NYU Paris
Experimental theater workshop

Instructor Information
COTTE Cécile
cc154@nyu.edu or cecilecotte72@gmail.com
tel: 06 13 63 85 88

Course Information
- FREN-UA 9807
Experimental theater workshop
Conducted in English.

This course allows students to discover Eugene Ionesco (1909 – 1994), a Romanian-French playwright who wrote mostly in French, and one of the foremost figures of the French Avant-garde theatre. Beyond ridiculing the most banal situations, Ionesco's plays depict the solitude and insignificance of human existence in a tangible way.

He is a leading figure in the theater of Absurd, a drama form that pushes theater to extremes, and which asks probing questions about what reality (and unreality) really looks like.

A style of theatre that refuses realism, characters and plot, where time itself is rendered absurd.

- Students interested in theater.
- Monday 4 pm – 6 pm
- Auditorium

Course Overview and Goals
-Through a study of Eugene Ionesco plays and their contexts, to gain an appreciation of a style of theatre that would prove - so wrote Esslin in 1961 - “to provide a new language, new ideas, new points of view and an entirely new and invigorated philosophy, that would transform the modes of thought and sentiments of the wider public.”
- understand the meaning of “the absurd” of Ionesco through performance and analysis.
- inhabit a style of theatre where the backdrop of the action is often satire of the bourgeoisie, of its rigid language and its small worldview.

Course Requirements

Class Participation
Students will study and perform excerpts from selected works with a focus on the absurdity of situations, de-structuring language, and corporal expression. The approach of the course is intellectual, creative and physical.

Assignment 1
Active participation to discussions in class, and active, creative contribution to final performance (rehearsals with partners outside the class).
Conferences and performances in the theater de la Huchette (dates to be confirmed)

**Assignment 2**
Montage and memorization of excerpts acted out from plays studied to be performed at end of semester.

**Tests & Quizzes**
Reviews of a plays by Ionesco to be seen in the theater La Huchette

**Assigned Readings**

- The Bald Prima Donna
- The Lesson
- Jack or the Submission

(Ionesco’s earliest theatrical works, considered to be his most innovative, were one-act plays or extended sketches: *La Cantatrice chauve* translated as *The Bald Soprano* or *The Bald Prima Donna* (1948), *Jacques ou la soumission* translated as *Jack, or The Submission* (1950), *La Leçon* translated as *The Lesson* (1950)). All three performed for the first time in the theatre de la Huchette.)

- Exit the King (1957)

**Grading of Assignments**
The grade for this course will be determined according to the following formula:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignments/Activities</th>
<th>% of Final Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Active participation</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scenes acted out and memorized</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written exercises</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montage and final presentation</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Letter Grades**
Letter grades for the entire course will be assigned as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>16-20</td>
<td>Outstanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Very Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Letter Grade

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Above Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Below Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Unsatisfactory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Low Pass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Low Pass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Fail</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Course Schedule (The schedule of readings might be modified according to the schedule of the performances to be seen at the theatre de la Huchette)

### Topics and Assignments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week/Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Assignment Due</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>02/03</td>
<td>General presentation/ Absurd theatre characterized by its complete rupture from classical genres such as drama or comedy.</td>
<td>Notes and counter-notes by Eugene Ionesco. Excerpts of plays</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02/10</td>
<td>Scenes acted out</td>
<td>The Bald Prima Donna</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02/17</td>
<td>Analyze of the speaking in cliché.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Scenes worked to be acted out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week/Date</td>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>Assignment Due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>02/21 (Make up date)</td>
<td>Scenes acted out/ Satire of the bourgeoisie</td>
<td>The Lesson</td>
<td>Scenes worked to be acted out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02/24</td>
<td>The language: how it gains a certain phonetic, rhythmical, musical quality, opening up a wide range of comedic playfulness. Scenes acted out</td>
<td>Jack or the submission</td>
<td>Written work on a Performance to be seen in theater/ and Scenes worked to be acted out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03/02</td>
<td>Absence, emptiness, nothingness, and unresolved mysteries of life/</td>
<td>Exit the King</td>
<td>Scenes worked to be acted out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03/09</td>
<td>Discussions about the theater de la Huchette (performances and visits)/ scenes acted out</td>
<td>View links for Exit the King: Preview Exit the King <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=el66pyXs2io">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=el66pyXs2io</a> Theater Talk about Exit the King with Geoffrey Rush <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OhQ0LowDkc0">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OhQ0LowDkc0</a> Review in London at the National theater <a href="https://oneminitetheatrereviews.co.uk/tag/national-theatre/">https://oneminitetheatrereviews.co.uk/tag/national-theatre/</a></td>
<td>Written work on a Performance to be seen /Scenes worked to be acted out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03/16</td>
<td>Selected scenes by students discussed and acted out.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Students prepare a written montage of the excerpts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week/Dates</td>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>Assignment Due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>03/23</td>
<td>Discussions on the way to direct the scenes. Scenes acted out and memorized.</td>
<td></td>
<td>they want to perform</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03/30</td>
<td>Scenes acted out/Characters appear as automatons stuck in routines</td>
<td></td>
<td>Memorization and rehearsal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04/20</td>
<td>Scenes acted out. Silence in the scenes.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Memorization and rehearsal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04/27</td>
<td>Scenes acted out</td>
<td></td>
<td>Memorization and rehearsal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05/04</td>
<td>Scenes acted out</td>
<td></td>
<td>Memorization and rehearsal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05/11 and Public presentation on the 15th of May/Rehearsal in the morning 05/18</td>
<td>General rehearsal</td>
<td></td>
<td>All lines memorized for the final presentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Discussions about the performance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Course Materials

