

Fall 2025 FREN 3850-301 MODERN FRENCH THEATER MW 12:00-1:29 PM

Instructor: Gerald PRINCE (gprince@babel.ling.upenn.edu)

Office Hours (531 Williams Hall): MW 11:00-12:00

This course studies major movements and major dramatists in modern French theater from Giraudoux, Anouilh, Sartre, and Camus to the theater of the absurd (Ionesco, Beckett, Genet) and its aftermath (Césaire, Koltès, Reza). Students are expected to take an active part in class discussion in French.

Assignments (the course will be conducted in French) The students will do the reading assignments for the day they are assigned. For each reading assignment the students will prepare at least two questions which may be discussed in class and they will be ready to answer these questions. The students will also be expected to take part in the discussion generated by all the questions raised. There will be a number of short writing assignments (250-300 words) consisting of a question formulated by the student about some element of a given text and of an answer to that question.

The students will write a final paper (2500-3000 words or more) on some aspect of one of the required texts discussed in class. The paper will be due by 12/15/2025 at 5:00 pm.

On 12/8/2025 there will be a written assignment done in class: a synthetic discussion pertaining to some aspect of some or all of the texts examined in class.

Assessments Questions to discuss in class and participation in discussion will count for 50% of final grade. Short writing assignments: 5% each.

Final paper: 25%. Synthetic written discussion: 10%.

Required Texts

Jean Giraudoux. *La guerre de Troie n'aura pas lieu* (any unabridged edition in French)

Jean Anouilh. *Antigone* (any unabridged edition in French).

Jean-Paul Sartre. *Huis-clos* (any unabridged edition in French).

Albert Camus. *Le malentendu* (any unabridged edition in French).

Eugène Ionesco. *La cantatrice chauve* (any unabridged edition in French).

———. *Les chaises* (any unabridged edition in French).

Samuel Beckett. *En attendant Godot* (any unabridged edition in French).

Jean Genet. *Les Nègres*. (any unabridged edition in French)

Aimé Césaire. *La tragédie du roi Christophe* (any unabridged edition in French).

Bernard-Marie Koltès. *Dans la solitude des champs de coton* (any unabridged ed. in French).

Yasmina Reza. *Art*. (any unabridged edition in French).

Recommended Texts

Odette Aslan. *L'art du théâtre*.

Martin Esslin. *The Theater of the Absurd*.

Jacques Guicharnaud. *Modern French Theater from Giraudoux to Genet*.

Tadeusz Kowzan. *Littérature et spectacle*.

Jean-Pierre Thibaudet. *Le théâtre français contemporain*.

Syllabus

8/27 Introduction

9/3 *La guerre de Troie n'aura pas lieu*—Acte I

9/8 *La guerre de Troie n'aura pas lieu*—Acte II

9/10 *La guerre de Troie n'aura pas lieu* (concluding remarks); *Antigone* (introductory remarks)

9/15 *Antigone* (up to: "Créon: Je vais tout de même prendre le temps qu'il faudra et te sauver, petite peste")

9/17 *Antigone* (up to the end)

9/22 *Huis-clos* (up to: "Estelle: Si vous saviez comme je vous hais")

9/24 *Huis-clos* (up to the end)

9/29 *Huis-clos* (concluding remarks); *Le malentendu* (introductory remarks). First short writing assignment, on *Huis-clos*, due.

10/1 *Le malentendu*—Acte I

10/6 *Le malentendu*—Acte II, Acte III

10/8 *La cantatrice chauve*

10/13 *La cantatrice chauve* (concluding remarks)

10/15 *Les chaises*

10/20 *Les chaises* (concluding remarks). Second short writing assignment, on *Les chaises*, due.

10/22 *En attendant Godot*—Acte I

10/27 *En attendant Godot*—Acte II

10/29 *En attendant Godot* (concluding remarks)

11/3 *Les Nègres* (up to: "Village: Mais j'allais trop loin, arrêtez-moi")

11/5 *Les Nègres* (up to the end).

11/10 *Les Nègres* (concluding remarks). Third short writing assignment, on *Les Nègres*, due.

11/12 *La tragédie du roi Christophe*—Acte I

11/17 *La tragédie du roi Christophe*—Acte II, Acte III

11/19 *Dans la solitude des champs de coton*

11/24 *Dans la solitude des champs de coton* (concluding remarks); *Art*

12/1 *Art*

12/3 Conclusion

12/8 Synthetic Written Discussion