

Comedy



SPRING 2000
Comparative Literature
Sally Lawall

315 South College
Tu-Thu 11:15
Office Hours: M 2:00-3:00,
T 1:30-3:00, and by appt.
Machmer W-24
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Texts:

Aristophanes: *Lysistrata*, *The Acharnians*, *The Clouds*, tr. Sommerstein
Plautus: *Four Comedies*, tr. Segal
Shakespeare: *The Comedy of Errors*
Molière: *Tartuffe*, tr. Wilbur
Beaumarchais: *The Marriage of Figaro*
Gogol: *The Inspector General*, tr. Seymour and Noyes
Dürrenmatt: *The Visit*, tr. Bowles
Howe: *The Art of Dining*
Soyinka: *The Lion and the Jewel*
Ionesco: *Rhinoceros*, tr. Derek Prouse
Commedia dell'arte scenario, lazzi (duplicated material)

Requirements:

One term paper (7 pages, 30%; choose topic in consultation with instructor), **6 quizzes** (lowest two dropped, so no make-ups; 5% each: total 20%), participation in **two class performances** of selected scenes (10% each; graded on degree of contribution), midterm exam (20%), attendance and class participation (10%). Students wishing to use this course for Comparative Literature major credit must do some work in foreign language texts: see instructor for details.

Aim:

To examine a series of international comedies from the ancient Greeks to modern Greeks to modern Europe, Africa, and America, focusing on comic strategies and traditions, on theatrical representation of comic effects, and on the kind of laughter provoked... which often reveals their and our assumptions of what is funny.



Schedule:

- Jan. 27 Introduction: aims, method of course. Performance requirement. Overview: comic texts comic theater/laughter in context. Four elements to keep in mind throughout the semester.
- Feb. 1 Ancient Greek comedy ("Old Comedy"): staging and acting tradition. Aristophanes' *The Acharnians* (war, peace, politics, and partying); *Lysistrata* (war, peace, and gender politics). Intellectual satire together with broad physical farce. *The Acharnians*, Act I (pp. 47-81).
3 *The Acharnians*, Act II (pp. 82-104).
8 *Lysistrata*, Act I (pp. 180-209).
10 *Lysistrata*, Act II (pp. 210-35).
15 Roman comedy: the beginnings of commercially successful popular theater. Plautus, *The Haunted House*. The clever valet tricks and swindles his master with a coverup ghost story.
17 *The Haunted House*.
22 Plautus: *The Menaechmus Brothers*. A comedy of errors and mistaken identities.
24 *The Menaechmus Brothers*.
29 *Commedia dell'arte* (improvisational popular theater): **Lazzi**.
- March 2 *Commedia dell'arte*, scenario.
7 Shakespeare: *Comedy of Errors*.
9 Shakespeare: *Comedy of Errors*.
13-17 SPRING RECESS
21 Molière: *Tartuffe*. More cultural contexts: censorship and the satire of religious hypocrisy; psychological characterizations; humor and terror combined.
23 *Tartuffe*. Comic effects: verbal play, physical farce, stage effects.
28 Midterm exam in class.
30 Beaumarchais, *The Marriage of Figaro*. New comic types and double-edged cultural laughter. The social roles of women and of the servant class.
- April 4 *The Marriage of Figaro*.
6 Gogol: *The Inspector General*. Social satire and bitter comedy in Czarist Russia. Dilbert would like this one: it's about bureaucrats.
11 *The Inspector General*.
13 Dürrenmatt, *The Visit*. Tragicomedy of murder, revenge, get-rich-quick schemes, and the grotesque.
18 *The Visit*.
20 Monday class schedule followed.
25 Ionesco, *The Rhinoceros*.
27 *The Rhinoceros*.
- May 2 Soyinka: *The Lion and the Jewel*. Clash of cultures, of generations, and of genders.
4 *The Lion and the Jewel*. Verbal play, dramatic spectacle, fantasy and reality interwoven in a many-leveled romantic farce that is bound to offend some spectators.
9 Howe, *The Art of Dining*. Contemporary American comedy set in a restaurant: psychological sketches and lots of fun with food.
11 *The Art of Dining*.
15 Term paper due on Monday May 15, 2000.

