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COLQ-339 – “AMERICAN PERFORMANCE CULTURE CIRCA 1900”
(Thursdays, 1:00-3:30pm)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

We will work together to make sense of the Samuel French Company archives, focusing on materials from the turn of the twentieth century. With the inside view afforded us by this archive, we will question and complicate each of the key terms in this course's title. What was “American” about turn-of-the-century performance culture? What counted as “performance” at this time? How did this performance relate to the wider “culture”? How did the performance culture enact or resist a national identity?

COURSE FORMAT

This course is more like a collaborative research project than it is a lecture or a seminar. Therefore, though there are collective, assigned readings toward the beginning of the semester, I have left more and more space as the semester goes on for either a) readings you discover during your research or b) readings I assign based on which direction your research is heading.

GRADING

Your final grade will be based on your in-class participation (10%), regular research exercises (30%), and the quality of your final project (20% contribution to collaborative exhibition, 40% individual research paper).



WEEK ONE: PERFORMANCE CULTURE / INTRODUCTION TO THE COLLECTION
January 24th

Suggested reading:

Truly Yours (a brief history of the Samuel French Co.)

Marvin Carlson, “What is Performance?”

Barbara Kirschenblatt-Gimblett, “Performance Studies”

WEEK TWO: SPECTATORS AND COLLECTORS

January 31st

"Scrapbook Assignment #1" due on Tuesday; Skype in class with Prof. Marcus

Core reading:

Sharon Marcus, "The Theatrical Scrapbook"

Annette Fern, "What Have They Done to the Evidence?"

Required reading:

Herbert I. Jackson, "The Fascinating Field of the Extra Illustrated Book"

Christopher Bigsby & Don Wilmet, "Introduction" to *Cambridge History of American Theatre*, vol. 2

Suggested reading:

Archer, "E Pluribus Unum: Sarah Bernhardt's `Farewell Tour of 1905-06"

WEEK THREE: CONTEXT, EVIDENCE, DATA

February 7th

"Scrapbook Assignment #2" due on Tuesday

From the archive: Box Office Books of the Madison Square & American Theatres

Core reading:

William Gillette, *Secret Service*

Tracy Davis, "The Context Problem"

Franco Moretti, *Graphs, Maps & Trees* (excerpt)

Required reading:

Gertrude Stein, "Plays" (excerpt)

G. B. Shaw, review of *Secret Service*

Assorted images, newspaper stories, etc. related to *Secret Service*

WEEK FOUR: THE QUESTION OF A NATIONAL THEATRE

February 14th

Presentations on self-assigned plays in class

From the archive: tour books of "Little Lord Fauntleroy" and "Officer 666"

Core reading:

W. B. Yeats, *Kathleen Ni Houlihan*

Imre Kiralfy, *America: A Grand Historical, Theatrical, and Mimic Spectacle*

[Play of your choosing from the Brander Matthews essays]

Required reading:

Brander Matthews, "The Question of the Theater" in *The American of the Future...*

Brander Matthews, "The Future of the Drama" in *The Development of the Drama*

Suggested reading:

John Frick, "A Changing Theatre: New York and Beyond"

WEEK FIVE: REALISM, REPERTOIRE, AND THE "WOMAN QUESTION"

February 21st

Class visit by Marc Robinson

Core reading:

David Belasco, *The Girl of the Golden West*

Marc Robinson, "Realism Against Itself"

Required reading:

Henrik Ibsen, *A Doll's House*

G. B. Shaw, *Mrs. Warren's Profession*

Belasco on directing & acting

WEEK SIX: ENGLAND ↔ AMERICA, ARGUMENTS & ARCHIVES

February 28th

"Show and Tell" assignment (Samuel French London, correspondence)

Skype with Derek Miller

Core reading

Derek Miller, "Performative Performances: A History and Theory of the 'Copyright Performance'"

Ju Yon Kim, "Trying on *The Yellow Jacket*: Performing Chinese Exclusion and Assimilation"

WEEK SEVEN: RESEARCH PROPOSALS

March 7th – Workshop research proposals

WEEK EIGHT

March 14th

Class visit by Charlotte Canning

Charlotte Canning, *The Most American Thing in America*

WEEKS NINE-TWELVE: FLEX WEEKS: Readings determined in consultation with me based on research projects; each student leads class once

WEEK THIRTEEN: Group meeting to conceive and plan exhibition of archival materials

WEEK FOURTEEN: Presentations relating to final papers