ENG 5006-001: Bernard Shaw and the Avant-Garde

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Eng 5006: Bernard Shaw and the Avant-Garde

fall 2012

“The only golden rule is that there are no golden rules.”
— G.B.S.

sylabus

course description
Beginning in the 1890s, Bernard Shaw transformed British drama, bringing to it intellectual substance, ethical imperatives, and modernity itself, setting the theatrical course for the rest of the century. Approvingly characterized as a “terrorist” by Bertolt Brecht, Shaw is the greatest playwright in the English language after Shakespeare. Lately, the word “surrealism” has appeared increasingly and unexpectedly in conversations about Shaw’s work, especially among theater practitioners. At first glance, considering Shaw a surrealist dramatist seems itself a surreal move. His early works are grounded in a kind of didactic realism, characterized by furious drawing-room moralizing and quite dated shock and awe tactics. The plays from his middle period are the most famous and epitomize the style of modern drama with which he is most associated: the discussion play. Even his reputation among academics and critics is largely that of what one contemporary director calls “a boring old geezer lecturing everybody...always knowing better than anyone else what was wrong with everything...the kind of uneven-tempered old farmer who would chase one out of his field with a stick”. In the past two decades, however, this common view of Shaw and his plays seems to be changing, and his late work in the 1930s and 40s, generally written off as the result of senile decline or the musings of a lunatic, is being re-appraised as the fullest expression of his dramaturgical vision.

In this course, we will interrogate this notion of the “Shavian surreal” over the course of six major plays, framing our readings of them with the works of other contemporary artists (including Harley Granville Barker, Igor Stravinsky, Paul Cezanne, Luis Bunuel, Roger Vitrac, Rene Magritte, and Salvador Dali), theorists (including Andre Breton and Antonin Artaud), and scholars. Part of our work together will involve liberating the plays from their paratextual prisons, resisting the MacGuffin lure of Shaw’s voluminous Prefaces and his own mythologized persona and freeing ourselves to analyze what is apt and what is misleading about situating Shaw not only within the surrealist tradition but among emergent avant-garde forms of literature, theater, music, painting, film, and even literary theory.

Obviously, this is not in any sense an exhaustive survey course through Shaw’s entire body of work but a discussion-based seminar that will ideally provide those new to his work with places to get acquainted and those who have some background in it opportunities to move deeper. In fact, this course is itself a kind of experiment. Just as surrealism is founded upon unexpected juxtaposition, this course will situate Shaw’s plays in relation to the work of surrealist artists. This direction in Shaw’s dramaturgy is coextensive with his movement away from issue-oriented realism and into explorations of what we might nowadays term the postmodern and the postcolonial. In addition to very close readings and re-readings of the plays, there will be a fair amount of secondary readings in theory, history, and criticism as well as frequent writing assignments of various lengths involving research and designed to be challenging. One of the course’s goals is to deepen your engagement in academic discourse, as a reader, writer, and thinker, by providing you opportunities for vigorous exercise of your critical practice.
erning food marketing developed. The differing perceptions of consumers and of modernization were rhetorical elements of a contest over whether or not regulation was required and over the extent of any regulation that might emerge. Each side represented consumers in a particular light; indeed, "virtual" consumers were far more evident in the polemics and investigations than were the opinions of actual consumers. Rather than apathy, reformers may have been confronting a public with multiple concerns who refused to coalesce around a single issue such as adulteration. The Co-operative Movement's challenge to private enterprise coexisted with a "value for money" reform campaign that pursued consumer protection through regulation and scientific expertise. The variety of approaches diminished the force of all the reform campaigns.

Legislative success required a major scare involving a health risk and, ideally, a focus on a specific commodity. By 1914, the reform movement was focusing its attention on milk, which was by far the most commonly adulterated commodity and whose danger to health, particularly through the risk of tuberculosis, was most easily identifiable as a threat to mothers, children, and invalids. In addition to their potential to attract public sympathy, these categories of consumers, especially children, could be portrayed as in need of protection, thereby weakening the force of commercial arguments based on the concept of the informed and rational (adult) consumer. 83

Business offered its own perspectives on the behavior of consumers. Although the limited character of the food laws reflected more closely the regulatory views of the food trades than of the food reformers, business was by no means dominant or complacent. Indeed, its strategies of branding and advertising and its emphasis on consumer choice were themselves responses to the uncertainties and instabilities inherent in the global marketplace and in a public culture where journalistic exposés influenced consumer behavior. For these reasons modernization was a subject for debate, offered as a source both of new hazards and of scientific expertise that might provide consumers with improved information. In this context, reformers and businesses usually took an opportunistic view of the idea of an official Court of Reference as a forum for expert and scientific debate, depending on its proposed membership or duties.

The LGB's planned Food and Drugs bill of 1914 was shelved following the outbreak of World War I, ending the influence of the reform campaign centered on the 1910 Pure Food Exhibition. Indeed the state's reliance for the next two years on "business as usual" to

83. For a similar reform movement and the Juvenile Smoking Bill of 1908, see Hilton, Smoking in British Popular Culture, 165–69.
course texts
Butler, Postmodernism
Denis Johnston, Shaw and his Contemporaries
Morgan, 20th Century Britain
Bernard Shaw, Pygmalion and Other Plays
Bert Cardullo, Theater of the Avant-Garde
Jonah Lehrer, Proust was a Neuroscientist
Bernard Shaw, Plays

**Our secondary readings will be handed out or can be accessed through Booth Library journal databases.

attendance
Mandatory.

