

Department of English & Writing Studies
Theatre Studies Program

Theatre Studies 2201F (001)
Understanding Performance
Fall 2023

Prerequisites: At least 60% in 1.0 of any 1000-level or above “E” or combination of two 1000-level or above “F/G” courses from any department in the following Faculties: Arts and Humanities, School of Humanities (Brescia), Information and Media Studies (FIMS), or Music; or from any of the following additional Departments: Anthropology, English (King’s), English and Cultural Studies (Huron), History (Main and Affiliates), Philosophy (Affiliates), Political Science (Main and Affiliates), the Religious Studies (Affiliates), or permission of the Department.

Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

Land Acknowledgement:

Western University is situated on the traditional territories of the Anishinaabeg, Haudenosaunee, Lunaapeewak and Attawandaron peoples, who have longstanding relationships to the land and region of southwestern Ontario and the City of London. The local First Nation communities of this area include Chippewas of the Thames First Nation, Oneida Nation of the Thames, and Munsee Delaware Nation. In the region, there are eleven First Nation communities and a growing Indigenous urban population. Western values the significant historical and contemporary contributions of local and regional First Nations and all of the Original peoples of Turtle Island (North America).

Course Description

This course will equip students with the primary tools necessary to conduct basic performance analysis. From costumes to lighting and sound effects to textual alterations, students will learn to analyze a production while exploring the social, political, and aesthetic meanings of the required texts. Much of our work will be pursued through hands-on engagement with live and archived theatre.

Objectives:

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

- Recognize and analyze the component parts of live or archived performance;
- Use specialized terminology relevant to the study of performance;
- Engage with scripts as blueprints for performance and theorize that interpretive strategy;
- Think critically about the reception of performance;
- Locate and search library databases to find critical and theoretical analyses relevant to a topic of study;
- Write an essay about a piece of theatre that contains an effective thesis.

Course Materials (all texts are required)

We will study the following plays on the course. The asterisked ones we'll be seeing live and the others will be viewed recorded as live. Students will be asked to purchase tickets to the live shows:

- *Shakespeare, *Richard II* (Stratford Festival)
- *Ins Choi, *Kim's Convenience* (Grand Theatre)
- Inua Ellams, *Barbershop Chronicles*
- Arthur Miller, *A View from the Bridge*
- *Jonathan Larson, *Rent* (Stratford Festival)
- *Natal'ya Vorozhbit, *Bad Roads* (Crow's Theatre)

Texts/Scripts (all texts are required and available for purchase at the Bookstore)

Shakespeare, *Richard II*
Ins Choi, *Kim's Convenience*
Sarah Kane, *Cleansed*
Arthur Miller, *A View from the Bridge*

Methods of Evaluation

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

- Journal (ongoing through term) – 15%
- 2000-word essay – 20%
- Podcast (8-10 minutes, group project) – 15%
- Scene preparation – 20%
- Director's Notebook (includes 1,000-word essay) – 20%
- Participation (class quizzes are rolled into grade) – 10%

Students are fully responsible for looking at and being familiar with the information posted on the department website.

Scene Preparations

As an entry into actorly reading, each student participates in two acted scene preparations. Presenting a scene involves, simply, rehearsing your scene regularly and frequently, performing that scene for the class, and writing a follow-up report (taking into account classroom feedback). That report should describe, with specific textual illustration, what you learned about the play from rehearsing and acting the scene, and from the discussion during its "stage life". You might, for instance, address some of the following kinds of questions:

1. What did you learn about the character you played, and about her/his place in the scene and the play?
2. What did you learn about the function(s) of your scene in the play?
3. What interpretative obligations did the text impose?
4. What important performance options were available? What choices did you make, and what led you to make them?
5. What was the interpretative result? What readings of character, action, and so on were enabled (or disabled) by your choices?

Try to keep careful track of the practical / interpretative decisions you and your group take, particularly where the script may seem to invite choosing among a number of possibilities. What alternatives presented themselves? Which did you choose? Why? How did your choice fine-tune the meaning of the action or of the character? What kind of reading did you present? You might find it very helpful, here, to keep a journal of your rehearsal process.

For somewhat obvious reasons, do not try to finalize your report until after you have performed and discussed your scene, but do prepare yourself to complete it immediately after your in-class presentation. The report is due, without fail, two days after your presentation. You need to complete it while the experience is fresh in your mind, and I need to read it while it is fresh in mine.

Director's Notebook

This assessment pushes further your ability to imagine and analyse these plays as texts for performance. From any of the plays on the syllabus, choose a scene (no more than 200 lines from the Shakespeare play) on which to base your Director's Notebook. Think about how you would stage this scene if you were directing it. Start this project as soon as possible and update your ideas as you go along with notes from class, reflections on current affairs or modern political debates that resonate with the scene you've chosen, comments about past productions that incorporate similar moments, ideas that arise in class that you could adapt for your own purposes, etc.

Your project will be in three parts, with an optional fourth part:

Photocopy or scan the section of text you're presenting, and then prepare a set of marginal directorial annotations for it, keyed to the text by numbers. Think about such features as lighting, set changes, music cues, props, movement by actors across or around the stage, significant (not incidental) gestures. You should feel free to cut or rearrange the text, even add lines to it.

Supplement this promptbook with a diagram of the stage on which you imagine your production being performed (you can photocopy a plan of an existing stage, or design your own). Your staging must not ignore, and ideally should make creative use of, the constraints and opportunities imposed by the space.

