

Theatre 597
Issues of the Contemporary World:
Censorship and Performance

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Office hours: MW 10 - 12
and by appointment

Class Meetings: MW 1:30-3:18 p.m.
2068 Drake

Credit: 5 UG credits
GEC: Contemporary Issues
Prerequisite: Senior status

Course Description:

Theatre 597 explores the ways in which censorship of performance has been employed by governmental groups in both western and Asian societies as an instrument of public policy, or in response to pressure groups within those societies. Recent and historically significant instances of censorship (or attempts at censorship) will be examined, with case studies drawn primarily from theatre and performance. Students are asked to consider their positions on the use of censorship in the contemporary world.

Course Objectives:

1. To study the interaction between cultures with differing (and often mutually exclusive) societal value systems
2. To explore the ways in which the cultures of contemporary societies have become interdependent, and some of the stresses that interdependence creates
3. To give students the opportunity to gain a richer comprehension of issues of censorship and governmental control in the contemporary world, especially as pertains to various forms of theatrical performance
4. To discover how different contemporary societies perceive the role of government in controlling what information citizens can freely access

GEC Description:

Theatre 597 fulfills the GEC requirement for Section 8, Issues of the Contemporary World. The course is meant to draw students from diverse majors. The issue to be explored is censorship, with instances and examples drawn from both Western and Asian communities, particularly in relation to theater and other forms of performance. With the advent of global media and the Web, instances of censorship are often "going global." The course looks both at particular instances of censorship and at responses to censorship that have reached beyond particular communities. Through group projects and class discussion, the course promotes interaction among students. A significant part of the course is the requirement that each student produces a research paper and annotated bibliography (as well as participating in group presentations).

Background Statement:

As culture becomes global, one response has been an increasing conservatism and nationalism, often expressed in efforts by governmental bodies to control or shape information and opinion. Those efforts frequently result in censorship (whether overt or covert), often defended on moral, cultural, political, or educational grounds. Worries about secular Western influences in fundamentalist Islamic countries which led to the banning of cable television in Iran, the concern about the imposition of American sexual freedom on Chinese youth which caused the Chinese government to ban a production of Eve Ensler's *The Vagina Monologues*, an Oregon secondary official cutting the text of Arthur Miller's *All My Sons* so as not to expose students to profanity, or efforts to block pornographic websites (defined in radically diverse ways) in American libraries, schools and homes—all are recent manifestations of beliefs that governments must regulate expression. However justified, such efforts often are met with fierce resistance and at least some measure of public debate. Theatre 597 will explore selected examples of censorship, or attempts to establish censorship, in a variety of western and eastern cultures, to examine the issues that such efforts expose.

Course Readings:

The first part of the course will briefly survey past instances of censorship. Required readings (as well as any readings listed below) will be available online, on the course webpage, or on reserve through the Ohio State University Libraries. Additional copies will be available in the reading room of the Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee Theatre Research Institute, 14th floor of Lincoln Tower. Required Readings will be drawn from:

Bolton, Richard, ed. *Culture Wars: Documents from the Recent Controversies in the Arts*. New York: New Press, 1992.

Barish, Jonas. *The Anti-Theatrical Prejudice*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1981.

Joshi, Aparna, and Hetal Adesare. "Television Censorship: Is anyone keeping a watch?"

Martyris, Nina. "Gujarat censor board bans Maulana Azad play"

Although research topics will be varied to take advantage of current events, the initial course offering will explore the following cases of censorship or attempted censorship. Students will choose from topics listed below and develop presentations. Group research will involve developing a bibliography that includes books as well as source material from contemporary newspapers (accessed through *Lexis/Nexis*) and any pertinent primary documents housed at OSU.

SEX ON STAGE:

Olga Nethersoleís trial for obscenity in Clyde Fitch's *Sapho*, New York, 1900.

Maude Allan, *Salome*, and libel in London, 1918.

The Vagina Monologues, North America, China, India, Europe, 1997-2004.

