

# HL4012 – Advanced Studies in Drama: Documenting Theater

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

Office: HSS 03-72  
Consultation hours: TBD  
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William Worthen suggests that a dramatic text is positioned to be read both as “a record and as an instigation” (10). Worthen here 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 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%
Reaction Papers (2)	10%
Field Work	10%
Found Play	20%
Final Essay	30%
Performance Review	15%

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

### Week 2 – Writing the Event

August 23 – Geertz, “Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight;” Chua, from “Slow Boat to China”  
Reaction Paper 1 due

### Week 3 – Theatricalizing the Real

August 30 – Kaufman, *The Laramie Project*; Brecht, “The Street Scene”

### Week 4 – Making People Talk

September 6 – Alfian, *Cooling-Off Day*; Thum, “A Short History of Elections in Singapore”

### Week 5 – Researching/Rehearsing the Traumatic

November 1 – Bechdel, *Fun Home*  
Field Work due

### Week 6 – Staging the Real

November 8 – Kron and Tesori, *Fun Home* (selections); Liew, *The Art of Charlie Chan Hock Chye* (selections)

### Week 7 – The Theatrical Real

September 27 – Martin, from *Theatre of the Real*; Schneider, from *Performing Remains*

## Recess

### Week 8 – Found Play Workshop + True War Stories

October 11 – O’Brien, “How to Tell a True War Story;” Weiss, *The Investigation* (selections); Sacco, *Palestine* (selections)

Found Play draft due

October 16 – Found Play due

## October 18 – No Class – Deepavali

### Week 9 – True Stories, Continued (with Talking Ghost-Tigers)

October 25 – Joseph, *Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo*

### Week 10 – Staging the Personal (Mediated)

November 1 – Oon, *#unicornmoment*

Performance Review due

**Week 11 – The Real and Personal Mythologized**

November 8 – Lee, *Songs of the Dragons Flying from Heaven*

**Week 12 – Exiting the Theater**

November 15 – TBD

Reaction Paper 2 due

November 22 – Final Essay due