

# TH208 Theater and the State in Germany

Seminar Leader: Julia Hart  
Course Times: Tuesdays 15:45-19:00  
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Office Hours: Tuesdays 2:30-3:30pm (by appointment)

## Course Description

Theater necessarily has concrete preconditions and constraints, as is evident from an encounter with a theatrical production, however high or low-budget. What is less visible is the apparatus of institutions, organizational structures, and funding mechanisms that make theater possible within any given context. Germany has the largest state-funded theater system in the world. There are a total of 140 state, city, and country theaters, producing around 7,300 productions per year. This course looks at how this state theater system really works and how theater is produced. How does the wider institutional network (its history, funding, and interlinkage) shape the kind of productions and performances that are created? How do artists work within these parameters? First we will examine the evolution of the state theater system in Germany: the historical conditions and political pressures that brought about its existence. We then explore the approaches of individual artistic directors, dramaturges, actors, designers, and stage technicians. Practices specific to German state theater are considered, such as the "Bauprobe," where a mock-up of the set is built on-stage before rehearsals. Including visits backstage at Berlin state theater as well as performances, the seminar will track the steps that theatermakers take in rehearsal to produce a show. We will examine the German state theater from all angles, asking: how do its particular features shape identifiable kinds of aesthetic style or rival styles; what is its effect on artistic creativity as such?

## Requirements

- active participation in class discussions and workshops
- completion of all reading assignments
- completion of two performance analysis essays
- completion of one production abstract
- participation in seminar assignments including: a brief introduction of a specific state theatre, work on planning a hypothetical state theatre season, and work on a production idea as a dramaturg, director, or set designer
- Students are expected to turn off phones during the entire class time, including off-campus trips. They will be allowed to be used only during breaks. Students are expected to come to seminars, theatre visits and workshops punctually and prepared and to participate actively in the class discussions.

## Attendance

Attendance of ALL classes is expected. More than one absence (that is, absence from one three-hour session per week) in a semester will significantly affect the participation grade for the course. Students are expected to attend all off-campus classes punctually, from start to finish. If there is a scheduling / travel conflict, Professor must be informed in advance. Tardiness after five minutes will be considered an absence. Please consult the Student Handbook for regulations governing periods of illness or leaves of absence.

### Theatre Season Proposal

Students will work in groups to plan their own season of a state theatre (either existing or invented). Students should consider aspects of the history, state theatre structure, and funding when planning their theatre's season and be able to talk about their decisions. Students will present their theatre season in class on 23.10.19)

### Production Abstract

Students will think as directors, dramaturges, or set designers and take the beginning steps of developing a conceptual approach to a production at a state theatre. Groups will present their ideas together in class on 27.11 and each student will write their thoughts in a brief summary (see below).

### Writing Assignments

Please note: All written assignments should be submitted by 11:59pm on the deadline on Google Classroom

#### Production Abstract (1000 words due 4.12)

Production Abstract should contain the following:

- A discussion of your conceptual ideas concerning a dramatic work. Depending on your role in your group as a director, dramaturg, or set designer, describe what your approach to your work on the theatre production would be and which state theatre would be appropriate for this production and why. State which ideas and styles your team would explore.

#### Performance Analysis Essays (2000-2500 words due 6.11.19 and 21.12.19)

Performance Analysis Essays should contain the following:

- A thorough critical analysis of a performance at a state theatre and it's context seen during the semester discussing and describing the text (from a playwright or a devised performance), role of space, the voice, tempo, rhythm, atmosphere, sound, music, composition, costume, set design, electronic media, and further theatrical devices and symbols observed in the performance. Consider the style of acting and directing in the context of that particular state theatre's mission, reputation, target audience, location, and history.

