World Theatre

Prof. Nicholas Pierpan, Royal Holloway, University of London

The academic content of the course is the exploration of World Theatre. As this subject is theoretically endless (as famously described by Peter Brook in his book The Empty Space), World Theatre is an introductory course that is necessarily selective – while always pointing to further horizons for students to explore on their own. The course itself is great preparation for doing so.

World Theatre examines wildly varying plays from wildly varying cultures, with a particular emphasis on the modern and contemporary. Our close reading of actual plays – presenting diverse theatrical forms, traditions, styles, and themes – is complemented with a study of their respective cultural contexts: how the two interact is at the heart of this course.

At the same time, World Theatre recognises the limits of any particular example; there is no such thing as ‘a typical Brazil play’ or ‘a typical Japanese play’ any more than there is ‘a typical German play’. Within a culture there are, however, shared histories and prevailing traditions that each of its playwrights must reckon with, even if they wish to dismantle a tradition or innovate upon it. We will explore many such crucial examples, from a wide variety of cultures.

The course begins with the biggest possible questions, such as ‘what is theatre?’ Geography structures our journey through theatrical cultures in Asia, Oceania, the Middle East, Africa, Europe, the Caribbean, South America, and North America.

The course will include classes on:

- African-American Theatre (A Raisin in the Sun, Lorraine Hansberry; Fences, August Wilson)
- British Theatre (Top Girls, Caryl Churchill)
- Cuban-American Theatre (Anna in the Tropics, Nilo Cruz)
- Egyptian Theatre (Short plays by Alfred Farag)
- German Theatre (The Caucasian Chalk Circle, Bertolt Brecht)
- Irish Theatre (Purgatory, WB Yeats; The Weir, Conor McPherson)
- Japanese Theatre (Tadanor of the theatre Noh; Thread Hell, Kishida Rio)
- Latin American Theatre (Death and the Maiden, Ariel Dorfman)
- LGBTQ+ Theatre (Angels in America, Tony Kushner)
- Nigerian Theatre (The Strong Breed, Wole Soyinka)
- South African Theatre (‘Master Harold’... and the Boys, Athol Fugard)
Selections from secondary materials, such as Augusto Boal’s Theatre of the Oppressed or Peter Brook’s The Empty Space, will also be included.

Anrechnung:

Anglistik: PS Literary Studies US oder PS Literary Studies UK
Alle anderen FB: S International Cultural Studies
Language Policy and Planning in Multicultural Societies

Prof. Maxwell Kadenge, University of the Witwatersrand

Drawing upon our own experiences of the socio-cultural importance of language, this course will explore the intricate link between language planning and language policy in different multicultural societies and contexts and endeavor to demonstrate the opportunities and challenges that emerge therefrom.

The course will describe and examine the implementation of language and/or cultural policies in various sociolinguistic contexts. Throughout the course, due consideration will be given to the application of the theoretical knowledge gained to real world situations. The course will focus on what language politics consists of, how it operates, its history, and the various ways in which it can be studied empirically and theoretically at different levels: globally, nationally and locally. Typical questions that will guide the conversations during seminars are:

- How did English become a world language?
- Why is English the only official language in a multilingual country like Namibia?
- What does the linguistic landscape of the University of Mannheim tell us about its language policy?
- Which languages do you prefer to use with family, friends, in school, when accessing public services, and on social media etc.?
- What can be done to improve the visibility and sociolinguistic status of minority and endangered languages?

In addressing questions such as these, the seminars will delve into topics such as:

- the legal status of languages and language rights;
- the relations-hip between Languages of Wider Communication and Languages of Limited Communication in different sociolinguistic contexts;
- the relations-hip between language attitudes and ideologies and language policy and language planning;
- the interrelations between globalisation, nationalism, ethnicity, identity and language policy;
- linguistic ecology;
- language in education;
- language and cultural shift;
- language vitality;
- language maintenance;
- multilingualism as a resource rather than a problem;
- language minoritisation and endangerment;
- linguistic landscapes;
- linguistic markets;
- translanguaging;
- language standardization in different societies.