If you become suddenly ill (think Bubonic plague) or the victim of emergency circumstances, please email me or a member of the seminar as soon as possible and stay in touch. Excused absences are accompanied by appropriate legal or medical documentation. Any unexcused absence will seriously undermine your success in this course. That being said, don’t come to class if you haven’t done the reading. Attendance will be taken at each class session – each unexcused absence will lower your participation grade by a letter. More than two unexcused absences will result in a “O” for participation. More than four unexcused absences will result in a grade of no credit for the course. Habitual lateness (beyond once) will also affect your grade negatively since it is disruptive and disrespectful.

class participation
Mandatory.

Think of our meetings potluck conversations; everyone simply must contribute. Participation in a seminar means careful preparation of the reading, frequent contributions to discussions, and engaged critical thought. You should come to each session armed with observations, opinions, questions, and insights, ready to take an active part in the ongoing dialogue about the course materials and your course projects.

If you plan on doing either of the following things, you should probably drop this class:
1. Remaining in your comfort zone and not talking in class and justifying the silence by saying you are ‘just the type of person who likes to sit back and listen to what everyone else has to say.’ Certainly, listening is a premium in this class and is a crucial human skill. But real listening only happens in an exchange. Letting everyone else do the talking means that you’re not really listening because you are busy keeping yourself safe. Of course, this ‘safety’ is an illusion.

2. Remaining in your comfort zone and not talking in class and justifying the silence because you assume that you don’t know enough to participate in class and other people (especially those who talk) do. To approach the class and the work in a way that suggests that one can speak only about what is already known is not only dangerous, but it’s also intellectually lazy.

Our work together is a collaborative process of inquiry. For our endeavor to succeed, there are three preconditions that must be met: everyone must have done the reading and done it critically and carefully; everyone must be willing to take intellectual risks and be open to uncertainty; and everyone must be willing to engage respectfully. Consider each class session a performance in which you demonstrate the depth of your preparation for and commitment to the course.

Although I’m likely to talk a lot (that’s my character), I won’t give lectures, and the content and direction of the class is largely in your hands. In other words, I will serve as a resource and guide and occasionally cranky curmudgeon, but it’s your class to shape and energize. Individually and collectively, this course
rectly addressed the association of low prices with poor quality by depicting its product, a granulated beef extract commonly used in soups and drinks, as ideal for both invalids and athletes yet cheap enough to yield savings on the poor rate when used as a foodstuff in workhouses. Glaxo cited testimonials from doctors for its infant food, described as the “purest of milk desiccated . . . with the addition of cream and sugar” and compared favorably with “starchy” patent foods. Suspicions about processed foods were addressed in the slogan, “Not an artificial food but Pure Dry Milk of Standardised Quality and Germ-free.” In a similar vein Tate and Sons described their sugar as the “World’s Standard of Purity.” The merits of large-scale manufacturing were emphasized, along with the patronage of nine royal families, by Huntley and Palmers, who portrayed its factory as pursuing a “Cult of Perfection” from thorough inspection of ingredients and hygienic manufacturing processes to the “ruthless elimination” of imperfect biscuits. Smithfield meat market advertised the benefits of its large-scale operations and strict inspection regime.

Such themes can also be found in Crosse and Blackwell’s promotion of its soups, pickles, jams, and vinegar; their advertising highlighted “scrupulous cleanliness,” “white-coated young women” working in the factory, and the use of fresh meat and vegetables. In addition, the company addressed concerns about modernization by stressing that it was a long-established family business and placed factory operations in a direct, though progressive, lineage from the domestic kitchen. Crosse and Blackwell jams and marmalade were, the advertisement emphasized, made in the “good old-fashioned home-made way, with this difference: that the modest preserving pan of the housewife gives place to rows of shining metal cauldrons perhaps 20 times as large.” It was a commercial response to the Victorian ambivalence toward progress, emphasized by Loeb, that legitimized modernization by associating it with the values of home cooking. In this respect, the Times “Food” issue fits scholars’ portrayal of manufacturers as conveyers of modernity in the sense of appealing to a mass of consumers. It was, however, a cautious and qualified concept of progress stressing continuity and locating new products and technologies within a framework of domestic and “traditional” values.

Conclusion

The debates between reformers and traders over food adulteration reveal the slow and contested process through which the rules gov-
carries with it a responsibility to drive the inquiry and conversation. As a consequence, class participation will count for a major part of your grade.

class preparation
In addition to your written assignments, what else you bring to share need not be written out (although you may be asked to do so) but should refer to specific passages in the reading as the basis for formulating a broader discussion topic. Come to class with an agenda. That means coming with lucrative questions that you think the texts are asking with their form and content, not simply questions you have about the texts. In addition, you may also wish to read the introductions to our plays, although I would advise doing so AFTER you have read each play; consider this sentence a formal spoiler alert. Besides preparation, class participation also means responding constructively, respectfully, and energetically to what other seminarians share, that you work actively to stretch yourself intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually. In short, you are expected to work actively to contribute to the class's overall movement and to strive to promote dialogue between yourself and other seminarians. I TAKE THIS GRADE VERY SERIOUSLY.

assignments
* A 10-12 page conference length paper, the topic developed in consultation with me which can be an expansion of one of the critical papers.