### Policy on Late Submission of Papers

Syllabi for core and elective classes should note or refer to the following policy from the Student Handbook on the submission of essays: *essays that are up to 24 hours late will be downgraded one full grade (from B+ to C+, for example). Instructors are not obliged to accept essays that are more than 24 hours late. Where an instructor agrees to accept a late essay, it must be submitted within four weeks of the deadline and cannot receive a grade of higher than C.*

*Thereafter, the student will receive a failing grade for the assignment.*

## Grade Breakdown

Participation 30%  
Written Assignments 40%  
Seminar Assignments 30%

## Schedule

- 4.9 Introduction to the German State Theater System: overview of Berlin state theatres and the independent performing arts scene
- 11.9 What is theatre? What is performance? Introduction/Review of the concepts of theatre and performance .  
Reading: *Introduction to Theatre and Performance Studies* 7-11, 18-44  
*The Bedford Introduction to Drama* 1-24  
*History of German Theatre:* 1-7
- 18.9 History of the German State Theater  
Reading: “From Court Theatre to Federal System” 1-2  
*History of German Theatre* “Classical Theatre and the formation of a civil society” and “The realistic theatre and bourgeois values”: 65-119,  
*Actors on Acting* 261-276  
“Lessing’s Drama Theory” 211-226
- 25.9 Structural Breakdown of State Theater / Intendanten Modell / A brief look at Theatertreffen and German theater festivals / Theater production budget breakdown  
Reading: *History of German Theatre* “Nationalism and it’s Effect on the German Theatre” 222-247, and 174 about Intendant.  
“The Landscape of German Theatre: World Heritage and Bone of Contention” (1-3).  
“Lessing, Schiller, Brecht, Müller and the State of German Theatre” 1-6  
“The New Theatre Season in Germany: Occupation and Immersion.”  
“Programme of the 2017/18 Season”- Goethe Institute  
“Notes on the German Theatre Crisis” 133-151  
“Towards a Theatrical Landscape: Funding the performing arts-cultural policy considerations 575-595
- Optional (for German speakers): *Elemente des deutschen Theatersystems*
- 2.10 Regietheater and the Role of the Director / German Actors’ Ensemble / Konzeptionsprobe  
Reading: *Theatre is More Beautiful Than War: German Stage Directing in the Late 20th Century. Ix-xiii*, Optional Reading: 4-81  
*German Theatre Dictionary: Regietheater* 313-314  
*History of German Theatre:* “Directors and actors in modern and contemporary German theater 1945-2000” 332-359  
“Introduction. The dissensus of Regie: rethinking director’s theater”  
Peter Boehnisch 1-4 and Chapter 5 “The tremor of speculative negation: on Regie, truth, and ex-position” 97-116

“Ensemble Theater: Involve the Audience in the Conflict” 1-3

“International Theatremakers” 1-2

Optional Reading: *Theatre is More Beautiful Than War: German Stage Directing in the Late 20th Century*. 4-81

9.10 Schaubühne workshop

14.10 PLASTIK Schaubühne

16.10 What does a dramaturg really do? Chefdramaturg / Produktionsdramaturg / Intro to Performance Analysis

Reading: Interview with John von Düffel

“How do you devise a theatre program?” 1-2

*Introduction to Theatre and Performance Studies* 49-70

Assignment: Start season proposal

23.10 Schaubühne discussion / In-depth look at several known artistic directors including: Thomas Ostermeier, Frank Castorf, Oliver Reese, Jens Hilje

Reading: *Theatre is More Beautiful Than War* 96-115, 161-180

\*see links to further reading on Google Classroom

\*Season proposal presentations

6.11 Set design, Props, Costume, and technicians. Visit from set designer Iris Holstein.

Reading: “Technicians” article on Google Classroom

\*Performance Essay 1 due

13.11 The steps to planning a production using as an classical play as an example.

Reading: Play to be announced.

\*groups formed for Production Abstract Assignment

20.11 HAU visit

27.11 Deutsches Theater visit

4.12 Theater Freiburg and the search for new ways of creating theater and working with cities and institutions / A closer look at Germany’s independent performing arts sector

Reading: *A Theatre of Postmodernity in Western European Theatrescapes* 275-313

\*Production Abstract Presentations

\*Production Abstract paper due (1000 words)

11.12 Final class discussion. Preparation for the student panel on the German theatre system at 7pm in the Factory.

21.12 Final Performance Essay due