

Department of English & Writing Studies
Theatre Studies Program



TORONTO CULTURE AND PERFORMANCE
Theatre 3581F / English 3581F / ArtHum 3393F
Fall 2023

Course Description

Welcome to Toronto Culture and Performance! This semester in this open and welcoming class, we'll go see Toronto theatre productions, watch in class screenings of digital Toronto theatre productions, explore the history of representation on Toronto stages, and analyze the elements of the production as a class.

This course explores concepts of interculturalism and performance in Toronto theatre's scene. Starting in the 1970s, Toronto's theatre scene has been deeply invested in questions of Canadian identity. These representations have shifted and changed over time in meaningful ways. We will study key players and places in Toronto's theatre scene today in order to discover who or what is Toronto and Canada more broadly?

Driving questions for the class include: Whose stories are told on Toronto stages? Whose stories are left out? How has the Toronto theatre scene changed since the 1970s and why? What is the value of focusing on stories by and about specific communities? What does the overall theatre landscape in the city tell us about Toronto today? How did key theaters develop and evolve their mandates over time? How do Toronto theatres work as businesses? What is their funding model? Does this model affect the work in production? What relationships to nationalism and identity exist in Toronto theatre in different contexts? How does land, place, and space also inform the Toronto theatre ecology? How are communities in conversation with each other through theatre on Toronto stages?

Introductory weeks we will introduce concepts interculturalism and explore a number of Toronto theatre institution histories of representation since the 1970s until today. As a class, we will also apply feminist and decolonial perspectives to the Toronto theatre examined.

In addition to class discussions, we will go see Toronto theatre and watch in class screenings as well. Throughout the semester as a group we will watch live plays including *work.txt* by Nathan Ellis at The Theatre Centre, Nikki Shaffeeullah's *A Poem for Rabia* at the Tarragon Theatre, and *Bad Roads* by Natal'ya Vorozhbit at Crow's Theatre. The in class screenings include *White Girls in Moccasins* by Yolanda Bonnell and *Prince Hamlet* adapted and directed by Ravi Jain.

Objectives:

By the end of the course, successful students will be able to:

- Apply critical theoretical frameworks (intercultural, feminist theories, and decolonial theories) to theatre histories and theatrical outputs
- Critically watch and engage with aspects of production of theatre performance in a variety of contexts
- Examine performance review formatting including long form reviews and in various contemporary electronic formats
- Research, critically examine, and write analytically about culture and performance in Toronto
- Vision, develop, workshop, write, and present an academic and/or creative project throughout the semester
- Debate and revise interpretations of ideas/texts/histories in dialogue with other students in class with a high degree of professionalism
- Reflect on personal understanding of core class concepts, creative engagement, and other progress throughout the semester

Course Materials

Texts/video/audio will be available through the library’s online resources or open source online. No book purchases are required. Instead, students will have theatre tickets to purchase. More details will be provided in class.

Methods of Evaluation

The grade for the course will be arrived at as follows:

Critical Performance Reflections (3 at 5% each and 1 at 10%)	25%
Final Project In-Class Workshopping	10%
Final Project (Written Version)	25%
Final Project Sharing (Presentation)	10%
Semester Journal / Commonplace Book (Midterm 10%, Final 10%)	20%
Class Participation	10%

Note: Each assignment has a full description and a marking rubric available on OWL with full details about evaluation.

Students are fully responsible for looking at and being familiar with the information posted on the department website at <https://www.uwo.ca/english/undergraduate/Student%20Information.html>

Attendance

Attendance is mandatory in all classes and tutorials. In cases of excessive absenteeism (e.g. more than 9 unexcused hours for a half course, 18 for a full course), which are not accounted for by either academic consideration or accommodation, students may be debarred from taking the final examination, and will receive an official warning to this effect by or before the course drop date (see Senate policy). In classes with or without final exams, students who do not attend class will receive 0% for course participation grades. Unless other policies dictate a different set of penalties in specific English and Writing Studies programs, this will apply to all department program.

Student Absences

If you are unable to meet a course requirement due to illness or other serious circumstances, please follow the procedures below.

Assessments worth less than 10% of the overall course grade:

Please contact the instructor directly via email as soon as possible (see OWL course site) with as much detail about why you cannot meet the assignment expectations including medical notes or other documentation if available.

