



CIEE Global Institute – London

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| Course name: | Contemporary British Theater |
| Course number: | THES 3002 LNEN |
| Programs offering course: | London Open Campus (Literature and Culture Track) |
| Language of instruction: | English |
| U.S. Semester Credits: | 3 |
| Contact Hours: | 45 |
| Term: | Spring 2020 |

Course Description

Contemporary British theatre is famous worldwide for numerous popular and well-known works, and most notably for the London West End. From popular musicals to daring dramas, contemporary British theatre continues to develop new, innovative, and imaginative ways of stage performance. This course promotes critical engagement with a range of cultural and political issues in contemporary British theatre including: nationality, gender, race, class, aesthetics and ideology. Students will examine the works of notable and significant dramatists including: John Osborne, Harold Pinter, Edward Bond, Caryl Churchill, Mark Ravenhill and Sarah Kane. Students will visit sites throughout London that host traditional or innovative formats of theatre, particularly in London's West End.

Learning Objectives

By the end of the course students will:

- Learn the depth, and development of theater in 20th and 21st Century United Kingdom
- Be able to evaluate the connection between politics and theater in the UK
- Be able to articulate how class, race, and ethnicity have historically been represented on stage
- Develop an understanding of key debates on modernity and post-modernity in British theater
- Learn to think critically about the changing form of contemporary theater

Course Prerequisites

Participants in this course should be familiar with the key debates in drama, performance, and critical theory.

Methods of Instruction

The methodology will be based on interpretative group work in the form of discussions about the texts read and films/plays/musicals watched, and art objects or performances observed. The more theoretical parts of class sessions will sometimes consist of lectures as well. The first week of the course will serve



to establish a basic repertoire of analytical instruments – based on current cutting-edge research – with which all participants are to familiarize themselves. This repertoire may be widened as the course proceeds, for example in cases where students feel that they need additional tools to be able to analyze more adequately a certain text, performances, etc.

Assessment and Grading

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| Mid-term Exam | 25% |
| Group Presentation | 25% |
| Reflexive Paper | 30% |
| Class Participation | 20% |

Course Requirements

Mid-term Exam

This exam will comprise of 5 essay questions, for which students will be obliged to complete two answers at 3 pages length for each.

Group Presentation

Group presentations of 20 minutes will involve between 3 and 5 students (dependent on class size) and will require students to address one of the major themes or topics of the course, using supporting evidence from readings and site visits, as well as their own reflexive observations on theatre in London. Students can, if preferred and agreed by lecturer and the group, use creative and dynamic performance to elucidate their argument. A small report (3-4 pages) must accompany the presentation.

Reflexive Paper

Based upon performances and visits to cultural events (which will be obligatory for all participants), the 7 page reflexive paper will require demonstrating reactions to, understanding, and interpreting the various texts that we encounter will be the central focus of the class in the context of these events. Students will be asked to take notes during visits or performances.

Participation

Participation is valued as meaningful contribution in the digital and tangible classroom, utilizing the resources and materials presented to students as part of the course. Meaningful contribution requires students to be prepared in advance of each class session and to have regular attendance. Students must clearly demonstrate they have engaged with the materials as directed, for example, through classroom 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 will result in a written warning.

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, including unforeseen delays that arise as a result of 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> |
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| Up to 10% | 1 content classes, or up to 2 language classes | Participation graded as per class requirements |
| 10 – 20% | 2 content classes, or 3-4 language classes | Participation graded as per class requirements; written warning |
| More than 20% | 3 content classes, or 5 language classes | Automatic course failure , and possible expulsion |

Weekly Schedule



Week 1 Introduction: 20th British Theater – an Overview

This week's site visits and lectures provide an overview of contemporary British Theatre, introducing key terms, periods, debates, and examples of dramas. Small samples of stage performances will be played during class for small groups to deconstruct and evaluate as a learning exercise.

Readings: Cochrane, 2014, chapters 1, 5, and 8

Site visit: Theatre and Performance Collection, Victoria and Albert Museum

Week 2 Professional theater and Community Theater

This week's topics include a comprehensive overview of the community field in British theatre, and contrast its progress with that of professional theater. It will also evaluate case studies where the two areas merge to support and promote drama in British culture and society.

