

THST S390 / Engl S353: Modern European Drama
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Summer 2017

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The major European playwrights active from 1879 (the premiere of Ibsen's *Doll's House*) to 1989 (the death of Beckett) were responsible for theatrical advances of continuing influence and importance. This seminar will trace the advent of dramatic naturalism and realism (early Ibsen and Strindberg, the major plays of Chekhov), the contrary movement toward expressionist urgency and symbolist subtlety (late Strindberg and Ibsen, early Brecht), the efforts of socially-engaged playwrights to shoulder the burden of history and to respond to contemporary politics (Shaw, middle- and late-period Brecht), and the opening of drama to the ambiguities of religion and philosophy (Beckett). The seminar will be grounded in close readings of representative plays but will also consider how dramas change under the pressures of performance. To that end, we will read the playwrights' theoretical statements (many of which are focused on issues of staging) and view video excerpts of important recent productions.

July 4: Introduction: defining modern drama, introduction to realism

Henrik Ibsen: *A Doll House* (1879)
The Wild Duck (1884)

July 6: Henrik Ibsen: *Hedda Gabler* (1890)

The Master Builder (1892)

July 11: August Strindberg: *Miss Julie* (1888)

The Ghost Sonata (1907)
 Preface to *Miss Julie* (1888)
 "Notes on the Intimate Theater" (1907-09) (server)

July 13: Anton Chekhov: *The Sea Gull* (1896)

Uncle Vanya (1899)

David Magarshack: Introduction to *Stanislavsky on the Art of the Stage*
 (server)

July 18: Anton Chekhov: *Three Sisters* (1901)

The Cherry Orchard (1904)

July 20: George Bernard Shaw: *Major Barbara* (1905)

Heartbreak House (1919)

July 21: Paper (6-8 pages) due by 11:59 PM.

July 25: Bertolt Brecht: *The Threepenny Opera* (1928)
Saint Joan of the Stockyards (1929-31)
 “The Modern Theater Is the Epic Theater”
 “Alienation Effects in Chinese Acting”

July 27: Bertolt Brecht: *The Good Person of Szechwan* (1940)
Mother Courage and Her Children (1941-49)

Aug. 1: Samuel Beckett: *Waiting for Godot* (1953)
Endgame (1957)

Aug. 3: Samuel Beckett: *Krapp’s Last Tape* (1958)
Happy Days (1961)
Rockaby (1981)

Aug. 4: Paper (8-10 pages) due by 11:59 PM

Requirements: two papers, due July 21 and August 4; at least 5 blog posts at [URL TBA], and lively participation in class.

Texts:

Ibsen: *Four Major Plays, vol. 1* (trans. Rolf Fjelde), Signet
 Strindberg: *Five Plays* (trans. Harry Carlson), Univ. of California Press
 Chekhov: *The Plays of Anton Chekhov* (trans. Paul Schmidt), HarperCollins
 Shaw: *Major Barbara*, Penguin
 Shaw: *Heartbreak House*, Penguin
 Brecht: *The Threepenny Opera* (trans. Ralph Mannheim/John Willett), Bloomsbury/Methuen
 Brecht: *Collected Plays, vol. 6*, (ed. and trans. Mannheim/Willett) (contains *The Good Person of Szechwan*), Bloomsbury/Methuen
 Brecht: *Saint Joan of the Stockyards* (trans. Ralph Mannheim), Bloomsbury/Methuen
 Brecht: *Mother Courage and Her Children* (trans. David Hare), Bloomsbury/Methuen
 Beckett: *Waiting for Godot*, Grove
 Beckett: *Endgame*, Grove
 Beckett: *The Collected Shorter Plays*, Grove
 Beckett: *Happy Days*, Grove

Xeroxes (on server):

Elinor Fuchs: “EF’s Visit to a Small Planet” (recommended)
 David Magarshack: Introduction to *Stanislavsky on the Art of the Stage*
 Strindberg: “Notes on the Intimate Theater”

Brecht: "The Modern Theater Is the Epic Theater"

Brecht: "Alienation Effects in Chinese Acting"

Books available at Yale Bookstore and on reserve at Haas Arts Library.