* Five Short critical papers two full single-spaced pages in length. See prompts on schedule.

* One "-ism" presentation

* Active, Engaged Participation in Discussion — defined as TALKING productively

questions and passages
To cultivate potential avenues for meaningful discussion on days when critical papers are not due, write out in advance at least three productive discussion questions of the reading, each anchoring themselves in a specific word/phrase/moment in the text. Start with questions, not “topics.” I am not looking simply for different questions but three different kinds of questions — one on issues of character; one on issues of the play’s architecture; one on issues of staging (the performance text versus the script). Then, trace possible answers, not reaching definitive conclusions but demonstrating engaged critical practice in teasing out the implications of your subject. These papers are part of your preparation for class but are not in any sense to stand in the place of participation — two separate entities.

"-ism presentation"
Everyone will be required to present an “-ism” on October 2nd. You are responsible for the conversation, which should last a productive 30 minutes or so. There will be assigned readings, but they will focus on Shaw’s dramaturgy. As such, you may wish to supplement with concise texts of other kinds. In addition to enabling and directing a meaningful class conversation about the materials, a central component of your session should be to provide us with a sense of the movement’s core principles in theory and in practice. The other central component to your presentation is an appraisal of one of Shaw’s plays we have read thus far through the lens of your -ism. How does it change the questions of the text we ask and where we look for answers? What interpretive insights does it produce? This session should be entirely a scholarly discussion; no “acting out” of scenes or playing video clips in class, although images of paintings/sculptures or sound recordings are encouraged.
Greenwich magistrates' court indicates that nostalgia carried little legal weight. In dismissing a batch of prosecutions over the inclusion of salicylic acid in British wines, the magistrate noted that in the past "people made their own wines and preserves and their own bread and brewed their own beer. He could not reconstruct those times. . . . Housewives had given that up; they now bought these things, and in his endeavour to see that wholesome food was sold he must not prevent people getting any." This presumption—that although foods were changing, consumer choice remained paramount—was significant because it accepted the food industry's insistence that "modernized" methods facilitated product innovation and hence advanced consumer choice. At the grocers' 1910 conference, Alderman Hinton had claimed that precise standards or detailed labeling of ingredients would "destroy enterprise and initiative." He rejected proposals for more stringent labeling of contents as impractical, unlikely to be read or understood by consumers, and liable to hand foreign rivals a competitive advantage by revealing trade secrets. In 1913, editorials in the Grocer argued that increased LGB power to set standards would lower average quality (as the journal claimed had been the result of the milk and butter regulations) and restrict innovation. Like the Times, the Grocer blamed the public's preference for low prices over quality for any deterioration in standards and advocated an educational campaign. Such rhetoric not only blamed consumers, but also made a link to "modern trading methods," associating problems of adulteration with the chain stores and systems of volume distribution that the independent grocers regarded, along with cooperatives, as threats to their own existence.

A more complicated defense of modern methods of production and distribution entailed making connections between new food technologies and traditional foods, production methods, or cookery. One justification for food colorings claimed that coal-tar dyes were harmless and downplayed their scientific character by likening their use to the smoking of fish or bacon. Artificial colorings, it was argued, were necessary to satisfy the consumers' ideas about the appearance of foods. The Times food issue in 1914 carried advertisements, including several lengthy accounts of factory operations and employee relations, that illustrated the marketing and public relations strategies of some manufacturers. An advertisement for Oxo di-

79. Grocer (4 July 1914), 49.
80. Ibid. (16 Aug. 1913), 399.
81. The Lancet advocated reforms to protect consumers on the basis that such policies were achievable without complete standardization or being too "vexatious" for traders; Grocer (15 Feb. 1913), 504.
82. Grocer, Supplement (25 June 1910), 11–16.
longer paper topic
It is important to identify as early as possible in the term your area of interest for the final paper. (I am assuming seminarians are bringing with them critical problems and issues of interest to them from earlier coursework.)

A proposal is due in mid-October so I advise you very strongly to do a couple things. One, the course is focused on a small number of plays; reading them early in the course allows you to get a sense of the movement of the semester and pinpoint plays that speak to your topic. In fact, it is expected that plays will be read and reread. Two, come see me. I can hopefully save you some time and point you in lucrative directions. The proposal should identify your topic and sketch the contours of your argument; it also should provide a bibliography containing at least five scholarly sources.

final grades
Your final grade in the course will be determined by your performance on the following assignments:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Five Short Critical Papers</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Longer Scholarly Paper</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hosting / Participation</td>
<td>20%</td>
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**Because this is an advanced course (thus a thinking-intensive and collaborative venture), you must be committed to becoming more resourceful and reflective as an interpreter, researcher, discussant, and writer. The degree to which you demonstrate this development in class and in your written work will certainly be a factor in my determination of your term grade. All course assignments must be completed.