Assessments worth 10% or more of the overall course grade:

For work totalling 10% or more of the final course grade, you must provide valid medical or supporting documentation to the Academic Counselling Office of your Faculty of Registration as soon as possible. For further information, please consult the University's medical illness policy at https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf

The Student Medical Certificate is available at

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf

Contingency plan for an in-person class pivoting to 100% online learning

In the event of a COVID-19 resurgence during the course that necessitates the course delivery moving away from face-to-face interaction, affected course content will be delivered entirely online, either synchronously (i.e., at the times indicated in the timetable) or asynchronously (e.g., posted on OWL for students to view at their convenience). The grading scheme will not change. Any remaining assessments will also be conducted online as determined by the course instructor.

Note From Instructor:

While I'm very hopeful we'll be able to spend the entire semester in person together, it is very possible that things may need to change throughout the semester. In setting up this course, I have made it as barrier free as possible including having all required reading available online. It's important that everyone in the class can speak freely; therefore, we will not record or live stream classes as a general rule. If you do require access to class from home, please contact me to discuss options. Please feel free to reach out at any point throughout the semester with questions or just to check in.

Accommodation and Accessibility

Religious Accommodation

When a course requirement conflicts with a religious holiday that requires an absence from the University or prohibits certain activities, students should request accommodation for their absence in writing at least two weeks prior to the holiday to the course instructor and/or the Academic Counselling office of their Faculty of Registration. Please consult University's list of recognized religious holidays (updated annually) at

<https://multiculturalcalendar.com/ecal/index.php?s=c-univwo>

Accommodation Policies

Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact Accessible Education, which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive testing. The policy on Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities can be found at: https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/Academic%20Accommodation_disabilities.pdf

Academic Policies

The website for Registrarial Services is <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>

In accordance with policy, https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/policies_procedures/section1/mapp113.pdf the centrally administered e-mail account provided to students will be considered the individual's official university e-mail address. It is the responsibility of the account holder to ensure that e-mail received from the University at their official university address is attended to in a timely manner.

Academic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site: http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf.

Plagiarism:

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea or passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence.

Plagiarism Checking:

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com <http://www.turnitin.com>.

All instances of plagiarism will be reported to the Chair of Undergraduate Studies. Proven cases of plagiarism will result in a grade of zero for the assignment. Subsequent offences will result in failure for the course.

Support Services

Academic Counselling

Your Home Faculty's Academic Counselling or Academic Advising Office will support or refer whenever you have an issue that is affecting your studies, including information on adding/dropping courses, academic considerations for absences, appeals, exam conflicts, and many other academic related matters. Do not hesitate to reach out to them if you are struggling and unsure where to go for help. Contact info for all Faculties is here: https://registrar.uwo.ca/faculty_academic_counselling.html

Mental Health Support

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western (<https://uwo.ca/health/>) for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Gender-based and sexual violence

Western is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence and providing compassionate support to anyone who has gone through these traumatic events. If you have experienced sexual or gender-based violence (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at https://www.uwo.ca/health/student_support/survivor_support/get-help.html

To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca.

Accessible Education

Please contact the course instructor if you require lecture or printed material in an alternate format or if any other arrangements can make this course more accessible to you. You may also wish to contact Accessible Education at http://academicsupport.uwo.ca/accessible_education/index.html if you have any questions regarding accommodations.

Learning Development and Success

Counsellors at the Learning Development and Success Centre (<https://learning.uwo.ca>) are ready to help you improve your learning skills. They offer presentations on strategies for improving time management, multiple-choice exam preparation/writing, textbook reading, and more. Individual support is offered throughout the Fall/Winter terms in the drop-in Learning Help Centre, and year-round through individual counselling.

Digital Student Experience

Western University is committed to a thriving campus as we deliver our courses in the mixed model of both virtual and face-to-face formats. We encourage you to check out the Digital Student Experience website to manage your academics and well-being: <https://www.uwo.ca/se/digital/>

USC

Additional student-run support services are offered by the USC, <https://westernusc.ca/services/>

Timetable

Please see OWL for the most up to date information including links to required and suggested readings, watching, and listening.

