

**Module title:** Avant-Garde Theatre in Europe

**Module code:** COM6007

**Credit value:** 15

**Level:** 6

**Pre-requisite modules:**

### **Content Description**

Why should characters behave illogically on stage or not exist at all? How can image rival plot? And what is the point of shocking audiences? This module introduces some fundamental styles and plays from European avant-garde theatre and sets them within an artistic and socio-political context. Futurism, Dada, Expressionism and the Theatre of the Absurd are included. We will at all times try to see texts as excuses for performance and use other aspects of culture to understand the challenges of this new drama.

### **Module Aims**

1. To provide students with an overview of some of some key movements in European avant-garde theatre of the twentieth century.
2. To undertake close readings and analysis of selected plays;
3. To assess performance potential and realization of dramatic texts;
4. To situate dramatic texts within major aesthetic contexts and develop a comparative perspective of theatre;
5. To acquire an understanding of the specific nature of avant-garde practice in European drama;
6. To equip students with key theoretical, critical, and analytical tools to analyze drama;
7. To develop techniques for writing about avant-garde theatre.

### **Learning Outcomes**

Academic Content:

A1 Understanding of major currents in avant-garde drama in Europe.

A2 Knowledge of specific avant-garde plays.

A3 Knowledge of specific concepts related to avant-garde drama.

Disciplinary Skills – able to:

B1 Engage in close critical readings and analysis of plays on the page and for performance.

B2 Evaluate arguments within class discussion and in written work.

B3 Write clearly and concisely about fundamental issues concerning avant-garde drama.

Attributes:

C1 Ability to analyze texts within their aesthetic and performative context.

C2 Ability to construct cogent written arguments through the use of textual and artistic evidence.

C3 Ability to analyze theatrical features.

### **Activity Hours**

<b>Activity Type</b>	<b>Time spent (hours)</b>
Lecture	11

Seminar	11
Guided independent study	128
Total	150

### Indicative Reading List

- Maurice Maeterlinck, *Interior* (1894), in *Theater of the Avant-Garde: 1890-1950*, ed. by Bert Cardullo and Robert Knopf (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001).
- Maeterlinck, 'The Modern Drama', in Cardullo and Knopf, pp. 55-61.
- McGuinness, Patrick, *Maurice Maeterlinck and the Making of Modern Theatre* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).
- Wilde, Oscar, 'The Decay of Lying' (1889), at: [http://cogweb.ucla.edu/Abstracts/Wilde\\_1889.html](http://cogweb.ucla.edu/Abstracts/Wilde_1889.html)
- Worth, Katherine, *Maeterlinck's Plays in Performance* (Cambridge: Chadwyck-Healey, 1985).
- Umberto Boccioni, *Genius and Culture* (1915)
- Francesco Cangiullo, *Detonation* (1915)
- F.T. Marinetti, *Feet* (1915)
- Marinetti, Settemelli and Corra, 'The Futurist Synthetic Theater, 1915'
- Tristan Tzara, *The Gas Heart* (1920) (all in *Theater of the Avant-Garde: 1890-1950*, ed. by Bert Cardullo and Robert Knopf (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001)
- Dashwood, Julie R., 'The Italian Futurist Theatre', in *Drama and Society, Themes in Drama, 1*, ed. by James Redmond (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp. 129-46.
- Gordon, R. S., 'The Italian Futurist Theatre: A Reappraisal', *Modern Language Review*, 85 (1990), 349-61.
- Matthews, J.H., *Theatre in Dada and Surrealism* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1974).
- Varisco, Robert, extract from 'Anarchy and Resistance in Tristan Tzara's *Gas Heart*', in Cardullo & Knopf, pp. 266-71.
- Oskar Kokoschka, *Murderer Hope of Womankind*.
- August Stramm, *Awakening*. Both in *Seven Expressionist Plays: Kokoschka to Barlach*, trans. by J.M. Ritchie and H.F. Garten (London: John Calder; Dallas, TX: Riverrun, 1980).
- Knapp, Bettina, 'Oskar Kokoschka's *Murderer Hope of Womankind*: An Apocalyptic Experience', *Theatre Journal*, 35 (May 1983), 179-94.
- Pam, Dorothy, 'Murderer, the Women's Hope', *Tulane Drama Review/The Drama Review*, 19, no. 3 (1975), 5-12. Electronic Journal Via JSTOR
- Patterson, Michael, *The Revolution in German Theatre, 1900-1933* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981).
- Schvey, Henry I., *Oskar Kokoschka: The Painter as Playwright* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1982)
- Styan, J. L., *Modern Drama in Theory and Practice*, 2nd edn, 3 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), vol. 3: Expressionism and Epic Theatre.
- Luigi Pirandello, *Six Characters in Search of an Author* in Pirandello, Luigi, *The Rules of the Game. Six Characters in Search of an Author. Henry IV*, transl. by Robert Rietty (London: Methuen, 1985).
- Fergusson, Francis, *The Idea of a Theater* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1953), pp. 198-206.

