CIEE London, England

Course title: Contemporary British Theatre
Course code: THES 3002 LNEN
Programs offering course: Semester Global Internship, London Open Campus Block
Open Campus Track: Language, Literature, and Culture
Language of instruction: English
U.S. semester credits: 3
Contact hours: 45
Term: Spring Block I 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 completing this course, students will:

- Analyse the depth, and development of theater in 20th and 21st Century United Kingdom
- Deconstruct the connection between politics and theater in the UK
- Critique and evaluate 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
• Compare and contrast the changing forms of contemporary theater

Course Prerequisites

At least one literature, critical theory, or performance course.

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 Final Grade

1. Performance Review 15%
2. Research exercise 20%
3. Final Exam 25%
4. Critical Essay 20%
5. Class Participation 20%
   TOTAL 100%

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 prep 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

Regular class attendance is required throughout the program, and all 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, 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 any required field placement. Students may not miss placement/work hours at an internship or service learning site unless approved in advance by the Academic Director and placement supervisor. All students must complete all of the requisite 100 minimum work hours on site at the internship or service learning placement to be eligible for academic credit.

Students who miss class for personal travel, including unforeseen delays that arise as a result of personal travel, will be marked as absent. 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.

Absences for classes will lead to the following penalties:
N.B. Course schedule is subject to change due to study tours, excursions, or local holidays. Final schedules will be included in the final syllabus provided to students on site.

**Weekly Schedule**

**Week 1**

**Class: 1.1 Course Orientation and Medieval English Theatre**

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.

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<tr>
<th>Percentage of Total Course Hours Missed</th>
<th>Minimum Penalty</th>
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<tr>
<td>Up to 10%</td>
<td>Participation graded as per class requirements</td>
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<td>10 – 20%</td>
<td>Participation graded as per class requirements; 3% grade penalty &amp; written warning</td>
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<tr>
<td>More than 20%</td>
<td>Automatic course failure, and possible expulsion</td>
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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

Closed 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

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/Ation: 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


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

