

EL 590: Framing the Modern: Theatre and Community

Fall 2019

Wednesdays, 10-1 pm, TB 480

Emine Fişek

Office Hours: TB 475, TBA

emine.fisek@boun.edu.tr

Course Description:

References to community are as flexible as they are ubiquitous in twenty-first-century public discourse. For some, community indicates a social grouping organized around a particular identity or locality; for others, it signals their desire for a grouping yet to come. More often than not, community is evoked as a moral imperative and a necessary strategy for enduring modern life, itself synonymous with the figure of the overly bureaucratized and alienated individual. Yet this “warmly persuasive word” (Raymond Williams, *Keywords*) has had a complicated theoretical trajectory in the modern period, from its associations with political movements premised on violent communal identification to its partnership with global capitalism. In this course, we will take the term “community” as a framing device for thinking about cultural politics in the modern period and trace its reflections in dramatic literature from the nineteenth, twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Throughout, our goal will be to think through the history as well as the complexity of the modern Western association of theatre and community.

Course Readings:

All of the course readings will be available online. I will be sending a Dropbox link for access to these digital copies.

Course Requirements:

Active Participation	%10
Presentation I	%25
Presentation II	%25
Abstract + Final Paper	%5 + %35

Active Participation: In-class discussion is central to realizing the goals of this course, so students’ presence and active participation is crucial. Please read the course materials before coming to class and be ready to ask questions and respond to those of your peers.

Presentation I: Each course participant will pick a week when they will be responsible for producing a 15-minute presentation on that unit’s critical/theoretical reading. The goal of this presentation will be to 1) discuss the overall theoretical trajectory and claims of the reading, and 2) to identify the key concepts and associations with which they approach the idea of community. These presentations will conclude with three questions with which the presenter would like to frame that week’s discussion.

Presentation II: Each course participant will pick a week when they will be responsible for producing a 15-minute presentation on that unit’s designated play(s) in light of the attached critical readings. These presentations are meant to be exercises in thinking about literary texts in association with critical/theoretical frameworks and we will be discussing the specifics of

methodology throughout the semester. These presentations will conclude with a brief statement in which the presenter will discuss one challenge that they encountered during this exercise.

Abstract and Final Paper: This course will conclude with a 20-page final research paper that will, ideally, contribute to the development of students' eventual thesis projects. As a first step in this direction, students will produce a 250-word abstract that will be due during our final course meeting, and which we will discuss as a group. We will talk through the specific contours of the final paper over the course of the semester.

Course Schedule:

Sept. 25 **Week 1:** Introduction

Historical Precedents: Imaginaries of Community & Modernity

Oct. 2 **Week 2:** Human Community
Lessing, *Nathan the Wise*
Brown, "Tolerance as Supplement"
Asad, "Redeeming the "Human" through Human Rights"

Oct. 9 **Week 3:** National Community
Pixérécourt, *The Ruins of Babylon*
Anderson, Excerpts from *Imagined Communities*
Balibar, "Citizenship and Community"

Oct. 16 **Week 4:** Racial Community
Boucicault, *The Octoroon*
Hartman, "Instinct and Injury"
Lott, "White Kids and No Kids At All"

Oct. 23 **Week 5:** Bourgeois Community
Ibsen, *Rosmersholm*
Habermas, Excerpts from *The Structural Transformation of
The Public Sphere*
Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere"

Oct. 30 **Week 6:** Individuality and Collectivity
Chekhov, *Three Sisters*
Nancy, Excerpts from *The Inoperative Community*
Ridout, "Preface + Theatre and Communism After Athens"

The Domain of Modern Drama: The Aesthetics and Politics of Community

Nov. 6 **Week 7:** Human and Non-Human Community
O'Neill, *The Hairy Ape*
Čapek, *R.U.R.*
Freud, Excerpts from *Group Psychology*

Nov. 13 **Week 8:** Community and Crisis

Brecht, *The Good Woman of Szechwan*
Miller, *The Crucible*
Sartre, “The Humanism of Existentialism”

Nov. 20 **Week 9:** Revolutionary Community
Théâtre du Soleil, *Molière (Viewing TBA)*
Wesker, *The Kitchen*
Rancière, “Aesthetic Separation, Aesthetic Community”

Nov. 27 **Week 10:** Colonies and Collectivities
Soyinka, *Death and the King’s Horseman*
Wertebaker, *Our Country’s Good*
Critical Reading TBA

Dec. 4 **Week 11:** Identity and the Question of Sameness
Wilder, *Our Town*
Kaufman, *The Laramie Project*
Joseph, “Not for Profit?”

Dec. 11 **Week 12:** Identity and the Question of Difference
Smith, *Fires in the Mirror*
Özbudak, *İz*
Hall, “Who Needs Identity?”

Dec. 18 **Week 13:** Conclusion
Discussion of Final Paper Abstracts