- Lorch, Jennifer, *Six Characters in Search of an Author* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).
- Thompson, Doug, *An Introduction to Pirandello's 'Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore'* (Hull: Department of Italian, University of Hull, 1985).
- Ramón María del Valle-Inclán
- *Luces de Bohemia / Bohemian Lights*, ed. by Anthony N. Zahareas, *Edinburgh Bilingual Library*, 10 (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1976) or *Lights of Bohemia*, trans. by John Lyon (Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1993).
- Delgado, Maria, Introduction, in Valle-Inclán, *Three Plays/Plays: One*, trans. by Maria M. Delgado (London: Methuen, 1993), pp. xiii-xlii.
- Edwards, Gwynne, *Dramatists in Perspective: Spanish Theatre in the Twentieth Century* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1985), pp. 36-74.
- Lyon, John, *The Theatre of Valle-Inclán* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 105-25.
- Smith, Verity, *Valle-Inclán* (New York: Twayne, 1973).
- García Lorca, Federico, *The Dream of Life / Play without Title (Comedia sin título)*, in *The Unknown Federico García Lorca: Dialogues, Dramatic Projects, Unfinished Plays & a Filmscript*, ed. and trans. by John London (London: Atlas Press, 1996), pp. 93-112.
- Artaud, Antonin, 'The Theatre and the Plague', in *The Theatre and Its Double*, trans. Mary Caroline Richards (New York: Grove Press, 1958).
- Delgado, Maria M., *Federico García Lorca* (London: Routledge, 2008).
- Edwards, Gwynne, "'Comedia corriente de los tiempos actuales": Lorca's Comedia sin título', in *Journal of the Institute of Romance Studies*, 2 (1993).
- Murray, Ros, *Antonin Artaud: The Scum of the Soul* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).
- Singleton, Brian, *Artaud: Le Théâtre et son double: Critical Guides to French Texts* (London: Grant & Cutler, 1998).
- Soufas, Christopher, *Audience and Authority in the Modernist Theatre of Federico García Lorca* (University of Alabama Press, 1996).
- Pedrolo, Manuel de Pedrolo, *Homes i no / Men and No*, trans. by Herbert Gilliland, *Modern International Drama*, 10, no. 1 (Fall 1976), 39-74.
- Ionesco, Eugene, *The Bald Prima Donna*, in *Plays vol. 1*, trans. by Donald Watson (London: Calder, 1958).
- Coe, Richard, *Ionesco: A Study of His Plays*, rev edn (London: Methuen, 1971).
- Esslin, Martin, *The Theatre of the Absurd*, 3rd edn (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1980).
- George, David and John London, ed., *Contemporary Catalan Theatre: An Introduction* (Sheffield: Anglo-Catalan Society, 1996).
- Schechner, Richard, 'The Bald Soprano and The Lesson: An Inquiry into Play Structure', in *Ionesco: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. by R.C. Lamont (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1973).
- Styan, J. L., *Modern Drama in Theory and Practice*, 2nd edn, 3 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), vol. 2: *Symbolism, Surrealism and the Absurd*.
- Wellwarth, George, *Modern Drama and the Death of God* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1986), pp. 147-52.

- Fernando Arrabal
- Guernica and Picnic on the Battlefield, in 'Guernica' and Other Plays, trans. by Barbara Wright (London: Calder & Boyars, 1967; New York: Grove, 1969).
- Arata, Luis Oscar, The Festive Play of Fernando Arrabal, Studies in Romance Languages, 25 (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1982).
- Chesneau, Albert, Décors et Décorum: enquête sur les objets dans le théâtre d'Arrabal, Collections Études, 42 (Quebec: Naaman de Sherbrooke, 1984).
- Donahue, Thomas John, The Theater of Fernando Arrabal: A Garden of Earthly Delights (New York: New York University Press, 1980).
- Esslin, Martin, The Theatre of the Absurd, 3rd edn (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1980).
- Kronik, John W., 'Arrabal and the Myth of Guernica', Estreno, 2, no. 1 (Spring 1976), 15-20.
- Podol, Peter L., Fernando Arrabal, Twayne's World Authors Series, 499 (Boston, MA: Twayne, 1978).
- The Quarrelsome Party, trans. by Anna García Jové, Laia Castañé, David George and John London, in Modern Catalan Plays, ed. by John London and David George (London: Methuen, 2000).
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- Brossa, Joan and Antoni Tapies, Novel.la (Barcelona: Curial, 1975).
- George, David and John London, ed., Contemporary Catalan Theatre: An Introduction (Sheffield: Anglo-Catalan Society, 1996), pp. 73-83 (by David George).
- Guerrero, Manuel, ed., Joan Brossa or the Poetic Revolt (Joan Brossa o la revolta poètica (Barcelona: Departament de Cultura, Generalitat de Catalunya/Fundació Joan Brossa/Fundació Joan Miró, 2001).
- Caresses, trans. by John London, in Spanish Plays, ed. by Elyse Dodgson and Mary Peate (London: Nick Hern Books, 1999); or After the Rain, trans. by Xavier Rodríguez Rosell, David George and John London, in Klaus Chatten, Sugar Dollies and Sergi Belbel, After the Rain (London: Methuen, 1996).
- George, David and John London, ed., Contemporary Catalan Theatre: An Introduction (Sheffield: Anglo-Catalan Society, 1996), pp. 91-96.
- Faulkner, Sally, Literary Adaptations in Spanish Cinema (Woodbridge: Tamesis, 2004), pp. 72-77.
- Feldman, Sharon, In the Eye of the Storm: Contemporary Theater in Barcelona (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2009), esp. pp. 185-95.
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- George, David, Sergi Belbel and Catalan Theatre: Text, Performance and Identity, Colección Tamesis: Serie A: Monografías, 287 (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2010), pp. 120-26 (Caresses), 126-32 (After the Rain).