

CA 457: Context of Theatre III (Spring 2020)

## **Performing History/Histories of Performance**

Meeting Time: Fridays, 9:30-12:20 pm, GCA 4390

Instructor: Peter Dickinson ([peter\\_dickinson@sfu.ca](mailto:peter_dickinson@sfu.ca))

Office Hours: By appointment; GCA 3510

Course Description: This course focuses on the intersections of theatre and history, both the representation of historical events on stage and the historiography of theatre as a form. While our discussions will not proceed chronologically, we will nevertheless remain focused throughout on how performance intersects with the work of historical memory. We begin by considering histories of place, resituating a Western dramatic tradition within the context of our occupation of unceded Indigenous territories. Next, we look at a closet drama from seventeenth-century England to ask why there are apparently so few women in theatre history. We then examine Brechtian techniques of historicization in the German playwright's most famous text, as well as two contemporary feminist responses to his work. After the mid-term break, we turn our attention to ghosted performance histories via a discussion of two postdramatic updates of *Hamlet* and also the hauntings of local Vancouver theatre buildings. The ghosts of theatre history will continue to preoccupy us when next we look at how two contemporary playwrights from the Americas (one Indigenous, the other African-American) re-appropriate the denigrated nineteenth-century form of minstrelsy. Finally, we will conclude by focusing more closely on how a single playwright has formally responded to staging the complexities of the historical present, contextualizing our discussions in terms of the arc of her professional career.

### Required Texts:

Bertolt Brecht, *Mother Courage and Her Children* (London: Bloomsbury Methuen, 2012 [1939]) ISBN: 978-0413492708

Margaret Cavendish, *The Convent of Pleasure* (1668; pdf posted to Canvas)

Caryl Churchill, *Vinegar Tom* (1976; pdf posted to Canvas)

Caryl Churchill, *Plays 4* (London: Nick Hern Books, 2009) ISBN: 978-1854595409

Caryl Churchill, *Love and Information* (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 2013) ISBN: 978-1559364409

Marie Clements, *Age of Iron* (1993; pdf posted to Canvas)

Daniel David Moses, *Almighty Voice and His Wife*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Toronto: Playwrights Canada Press, 2009 [1991]) ISBN: 978-0887548970

Heiner Müller, *Hamletmachine* (1977; pdf posted to Canvas)

Lynn Nottage, *Ruined* (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 2009) ISBN: 978-1559363556

Suzan-Lori Parks, *The America Play and other works* (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1994) ISBN: 978-1559360920

Rebecca Schneider, *Theatre & History* (London: Palgrave, 2014) ISBN: 978-0230246614  
Wooster Group *Hamlet* (2007; to be viewed outside of class)  
Additional critical articles will be posted as pdfs to Canvas.

Course Requirements:

Attendance and participation	15%
Quizzes	20%
Three short group presentations	30%
Paper	20%
Final test	15%