Write a 1,000 word essay that briefly describes and then analyses your production choices. Begin by situating your staging of this scene in terms of the scene's relation to the rest of the production. What is your directorial "take" on the play? What are the central themes, images, and/or concepts that this staging is designed to explore? Then describe the particular staging choices you're introducing to this passage, and analyse how they contribute to the overall production goals. Where you make use of secondary sources, document your research thoroughly.

OPTIONAL: Feel free to add other materials such as photographs, illustrations of props, an illustration of the set (if there is one), costume sketches and swatches of material, music suggestions, dance choreography, a diary of ideas tracking your work in progress, and/or anything else that seems relevant to the impact of your staging in performance.

Your Director's Notebook will be assessed according to the following criteria:

The extent to which your production choices are appropriate to and make use of the specific theatrical space in which you propose to stage the imagined production;

The extent to which your production choices offer an insightful interpretive reading of the passage, especially in relation to the rest of the play;

The extent to which your thinking about the staging you devise is in dialogue with past productions and/or with scholarly examinations of the play;

The creativity of your production choices;

An ability to articulate effectively the interpretive significances of the choices you make, to document your secondary reading in a scholarly manner, and to present your argument without errors of presentation.

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 programs.

Intellectual Property/Copyright

All instructor-written materials (e.g. PowerPoints, lecture notes, oral lectures) for this course are created solely for students' personal use within the course, and remain the instructor's intellectual property. Further reproduction, fixation, distribution, transmission, dissemination, communication, or any other uses, without securing the consent of the copyright owner (the course instructor) may be an infringement of copyright. You may not distribute, email, or otherwise communicate these materials to any other person. These limitations extend to recording, photographing, or sharing lectures (online or in-person) and lecture material without permission. Posting the instructor's content from this course to online course sharing sites like OneClass or Course Hero without permission is both an infringement of intellectual property law and a violation of academic integrity guidelines. The instructor will pass these cases on to the Western University Ombudsperson or their Department Chair as appropriate.

Additional Information

Late Paper Policy:

If you submit a paper after the due date, the paper will be counted as late. The grade will be reduced by a penalty of two marks (2%) for each calendar day that it is late.

Extensions will only be considered if supported by a request for accommodation sent by students' Academic Counsellors in their home faculty (see below, "Accommodation").

Accommodation Policies

Students with disabilities work with Accessible Education (formerly SSD) which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive testing. The accommodation policy can be found here: [Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities](#).

Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments worth (either alone or in combination) 10% or more of their final grade must apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Academic accommodation cannot be granted by the instructor or department.

Documentation shall be submitted, as soon as possible, to the Office of the Dean of the student's Faculty of registration, together with a request for relief specifying the nature of the accommodation being requested. The Student Medical Certificate (SMC) can be found at https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf.

The full policy is set out here:

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

Religious Accommodation:

Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays, and should give reasonable notice in writing, prior to the holiday, to the Instructor and an Academic Counsellor if their course requirements will be affected by a religious observance. Additional information is given in the [Western Multicultural Calendar](#).

Academic Integrity Tutorial

All students are required to enroll in and complete the Centre for Teaching and Learning's Academic Integrity Tutorial. To access the tutorial, please use the link provided in the Resource tab in the course OWL site. Once the tutorial has been completed, you will receive a downloadable certificate. You must upload the certificate and submit it through the course Assignments tab in order to complete this assignment. The tutorial must be completed by Friday in the second week of term. This tutorial is mandatory in order for you to complete and pass the course. If you have completed the tutorial already for another course, you may upload the same certificate for this course; you do not need to repeat the tutorial.

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 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

Registrarial Services <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>

Student Support Services <https://student.uwo.ca/psp/heprdweb/?cmd=login>

Services provided by the USC <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

Academic Support & Engagement <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/>

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to MentalHealth@Western: <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Timetable

11 Introduction and *Richard II*

13 *Richard II*

18 *Richard II* – Quiz

20 *Richard II* – Group work on Scene preparation

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 8pm – STRATFORD THEATRE TRIP – *RICHARD II*

25 Post-performance discussion. Group work on Scene preparation.

27 *Rent*

OCTOBER

2 *Rent*

4 STRATFORD THEATRE TRIP – *RENT*

9 THANKSGIVING MONDAY – NO CLASS

11 Post-performance discussion

16 *Kim's Convenience* – Quiz.

October 16 – Podcast due (roundtable review of either *Richard II* or *Rent*)

18 *Kim's Convenience*

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 18, 7:30pm – GRAND THEATRE TRIP – *KIM'S CONVENIENCE*

23 Post-performance discussion. *A View from the Bridge*

25 *A View from the Bridge* – Quiz

OCTOBER 30-NOVEMBER 5 – READING WEEK

NOVEMBER

6 *A View from the Bridge*

8 *A View from the Bridge* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AYij1xV0Mjo>

13 SCENE PRESENTATIONS

15 SCENE PRESENTATIONS

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 2pm – CROW'S THEATRE – *BAD ROADS*

20 Post-performance discussion (*Bad Roads* and Vorozhbit as “Ukrainian Sarah Kane” – extracts from *Cleansed*. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O7Z_5JhnkTA). Director's Notebook workshop

22 Essay writing skills.

November 24 – Director's Notebook due

27 *Barbershop Chronicles* – Quiz

29 *Barbershop Chronicles*

DECEMBER

4 *Barbershop Chronicles*

6 Course Reflections

December 8 – Essay due