RELIGION ON STAGE:

Christopher Durang, the Roman Catholic Church, and *Sister Mary Ignatius*

Explains It All To You, St. Louis and elsewhere, 1980s.

Corpus Christie: Terrence McNally and a gay parable, New York and elsewhere, 1998-2003.

POLITICS

“Kucch Bhi Ho Sakta Hai” (Anything Can Happen) banned in Pakistan (2004)
Maulana Azad and the Gujarat Censor Board, India, 2003.
Berlusconi, Ronconi, and Aristophanesí *The Frogs* in Sicily, 2002.
Porgy and Bess and cultural diplomacy, Europe and the Soviet Union, 1952-56.
Paradise in Cincinnati, 2002.

SEX AND POLITICS

Annie Sprinkle, Karen Finley, and Tim Miller: the NEA 4 updated, United States, 1990-2005.

EDUCATIONAL CENSORSHIP

Arthur Millerís *All My Sons* in Oregon, 2003; *The Breakfast Club* in Washington, 2004; *Footloose* in Georgia, 2003.

FURTHER READING (in addition to popular press pieces):

- Alpert, Hollis. *The Life and Times of Porgy and Bess: the Story of An American Classic*. New York: Knopf, 1990.
- Angelou, Maya. *Singin' and Swingin' and Getting' Merry Like Christmas*. New York: Random House, 1976.
- Callis, Ann Everal. 'Olga Nethersole and the Sapho Scandal.' M.A. Thesis. Ohio State University, 1974.
- Cherniavsky, Felix Benjamin. *The Salome Dancer: the Life and Times of Maud Allan*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1991.
- Hamilton, Marybeth. *When I'm Bad, I'm Better: Mae West, Sex, and American Entertainment*. New York: HarperCollins, 1995.
- Heins, Marjorie. *Not In Front of the Children : "Indecency," Censorship, and the Innocence of Youth*. New York : Hill and Wang, 2001.
- Hoare, Philip. *Oscar Wilde's Last Stand: Decadence, Conspiracy, and the Most Outrageous Trial of the Century*. New York: Arcade Pub, 1998.
- Hunter, James Davison. *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America*. New York: Basic Books, 1991.
- Levinson, Nan. *Outspoken: Free Speech Stories*. Berkeley: U of California P, 2003.
- Sova, Dawn B. *Banned Plays: Censorship Histories of 125 Stage Dramas*. New York: Facts on File, 2004.
- West, Mae. *Three Plays by Mae West*. Ed. Lillian Schlissel. New York : Routledge, 1997.

PRIMARY DOCUMENTS and SUBJECT FILES

The rich resources of the Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee Theatre Research Institute will permit student participants to use primary source materials for some of their work. In particular, the Charles McCaghy Collection documenting the

history of burlesque and strip tease will be particularly valuable, as will files of materials amassed by the course instructor for research and previous graduate seminars on censorship and in his work as a dramaturg for local professional theatre companies.

Course Requirements:

Student participants will be organized into small research teams of 3-4 members each and will explore specific instances of attempted censorship. The explorations will result in classroom presentations, a research paper, and an annotated bibliography. Each individual student will also prepare a personal manifesto regarding his or her own response to the larger issue of the role of government in regulating information.

Research Project Oral Report:

Each group will identify a case study to research during the quarter. Groups will present their finding in an oral presentation. Presentations should be 20-25 minutes in length and need to involve all group members. The presentation should cover the instance of censorship, media/Web coverage of the event (if applicable), and what has happened since the event. As well, the group should provide some contextualization, providing background that led up to the (attempted) censorship. Following each presentation, there will be time for questions from the rest of the class.

Research Project Written Paper and Annotated Bibliography:

Individually, each student will write a 5-8 page research paper. Students will be asked to focus on their group's case study, but to compare/contrast the event or instance with at least 2 other events that have been addressed in class. Accompanying the paper, students will develop an annotated bibliography of works cited. Written reports and bibliographies may, at the student's option, be submitted in the form of a webpage.

