



CIEE Global Institute – London

Course name:	British Theatre: A History
Course number:	THES 3001 LNEN
Programs offering course:	London Open Campus (Literature and Culture Track)
Language of instruction:	English
U.S. semester credits:	3
Contact hours:	45
Term:	Fall 2019

Course Description

This course offers a general introduction to British theatre history through text and performance analysis. It gives you the opportunity to see a wide canon of plays in performance and study texts and relevant secondary sources, including interviews, pictorial and photographic material, reviews and academic articles. We will study a number of British plays which are key pillars of British theatre history. By reading and analysing them in chronological order we will be able to follow developments from early medieval England to modern playwrights and their work today, tracing major developments in writing for and about theatre, and understanding how theatre making in Britain has evolved in the last seven centuries. We will discuss key dramatists, theories, and stage practice and look at other historical material such as playbills, reviews, biographies and interviews to understand theatre's socio-political impact on this country and the Commonwealth.

The other focus of this course will be on performance analysis, an aspect that is shaped and defined by the plays currently being performed on the London stages. You will see a variety of performances on the London stage with modern interpretations of traditional plays as well as newly written and devised material. We will discuss the role of theatre in today's society, its relevance and its ability to address issues such as politics, race, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, religion and class. We will also talk about the historical context and stage history of these plays. In our post-show discussions we will talk about various aspects of each performance, including set and lighting design, the use of different stage forms, acting, directing, audience participation and music.

The course will introduce you to theatre-related terminology and a wide range of materials used by theatre historians to reconstruct and reassess historical performances, such as theatre reviews, playbills, promptbooks, film and photographic material. A backstage tour of one of the London theatres will provide you with a better understanding of modern theatre practice, illustrating the history and present-day use of different theatre venues and different stage forms, as well as the work of set and costume



designers. We will visit the Theatre and Performance Galleries at the Victoria and Albert Museum for a glimpse into theatre history and to discuss their current exhibition.

Learning Objectives

At the end of this course you should:

- Demonstrate an understanding of the history and development of theatre as an art form, including various theatrical styles, dramatic genres and stage forms from the Middle Ages to the present day.
- Understand and be able to discuss different theories, concepts and motivations for theatrical performance.
- Be able to read and analyse plays with confidence and a critical attitude, paying attention to a play's socio-historical context and using relevant terminology as well as a wide range of secondary sources in your analysis.
- Know how to research, evaluate and apply relevant secondary sources (e.g. academic articles, performance reviews, theatre data bases, written / audio / video interviews, internet resources) for any of your presentations and written work.
- Understand both the creative process, e.g. acting and directing techniques, and the more practical aspects of theatre making, e.g. the structures of (non-) subsidised theatres, producing, marketing, sponsorship schemes.
- Display a basic knowledge of the professional work of literary managers, actors and directors.
- Display your ability to understand, analyse and critically discuss a theatre performance as an interpretation of a play in both its historical and current social context, assessing the meaning of theatre with its creative abilities and limitations and expressing your criticism clearly and professionally.
- Demonstrate the ability to plan, prepare, structure and present your oral and written work in an academic and professional manner.

Course Prerequisites

None required.



Methods of Instruction

The course will be highly interactive between the instructor and the students. In class we will study the history of British theatre including a collection of plays and films. Parallel to our classroom sessions we will see at least 4 theatre productions in London. We have required readings that will be assigned in advance to allow students to read, digest and prepare questions, thereby contributing to engaging and inspiring classroom discussions (see “Weekly Schedule” below).

Assessment and Final Grade

Performance Review	15%
Research exercise	20%
Final Examination	25%
Critical Essay	20%
Class Participation	20%

Course Requirements

Performance Review

You will write a 1000 word theatre reviews of a performance seen this term. The review should be done in the style of a professional theatre review for an established newspaper, like the *New York Times*, the *Guardian*, or the *London Times*. The review should be submitted electronically through Canvas.

Please note:

- It is important that you read as many reviews as possible throughout this semester. Try to get a feel for the layout, style and contents of professional reviews.
- The layout, style and content of your review should be that of a professional review, **not** a blog in first-person narration. So think of picture material, invent your own rating system, be professional and fair in your criticism and praise. **Be creative!**

Research exercise

You will be given a theatre portrait or an extract from a prompt book or a playbill. Each of these relate to the plays and themes discussed in weeks 2-3.

You should chose ONE of these and write a 1000 word piece in which you consider how you, as a researcher, can make use of the material. This exercise aims to develop your understanding of the use of resources in theatre research. More guidance will be given in class in preparation for this exercise. Although this is a reflective piece, it should still be written in

the 3rd person.

Final Exam

The exam is a combination of multiple choice questions on theatre history covered in the course lectures and 2 short essays. You will be given several questions to choose from for the 2 short essays. The exam will last 2 hours.

Please note:

- The best way to prepare for the exam is to have good text knowledge, including the texts we study for this class. A take home essay prep worksheet will be included in the work of the course. For the short essay questions, you will not be required to quote from the plays, but to have a thorough knowledge of the plays and historical information covered in the course.
- The use of texts, notes or Kindles is **not** allowed.

Critical Essay

You will write an essay critically analysing one play under study in Weeks 1-3. For this, you will receive a series of essay questions and choose one to focus your essay on. This paper needs to include secondary source material from the period of the play under scrutiny to help ground your analysis in the play's historical context. The essay should be 2000 words long and should be submitted electronically through Canvas. Structure your essay clearly and include examples to underline your arguments. Go into detail with your descriptions, analysis, ideas. Detailed and thorough work is key in this final assignment which should showcase what you have learned this term.

Class participation

As part of your work in this course, students should demonstrate learning beyond the submission of written assignments or presentations. As such, all students receive grades based upon participation.