Reserve:

These texts are available at the W.E.B. Du Bois Library on a two-hour loan. Check at the UMASS/ Amherst Library System web site (<http://www.library.umass.edu/index.html>) for information such as hours of operation, the Q & A program "Ask a Librarian" (UMass Amherst Library System Electronic Reference Service), and other useful information.

Catalog number	Author	Book title
	Aristophanes, tr. Sommerstein	<i>Lysistrata, The Acharnians, The Clouds</i>
	Beaumarchais, Pierre-Augustin Caron de	<i>The Marriage of Figaro</i>
PN 1942 .B4 1982	Bermel, Albert	<i>Farce: A History from Aristophanes to Woody Allen</i>
PA3201 .B52 1961+	Bieber, Margarete	<i>The History of the Greek and Roman Theater</i>
PA3161 .C7 1968	Cornford, Francis M.	<i>The Origin of Attic Comedy</i>
PQ4155 .D82 1966	Duchartre	<i>The Italian Comedy</i>
PT 2607.U493 B43 1977	Dürrenmatt	<i>The Visit</i>
PG 3333 T3 1962	Gogol	<i>The Inspector General</i>
	Gordon, Mel	<i>Lazzi: The Comic Routines of The Commedia Dell'arte</i>
	Howe	<i>The Art of Dining</i>
PS 3558 O894 A73	Ionesco, Eugene	<i>Rhinoceros and Other Plays</i>
PQ2617.06451960	Molière, tr. Wilbur	<i>Tartuffe</i>
PQ 1837.A485 1965 c.4	Nagler, A. M.	<i>A Source Book in Theatrical History</i>
PN2101 .N3 1959 c.2	Paulos, John A.	<i>Mathematics and Humor</i>
PN6149 .P5 P3	Plautus, tr. Segal	<i>Four Comedies</i>
PA 6570 .A3 S4 1996	Salerno, Henry F., ed.	<i>Scenarios of the Commedia dell'Arte</i>
PQ4236 .S313	Scala, Flaminio	<i>Teatro delle favole rappresentative (English)</i>
PQ4236.S313	Soyinka	<i>The Lion and the Jewel</i>
PR 9387 9 S6 L5 1963	Wadsworth, Philip	<i>Molière and the Italian Theatrical Tradition</i>
PQ1858 .W33		

Appendix: Interesting URLs**Theater Study:**

Guide to Internet Resources in Theatre and Performance Studies -
<http://www.win.net/~kudzu/history.html>

Virtual library and tour of Globe theater - <http://vl-theatre.com/>

Greek Theater:

Map of theater sites - <http://www.georama.gr/eng/history/02.html> -
click on the map dots for a picture of each site

Ancient theater - <http://didaskalia.berkeley.edu/Didintro.html> . Also
<http://depthome.brooklyn.cuny.edu/classics/cmdycnts.htm> (*reference page from a CUNY classics course*)

Reconstructions of the Athenian Theater of Dionysus -
<http://didaskalia.berkeley.edu/stagecraft/TDA/index.html> - *general page.* <http://didaskalia.berkeley.edu/stagecraft/TDA/tdamain.html> - *sections*

Reconstruction of the theater at Ephesus -
<http://csaws.brynmawr.edu:443/web1/May96/nl059603.html>
Greek stagecraft - <http://didaskalia.berkeley.edu/stagecraft/greek.html>

Farce:

History of clowns - <http://www.webdom.com/chof/history.html>

Three Stooges - <http://members.aol.com/otpacker/3stoogeshome.html> and <http://www.gigaplex.com/tv/3stooges/threestooges.html>

Greek Comedy:

Aristophanes: a short biography - <http://www.imagi-nation.com/moonstruck/clsc13>

Censorship of Aristophanes, past and present - <http://simr02.si.ehu.es/FileRoom/documents/Cases/103aristophanes.html>

Women and gender in the ancient world (translated texts) - <http://www.uky.edu/ArtsSciences/Classics/dioperseustexts.html>

Roman Comedy:

General introduction to Roman Comedy (honors student project) - <http://www.uakron.edu/classics/IVARI/>

Roman stagecraft - <http://didaskalia.berkeley.edu/stagecraft/roman.html>

Plautus: a short biography - <http://www.imagi-nation.com/moonstruck/clsc21.html>

Commedia dell'arte:

Commedia dell'arte: descriptions of stock characters - <http://shift.merriweb.com.au/characters/commedia.html>

History of commedia dell'arte by a modern troupe - <http://www.flash.net/~trshane/dellarte.htm>

Shakespeare:

Shakespeare: a short biography - <http://www.imagi-nation.com/moonstruck/clsc12.htm>

Shakespeare site: many links, but occasional loading problems - <http://144.75.2.40/~english/vmishakewithbyrd.html>

Image gallery for Renaissance culture course at Penn State, Prof. Rebecca Bushnell. Lots of pictures; lots of pixels if blown up (includes information on Commedia dell'arte) - <http://www.flash.net/~trshane/>

Mr. William Shakespeare on the Internet - <http://daphne.palomar.edu/shakespeare/>

The Globe Theater- <http://www.rdg.ac.uk./globe/>

Virtual tour of the Globe Theater (it is necessary to download a special program from this site to go on this tour) - <http://virtual.clemson.edu/caah/shakespr/VRGLOBE/index.html>

Molière:

Molière web site with many picture links (in French only): try it! - <http://www.tokolos.demon.co.uk/research/moliere.htm>

Tartuffe: the original French text - http://cedric.cnam.fr/cgi-bin/ABU/donner_html?tartuf2

Cultural Contexts:

Molière's king, Louis XIV: descriptions in contemporary memoirs - <http://history.hanover.edu/early/louisXIV.htm>

Contemporary explanation of the divine right of kings - <http://history.hanover.edu/early/bossuet.htm>

Text of his Revocation of the Edict of Nantes (Oct. 22, 1685), expelling Protestants from France - <http://history.hanover.edu/early/nonantes.htm>

Beaumarchais:

Biographical timeline - <http://chris.simplenet.com/bookstore/beaumarchais/beaumarchais.html>

"The Marriage of Figaro" and social protest - <http://www.operaatelier.com/figaro.htm>

Beaumarchais and censorship -

<http://simr02.si.ehu.es/FileRoom/documents/Cases/176beaumarchais.html>

Gogol:

Gogol: a short biography - <http://www.kirjasto.sci.fi/gogol.htm>

Review of modern performance (comments on actors' reactions) -

<http://wykehamist.oaktree.co.uk/1996Mar/TheGovernm.html>

Dürrenmatt:

Dürrenmatt: a short biography -

<http://www.imagi-nation.com/moonstruck/clsc37.html>

Ionesco:

Ionesco: a short biography - <http://www.levity.com/corduroy/ionesco.htm>

Ionesco: another short biography - <http://www.imagi-nation.com/moonstruck/clsc19.html>

1998 review - <http://www.botz.com/nytheatre/rhino.htm>

Howe:

Howe biography - <http://www.dal.ca/~thtrwww/dtdp/museum/author.html>

Soyinka:

Soyinka website (good, but still under construction) -

<http://landow.stg.brown.edu/post/soyinka/soyinkabio.html>

Short biography - <http://www.kirjasto.sci.fi/soyinka.htm>

Interview article at Emory - http://www.emory.edu/EMORY_MAGAZINE/spring97/wole.html

Perceptive discussion and links to related topics -

<http://prelectur.stanford.edu/lecturers/soyinka/index.html>

