

HL4012 – Advanced Studies in Drama: Documenting Theater

Meets: Thursdays 2:30-5:30
Location: S3.2 SR5
Professor: Dr. Kevin Riordan

Office: HSS 03-71
Consultation hours: TBD
Email: kriordan@ntu.edu.sg

William Worthen suggests that a dramatic text is positioned to be read as both “as a record and as an instigation” (10). Worthen signals the way in which a play—more so than other genres—is never quite one with itself. It always gestures back to its previous performances and ahead to new ones. In this course, we decenter the literary script as the primary site of analysis and study the network of related documents that circulate around and help produce our sense of a given “play.” We will consult source materials, drafts, and design plans; we will study the subsequent reviews, published versions, and critical assessments. We will witness and document how a “play” is only one articulation in a longer series of theatrical texts and events.

This course expands and deepens students’ understanding of drama, theater, and performance. Our work will both include and move beyond the study of plays as literary objects, to more fully engage with embodied performances in the real world and how those performances find documented form. Through the assignments, we will reckon with how our own reading and writing practices serve to negotiate theater’s records and instigations. Our readings will mostly be contemporary, so as to engage with and learn from current theatrical theory and practice.

Per NTU convention there are no formal prerequisites for this course. That said, it is my expectation that students have significant interest and have taken other modules in theater, drama, and/or performance studies. At the 4000-level, this course’s workload is substantial in terms of reading, writing, and participation.

Core Readings:

Alfian, *Cooling-Off Day*
Bechdel, *Fun Home*
Joseph, *Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo*
Kaufman, *The Laramie Project*
Lee, *Songs of the Dragons Flying to Heaven*
Oon, *#UnicornMoment*
Course Reader (Available on B1 of HSS)
Selected Theater Performance

Course Assignments and Assessment:

Preparation, Participation, and Presentations	15%
Theater Writing Portfolio (Field Work, Found Play, Script Analysis)	25%
Performance Review	10%
Final Exam	50%

Late Policy: All written work is due in hard-copy and on NTU Learn by the start of class. Late work will be accepted within twenty-four hours for a reduced grade and it will receive no instructor comments.

Plagiarism disclaimer: Please see the divisional policy of plagiarism here:
<http://www3.ntu.edu.sg/hss2/english/Plagiarism.pdf>

Prospective Itinerary

Week 1 – What Is Happening

August 11 – Schechner, from *Between Theater and Anthropology*; Phelan, from *Unmarked*

Week 2 – Writing the Event

August 18 – Geertz, “Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight;” Chua, from “Slow Boat to China;” Narayan, “Place” (optional); de Certeau, “Walking in the City” (optional)

Week 3 – Theatricalizing the Real

August 25 – Kaufman, *The Laramie Project*; Brecht, “The Street Scene”

Week 4 – Making People Talk

September 1 – Alfian, *Cooling-Off Day*; Thum, “A Short History of Elections in Singapore”

Week 5 – True War Stories

September 8 – O’Brien, “How to Tell a True War Story;” Brecht, from *War Primer*; Sacco, from *Palestine*; Weiss, from *The Investigation*

Week 6 – True Stories, with Talking Tiger Ghosts

September 15 – Joseph, *Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo*

Week 7 – Making Sense of the Theatrical Real

September 22 – Martin, from *Theatre of the Real*; Schneider, from *Performing Remains*

Recess

After the recess, we will set the reading and writing sequence to most productively correspond with our ongoing conversations and insights. Our principal texts will include a combination of the following:

Bechdel, *Fun Home*

Bel, *GALA*

Greenblatt and Mee, *The Cardenio Project*

Kron and Tesori, *Fun Home*

Lee, *Songs of the Dragons Flying to Heaven*

Liew, *The Art of Charlie Chan Hock Chye*

Oon, *#unicornmoment*

Spell 7, *National Language Class*

FINAL EXAM: Wednesday, November 30