late papers
These are no fun for me to keep track of and only put you further behind. Because they form the basis of class discussion; as such, in order to be fair to all seminarians, no late Short Critical Papers will be accepted. Regarding the longer Scholarly Paper, for each day beyond the scheduled due date, it will be penalized a third of a letter grade. After a week, I will no longer accept the paper, and it becomes a “0.” Again, if you become ill or the victim of emergency circumstances, please email me as soon as possible and stay in touch. Graduate seminars have a demanding pace; if you have a problem with procrastination, plan your work schedule accordingly to avoid disaster.

cell phone and computer use
You may bring your computer to class with you, assuming that you use it in a scholarly and responsible fashion. This means that you will only have applications and windows related to the current discussion open. You may not check email, news, or box scores, surf the web, use chat applications, play games, or otherwise distract yourself and those around you from the class conversation with your computer.

You are likewise expected to use cell phones in a responsible manner: turn them off when you come in to class. If you have an emergency for which you must be available, you must discuss it with me beforehand and keep your phone on vibrate. Under no conditions are you allowed to text message, take pictures or video (illegal in class), play games, or use the cell phone in any other manner during class. The nature of our scholarly endeavor together necessitates mutual respect and dedicated attention during the too short time we have to discuss these texts. Violating any of these policies will result in your participation grade being lowered by a full letter grade for each violation.

academic integrity
Any paper with your name on it signifies that you are the author—that the wording and major ideas are yours, with exceptions indicated by either quotation marks and/or citations. Plagiarism is the unacknowledged use (appropriation and/or imitation) of others’ materials (words and ideas). We will
bility of the nation's food supplies as war approached, given the
dependence on imported goods, the food issue's contents ranged
widely from production and transport to cookery and to related
themes, such as vegetarianism. An article on adulteration offered a
fragmentary vision of the consumer, combining judgments on mod­
ernization, class, and gender. Urbanization, it was argued, had bro­
ten the direct links between consumers and food production and
increased the reliance on prepared foods liable to adulteration. 74 The
reformers' imagery of the apathetic public also appeared, with con­
sumers pictured as accepting food as presented “in spite of the
alarming stories that every now and then go the rounds.” Class mat­
tered, however, and the Times' readers were reassured: “As a rule it
may be taken for granted that the food sold in the better class shops
is what it pretends to be.” 75 Ultimately consumers themselves were
held culpable for their desire for cheap food—because “‘cheap’ in
many cases connotes ‘nasty’”—as well as for preferring their food to
be a particular color, thereby encouraging the use of artificial dyes. 76
These general judgments coalesced around the domestic and con­
sumer roles of women, though in a far less glamorous way than the
advertising analyzed by Loeb:

When our mothers ceased to make their own jams, pickles, and
preserves, sophistication found a new field for its activities, and
now when our wives, anxious to show how much they can save
out of the housekeeping money, allow themselves to be cajoled
into purchasing cheap and inferior tinned and potted goods of all
kinds put forward by the obsequious salesman as “our own make,”
it is no matter for surprise that the unscrupulous manufacturer
should meet the demand for such wares by supplying decompos­
ing food artfully masked with boracic or other preservatives. 77

The stress on the perils of economy contrasts with other Victorian
rhetoric that associated female consumers with undue extravagance
and an easy susceptibility to the wiles of unscrupulous door-to-door
salesmen. 78

The significance of such opinions in influencing regulation and
thus commercial practices is uncertain, though a decision in 1914 at

74. Ibid.
75. Ibid.
76. Ibid.
77. Ibid.
78. For examples, see Victoria DeGrazia and Ellen Furlough, eds., The Sex of
Things: Gender and Consumption in Historical Perspective (London, 1996), and
Margo C. Finn, “Scotch Drapers and the Politics of Modernity,” in The Politics of
discuss how to avoid it. Evidence of plagiarism will result in one or more of the following: a failing grade for the assignment, an F in the course, and a report filed with the Student Standards Office.

special needs and situations
If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the Office of Disability Services (581-6583) as soon as possible.

BERNARD SHAW (1856-1950): A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY
by Denis Johnston of The Shaw Festival Theatre

An acclaimed playwright, critic, and social reformer, George Bernard Shaw (but he hated being called George) was born in 1856 into a family he described as of shabby genteel lineage. He grew up a Protestant in the predominantly Catholic city of Dublin, the capital of Ireland. Although he quit school at age 14 and was always critical of formal education, Shaw gave himself a rigorous informal education, frequenting the National Gallery of Dublin and reading voraciously. Through his mother’s work as a music teacher and vocalist, he also developed a keen interest in classical music that would assist him in his early career as a music critic.

At age 20, Shaw followed his mother to London to embark on a literary career. He struggled through the late 1870s and much of the 1880s trying to establish a name for himself by writing reviews and criticism for numerous publications: book reviews for The Pall Mall Gazette, art criticism for The World, music criticism for The Star and The World, and drama criticism for Saturday Review. During these years he also wrote five highly original novels that no one would publish until friends serialized them in magazines, started on his first play, and made public speeches on various topics of political and social controversy. Influenced by socialist lectures and by reading Marx’s Das Kapital, Shaw joined the fledgling Fabian Society in 1884. The Fabian Society was an influential group dedicated to establishing a socialist democracy in Britain. Shaw quickly became a major spokesperson for the Fabians and their ideas. Among his associates in the Society were the artist William Morris, author H.G. Wells, feminist Annie Besant, and economic reformers Sidney and Beatrice Webb.

