

USC School of Dramatic Arts

THTR 477: THEATRE AND THERAPY

Course #:	63098R
Schedule:	Spring, T/TH – 2:00 - 3:50 PM
Location:	MCC 109
Instructor:	Brent Blair, Ph.D.
Office:	MCC 101b
Office Hours:	(Th 12:30 – 1:30 PM)
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Course Description and Overview:

"[The human being]...needs to symbolize that distance which separates space and divides time, the distance from 'I am' to 'I can be'... of what is possible and could one day exist." – Augusto Boal, Rainbow of Desire.

"Healing takes place in community, in the telling and the bearing witness, in the naming of trauma and in the grief and rage and defiance that follow." – Aurora Levins Morales, Medicine Stories

"It is far more important to know what person the disease has than what disease the person has." - Hippocrates

This course examines ways in which the skills and training of theatre artists may be adapted and developed as therapeutic interventions for a variety of populations experiencing a variety of personal, interpersonal and collective ruptures.

Learning Objectives:

This course is designed to introduce students to some of the latest theories and techniques behind the theatre and therapy movement. Students will begin by investigating some fundamental and developing theories of general psychology, then explore various ways in which theatre and therapy techniques may be applied to a variety of disparate populations with special needs. The goal of the course is to teach the multiplicity of working relationships between theatre and therapy.

Course Philosophy:

Theatre is one of the oldest forms of community healing. Roots of the close relationship between expressive art and community healing arguably go back to the very origins of this art form. Indigenous cultures all over the world still practice masked rituals with music, dancing and spoken text with the sole purpose of casting out demons, bringing about physical, spiritual, emotional or even social healing to the community "at risk."

Theatre provides the actor and spectator alike with the unique opportunity to put on masks and distance oneself from the painful realities of the surrounding world. The discipline may be seen as therapeutic by virtue of the healing process that frequently occurs through catharsis and conscientization after experiencing the story as audience member or participant. This course narrows the focus on this process

and offers an overview of theatre as therapeutic intention.

To this end the class will examine and explore a variety of questions around the interplay between theatre and therapy, looking at a combination of psychotherapeutic models in order to better understand the nature of the dilemma within the select target population, then explore a variety of disparate theatre “interventions” such as theatre games, improv, playback theatre, role playing, story building, Augusto Boal’s “Rainbow of Desire,” J.L. Moreno’s “Psychodrama” and Tian Dayton’s understanding of Dramatherapy, to name a few.

In a culture inundated with information but woefully lacking in authentic human interaction, much can be gained when theatre artists and therapists explore the space between these disciplines.

Required Texts

Boal, A. (1995). *The rainbow of desire: the Boal method of theatre and therapy*. Routledge, New York. (ISBN 0-415-10349-5)

Dayton, T. (2004). *The Living Stage: A Step-by-Step Guide to Psychodrama, Sociometry and Group Psychotherapy*. Health Communications, Inc., Deerfield Beach, FL. (ISBN 0-75730-212-2)

Course Questions:

In the spirit of enthusiastic and personalized research, much of the course’s success will depend on the student’s willingness to embark on a quest with no determined answers, only deeper and more penetrating questions that challenge the theories underlying each of the disparate approaches to theatre therapy explored in class. Students will be asked to submit provocative questions raised by the class readings. Some general course questions might include:

- What is the role of theatre in the realm of human suffering?
- What are some intersections between the professions of theatre and therapy?
- What are the benefits and dangers inherent in this intersection?
- What is the relationship between theatre, therapy and the sociopolitical world?