Participation is valued as meaningful contribution in the digital and tangible classroom, utilising the resources and materials presented to students as part of the course. Students receive grades based upon their contributions both in the classroom and in the Canvas course.

Meaningful contribution requires students to be prepared, as directed by the Instructor, in advance of each class session. Students must clearly demonstrate they have engaged with the materials where directed.

This includes valued or informed engagement in, for example, small group discussions, online discussion boards, peer-to-peer feedback (after presentations), interaction with guest speakers, and attentiveness on co-curricular and outside-of-classroom activities.



Attendance Policy

Regular class attendance is required throughout the program, and all unexcused absences will result in a lower participation grade for any affected CIEE course. Due to the intensive schedules for Open Campus and Short Term programs, unexcused absences that constitute more than 10% of the total course sessions will also result in a lower final grade.

Students who transfer from one CIEE class to another during the add/drop period will not be considered absent from the first session(s) of their new class, provided they were marked present for the first session(s) of their original class. Otherwise, the absence(s) from the original class carry over to the new class and count against the grade in that class.

For CIEE classes, excessively tardy (over 15 minutes late) students must be marked absent. Attendance policies also apply to any required co-curricular class excursion or event, as well as to Internship, Service Learning, or required field placement. Students who miss class for personal travel will be marked as absent and unexcused. No make-up or re-sit opportunity will be provided.

Attendance policies also apply to any required class excursion, with the exception that some class excursions cannot accommodate any tardiness, and students risk being marked as absent if they fail to be present at the appointed time.

Unexcused absences will lead to the following penalties:

<i>Percentage of Total Course Hours Missed</i>	<i>Equivalent Number of Open Campus Semester classes</i>	<i>Minimum Penalty</i>
Up to 10%	1	No academic penalty
10 – 20%	2	Reduction of final grade
More than 20%	3 content classes, or 4 language classes	Automatic course failure, and possible expulsion

Weekly Schedule

NOTE: this schedule is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor to take advantage of current experiential learning opportunities.

Week 1

Class 1.1

**Course Orientation and Medieval English Theatre
Medieval Theatre, or Can Theatre Change Men's Lives?**

In this class we shall discuss the influence of the church, morality / miracle / mystery plays, cycle of plays (e.g. York), influence of the guilds, development from liturgy (Quem Quaeritis) to liturgical plays, pageant wagons vs scaffolds, shifts in society as brought on e.g. by the plague, allegorical characters, Passion plays (e.g. Oberammergau today). We shall focus on London's Roman amphitheatre and medieval theatre in England

Readings:

Everyman Mankind

Introductions: Performing Social Change

Week 2

Class 2.1

Shakespeare and His Contemporaries

In this class we will analyse the context around Shakespeare and other Elizabethan playwrights. We will examine the socio-political world in which the plays were created, as well as the source material, theatrical and literary tradition Shakespeare's work was created in.

Reading:

William Shakespeare, Measure for Measure

John Webster, The Duchess of Malfi

Class 2.2

Based upon the lecture presenting the context of Shakespeare's plays we shall critically discuss Shakespeare's worldview

Theatre Excursion

Tour of Shakespeare's theatres

Week 3

Class 3.1

Restoration Drama

This class will focus on the first actresses on the London Stage women on and behind the scene, technical and stylistic innovations from the court of Louis XIV, Pepys' diary, John Evelyn, royal patents, John Davenant and William Killigrew, "reusing" the tennis courts at Lincoln's Inn Field
Comedy of manners in the 18th century

Readings:

George Farquar, *The Beaux' Stratagem*
Oliver Goldsmith, *She Stoops to Conquer*

Class 3.2 In this session we will examine Restoration and 18th-century England and how it was presented in the theatre

Co-curricular: Walking Tour of the Soane Museum and Covent Garden

Assignment: Performance Review

Week 4

Class 4.1 Victorian Theatre: Between Melodrama and Social Criticism

We will analyse social realism, comedy of manners, social change and middle class morality

Readings:

Oscar Wilde, *An Ideal Husband*
George Bernard Shaw, *Mrs Warren's Profession*

Class 4.2 Closeted Secrets and National Hypocrisies: Oscar Wilde and George Bernard Shaw's Theatre of Resistance

Assignment: Critical Essay Due

Week 5

Class 5.1 Postwar Britain – After WWII

We will discuss WWII and social change, postwar British government change and its effects on the theatre including censorship and its abolition (Theatres Act 1968).

Reading:

John Osborne, *Look Back in Anger*
Shelagh Delaney: *Taste of Honey*
Caryl Churchill: *Cloud Nine*

Class 5.2 This class will focus on the 1960s: the creation of the National Theatre and the RSC's "Dirty Season". We will examine gender, postcolonialism and Caryl Churchill's *Cloud Nine*

Screening: Peter Brook, *Marat/Sade*

Assignment: Research exercise



Week 6

Class 6.1 British Theatre Today, Course Wrap-up and Final Exam

Overview of British theatre today, course wrap-up and exam prep worksheet feedback

Class 6.2 Final Exam

Course Materials

Readings

Everyman / Mankind Three Late Medieval Morality Plays: "Everyman", "Mankind" and George Farquhar. The Beaux' Stratagem Restoration Drama: An Anthology. Ed. David

John Osborne. *Look Back in Anger.* Faber and Faber, 1979. ISBN: 978-0571038480

John Webster *The Duchess of Malfi English Renaissance Drama: A Norton Anthology.* Ed.

Plays

William Shakespeare, *Measure for Measure*

George Bernard Shaw, *Mrs Warren's Profession*

John Webster, *The Duchess of Malfi*

Oscar Wilde, *An Ideal Husband*