Shaw's first play, Widowers' Houses, was produced in 1892 by J.T. Grein's Independent Theatre, a company founded to produce new plays by new modern playwrights. Widowers' Houses was this company's second production, following the English premiere of Ibsen's Ghosts the year before. Like many of his peers, Shaw was greatly impressed with Ibsen's new drama of social realism. In 1891 he wrote an essay on the subject entitled The Quintessence of Ibsenism. Shaw despised the sentimental romance being presented to London audiences in contemporary plays. He advocated instead that greater attention be paid to Ibsen and his innovations. Shaw valued the way the stage could become a platform for the communication of ideas: through his own plays he sought to confront audiences with issues of social and political importance. He aimed to stimulate not only the hearts, but also the minds of London's theatre-
and merchants to hoodwink the law.\textsuperscript{67} Such sentiments were connected to the liberal food reformers' general argument that old-style adulteration had been replaced by more subtle science-based practices that left ordinary consumers unable to evaluate the contents or consequences of foods.\textsuperscript{68}

The catalogue of the 1910 Pure Food Exhibition also linked such trends to modernization. Its section on potted meats and fish pastes blamed the transformation from domestic production by the "enthusiastic housewife" to factory manufacture for opening the "road for the adulterator as usual."\textsuperscript{69} The NPFA's publicity emphasized the risk to health from substituting inferior chemicals for nourishing ingredients and the argument that chemical preservatives hindered digestion. A link was drawn to modernization by associating the adverse nutritional effects of adulteration with the increased prevalence of cancer, the incidence of both adulteration and cancer being described as "directly proportionate to the higher civilisation of man."\textsuperscript{70}

In 1911 Cassal argued that, although earlier "grosser" adulterations had been outlawed successfully, new forms appeared regularly, "very generally under the guise of alleged 'scientific improvements,' or with the shallow excuse that what has been done has been rendered necessary in order to meet 'a public demand,' or the requirements of 'the public taste.'"\textsuperscript{71} For Cassal, the "sordid souls" of adulterators were a constant presence, held in check only by vigorous enforcement of new laws and the social responsibility of legitimate producers. But in Cassal's vision the analytical chemist, as the scientific expert able to identify malpractice and danger, was given the central role (though he also portrayed analysts as beleaguered workers, deserving of greater recognition, authority, and income).\textsuperscript{72}

Food reformers' arguments about the alleged dangers of modernization were effective, to judge by a \textit{Times} special issue on food published in June 1914.\textsuperscript{73} Although its primary concern was the vulnera-
goers. One of the major innovations of Shavian drama was the unusually large role he gave to thought and debate - but thought enlivened with a love of wordplay and paradox.

Although initially considered subversive because of the subjects he chose to portray, by the turn of the century Shaw had secured his reputation as a major playwright. His plays were produced on both sides of the Atlantic, and his scripts were published and distributed widely. The young actor-manager Harley Granville Barker helped to advance Shaw's popularity with three landmark seasons (1904-7) at the Royal Court Theatre in London. Of the thousand performances presented under the Barker-Vedrenne management, over 700 were of eleven plays by Shaw.

After the advent of talking films in the 1920s, Shaw's scripts began to find a place in the burgeoning film industry. Although a fan of movies since the early days of silent films, Shaw refused to sell the screen rights to his scripts unless he could retain some control over the final product. In the 1930s and 1940s he adapted several of his plays for film, including How He Lied to Her Husband (1931), Arms and The Man (1932), Pygmalion (1938), Major Barbara (1941), and Caesar and Cleopatra (1945).

Shaw was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature for 1925 and donated the prize money to the founding of the Anglo-Swedish Literary Foundation. In the 1930s he travelled around the world with his wife, Charlotte Payne-Townshend, an Irish heiress whom he had married in 1898. He continued to write plays and essays on religion and socialism until his death in 1950, after falling from a ladder in his orchard.

**Some Reliable Historical Sources:**
Richard D. Altick, *Victorian People and Ideas*
Jean Chothia, *English Drama of the Early Modern Period, 1890-1940*
P.F. Clarke, *Hope and Glory: Britain 1900-2000*
Christopher Innes, *Modern British Drama*
Clive Barker and Maggie B. Gale eds., *British Theatre between the Wars 1918-39*

The Shaw Festival, who specializes in the drama written during Shaw's lifetime, produces study guides for some of their annual productions, including four of the plays we are reading in this course. These are not scholarly kits but are intended for general audiences and secondary students. However, they can be insightful and spark ideas. You can access them at:

http://www.shawfest.com/education/study-guides/archives/
reportedly signaling a retreat on the proposed SFDA bill, a stance confirmed within the month.  