Course Reading Responses – an important note on “Open-Ended Questions”

Students are in an inquiry-based course, so dialogue with the reading material assigned in class will be submitted in the form of *open-ended questions* in response to the section under review. For example, if the class is reading about Freud’s anatomy of the psyche and his topographical model of the unconscious, (id / ego / superego), the following *closed questions* would be considered *unacceptable* - namely, the “what” – “why” – “how” questions:

- **“What** is the “id”?
- *This question invites a concrete, “closed” response: “The id is ...”. This response does not interrogate the reading material nor reveal the reader’s depthful investigative interest.*
- **“Why** did Freud use this three-tiered system?”
- *This question invites a concrete, closed “because” response: “Because ...” followed by a presumably factual outline of the writer’s ideas. Again, this doesn’t invite a depthful interrogation of the material – just a spouting of the author’s suppositions.*
- **“How** many parts are there to Freud’s system?”
- *This question invites a concrete, closed “list” response: “There are three parts: 1) the id. 2) the ego. 3) the superego.” A disastrous response for a critically investigative course! This does the opposite of opening us up to the reader’s imagination and critical mind – it rather closes us off to supposed concrete lists and tangible items – hardly befitting the study of psychology, eh?*

The purpose of reading, as the Brazilian educator and author of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* might have said, is to “rewrite what is being read.” The students who fashion responses to the assigned readings in class may “rewrite” in brief but depthful ways – by first offering their own insight, then pitching a deepening inquiry that offers us all a chance to augment our investigation of the material. This would be considered an *expansive, open-ended* and not *reductive, closed* response. Here are a few examples – note that they needn’t all be as long as the first example:

- “I can’t help but notice that, in the framing of *id*, *ego* and *superego*, Freud seems to favor not only a clear distinction between these categories, but places them in hierarchical relationship to each other – *superego* occupying the supreme position, *id* the basest. What are the societal repercussions of this reading? Is the unbridled imagination of artists and poets an inferior servant, for example, of the presumably higher world of institutions such as church, state and tradition? In this context, does this model risk furthering the rupture it purports to heal?”
- “On p. 36, Freud says “The superego is the heir of the Oedipus complex and represents the ethical standards of mankind.” I wonder if women experience the same drives and dilemmas outlined in the Oedipus myth?”
- “Referring to this same quote, I then find myself wondering just to *whose* ethics Freud refers that we should conform?”
- “When Freud talks about ethics, should he distinguish between ethics and “morals”? What are we to make of this conclusion in a world where many religious fanatics claim this ethical high ground?”

Grading Breakdown

Presence in class	5%
Class dialogue and activity involvement	15%
Regular reading questions / responses	20%
Written responses on class fieldwork	10%
Midterm	20%
Final presentations – Book Design Art Project	10%
Final paper	20%
TOTAL	100%

A = 94 – 100
A- = 90 - 93
B+ = 87 – 89
B = 84 – 86
B- = 80 - 83
C+ = 77 – 79
C = 74 – 76
C- = 70 – 73
D = 60 – 69
F < 59

- There shall be no unexcused absences.
- No late assignments, projects, exams, papers, or exercises shall be accepted unless advance extensions have been arranged between the student and the teacher or unless exceptional circumstances occur.

Presence in class

Obviously, our work depends on the presence of each and every student in class. Missing class for this type of work is perhaps not the same as missing a lecture course: here, our work is *interdependent* and engaged. When we work together in class, we experience something together that is not repeatable or explainable after the fact. Please make every effort to attend every class. *Note: attending events such as labs, lectures, job fairs, interviews, auditions, appointments with financial aid or other engagements are not excuses for absence. These may be scheduled so they do not conflict with regularly scheduled classes.*

Class dialogue and activity involvement

Being physically present in class is part of the important journey! Participation in class dialogues, discussions and exercises (games and techniques relative to theatre and therapy) is crucial. This is 15% of the course grade. Missing class, therefore, not only subtracts from presence in class, but loses points

towards this portion of the grade as well. Attendance and readiness to participate are essential components of this course, and together they comprise one-fifth of the overall grade.

Regular reading questions / responses

Each time there is an assigned reading the student is expected to turn in one thoughtful long-form open-ended question pertaining to this reading (see opening section of this syllabus for examples of acceptable and unacceptable questions). Full engagement with the readings in the form of critical inquiry insures a depthful and meaningful relationship with this work, and parallels the therapeutic process. Questions may be submitted up to *one week* past the due date. Beyond this date, they will not be considered for the final grade.