Readings: Cochrane, 2014, chapters 3, 4, 6, and 7.

Site visit: Whitelodge Museum and Ballet Centre

Week 3 The Home and Family on Stage

British family life has changed dramatically since the second World War; so too have representations of family on stage. This week explores case studies and scripts of contemporary and classical plays in Britain, evaluating how home and family is represented visually and in language (both tone and text). Contrasting clips highlight various approaches to representing the family on stage will be presented during class for small groups to discuss.

Readings: Grene, 2014, chapters 1, 5, 7, and 9

Field trip: London's West End theater district walking tour

Mid-Term Exam



Week 4 Key Debates in Contemporary British Theater

Art, performance, language, tone, and imagery are deconstructed in post-modern thinking as various forms of interpretive text. This week we critically evaluate the key debates in contemporary British theater through the lens of Derrida and hermeneutics.

Readings: Reballato, 2013; Megson, 2013; Freshwater, 2013; Fragkou and Goddard, 2013.

Performance: House of Wolf

Week 5 Ethics in post-1989 British Theater

With the significant Thatcher era coming to a close, the Cold War ending, and Britain on the precipice of the last decade on the 20th Century, this week explores the ethics of representation and performance on the British stage throughout this era of extensive social and cultural change.

Readings: Aragay, 2014; Excoda, 2014, Scolnicov, 2014; Taylor-Batty, 2014.

Group presentations due

Week 6 Performing Early Modern Drama Today

Although London is a vibrant bastion of contemporary and groundbreaking theater, the classics and dramas from early modern Britain are still exceptionally popular (and required for study in much of the British national curriculum). This week we examine the significance of performing early modern drama and evaluate case studies and performances of Shakespearean plays as both art and tourism.

Readings: Karim-Cooper, 2012; Heijes, 2012; Bessell, 2012

Site Visit: Shakespeare's Globe Theatre

Final reflexive paper due

Readings

Claire Cochrane. 2014. *Twentieth-Century British Theatre*. Cambridge.

Nicholas Grene. 2014. *Home on the Stage: Domestic Spaces in Modern Drama*.

Dan Reballato. 2013. *Exit the Author*, in Vicky Angelaki (editor) *Contemporary British Theatre: breaking new ground*

Chris Megson. 2013. 'And I was Struck Still By Time': contemporary British theatre and the metaphysical imagination, in Vicky Angelaki (editor) *Contemporary British Theatre: breaking new ground*

Marissia Fragkou and Lynette Goddard. 2013. *Acting In/Action: staging human rights in Debbie Tucker Green's Royal Court plays*, in Vicky Angelaki (editor) *Contemporary British Theatre: breaking new ground*

Helen Freshwater. 2013. *Children and the Limites of Representation in the work of Tim Crouch*, in Vicky Angelaki (editor) *Contemporary British Theatre: breaking new ground*

Mireia Aragay. 2014. *To Begin to Speculate: theatre studies, ethics and spectatorship*, in Aragay and Monforte (editors) *Ethical Speculations in Contemporary British Theatre*

Clara Excodá. 2014. *Violence, Testimony and Ethics in Martin Crimp's The Country and The City*, in Aragay and Monforte (editors) *Ethical Speculations in Contemporary British Theatre*

Hanna Scolnicov. 2014. *How to Mourn: Kane, Pinter and theatre as monument to loss in the 1990s*, in Aragay and Monforte (editors) *Ethical Speculations in Contemporary British Theatre*

Karim-Cooper. 2012. *The Performance of Early Modern Drama at Shakespeare's Globe*, in Aebischer and Prince (editors) *Performing Early Modern Drama Today*

Coen Heijes. 2012. *Shakespeare's Contemporaries at the Royal Shakespeare Company*, in Aebischer and Prince (editors) *Performing Early Modern Drama Today*

Jacquelyn Bessell. 2012. *The Actor's Renaissance Season at the Blackfriars Playhouse*, in Aebischer and Prince (editors) *Performing Early Modern Drama Today*