Modernization

In addition to the competing perspectives on consumers’ interests and behavior, the debates over food quality engaged with the effects of modernization. Lori Anne Loeb’s study of advertising identifies ambivalence in Victorian attitudes toward progress. On the one hand, positive images of shops and factories highlighted productive power and technological advance; on the other hand, expressions of anxiety were evident, particularly over the moral implications of consumption, often focusing on female images. 62 The Edwardian debates over food regulation reveal rather different concerns. Advocates of greater regulation frequently argued that new production systems and more extensive trading in foodstuffs were distancing consumers from direct experience of food production and preparation. The perceived symptoms ranged from greater detachment from rural life and the increased availability of prepackaged goods to the new overseas sources of supply. 63 Such views were linked to a broader apprehension at the turn of the century concerning the effects of urbanization. Stephen Mennell identified Victorian anxieties about the transition from a rural life with a simple diet to a less active urban existence with a “rich stimulating” diet. 64 A consistent theme was the role of new scientific developments in altering foods, making them less natural or preventing consumers from recognizing potential health risks. In 1913 Mabel Lawrence, a Fabian, blamed adulteration on “modern conditions,” including the transfer of cooking from the home to the factory. 65

Mark Weatherall highlights the interplay among ideas of food purity, science, and newspapers during the standard bread campaign in 1911. 66 The ILP pamphlet of 1907 asserted that “scientific adulteration is being substituted for the clumsy blundering which formerly landed the rascally trader within the meshes of the law... Clever chemists are prostituting their gifts in order to enable manufacturers

61. Ibid. (7 March 1914), 740–43, and (4 April 1914), 1012 and 1035.
62. Loeb, Consuming Angels, chap. 3.
64. Mennell, All Manners of Food, 37–38, 222–27.
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fall 2012  
Dr. Chris Wixson

course calendar

**THIS SCHEDULE MAY CHANGE AT ANY TIME ACCORDING TO THE NEEDS AND DEMANDS OF THE CLASS. MAKE SURE YOU ALWAYS BRING IT WITH YOU FOR MODIFICATION.**

August 21  Introductory Comments and activities  
“Irish Theater” documentary excerpt  
Pygmalion (film screening)

28  Shaw’s Mrs. Warren’s Profession / Bring Questions and Passages  
Allett’s “Mrs. Warren’s Profession and the Politics of Prostitution” (Jstor)  
Gainor’s Shaw’s Daughters (excerpt) pp. 32-40  
Oxford DLB entry, “Early Plays” section

September 4  Shaw’s Man and Superman (skip Act Three) / Bring Questions and Passages  
Oxford DLB entry, “Marriage and Its Impact” and “The Royal Court Theatre Plays”

11  Surrealism and its Discontents / Bring Questions and Passages  
Vitric’s The Mysteries of Love  
Breton’s The Surrealist Manifesto (1924)  
Sandrow’s “Dada and Surrealism” (handout)  
Cardinal’s “The Surrealist Proposition” (handout)  
Styan’s “Dada and Surrealism in France” (handout)  
Apollinaire’s Prologue to “The Breasts of Tiresias” (handout)  
Ideas to Consider (see below)  
Bunuel’s “Un Chien Andalou” (1929) will be screened in class  
First Short Critical Paper DUE BY MIDNIGHT THURSDAY, 9/13

“The unconscious self is the true genius.” ‘Maxims for Revolutionists’, Man and Superman

18  Shaw’s Misalliance / Bring Questions and Passages  
Beer’s “The Island and the Aeroplane” (handout)  
John Mills, Excerpt from Language and Laughter (handout)

25  Shaw’s Misalliance / Studies in Criticism / Second Short Critical Paper Due

Stafford’s “Postmodern Elements in Shaw’s Misalliance” (via Project Muse)  
Wilde’s “Shaw’s Epic Theatre” (via Project Muse)  
Everding’s “Bernard Shaw, Misalliance, and the Birth of British Aviation” (Muse)  
Rodelle Weintraub’s “Johnny’s Dream: Misalliance” and “What Makes Johnny Run?” (Muse)


**Newspapers and Trade Publications**


*Confectioners' Union*. 1910.


**Archival Sources**

Board of Trade Records (BT), Public Record Office, London.

County Councils' Association Archives, Special Collections, University of Birmingham Library, Birmingham, U.K.
<table>
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<th>Date</th>
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<td><strong>October</strong></td>
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| 2 | Dada, Futurism, Vorticism—“-ism” Presentation due  
Switsky’s “Shaw Among the Modernists”  
Stanley Weintraub’s “The Avant-Garde Shaw” |
| 9 | Shaw’s *Heartbreak House* / Bring Questions and Passages  
Morgan, *Twentieth-Century Britain* pp. 1-20  
Strindberg’s “Author’s Note to *A Dream Play*” (handout) |
| 16 | Shaw’s *Heartbreak House* / Trace a Single Character’s Movement  
Conference Paper Proposal Due |
| **November** | |
| 6 | Shaw’s *Too True to be Good* / Bring Questions and Passages  
Butler’s *Postmodernism* pp. 13-21; 44-53  
Morgan’s *Twentieth-Century Britain* pp. 13-14; 31-7  
Homi Bhabha’s “DissemiNation” |
| 13 | Shaw’s *Too True to Be Good and Heartbreak House* / Fourth Short Critical Paper Due  
Lee Miller’s photography, Salvador Dali, Rene Magritte  
Lehrer’s chapter on Cezanne  
**LONG PAPER DUE BY 5:00 PM FRIDAY 11/23** |
| **Thanksgiving Break** | |
| 27 | Shaw’s *The Millionairess*  
Stanley Weintraub’s “GBS and the Despots” *Times Literary Supplement* 7/27/2011 |
| **December** | |
| 4 | Final Short Critical Paper Due – Mini-symposium |