Midterm

One class will be dedicated to a mid-term exam covering material learned in class lectures and contained in course readings prior to this point in the semester. The exam typically comes in the form of short responses and a few short essays. Some material on the exam is only covered in class lectures and may not appear in assigned readings, while other material may only appear in readings and not have been necessarily covered in class discussions.

Final presentations – Book Design Art Project

This work in the world comes in such a large variety of forms and structures, depending on the direct and very personal experience of the practitioner and the communities with whom he/she/they work. Students are asked to design their own version of a Theatre and Therapy book complete with an artistically rendered book cover design and accompanying title, followed by a sample Table of Contents with a brief description of each “chapter” in their hypothetical book. If they were to write a book about Theatre and Therapy, 1) what would it be called, and what population or group of people do they hope it will serve? 2) what would the art on the cover look like, and why? 3) what chapters would they include, and why these chapters and why in this order? And 4) what is a brief (one paragraph) description of each chapter?

Final Exam - Paper

The Final paper is due on the last day of class. Final presentations take place during the scheduled time for finals as laid out in the course catalogue. It will include information from the readings, notes taken during class, and an analytical treatment of experiences gleaned from outside projects of fellow students shared during class presentations. Here are three choices:

- 1) A 10 PAGE CREATIVE RESEARCH PAPER identifying a population with whom you would like to work, a particular breach you wish to address, the theatre-therapy methods you would (or “did,” as in a fictional account) employ in addressing the breach and the hypothesized outcome of your interventions. Include background support material from other books, articles and/or the internet about your population, and cite reading materials from class concerning the therapeutic interventions used.
- 2) A 10-PAGE HEURISTIC (personal experience) RESEARCH PAPER using your personal life story, your family and your own experiences, with a HYPOTHETICAL theatre-therapy intervention (create another imaginary theatre-therapist who comes into your life and works with you and a group of people like you, for example) and your personalized conclusions based on your imagination of the impact of this type of theatre-therapy on your life. Include background support material from other books, articles and/or the internet about your personal situation (i.e. eating disorders, gender identity, sexuality, depression, abuse, etc.), and cite reading materials from class concerning the therapeutic interventions you might imagine responding well to.
- 3) A 10-PAGE HISTORICAL DOCUMENTARY RESEARCH PAPER using your actual experiences during the course of this semester working in an ongoing theatre relationship with a specific population (i.e. battered women’s shelter, children “at risk” for gang activity, inmates incarcerated in Central Juvenile Hall, etc.) Include background support material from other books, articles and/or the internet about this population with whom you worked, including their own creative writing, pictures from any

production or workshops you did (where possible), and cite reading materials from class concerning the therapeutic interventions you used and evaluate their efficacy.

Assignment Submission Policy

Assignments are due on the date listed in the course outline. Late assignments up to one week will be accepted at 50% of the credit, and will not be accepted after that except in cases where the instructor has been notified and agreed to late submission in advance.

Support Systems

A number of USC's schools provide support for students who need help with scholarly writing. Check with your advisor or program staff to find out more. Students whose primary language is not English should check with the *American Language Institute* <http://dornsife.usc.edu/ali>, which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students.

The Office of Disability Services and Programs

http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations. If an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, *USC Emergency Information* <http://emergency.usc.edu/> will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology.

Statement on Academic Integrity

Plagiarism – presenting someone else's ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in *SCampus* in Section 11, Behavior Violating University Standards <https://scampus.usc.edu/1100-behavior-violating-university-standards-and-appropriate-sanctions/>. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct, <http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct/>.

Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university. You are encouraged to report any incidents to the *Office of Equity and Diversity* <http://equity.usc.edu/> or to the *Department of Public Safety* <http://capsnet.usc.edu/department/departement-public-safety/online-forms/contact-us>. This is important for the safety whole USC community. Another member of the university community – such as a friend, classmate, advisor, or faculty member – can help initiate the report, or can initiate the report on behalf of another person. *The Center for Women and Men* <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/cwm/> provides 24/7 confidential support, and the sexual assault resource center webpage sarc@usc.edu describes reporting options and other resources.

