

**UNIVERSITY OF DHAKA**



**Syllabus of the  
Department of Theatre and  
Performance Studies**

*for*

**M.A. Course**

*for the*

**Sessions: 2010-2011 and onwards**

Published by  
**THE UNIVERSITY OF DHAKA  
BANGLADESH  
2015**

**Price: Tk. 22.00  
(Taka Twenty two) only**

**University of Dhaka**  
**Department of Theatre and Performance Studies**  
Syllabus for M.A. (Masters of Arts) Program  
Sessions : 2010-2011 and onwards

**Aim:**

To create versatile, well-rounded and imaginative performers who have the skills to chart their own creative and professional paths, and thus are able to enhance the creative expressivity of performance in Bangladesh.

**Objective:**

1. To reinforce the critical capacity of the students by applying theoretical models drawn from Europe, North America and Asia.
2. To strengthen the performance skills of the students by acting in a play by one of the following playwrights of Bangla Theatre: Rabindranath Tagore, Selim Al Deen, Syed Shamsul Haque and Mamunur Rashid and Abdullah Al Mamun

**SEMESTER ONE**

**501. Performance Theory**

This is an advanced course on performance theories currently in practice in South Asia, Europe and North America. Building from the Stanislavski system as the foundation, the analytical skills of the students will be reinforced by re-visiting Grotowski, Eugenio Barba and Richard Schechner, and introducing Michael Chekhov, Tadashi Suzuki, and Allan Kaprow. Central notions drawn from these practitioners will be synthesized with the key aspects of performance theory drawn from the *Natyasastra* and performance practice applied in the

indigenous theatre of Bangladesh. Importantly, the theorizing will be founded on analysis of selected plays by Rabindranath Tagore, Syed Waliullah, Selim Al Deen, Syed Shamsul Haque and Mamunur Rashid, with emphasis on the play selected for performance in the second semester. As a part of the teaching, the students will be required to attend at least four performances in public (non-university) theatres under the supervision of the course teacher/s and submit two term papers not exceeding 3,000 words critiquing the performances by means of the theories discussed in the class-room context. The term papers will be equivalent to in-course/midterm examinations (30 marks).

#### Suggested Readings

Tadashi Suzuki, *The Way of Acting: The Theatre Writings of Tadashi Suzuki*

Michael Chekhov, *On the Technique of Acting*

Allan Kaprow, *Art as Life*

Eugenio Barba and Nicola Savarese, *A Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology: The Secret Art of the Performer*

Richard Schechner, *Performance Studies: An Introduction*

Michael Huxley and Noel Witts (Eds.), *The Twentieth Century Performance Reader*

#### **502. Critical Theory**

This course will seek to reinforce the capacity of the students to analyze the socio-political context in which his/her performance will be situated. It is not merely an introduction to theories developed in the humanities and social sciences, but also explores how these theories may be applied in critiquing contemporary social conditions in general, and reading the 'text' and context

systematically, analytically, and critically, in particular. The theoretical modules to be studied in the course are:

- (1) Introduction: Semiotics and structuralism
- (2) Post-colonialism and subaltern studies: Orientalism, the nation and resistance: Frantz Fanon, Edward Said and James Scott
- (3) Feminisms: Kate Millet, Gayatri Spivak, Judith Butler
- (4) The notion of Power: Karl Marx, Antonio Gramsci and Michel Foucault

Importantly, the theorizing will be founded on analysis of selected plays by Rabindranath Tagore, Selim Al Deen, Syed Shamsul Haque and Mamunur Rashid, with emphasis on the play selected for performance in the second semester. As a part of the teaching, the students will be required to attend four performances in public (non-university) theatres under the supervision of the course teacher/s and submit two term papers not exceeding 3,000 words critiquing the performances by means of the theories discussed in the class-room context. The term papers will be equivalent to in-course/midterm examinations (30 marks).