**Required Textbooks & Materials**
Plays will have to be bought at Eyrolles by the students

**Resources**
- Access your course materials: [NYU Classes](nyu.edu/its/classes)
- Databases, journal articles, and more: [Bobst Library](library.nyu.edu)
Course Policies

Attendance and Tardiness

- Study abroad at Global Academic Centers is an academically intensive and immersive experience in which students from a wide range of backgrounds exchange ideas in discussion-based seminars. Learning in such an environment depends on the active participation of all students. And since classes typically meet once or twice a week, even a single absence can cause a student to miss a significant portion of a course. To ensure the integrity of this academic experience, class attendance at the centers is mandatory, and unexcused absences will be penalized with a two percent deduction from the student’s final course grade for every week's worth of classes missed. Students are responsible for making up any work missed due to absence. Repeated absences in a course may result in harsher penalties including failure.

- Unexcused absences affect students’ grades: unexcused absences will be penalized with a 2% deduction from the students’ final course grade.

- Absences are excused only for illness, religious observance, and emergencies.

Illness: For a single absence, students may be required to provide a doctor’s note, at the discretion of the Associate Director of Academics. In the case of two consecutive absences, students must provide a doctor’s note. Exams, quizzes, and presentations will not be made up without a doctor’s note.

Religious Observance: Students observing a religious holiday during regularly scheduled class time are entitled to miss class without any penalty to their grade. This is for the holiday only and does not include the days of travel that may come before and/or after the holiday. Students must notify their instructor and the Academic Office in writing via email one week in advance before being absent for this purpose. If exams, quizzes, and presentations are scheduled on a holiday a student will observe, the Associate Director, in coordination with the instructor, will reschedule them.

Please note: if you are unable to attend class, you are required to email your professors directly to notify them.

Late Assignment
Late submission or work will be accepted only with justifiable reasons of health or family emergency.

Academic Honesty/Plagiarism
At NYU, a commitment to excellence, fairness, honesty, and respect within and outside the classroom is essential to maintaining the integrity of our community.

Plagiarism: presenting others' work without adequate acknowledgement of its source, as though it were one’s own. Plagiarism is a form of fraud. We all stand on the shoulders of others, and we must give credit to the creators of the works that we incorporate into products that we call our own. Some examples of plagiarism:

- a sequence of words incorporated without quotation marks
- an unacknowledged passage paraphrased from another's work
- the use of ideas, sound recordings, computer data or images created by others as though it were one's own
- submitting evaluations of group members' work for an assigned group project which misrepresent the work that was performed by another group member
- altering or forging academic documents, including but not limited to admissions materials, academic records, grade reports, add/drop forms, course registration forms, etc.

For further information, students are encouraged to check [www.nyu.edu/about/policies-guidelines-compliance/policies-and-guidelines/academic-integrity-for-students-at-nyu.html](http://www.nyu.edu/about/policies-guidelines-compliance/policies-and-guidelines/academic-integrity-for-students-at-nyu.html)

Disability Disclosure Statement

Academic accommodations are available for students with disabilities. Please contact the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities (212-998-4980 or mosescsd@nyu.edu) for further information. Students who are requesting academic accommodations are advised to reach out to the Moses Center as early as possible in the semester for assistance.

Instructor Bio

Cécile Cotté +33 6 13 63 85 / cecilecotte72@gmail.com/ site : cecilecotte.fr

Education

Theatre studies at the University of Censier in Paris. Student of Daniel Mesguich (director of the National Conservatory of Drama) Graduate student of the International Theater School Jacques Lecoq

Playwright

*L'eau est un corps qui brûle*, play published by Editions Comp'Act.