- WEEK 1: Thursday, September 7th**
Introductions, Land Acknowledgement, Class Expectations, Course Outline, Course Central Questions, Discuss Journal/Common Place Book Expectations
- WEEK 2: Thursday, September 14th**
Setting the City Stage, Indigenous Unsettling, Theatre and Nationalism, Re-Introductions, Review Schedule, Discuss Final Assignment Expectations
- REQUIRED READING / WATCHING:
- (1) Carter, Jill, "[Written in Land](#)" *Knowledge Café* (YouTube Video)
 - (2) Wallace, Robert., "[Growing Pains: Toronto Theatre in the 1970s](#)" *Contemporary Dramatists and the Art of Theatre*, Canadian literature, 1980, Vol.85 (85), p.71
To access the article click on download full issue
- WEEK 3: Thursday, September 21st**
Toronto, Theatre, & Interculturalism, The Theatre Centre, Discuss Critical Performance Reflections
- REQUIRED READING:
- (1) Harvie, Jenn., "[Introduction](#)" *Theatre and the City*, 2009
 - (2) Knowles, Ric., "Part One: Contexts" *Performing the Intercultural City*, 2011 (available on OWL)
- WEEK 4: Thursday, September 28th**
SPECIAL EVENT: Trip to Toronto to see [work.txt](#) at the Theatre Centre!
Bus leaves Western at 4:30pm. More details provided in class.
- OPTIONAL READING:
- (1) Ellis, Nathan., [work.txt](#) (play available to buy online)
- WEEK 5: Tuesday, October 3rd**
DUE: Critical Performance Reflection 1 on *work.txt* (5%)
(Three of four top grades counted)
- Thursday, October 5th**
Unpack *work.txt*, Digital Theatre, Interactive Theatre, Theatre Centre
- REQUIRED READING:
- (1) Friedgen, Kristina., [Work.Txt by Nathan Ellis and Emily Davis, and: Phase One: The Underbrush by New Phase Collective \(review\)](#)

WEEK 6: Thursday, October 12th

IN-CLASS SCREENING: *White Girls in Moccasins* by Yolanda Bonnell

OPTIONAL READING:

(1) Bonnell, Yolanda., [White Girls in Moccasins](#) (available to buy online)

WEEK 7: Tuesday, October 17th

DUE: Critical Performance Reflection 2 on *This is How We Got Here* (5%)
(Three of four top grades counted)

Thursday, October 19th

SPECIAL EVENT: Trip to Toronto to see *A Poem for Rabia* at the Tarragon Theatre

Bus leaves Western at 4:30pm. More details provided in class.

OPTIONAL READING:

(2) Shaffeeullah, Nikki., [A Poem for Rabia](#) (available to buy online)

WEEK 8: Tuesday, October 25th

DUE: Critical Performance Reflection 3 on *A Poem for Rabia* (5%)
(Three of four top grades counted)

Thursday, October 26th

Unpack *A Poem for Rabia*, Tarragon Theatre, Playwright Circles, Topic Selection for Final Assignment

Friday, October 27th

DUE: Journal / Commonplace Book Submission #1 (10%)

FALL BREAK: Oct 30th to November 3rd

Fall Break! No Class!

WEEK 9: Thursday, November 9th

Essay Writing, Playwrighting, Final Assignment Workshopping, Presentation Skills

OPTIONAL READING FOR ESSAY:

(1) Fisher, Mark., [How to Write About Theatre](#)

(2) Fortier, Mark., (2014). [Theory/theatre : an introduction](#). Routledge.

(3) [OWL Purdue MLA Guide](#)

(4) [McGraw-Hill's Concise Guide to Writing Research Papers](#) by Carol Ellison

OPTIONAL READING FOR PRESENTATION:

(1) Weiss, Michael "[Chapter 7: How](#)" from [Presentation skills: educate, inspire and engage your audience](#)

OPTIONAL READING FOR PLAY:

- (1) [36 Assumptions About Writing Plays](#) by Jose Rivera
- (2) [Katori Hall on Hoodoo Love](#)
- (3) [The Art of Dramatic Writing by Egri Lajos](#)
- (4) ["Dramaturgy and New Play Development"](#) found in The Director's Lab by Andrea Romaldi
- (5) [Inspire Me: Week 1 Video, Playwrights Foundation](#)
- (6) [The Here And Now by Anton Piatigorsky](#)
- (7) [The emotional arcs of stories are dominated by six basic shapes - University of Vermont Study](#)

WEEK 10: Thursday, November 16th

IN CLASS SCREENING: *Prince Hamlet* adapted and directed by Ravi Jain
In-Class Workshopping Final Assignments

WEEK 11: Tuesday, November 21st

DUE: Critical Performance Reflection 4 on *Prince Hamlet* (5%)
(Three of four top grades counted)

Thursday, November 23rd

SPECIAL EVENT: Trip to Toronto to see *Bad Roads* at Crows Theatre
Bus leaves Western at 4:30pm. More details provided in class.

WEEK 12: Tuesday, November 28th

DUE: Critical Performance Reflection 5 on *Bad Roads* (10%)

Thursday, November 30th

Final Assignment Project Sharing (10%)

WEEK 13: Thursday, December 7th

Final Assignment Project Sharing (10%)
DUE: Final Assignment (25%)

Friday, December 8th

DUE: Second Submission Journal (10%)