

THEATRE'S GREATEST MOMENTS—UC Berkeley OLLI

Spring 2025 (1pm to 3pm—April 1, 8, 15, 22, 29, May 6)

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Ever wonder how theatre first became theatre? Or when the first dialogue was spoken in front of an audience? What playwright first wrote an original story? Or how the Romans changed the way stories were told on stage simply by using a curtain? How Marlowe reconciled the medieval world of his youth with the developing English Renaissance in just one play? Or how Moliere dared to expose all of society's ills without upsetting his king? Or how the English writers brought the middleclass onto the stage? Or how Realism became the dominant form of theatre for an industrialized world? In this course we will explore the greatest historical and literary moments that changed both the theatre and humanity. Where we look at the complex ways art and history merged on stage to enlighten us and ultimately defined just how theatre became theatre.

COURSE CALENDAR

The following is a brief outline of topics we are likely to cover. The suggested readings are not required but are offered to augment the lectures and provide greater depth for those interested. Should you choose to read the plays, look for more recent translations—older editions tend to be expurgated. And while reading the plays is perfectly acceptable, watching performances is always preferred.

Tuesday, April 1 (1:00-3:00p) “Origins & Ancients: From Ritual Storytelling to Theatre as Aristocratic Nation/State”

Suggested Readings:

Sophocles, *Oedipus Rex*

Aristophanes, *Lysistrata*

Brockett & Hildy's chapter on Greek theatre

Tuesday, April 8 (1:00-3:00p) “In Media Res: How the Romans Reinvented Theatre”

Suggested Readings:

Plautus, *The Twin Menaechmi*

Seneca, *Medea*

Brockett & Hildy's chapter on Roman theatre

Tuesday, April 15 (1:00-3:00p) “Age of Elizabeth: The Rise of Drama as Imperial National Literature”

Suggested Readings:

Marlow, *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus*

Shakespeare, *Hamlet*

Brockett & Hildy's chapter on Elizabethan theatre

Tuesday, April 22 (1:00-3:00p) "Restoration & Reason: Comedy as Merchant Class Expression"

Suggested Readings:

Behn, *The Rover*

Wycherly, *The Country Wife*

Sheridan, *The Rivals*

Brockett & Hildy's chapter on Restoration Theatre

Tuesday, April 29 (1:00-3:00p) "Realism & Beyond: Entertainment as Middleclass Industry"

Suggested Readings:

Ibsen, *A Doll's House*

James A. Herne, *Margaret Fleming*

Eugene O'Neill, *Beyond the Horizon*

See also Brockett & Hildy's chapters on 19th century theatre & Realism

Tuesday, May 6 (1:00-3:00p) "Is the Theatre Really Dead?: Turmoil and Commodification in the 20th Century"

Suggested Readings:

Pirandello, *Six Characters in Search of an Author*

Beckett, *Waiting for Godot*

Brockett & Hildy, see chapters on 20th century theatre and the avant-garde

COURSE BIBLIOGRAPHY

Histories, Criticism & Biographies:

*Oscar G. Brockett & Franklin J. Hildy. *A History of Theatre*

Graham Ley. *A Short Introduction to Ancient Greek Theater*

Timothy J. Moore. *Roman Theatre*

Stanley Welles. *William Shakespeare: A Very Short Introduction*

Deborah Payne Fisk, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to English Restoration Theatre*

Michael Booth. *Theatre in the Victorian Age*

A. Nicholas Vardac. *Stage to Screen: Theatrical Method from Garrick to Griffith*

E. Papke. *Susan Glaspell: A Research and Production Sourcebook*

Stephan A. Black. *Eugene O'Neill: Beyond Mourning and Tragedy*

Susan Duffy, ed. *Political Plays of Langston Hughes*

Plays:

Sophocles, *Oedipus Rex* (sometimes *Oedipus the King*)

Aristophanes, *Lysistrata*

Plautus, *The Twin Menaechmi*

Seneca, *Medea*

Marlowe, *The Tragical History or Doctor Faustus*

Shakespeare, *Hamlet*

Behn, *The Rover*

Wycherley, *The Country Wife*

Congreve, *Way of the World*

Sheridan, *The Rivals*

Ibsen, *A Doll's House*

Herne, *Margaret Fleming*

Glaspell, *Trifles*

O'Neill, *Desire under the Elms*

Pirandello, *Six Characters in Search of an Author*

Hughes, *Mulatto*

Beckett, *Waiting for Godot*