>th</sup> meeting)

Last day of class

**Reading:**

- Excerpts from Bridgforth, Moore, Jones, eds., *Experiments in a Jazz Aesthetic* (ER)
- Sharon Bridgforth, *Love Conjure/Blues* (L)

**Workshop: Sharon Bridgforth**

**Reading period, January 8<sup>th</sup> (11<sup>th</sup> meeting)**

Presentations and final discussion, 12 – 3:00 (lunch provided), Room 219, 185 Nassau St.

**Dean's Date, January 15: All final work due via email attachment by 5:00 p.m.**

**Course Requirements**

Since this is a once-per-week seminar class, your regular attendance is required, and consistent, high-quality oral participation is assumed. You should plan to contribute actively in each class session, offering concise and succinct observations about the reading or performances and engaging your colleague's ideas. Don't be late for class; consistent lateness will lower your final course grade. More than one absence, for any reason, will lower your final grade by at least one letter. If you have questions about your class participation, your lateness, or your absences and how they're affecting your grade, please email me or visit me in office hours.

### Assignments:

1. **Five-minute in class report on an organization that advocates for women in theatre (10%).** The report should include written notes of ~250 words to be posted on Black Board by 5 p.m. the day prior to our class meeting. Organizations include 50/50 in 2020; League of Professional Women in Theatre; Lily Awards; Women's Project and Productions; Susan Smith Blackburn Prize; Jane Chambers Playwriting Award; Women and Theatre Program/ATHE; V-Day, Vagina Monologues; Melanie Joseph, Foundry Theatre; Young Jean Lee's theatre company; New Georges; New Perspectives Theatre; women artistic directors; women producers; women directors; women designers; women stage managers (list available).
2. **In-class reports to supplement discussions (30%), no more than five minutes each,** about the plays/playwrights/productions we're reading. You can sign up for these on the syllabus and cycle them through the semester. The reports should include written notes of ~100-250 words to be posted on Black Board by 5 p.m. the day prior to our class meeting:
  - a. *Biographical*, on the playwright(s), with one or two interesting anecdotes not easily found.
  - b. *Production history*, with detailed information—including images—on one exemplary performance: how it looked, what choices were made, who was cast, and what that might have meant to the production; what the reviews had to say.
  - c. *Dramaturgical questions*, about the play's form and content, to begin our conversation. For instance, "Why is the play organized around 'episodes' instead of scenes?" Or, "Why are the characters called 'The Lady in' a color of some sort?"
3. **Production or play analysis of something we've not seen or read in class (25%),** turned in on a date of your choice, to be pre-arranged with me, during the semester. Productions or plays must be selected and due dates arranged by **October 10<sup>th</sup>**. Send me an email indicating which production you'll see, where, and why, or which play you'll read and why, and **when you'll turn in your first draft** (~500 words; final draft 750-1000 words). **Your second draft will be due one week after I return the first draft with comments.** More details about this assignment (i.e., organizing questions, things to look for, etc.) to come.
4. **Final project/paper (35%),** structured in parts: idea-generating workshop, 11/7; 150-word proposal, describing your paper's thesis argument or your performance or project concept, including at least three sources on which you'll draw, due before class via email attachment, 11/28; oral presentation or performance of your final work during Reading Week, 1/8; final project/paper, due Dean's Day via email attachment by 5 p.m., 1/15).

### Ideas for projects:

- a. A research paper about/analysis of a play we haven't read (approx. 10 pages or 2500 words).
- b. An essay-length response to the theory or history we've read (approx. 10 pages or 2500 words).
- c. A series of reviews of plays by or about women for the *Prince* or a similar print or internet news outlet (adding up to approx. 2500 words).
- d. A 5-10 minute original performance (solo, pairs, or group), that in some ways addresses the materials of the class. The performance could be site-specific (that is, performed in a location of your choice that's meaningful to the work); could be in a theatre you reserve and arrange; or could be in the classroom. The parameters depend on what you want to accomplish by embodying some of the ideas and issues of the class for your colleagues. No more than 10 minutes of performance, plus a three-page/750-word written explanation/assessment of your work.
- e. An artistic response to a play, production, or performance, drawn from materials inside or outside of class. This might be a painting, drawing, or sculpture; a short play; a series of poems, etc.
- f. A critical journal, cataloguing your responses to an issue related to women and theatre that you follow throughout the semester (for example, the issue of discrimination against women playwrights) in the press or on line, engaging with the ideas dialogically.
- g. A paper, project, or performance of your devising, approved by me in advance.

**I don't accept late work at any point during the semester and I do not give incompletes. Please plan to finish your work on time.**

### How to Do Well in This Course

The central goal of our class will be to discuss what we read together in a lively, specific, spirited conversation each week. We'll read from/do scenes from the plays and listen to reports on playwrights and productions. Come prepared with questions about what you read and be ready to engage with questions about what you hear. You'll do well if you read closely; engage actively in class; throw yourself in to workshops and exercises. There are no right answers in this class; only committed, energetic engagement with a series of what I hope will be provocative texts.

Come to class on time, with the reading in front of you, thoroughly read and prepared. Make your reports informative, interesting, colloquial, and succinct. Ask one another questions; talk to your colleagues, not just to me. Imagine yourself as not "just" a student, but as someone with a stake in the project of women in American theatre—as an artist, a spectator, a critic, a donor, a producer, etc. Be invested in what we read, even if it's only imaginatively.

Come see me in office hours if you have any doubts at all about your work in the class, or even if you just want to chat. My office hours are time I set aside each week for you. Email me any time at all with questions or concerns.

Enjoy yourself! The course is meant to be pleasurable as well as informative and thought-provoking.