

THEA 560: Documentary Theatre

Instructor: Valleri Robinson

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Required Text: *Dramaturgy of the Real on the World Stage*, ed. Carol Martin (textbook)
Notes from the Field, Anna Deveare Smith



Course Objectives:

1. To gain an understanding of the range of contemporary global documentary/verbatim theatre styles;
2. To learn about historical approaches to docu-drama/living newspapers;
3. To explore historiographical questions raised by documentary/verbatim theatre;
4. To engage critically with the theoretical/philosophical implications of "the Real" and "the Truth" and ethical question that emerge around the form.
5. To develop individual creative or historical research projects focusing on documentary theatre.

Assignments/Grading

1. Lead discussant 25%
2. Class participation 25%
3. Final research paper/creative research project 50%

Lead Discussant:

As lead discussant, each scholar-artist will select a topic for the weekly readings and guide the classroom zoom discussion with additional information and engaging questions related to the course goals. If presenting background information, keep this to a minimum of 15 minutes to allow for discussion. Provide discussion questions 24 hours in advance of the class to the group.

Final project:

Scholar-artists may choose to write a conference-length (10-12 pages) research paper exploring a specific documentary theatre event or artist/collective OR write a 10-minute performance piece (or 10-15 minutes of a longer work) based on a historical or contemporary event using a range of archival materials, performance approaches, and technological sources. In both cases, scholar-artists should be able to discuss critical aspects of their historiographical approach, including their ways of defining “an event,” the archive used, and their methods of asking questions and organizing materials.

SCHEDULE IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE

Week 1: Introduction to the Course
Aug. 27

Zoom Thursdays 10-11:30

Week 2: Background and Concepts
Sept.3

Readings:

“Introduction: Dramaturgy of the Real,” Carol Martin (textbook)

“Bodies of Evidence,” Carol Martin (textbook)

“Living Newspaper: Theatre and Therapy” by John Casson. *TDR* 2000. (Compass)

Week 3:
Sept.1

Readings and Viewing:

Anna Deveare Smith, *Notes from the Field*

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-eL9oME21v0>

Anna Deveare Smith on HBO “Notes from the Field”

“Toward a Poetics of Theatre and Public Events: In the Case of Stephen Lawrence,” Janelle Reinelt (textbook)

Week 4:
Sept.17

Witness Theatre
Readings:

“After the Riot: Teatr.doc and the Performance of Witness” by Maksim Hanukai.
TDR: The Drama Review, Volume 61, Number 1, Spring 2017 (T233), pp. 43-55 .
(On Compass)

“Post-1990s Verbatim Theatre in South Africa,” Yvette Hutchison (textbook)

REwind: A Cantata and intro (textbook)

Week 5:
Sept.24

Readings:

“Reality from the Bottom Up: Documentary Theatre in Poland,” by Agnieszka
Sowinska (textbook)

“Don’t Be Surprised When They Come to Burn Your House Down,” by Pawel
Szarbowski

The Files, Theatre of the 8th Day (textbook)

Week 6:
Oct. 1

“Post-1990s Verbatim Theatre in South Africa: Exploring the African Concept of
‘Truth’” Yvette Hutchison, (textbook)

Week 7:
Oct. 8

“Excerpts from the plays of Vivi Tellas” (textbook)
Present materials for initial documentary project idea

Week 8:
Oct. 15

Readings:
“The Scripted Realities of Rimini Protokoll,” Florian Malzacher (textbook)

Website review/viewings

<https://www.rimini-protokoll.de/website/en/project/remote-x>

Week 9:
Oct. 22

Readings and Viewings:
Viewing: The Battle of Belarus Free Theatre
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v= haByIs0ojo>

Voices of the New Belarus and Insulted. Belarus. by Andrei Kureichik

Week 10:

Oct. 29

Readings:

“Staging Terror,” by Wendy S. Hesford (textbook)

“Three Posters,” by Elias Khoury and Rabiha Mroué (textbook)

Weeks 11-12

Guest artist in class workshops: (Andrei Kureichik)

Week 13:

Testimonies by Emily Mann

Week 14-15:

Present final projects