#### Suggested Readings

Peter Barry, *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Critical Theory*

Elaine Aston and George Savona, *Theatre as Sign-system: A Semiotics of Text and Performance*

Robert Scholes, *Structuralism in Literature: An Introduction*

Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*

Edward W. Said, *Orientalism: Western Conception of the Orient*

James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*

Kate Millett, *Sexual Politics*

Judith Butler, Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory, *Theatre Journal*, Vol. 40:4, 519-531.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty, Can the Subaltern Speak? In Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (Eds.), *Colonial Discourse and Post-colonial Theory: A Reader*

Patrick Campbell (Ed.), *Analysing Performance: A Critical Reader*

Collin Counsell and Laurie Wolf (Eds.), *Performance Analysis: An Introductory Course book*

Janella G. Reinelt and Joseph R. Roach (Eds.), *Critical Theory and Performance*

Sue-Ellen Case, *Feminism and Theatre*

Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from Cultural Writings*

Michel Foucault, *Power: Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984*, Vol. 3.

### 503. Production Process

This course prepares the students for the mounting of a full-fledged production at the end of the 2nd semester. It will take the students through voice and movement training in order to develop and fine-tune their physical apparatus. The students will also be required to engage with the play selected for the production by adapting and/or editing it, explore the text by means of improvisations, devise brief pieces based on the action incorporated in the text, develop characterization of multiple characters portrayed in the text, engage with different acting strategies identified as important for the performance, and design the set, lights and costume for the production. The course is enthusiastic to reflect that

every theatrical production is imbued with its own processuality.

### Suggested Readings

Rudolf Laban, *Modern Educational Dance*

Rudolf Laban, *The Mastery of Movement*

F. Matthias Alexander, *The Alexander Technique*

Kristen Linklater, *Freeing the Natural Voice*

### 504. Thesis Project I

This is a preparatory course for the presentation of a 15,000 to 20,000-words dissertation at the end of the 2nd semester. The course will build on Course 453 (Research Methodology) offered by the department in the 7th semester at BA (Hons) level. The dissertation has to cover the overlapping areas of acting and Bangladesh. It may be visually supported if appropriate, and, subject to approval by the department, partial fulfillment of the dissertation may be in the form of the production of a play, video documentation, or other forms of practical work.

The course will guide the students through the following stages:

1. Literature review
2. Defining the problem
3. Formulation of research questions and hypotheses
4. Research methodology
5. Data collection
6. References

The students will be required to submit their research proposal by the 21st week. The proposal will carry the weight 60% marks.

## SEMESTER TWO

### **551. Improvisation**

This course is founded on the belief that improvisation is a conceptual metaphor for collaborative means of negotiating indeterminacy in a performative situation, a context-dependent 'play' for promoting the integration of cognitive, emotive, and embodied aspects of acting, and a tool for developing skills in tactical and strategic thinking and problem solving in an act of performance. Based on these foundational notions, the course will draw on Viola Spolin, Keith Johnston and Clive Barker to strengthen the spontaneous creative impulses in the students.

#### Suggested Readings

Viola Spolin, *Improvisation for the Theatre*

Viola Spolin, *Theatre Games for Rehearsal: A Director's Handbook*

Keith Johnstone, *Impro: Improvisation for the Theatre*

### **552. Acting Practicum**

This is an advanced-level practical course designed to train and sharpen the performer's physical apparatus (which is to say, the body and the voice). The course will explore speech, music and movement in order to equip the students with a comprehensive vocabulary and analytic framework for applying skilled movement and speech in all performance contexts. By drawing on the text to be performed in Course 553, this course (i.e., 552) will aim to strengthen the preparation for the performance (553).

### **553. Production**

The practical course is continuation of 503 given in 1st semester. It is expected that

the students will mobilizes all the insight they have gained in courses 501, 502,

503, 551 and 552. The production has to be mounted in the 17th week as a public

performance of at least five shows.

### **554. Thesis Project II**

The students will carry out individual and autonomous research as detailed in their proposal submitted at the end of the 1st semester, under a supervisor approved by the academic committee of the department. They will also be required to present at least one seminar paper that anticipates the dissertation. The dissertation has to be submitted by the end of the 21st week. The seminar/s will carry 30% of the total marks, and the dissertation, 60%.

DHAKA UNIVERSITY PRESS  
UNIVERSITY OF DHAKA  
DUP-948-20-5-15-400 Copies