

HIS282-01: Contextualizing Opera
The NY Metropolitan Opera Live in HD Broadcasts
Dr. Kelly J. Maynard • History Department • Fall Semester 2022
meeting time and place TBD



COURSE INFORMATION

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OVERVIEW

This course is a 2-credit, 200-level variable topic research class that takes as its basic content the New York Metropolitan Opera's Live in HD series (in which roughly 8-14 operas per year are streamed live in movie theaters across the globe - including at the Harris Center on the Grinnell campus). Students choose one of the operas scheduled during the semester and research its historical context, formal characteristics, and scholarly treatment. In addition to cultivating basic historical literacy skills, students come to the class with and incorporate their own particular areas of interest and expertise. Working alone or with a small group of other students depending on enrollment, students prepare and deliver one c.fifteen-minute, pre-broadcast lecture based upon their research and interests.

OBJECTIVES

The main goals of this course are

- to cultivate research skills in a collaborative environment with faculty mentorship
- to engage critically with a range of primary sources, learning to interrogate their authorship, biases, contexts, and variably interpretable meanings
- to examine the work of modern scholars across disciplines and learn to identify their arguments, methods, conversational position, and use of evidence
- to hone skills in the clear, concise formulation of ideas with particular attention to the development of an argument and the use of appropriate supporting evidence
- to support and critique fellow students' work in constructive, respectful ways
- to cultivate student skills in public presentations that both deliver scholarly content AND entertain and engage a general audience.

REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

This is a two-credit course that runs throughout the entire semester. As compared to a four-credit course, 1) we meet for half the contact hours; 2) students spend half the time commitment of work outside of class; 3) all assignments cumulatively require roughly half as much labor; and 4) your grade at the end of the semester will carry half the weight of a normal four-credit course. In light of the fact that attending Saturday broadcasts is a necessary but time-consuming endeavor, we will not have common readings for our weekly discussions. Instead, all of your class preparation will be connected to your research process as you prepare your pre-performance lecture.

Your grade will be assessed according to the following formula:

20%	class attendance, participation, and peer feedback of R&D
20%	timely and thorough preparation of research components
20%	peer lecture feedback
40%	pre-broadcast lecture

PARTNERS AND RESOURCES

I want every person in this class to succeed and am deeply committed to creating an environment that helps make that possible. I encourage students with documented disabilities in any form to discuss reasonable accommodations with me. If you have not yet, please start a conversation about and provide documentation of your disability to Jae Hirschman, Coordinator for Student Disability Resources, at hirschma@grinnell.edu.

Grinnell's Writing, Reading, and Speaking Center supports students working on papers, projects, presentations, and applications. Schedule a session with one of the Center's professional instructors and get feedback as you interpret readings, talk through your ideas, analyze evidence, develop and organize arguments, craft introductions and conclusions, rewrite sentences and paragraphs, or plan presentations. Center instructors do not proofread papers, but they can show you how to edit your own work effectively. Make an appointment online: <http://mywco.com/grinnell>

SCHEDULE

The NY Metropolitan Opera Live in HD Broadcasts scheduled for the fall semester are:

Sat 10/22

Luigi Cherubini, *Medea*

François-Benoît Hoffmann, libretto
premiered in Paris, 1797

Sat 11/5

Giuseppe Verdi, *La Traviata*

Francesco Maria Piave, libretto, after Alexandre Dumas, *La Dame aux camélias*
premiered in Venice, 1853

Sat 12/10

Kevin Puts, *The Hours*

Greg Pierce, libretto, after M. Cunningham, inspired by V. Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*
world premiere in NY, 2022

All broadcasts will begin at 12:05 p.m. CST in the Harris Center, and our pre-performance lectures will begin at 11:30 a.m.

Each of your projects will develop roughly according to the following steps:

- 1) familiarize yourself with your opera (plot, premiere, composer and librettist, reception, and performance history) and think about your initial research angles / interests
- 2) look into the existing scholarship on your opera, your potential approach/argument, and source ideas
- 3) delve into your sources/evidence in depth, get a feel for the potential direction(s) for your argument, and frame a research question
- 4) continue to live with your sources, see what they say, and begin to answer your RQ
- 5) draft a possible thesis statement and think about the structure of your lecture
- 6) present a draft lecture, receive peer critique, and revise & polish your presentation

Mapped onto the semester and the performances listed above, then, our class schedule looks like this:

w/o 8/29	Initial meeting and assignment of opera lectures
w/o 9/5	<i>Medea</i> , <i>Traviata</i> , <i>Hours</i> step 1: discuss opera & initial research interests
w/o 9/12	<i>Medea</i> step 2: discuss/feedback for existing scholarship, approach, and source ideas
w/o 9/19	<i>Medea</i> step 3: discuss/feedback sources and possible research question
w/o 9/26	<i>Medea</i> step 4: further discuss/feedback sources and research question <i>Traviata</i> step 2: discuss/feedback for existing scholarship, approach, and source ideas
w/o 10/3	<i>Medea</i> step 5: discuss/feedback thesis and structure <i>Traviata</i> step 3: discuss/feedback sources and possible research question
w/o 10/10	<i>Medea</i> step 6: draft lecture presentation, feedback, revision & polish <i>Traviata</i> step 4: further discuss/feedback sources and research question

w/o 10/17 **FALL BREAK**

SATURDAY

10/22

Met Live in HD
Cherubini, *Medea* (1797)
pre-broadcast lecture 11:30 by
Harris Cinema

w/o 10/24 class discussion of *Medea* lecture and production
Traviata step 5: discuss/feedback thesis and structure

w/o 10/31 *Traviata* step 6: draft lecture presentation, feedback, revision & polish
Hours step 2: discuss/feedback for existing scholarship, approach, and source ideas

SATURDAY

11/5

Met Live in HD
Verdi, *La Traviata* (1853)
pre-broadcast lecture 11:30 by
Harris Cinema

w/o 11/7 class discussion of *La Traviata* lecture and production
Hours step 3: discuss/feedback sources and possible research question

w/o 11/14 *Hours* step 4: further discuss/feedback sources and research question

w/o 11/21 **THANKSGIVING**

w/o 11/28 *Hours* step 5: discuss/feedback thesis and structure

w/o 12/5 *Hours* step 6: draft lecture presentation, feedback, revision & polish

SATURDAY

12/10

Met Live in HD
Kevin Puts, *The Hours* (2022)
pre-broadcast lecture 11:30 by
Harris Cinema

w/o 12/12 **FINALS WEEK**
class discussion of *The Hours* lecture and production, course wrap up