The Final Exam session will take place Tuesday, December 11th, 2:45-4:45 PM. In preparation for it, please revise your long paper and read the following material: Shaw’s *Shakes vs. Shav* / Barthes’ *The Death of the Author* / Shaw’s *Fanny’s First Play* Induction pp. 92-6 and Epilogue.

“As institution, the author is dead: his civil status, his biographical person have disappeared; dispossessed, they no longer exercise over his work the formidable paternity whose account literary history, teaching, and public opinion had the responsibility of establishing and renewing: but in the text, in a way, I desire the author: I need his figure (which is neither his representation nor his projection), as he needs mine.” — Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*.

“The real Shaw is the actor, the imaginary Shaw is the real one.” — GBS


Articles and Essays


Short Critical Paper Assignment Topics:

**WARNING: The intellectual pre-writing work for these assignments will be challenging and time-consuming. I provide the prompts here so that you may start early. In addition, because these are challenging, it is expected that you will be working closely with me during your writing process for each one. Also, because all but one of these assignments will form the basis of class discussion, in all fairness to every seminarian, late papers cannot be accepted.

9/11/12 Choose a word that appears somewhere in one of Shaw's plays we have read thus far (including stage directions), a word, name, or concept that meant something in England when the play was written that it doesn't exactly mean today or a word, name, or concept that is archaic and foreign to us in 2012. Appreciating the distinctiveness about what that word, name, or concept meant then, you shall argue, helps us unlock the meaning of the line in which it appears and the larger thematics of the play. It can be an obscure historical allusion or a specific requirement of set the playwright prescribes. In the past, students have written on topics as varied as Vivie Warren's bicycle (a symbol for audiences at the time of "New Woman" independence) and Shaw's use of the name "Herbert Spencer" to describe Ramsden's demeanor when grappling with Tanner. Avoid "easy" topics such as Tanner's allusion to Hamlet. Be daring in your choice. It makes a difference.

While scholarly footnotes are generally quite short (three well-developed, single-spaced paragraphs, usually running to a full page and a half), the research behind them will be substantial. As an example, in Shaw's play Getting Married, Bishop Bridgenorth is referred to by his family as "the Barmecide". The title has two possible sources, each the focus of a paragraph in your footnote. One is a Persian family of scribes and viziers (800 AD) known for their cultural patronage, tolerant religious views, and lavish expenditures on public works and palaces. The other is the dictionary definition of a Barmecide — a give of benefits that are illusory, imaginary, or disappointing — taken from the name of an Arabian Nights prince who once served a feast consisting of lavish dish-covers with nothing beneath them. In each paragraph, after succinctly providing the source definition(s), you would spend the remaining few sentences connecting the definition productively to the play.

Remember: the driving point of your three paragraphs should be to teach your reader something they didn't know and then make clear how it leads to productive interpretation of the play. You're demonstrating to them that something they thought was straightforward and uninteresting is actually full of meaning and fascinating. The research will help you to make your point, but you are responsible for making the footnote meaningful and engaging and useful to understanding the larger thematics of the play. Be well-informed and take bold intellectual risks.

9/25/12 In this 2-3 page single-spaced paper (around 1200 words), situate yourself critically in relation to three of the articles. Academic professionals often find themselves in the position of "respondent" on a conference panel. That person is given the papers presented on the panel a month or so early and asked to relate the papers together, identifying convergences and divergences, and (most importantly) synthesizing their arguments together to produce an original point. In other words, the respondent answers the question: "The arguments of all these papers taken together, so what?" So your task here is not simply to respond to each article ("I agree with...." / "I don't agree with....") but, again, to synthesize them together to help build a larger argument all your own. What larger interpretive implications do these articles have when considered together? Represent the argument of each article with precision, concision, and clarity — not only what each individually says but how each speaks to the others. You are representing a critical conversation, not a series of isolated pieces, and also situating yourself in that conversation. Please read and be prepared to discuss all of the articles, but only choose to write on one cluster of three.

10/23/12 In this 2-3 page single-spaced paper (around 1200 words), situate yourself critically in relation to three of the four articles specifically in relation to Heartbreak House. Academic professionals often find themselves in the position of "respondent" on a conference panel. That person is given the papers presented on the panel a month or so early and asked to relate the papers together, identifying convergences and divergences, and (most importantly) synthesizing their arguments together to produce an original point. In other words, the respondent answers the question: "The arguments of all these papers taken together, so what?" So your task here is not simply to respond to each article ("I agree with...." / "I don't agree with....") but, again, to synthesize them together to help build a larger
greater organization, engagement with the state, and focus on "value for money." Yet, although major institutional and social changes clearly occurred between the 1910s and the 1950s or 1960s, in certain ways consumer protectionist initiatives after the Second World War resembled those of before World War I. BAC and the aims of the 1910 exhibition were both based on a belief in the role of experts to represent and educate consumers. Reformers such as Cassal also believed in better labeling to empower consumers and in establishing an alliance with progressive manufacturers so that markets worked more efficiently. It was a perspective central to the post-1945 consumer movement, which grappled with the same mixed picture of the consumer—sometimes the rational sophisticate, able to respond to widening product information and exercise free choice, and at other times the unwitting dupe, exploited by unscrupulous traders and in need of urgent protection through state regulation of manufacture and sale—that characterized public discussion of food during the Edwardian Era.