The main texts on language planning and language policy that will be used for this seminar are:


Some relevant articles (case studies)


Anrechnung:

Anglistik: PS Linguistics: Form and Function oder PS Linguistics: Variation and Change

Romanistik: PS Sprach- und Medienwissenschaft (mit kulturraumbezogener Prüfungsleistung)

Germanistik: PS Sprachwissenschaft (mit kulturraumbezogener Prüfungsleistung)

Alle anderen FB: S International Cultural Studies
Shakespeare on Screen: Transcultural Transpositions of *Hamlet*

*Prof. Pascale Drouet, University of Poitiers*

Hamlet is Shakespeare’s most famous tragedy and still worldwide stage and screen transposed. This seminar intends to explore the passage from script to screen, and to compare several film adaptations, from various periods of times (running from 1948 to 2000) and various cultural approaches (English, Italian, American, Russian).

Focusing (with a close-reading approach) on key scenes in the tragedy (the uncanny apparition of Hamlet’s father’s ghost; the enco-unter between Hamlet and Ophelia orchestrated by eavesdropping Polonius and Claudius; the ‘mousetrap’ to catch the conscience of the murderer; the confrontation between Hamlet and his ‘lustful’ mother; Ophelia’s madness and drowning; the gravediggers’ scene; the final sword fight between Hamlet and Laertes) in the films by Laurence Olivier (1948), Grigori Kozintsev (1964), Franco Zeffirelli (1990), Kenneth Branagh (1996) and Michael Almereyda (2000), this seminar will invite a comparative approach.

Both socio-political stakes and aesthetics choices will be taken into account, so as 1) to analyse timeless notions such as dread, fratricide, regicide, revenge, intelligence, repudiation, action, sacrifice and madness, and 2) to see how film directors both adapt a play dating back to 1600 to their own cultural context and time, while still transmitting its timeless pieces of thought on human nature.

Selected Bibliography:


Selected Filmography:

ALMEREYDA, Michael, Hamlet. The Denmark Corporation, 2000 (Ethan Hawke is H).
BRANAGH, Kenneth, Hamlet, 1996 (Kenneth Branagh is H).
KOZINTSEV, Grigori, Hamlet, 1964 (Innokenti Smoktounovski is H).
OLIVIER, Laurence, Hamlet, 1948 (Lawrence Olivier is H).
ZEFFIRELLI, Franco, Hamlet, 1990 (Mel Gibson is H).

Anrechnung:
Anglistik: PS Literary Studies UK
Alle anderen Fä: S International Cultural Studies
Perception and Cognition: Core Problems, Research Frameworks, and Theories

Prof. Jurgis Skelters, University of Latvia

In this course, an introduction to Cognition and Perception will be provided both from the perspective of theoretical frameworks and applications and methods. The course will explore core processes in perception and cognition and will highlight some of the most prominent problems in the current research. The underlying motivation of this course is to show how external (incoming/input) information is transformed into knowledge (in the broadest sense of the word; i.e., cognitive representation). Cognitive representation will be introduced as the main theoretical concept in cognitive and perception sciences. Different types of cognitive representations will be defined and some of the theoretical and empirical discussions and controversies will be discussed.

Literature:


Anrechnung:

Geschichte: Übung Einführung in die historische Theorie

Philosophie: PS Theoretische Philosophie

Alle anderen FB: S International Cultural Studies
Possible Worlds, Virtual Reality: Robots, Artificial Intelligence, and Human Enhancement in US-American Fiction and Film

Prof. Ulfried Reichardt, University of Mannheim

At a time when artificial intelligence, intelligent machines, and the internet of things no longer belong to the realm of science fiction, it seems to be urgent to investigate virtual reality and how possible forms of “intelligence” or “cognition” have been imagined by writers and thinkers. As has been argued, a large amount of what science has discovered and technology has developed had already been imagined before. Thus, science fiction and other literary forms of imaginative inquiry into what is possible are important resources for thinking about what our future might look like. We will read a significant text by Jorge Luis Borges about how the world might look like if completely different premises were in force, read short stories that fictionally test how neural networks, androids, and intelligent machines in general might interact with people, and also read about possible enco-uners with aliens of all kinds of sorts. We will discuss science fiction stories, some of them analyzed in Steven Shaviro’s Discognition (2015), and also films such as Ex Machina, Her, Arrival, and Blade Runner.

Literature

Borges, José Luis. “John Wilkins’s Analytical Language” (1942).
Films

Garland, Alex, dir. Ex Machina. (2014)
Jonze, Spike, dir. Her (2014)
Villeneuve, Denis, dir. Arrival (2016)

Anrechnung:

Anglistik: PS Literary Studies US
MKW: HS Audiovisuelle Medien (mit umfangreicher Hausarbeit)
Alle anderen FB: S International Cultural Studies