*Fossoyeurs* is also a radio play broadcast on France Culture in 2006.

Guest author at the Theatre Library of Saint-Herblain (2002).

Guest author at the Dijon Festival Frictions (2003).

Screenplay adapted from *La cicatrice* de Bruce Lowery. Lambart Production.

Director

1994 - 1995 Plays by Koltes, Botho Strauss, Copi, at the University René Descartes in Malakoff.

Theatre 71.


1999 Founded the io Compagny


2004 – 2012 *Poésies en jeux* conceived and performed by Cécile Cotté. Theater Firmin Gémier in Antony and on tour in France.


2010-2011 **L'aïl qui voit**, Cabaret conceived by Cécile Cotté. Cité Universitaire in Paris and Kimmel Center in New York.

2011-2012 **Haïti, un tableau vivant** (montage of texts by several different Haïtian writers) conceived by Cécile Cotté. Cité Universitaire in Paris.

2012-2013 **Les dix mots préférés d’Albert Camus** (The ten favorite words of Albert Camus) conceived by Cécile Cotté. Cité Universitaire (Résidence Lucien Paye) in Paris.

2013-2014 **Bестиola**, adaptation of Jean-Henri Fabre works conceived by Cécile Cotté. La Madelène/Vaucluse in France and on tour.


2018-2019 **Bamako-Paris** produced in l’Anis Gras, and at the Théâtre de Chelles.

2019 **Histoire d’une mouette et du chat qui lui apprit à voler** by Luis Sepulveda directed by Cotté at the Théâtre de la Huchette.

**Workshop Director**

1995 Commissioned by the "Action Française d'Action Artistique" in Singapore, directed with Philippe Minyana.


2000 Taught theatre workshops at the University of Arts of Butare (Rwanda National University).

2000 -2002 Taught theatre workshops at the Descartes University in Malakoff (in collaboration with the Pierre de Nohac college in Versailles (sponsored by the Guimet Museum).

2006 Taught theatre workshop in Vienna (Austria) and in Malta ( EDERED/ International theater meeting for children and teenagers).

2002 - 2017 Taught workshops at New York University of Paris

2010-2017 Taught workshops for Goucher College (Baltimore)

**Actress**

**THEATER**

**Contretemps** written and directed by Judith Gershman. TEP, American center, tour in Poland.

**Del tango** written and directed by Carlos Wittig. ATEM (Georges Aperghis’s direction).

**Top girls** by Caryl Churchill. Directed by Isabelle Fanchon. Theater La Bruyère in Paris.

**Images de Mussolini en hiver** by Armando Llamas. Directed by Stéphanie Loik. Théâtre Ouvert.


**La Princesse juive** written and directed by Armando Llamas. Alès Festival.

**Confusion** written and directed by Pierre Byland. On tour in Germany.

**Les lettres de la vie** written and directed by Judith Gershman. Theater 14 in Paris.

**Cyrano de Bergerac** by E. Rostand. Directed by Robert Hossein, with the participation of J-P Belmondo for the main part. Marigny Theater in Paris.

**Théâtre en chantier** Directed by Philippe Minyana. Théâtre Ouvert.

**Si vous êtes des hommes** by Serge Valletti. Directed by Michel Cerda. Théâtre Ouvert.
J'étais dans ma maison et j'attendais que la pluie vienne by Jean-Luc Lagarce. Directed by Robert Cantarella. Théâtre Ouvert.


Le Puits by Jean-Luc Raharimanana, directed by Cécile Cotté, on tour in France.

Poésies en jeux directed by Cécile Cotté, on tour in France

Bestiola directed by Cécile Cotté, on tour in France

CINEMA / TELEVISION

The daily life of the Lukwangos. Directed by John-Paul Davidson. BBC.


The french. Directed by Celia Lowenstein. BBC.


Elle avait... Directed by Nicole Roux. Short film. France.

RADIO

Acted in many radio plays: directed by J. Taroni, M. Sidoroff, J-M Zahnd, G. Peyrou, G. Gravier...

Since 1995, performs poetry readings for the the France Culture program Poésie sur parole directed by J-B Para and A. Velter.

Professor

Cécile Cotté is professor at New York University in France since 2002, (Acting French and Experimental french theater workshop). She has created plays with the students which have been performed in Paris (Cité Universitaire, United States Embassy, Théâtre Adyar) and in New York (Maison Française, Wasserman Center, Kimmel Center). She has also been a professor at the École supérieure des sciences économiques et commerciales (ESSEC) since 2009, giving a course called Behaving in Public, A training and in Stanford University in Paris in 2014 and 2015.