THEATRE OF THE REAL

Professor Carol Martin
THEA-UT 801.001 - 4 credits
Tuesday 11:00AM – 1:45PM

Theatre and drama that blurs the boundaries between the stage and the “real world” is the subject of this course. Theatre of the real includes devised, verbatim, interview-based, documentary, and blended fiction and nonfiction in a great range of theatrical activity including conventional plays, devised theatre, and postdramatic theatre. Theatre of the real identifies an array of theatre practices portraying real events whether personal, social, political, or historical. This worldwide theatre movement connects theatre to social and political realities in different ways in different places. Globally the form draws on highly innovative forms of playwriting and directing that include witness accounts, film footage, photographs, documents, legal transcripts, interviews and archives.

Students will read, analyze, and discuss plays and performance texts and view performances on video about personal, historical, and virtual events including war, terrorism, the Holocaust, racial clashes, political and social justice, and personal autobiographical reality. Students will also read and discuss key theoretical texts that specifically debate the plays, performance texts and productions read and/or seen for the class. The theoretical texts engage the problems and possibilities of representing and simulating both the real and the truth on stage. Taken together the theatre we will consider situates theatre as a “seeing place” where the truth about history, justice, and personal experience are encountered. If possible, we will see one or two current productions.

The course will explore such questions as: how do theatre artists and scholars engage the writing of history whether writing with words or writing metaphorically with acting, directing, and/or stage and costume design? In what ways does theatre uniquely tell stories? What are the implications of blurring art and life? How are memory and facts presented and represented? Are fiction and nonfiction adequate conceptual ideas when considering truth? How might we consider theatre of the real from the vantage point of the contemporary collapse of the distinction between the real, the simulated, and the virtual?