

**HIS 282-01 Contextualizing Opera:  
The NY Metropolitan Opera Live in HD Broadcasts**  
Dr. Kelly J. Maynard • History Department • Spring Semester 2023  
Thursday evenings 6:00-7:30, 2/2-5/4



**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 ~15-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 marshaling 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 discussion. 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 research and development |
| 20% | timely and thorough preparation of research components                         |
| 20% | peer lecture feedback  |
| 40% | pre-broadcast lecture  |

In the weeks leading up to your scheduled lecture, you should be prepared to do the following:

- identify extant historiography/scholarship, potential approach/argument
- identify primary sources/evidence in support of argument
- draft thesis, decide on lecture structure, consider public presentation strategies
- present draft lecture, receive peer critique

## 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](mailto: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>

## **BROADCAST SCHEDULE**

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

Sat 3/18 curtain at 11:00 a.m. C.S.T.

Richard Wagner, *Lohengrin* (Wagner, libretto)

world premiere in Weimar, 1850

Sat 4/1 curtain at 11:30 a.m. C.S.T.

Giuseppe Verdi, *Falstaff* (Arrigo Boito, libretto)

world premiere in Milan, 1893

Sat 4/15 curtain at 11:00 a.m. C.S.T.

Richard Strauss, *Der Rosenkavalier* (Hugo von Hofmannsthal, libretto)

world premiere in Dresden, 1911

Sat 4/29 curtain at 12:00 p.m. C.S.T.

Terence Blanchard, *Champion* (Michael Christofer, libretto)

world premiere in New York, 2023

## **PROJECT DEVELOPMENT**

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

## **COURSE SCHEDULE**

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

- 2/2 Initial meeting and assignment of opera lectures

- 2/9 all operas step 1: discuss opera (plot, music, staging, first impressions) and initial research interests
- 2/16 *Lohengrin* step 2: discuss/feedback for existing scholarship, approach, and source ideas
- 2/23 *Falstaff* step 2: discuss/feedback for existing scholarship, approach, and source ideas  
*Lohengrin* step 3: discuss/feedback sources and possible research question
- 3/2 *Rosenkavalier* step 2: discuss/feedback for existing scholarship, approach, and source ideas  
*Falstaff* step 3: discuss/feedback sources and possible research question  
*Lohengrin* step 4: further discuss/feedback sources and research question
- 3/9 *Rosenkavalier* step 3: discuss/feedback sources & possible research question  
*Falstaff* step 4: further discuss/feedback sources and research  
*Lohengrin* step 5: discuss/feedback thesis and structure
- 3/16 *Champion* step 2: discuss/feedback for existing scholarship, approach, and source ideas  
*Rosenkavalier* step 4: further discuss/feedback sources and research  
*Falstaff* step 5: discuss/feedback thesis and structure  
*Lohengrin* step 6: draft lecture presentation, feedback, revision & polish

SPRING BREAK BEGINS

**SATURDAY**

3/18

**Met Live in HD at Harris Cinema  
Wagner, *Lohengrin* (1850)  
pre-broadcast lecture starts at 10:30 a.m., curtain at 11:00**

week of 3/20  
or 3/27

class discussion of *Lohengrin* lecture and production  
*Falstaff* step 6: draft lecture presentation, feedback, revision & polish

**SATURDAY**

4/1

**Met Live in HD at Harris Cinema  
Verdi, *Falstaff* (1893)  
pre-broadcast lecture starts at 11:00 a.m., curtain at 11:30**

SPRING BREAK ENDS

4/6

class discussion of *Falstaff* lecture and production  
*Champion* step 3: discuss/feedback sources & possible research question  
*Rosenkavalier* step 5: discuss/feedback thesis and structure

4/13 *Champion* step 4: further discuss/feedback sources and research  
*Rosenkavalier* step 6: draft lecture presentation, feedback, revision & polish

**SATURDAY**

4/15 **Met Live in HD at Harris Cinema**  
**Strauss, *Der Rosenkavalier* (1911)**  
**pre-broadcast lecture starts at 10:30 a.m., curtain at 11:00**

4/20 class discussion of *Rosenkavalier* lecture and production  
*Champion* step 5: discuss/feedback thesis and structure

4/27 *Champion* step 6: draft lecture presentation, feedback, revision & polish

**SATURDAY**

4/29 **Met Live in HD at Harris Cinema**  
**Blanchard, *Champion* (2023)**  
**pre-broadcast lecture starts at 11:30 a.m., curtain at 12:00**

5/4 class discussion of *Champion* lecture and production, course wrap-up