Emergency Preparedness/Course Continuity in a Crisis

In case of a declared emergency if travel to campus is not feasible, USC executive leadership will announce an electronic way for instructors to teach students in their residence halls or homes using a combination of Blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technologies.

Fall Schedule

Legend: **LS** = The Living Stage (Dayton); **RD** = Rainbow of Desire (Boal); **CHO** = Class Handout

Day	Title	Description	Due in class
TU/Aug 23	Introduction	Roots of Theatre, Therapy...	
TH/Aug 25	Rupture	Pathology; Psyche; Logos	"Ruptures" art project
TU/Aug 30	Psych Theory I	Freud, Neuroses (Horney)	CHO Freud, CHO Horney
TH/Sep 1	PROFESSOR AWAY. NO CLASS TODAY.		
TU/Sep 6	Psych Theory II	Maslow, Gilligan	LS – Ch. 1 (3-10), CHO Maslow, CHO Gilligan
TH/Sep 8	Psychodrama	History, Practice	LS – Ch. 4 (47-60) LS – Ch. 2 (11-20)
TU/Sep 13	Psychodrama	Sociometry, Games, Development	LS – Ch. 6 (73-82), CHO Erikson
TH/Sep 15	Psych Theory III	Jung, Depth Psych, Archetypes	CHO Jung, CHO Healing Fiction
TU/Sep 20	Psych Theory IV	Dreams & Dream Theatre	
TH/Sep 22	Psych Theory V	Liberation Psychology	CHO Morales, CHO Lib Psych
TU/Sep 27	Games & Preparation	Theatre Games – Mirror games, group games	LS – Ch. 3 (21-46)
TH/Sep 29	Beit T'Shuvah 1	In-class Visit: Sociometry	RD – "Why this book?" (1-10)
TU/Oct 4	TO – Image Theatre	In-class techniques – image theatre (cont'd)	RD – "Image of images" (75-86)
TH/Oct 6	Beit T'Shuvah 2	In-class Visit: Games, Images	CHO – "The Complex"
TU/Oct 11	Basic Boal – TO History	Lecture	
TH/Oct 13	Beit T'Shuvah 3	In-class Visit: Improv & Images (cont'd)	RD – Image (cont'd) (87-95)
TU/Oct 18	TO - Basic techniques	In-class exercises, play with Protagonist/Antagonist model	RD – more theory (68-74)
TH/Oct 20	TO – Cop in the Head	Lecture, 3 Hypotheses	RD – "Three Hypotheses" (40-47)
TU/Oct 25	Beit T'Shuvah 4	In-class Visit: Status	CH – Johnstone: Status
TH/Oct 27	TO - Rainbow of Desire	Technique – kaleidoscope of images	RD – Kaleidoscopic (96-109)
TU/Nov 1	TO – Rainbow (cont'd)	Variations – boxing ring, parade of images, etc.	RD – "Chaos..." (135-150)
TH/Nov 3	TO – Rainbow (cont'd)	Variations – projection of the screens. Eg.	RD – "Screens" (167-171)
TU/Nov 8	TO – Rainbow (cont'd)	Still/silent work – later work on prot./prot. scenes	RD – Analytical Image (125-130)
TH/Nov 10	Beit T'Shuvah 5	In-class Visit: Rainbow of Desire work	RD – "Rainbow" (150-167)
TU/Nov 15	Practice	Investigation of trauma – Museum of Unspeakable	CHO – "Cry on the Inside"
TH/Nov 17	Conversation	Questions, problematizing, this work in the world...	CH – DSM IV excerpts
TU/Nov 22	Psychopathology I	Dramatherapy praxis in class	
TH/Nov 24	THANKSGIVING (No class)		
TU/Nov 29	Psychopathology II	Dramatherapy praxis in class	
TH/Dec 1	Wrap up / review	Feedback, review	
TH/ Dec. 8	2:00 - 4:00 pm, MCC 109	FINAL PRESENTATIONS, PAPERS DUE	