Peer Evaluation:

Individual students will also write a peer evaluation of their colleagues on the research team, covering such elements as timeliness of contributions, ability to accomplish assignments, the usefulness of contributions, value of contribution to the overall project, willingness to participate in the group project.

Personal Manifesto:

Each student will prepare a personal manifesto of 3 pages regarding his or her own response to the larger issue of the role of government in regulating information. A draft version is due at the beginning of the quarter, with a final manifesto due at the end of the term, during the Examination Week.

Additional Course Guidelines:

1. All written work must be submitted in processed form or via e-mail. Handwritten work will not be accepted.

2. Students should consult the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, 6th Edition, for standards of style.
3. Course material will be available online, via the course webpage. Instructions on how to access the course webpage will be distributed in advance of the course via e-mail, and during the first class session.

Grading Scale:

The final grade will be based on a combination of the following:

Research project oral report:	60 points
Research project written report:	60 points
Research project annotated bibliography:	20 points
Peer evaluations:	20 points
Personal manifesto: preliminary draft	10 points
Personal manifesto: final version	20 points
Participation and attendance:	10 points
 TOTAL POSSIBLE POINTS:	 200

Grading Standard:

A	185 and above
A-	180-184
B+	174-179
B	166-173
B-	160-165
C+	154-159
C	146-153
C-	140-145
D+	130-139
D	120-129
E	119 and below

Disability Accommodation:

Students with disabilities that have been certified by the Office for Disability Services will be appropriately accommodated, and should inform the instructor as soon as possible of their needs. The Office for Disability Services is located in 150 Pomerene Hall, 1760 Neil Avenue; telephone 292-3307, TDD 292-0901; <http://www.ods.ohio-state.edu/>. This syllabus is available in alternative formats upon request.

Academic Misconduct:

It is the responsibility of the Committee on Academic Misconduct to investigate or establish procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of student academic misconduct. The term "academic misconduct" includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed; illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations. Instructors shall report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee (Faculty Rule 3335-5-487).

For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct
(http://studentaffairs.osu.edu/info_for_students/csc.asp>http://studentaffairs.osu.edu/info_for_students/csc.asp).

USG ESCORT SERVICE: 292-3322.

Class Schedule:

- Week 1: Backgrounds*
M 3/27: definitions of types of censorship, discussion of reasons for efforts to censor
W 3/29: governmental and public policy issues; formation of research teams; have read Davison, introduction; Bolton, Chapter 1.
- Week 2: Overview of Censorship in the West through the mid 1600s*
M 4/3: Classic through early Medieval periods; assignment of research project topics; Barish, chapters 1-3. Personal manifesto preliminary draft due.
W 4/5: Medieval through Renaissance periods; Barish, chapters 4-6.
- Week 3: Overview of Censorship in the West post-Renaissance*
M 4/10: history of censorship in the west, post Renaissance; Barish, chapters 7-9
W 4/12: censorship in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries; Barish, conclusion.
- Week 4: Censorship in the Asia*
M 4/17: instances of censorship Asia; Joshi article
W 4/19: instances of censorship Asia; Martyris article
- Week 5: Case Studies*
M 4/24: case studies: the Lord Chamberlain in England, 1747-1968; Socialist Realism in the Soviet Union
W 4/26: case study: Mae West: *Sex, The Drag*; the Motion Picture Code in the United States, 1934-1955.
- Weeks 6-10: Case Studies Presented by Student Groups*
M 5/1: student reports: groups 1-2
W 5/3: student reports: group 3
- M 5/8: student reports: groups 4-5
W 5/10: student reports: group 6
- M 5/15: student reports: groups 7-8
W 5/17: student reports: group 9
- M 5/22: student reports, groups 10-11
W 5/24: student reports, group 12
- M 5/29 MEMORIAL DAY; NO CLASSES

W 5/31: summary and conclusions; final papers and bibliographies submitted or mounted on webpage

W 6/7: Final exam period: discussion of personal manifesto, final version due