Bibliography of Works Cited

Books
argument all your own. What larger interpretive implications do these articles have when considered together? Represent the argument of each article with precision, concision, and clarity — not only what each individually says but how each speaks to the others. You are representing a critical conversation, not a series of isolated pieces, and also situating yourself in that conversation. Please read and be prepared to discuss all of the articles, but only choose to write on one cluster of three.

11/13/12 For this session, please familiarize yourself with Dali’s and Magritte’s paintings; you might even want to research a bit as to how their work is analyzed and critically appraised. While we generally have evaluated a few of Shaw’s plays in relation to the theory and movement of Surrealism, we are going to analyze Heartbreak House and Too True to Be Good in the context of the work of specific painters. Write a two paged, single-spaced paper (around 1000 words) in which you respond to the following two prompts:

A. As we seek to interpret the plays in the contexts of these paintings (or approach Shaw’s plays as if they are paintings), how do our questions change? In other words, how do the terms and sites of our analysis change?

B. What new insights emerge about one of the plays (your choice) as a result of doing so?

12/4/12 Helen Vendler writes about poetry that “form is content-as-arranged; content is form-as-deployed,” a statement that would certainly have resonated within a number of avant-garde artistic movements in the early twentieth-century. Less has been said about the formal properties of Shaw’s later plays, except that they depart from the conventions of his early work that became reified as distinctly “Shavian.” In a 2-3 page single-spaced essay (around 1200 words), choose either Misalliance, Heartbreak House, or Too True to Be Good and demonstrate how it supports Vendler’s claim. Integrate two scholarly sources into your commentary and demonstrate the way in which your argument is in conversation with them.

Ideas to consider:

Preface to The Breasts of Tiresias by Guillaume Appollinaire (1903)

In order to attempt, if not a renovation of the theatre, at least an original effort, I thought it necessary to come back to nature itself, but without copying it photographically. When man wanted to imitate walking he created the wheel, which does not resemble a leg. In the same way he has created surrealism unconsciously. . . . After all, the stage is no more the life it represents than the wheel is a leg."

“The Surrealist Revolution” by J.A. Boiffard, P. Eluard, and R. Vitrac (1924)

“Revolution . . . Revolution . . . Realism is the pruning of trees, surrealism is the pruning of life.”

“The idea of movement is above all an inert idea.”

“Surrealism opens the doors of dream to everyone for whom the night is miserly. Surrealism is the crossroads of the enchantments of sleep, alcohol, tobacco, ether, opium, cocaine, morphine; but it is also the breaker of chains. We do not sleep, we do not drink, we do not smoke, we do not sniff, we do not puncture ourselves: we dream, and the speed of the lamps’ needles introduces to our minds the marvelous deflowered sponge of gold.”

“Every discovery changes nature, the destination of an object or a phenomenon constitutes a surrealist deed.”
ensure Britain’s food supplies emphasized the depth of official commitment to the operation of the free market. By 1916 shortages and rising prices triggered a popular unrest that the new Ministry of Food channeled through the formation of a Consumer Council. The focus on high prices reflected the persistent “cheap food” ideology, though Matthew Hilton has emphasized the developing radicalism of the Consumer Council and working-class challenges to the established economic and political regimes by 1920. The food reform movement shifted its focus away from fraudulent adulteration and toward health and nutritional aspects of food safety, though the debates about food standards in the 1930s were reminiscent of prewar discussions.

Throughout the interwar period, food prices remained politically contentious, with the Linlithgow Commission reporting on prices of agricultural produce in 1924 and then a Royal Commission investigating prices and profit margins in the food trades. The latter proposed a Food Council, established in 1925, that investigated supply, prices, and food quality. There was more emphasis on consumer representation, but a change of direction occurred in 1933 with the restructuring of the Food Council as the Consumers' Committee under the Agricultural Marketing Acts. In this guise, consumer representation was a tactical concession within schemes designed to raise producers' incomes. Christopher Beauchamp argues, however, that another legacy of the 1930s was the growth of new ideas about planning and consumer protection, perhaps best exemplified in this context by the establishment in 1931 of Political and Economic Planning, from which the modern-day Consumers' Association later emerged.

During the 1940s and 1950s, rationing made food a central and highly contentious political issue. The wider consumer movement was refashioned as a more narrowly technical adjunct of business-state relations, in which consumer experts—predominantly male—and business representatives displaced the earlier traditions constructed around radicalism and the female consumer. Yiannis Gabriel and Tim Lang emphasize the post-1945 consumer movement's