

TORONTO: Culture and Performance
(AKA Theatre 3581F / English 3581F / ArtHum 3393 F)
Autumn 2018
Professor Kim Solga, TA Courtney Church
TUESDAYS 6:30-9:30pm, Talbot College 204

What are we doing, anyway?

What's a "global city"? Is Toronto one? How does the theatre that appears on Toronto's stages contribute to, or maybe even *contest*, Toronto's "global city" aspirations?

What's an "intercultural city"? Is Toronto one? How do the performing arts help to shape the intercultural structures that now identify Toronto to Torontonians, and to the world? For whom are those structures liberating – and whom do those structures still leave behind?

What does economics have to do with theatre? Is theatre a viable business? How and when and why? What does theatre economics have to do with other kinds of urban economics – like, say, real estate?

What about memory? How does the theatre shape our memories (personal, communal, historical) of the city and its inhabitants? What about space? How does theatre *literally* help to "make" (that is, to shape and contour) a city like Toronto? What about labour? Who works in the creative economy in Toronto, what do they do, and how is their work valued (or not)?

All these questions and more we will touch on as we examine Toronto's theatre "ecology" circa autumn 2018. We will visit the city five times, to see five very different shows. We will talk to actors and directors and administrators and reviewers. We will learn about how to talk about urban theatre in a nuanced and sophisticated way. We will learn to write a good theatre review. And we'll explore questions that matter personally to each one of us.

Welcome to the culture and performance of Toronto.

When/Where are we?

We meet Tuesdays from 6:30pm to 9:30pm in Talbot College 204. HOWEVER.

On five Tuesdays – 18 September; 2 October; 16 October; 30 October; 20 November – we will be seeing theatre in Toronto during class time. **On those days, we will meet at the traffic circle in front of Talbot College at 4pm to board the bus.** We'll be back between 12am and 1am, depending on when shows end, and on whether or not we'll be speaking to artists after a show.

Meet your teaching team!

This course is led by Professor Kim Solga; call her Kim. **Kim's office hours are Tuesdays 12-2pm and Thursdays 12-1pm, or by appointment. Reach her at ksolga@uwo.ca.**

Kim lives in Hamilton, and when she's not teaching she works from home. You can always book a Skype / FaceTime / WhatsApp video appointment with Kim on days she's not on campus; just send her an email.

Kim has a dog called Emma; Emma is old and gentle, and often comes to campus with Kim. If you would prefer Emma was not around when you come to visit Kim's office, just let her know.

A note about email: Kim doesn't check her UWO email on the weekend. Any messages received after 6pm on Friday will be addressed first thing Monday morning. This ALSO means that *nothing* for our class is so urgent that you need to worry about it over the weekend – weekends are for self-care. Enjoy them!

Courtney is on campus every weekday between 9 and 5 and checks her **email** (cchurc7@uwo.ca) regularly during these hours. She will make a note about official office hours and location on OWL the first week of semester and she is available by appointment. Courtney, sadly, does not have a dog, but she would be delighted if a student brought hers/his/theirs to her office hours.

Land Acknowledgement

Land is a big part of what we are going to be talking about when we talk about Toronto, culture, and performance: who works on it, how their work is valued, who is recognized as fully human in the city, who is ignored, left out, stepped over. Acknowledging the politics of our inhabiting the land is an important part of starting our work on all of these scores.

Below are four land acknowledgements: from Western University; from Native Earth Performing Arts in Toronto; from Kim; and from Courtney. On our first day together you'll be encouraged to make your own land acknowledgement. It can take any form you wish, as long as it is both respectful and accurate.

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. (This

particular land acknowledgement comes from Western's Indigenous Strategic Plan, circa 2016.)

As we undertake work on and about the space now known as the city of Toronto, we honour and acknowledge the ancestral caretakers of its land: the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, the Wendat and most recently the Mississauga of the New Credit First Nation who have a Treaty relationship with Canada. (This particular land acknowledgement comes from Native Earth Performing Arts, the oldest professional Indigenous-led theatre company in Canada.)

*Kim is a White settler, the first-generation child of German immigrants. I was born in a suburb of Montreal, on the lands of the Haudenosaunee, Huron-Wendat, Kanien'heh:ka, and Mohawk nations and grew up in Edmonton, on the lands of the Métis, Tsuu T'ina, and Nēhiyawēwin nations. Today, I live on Treaty 3 land in Hamilton. That land was traditional to the Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee peoples; in 1784 Treaty 3 was signed by chiefs representing the Mississaugas of the New Credit nation and agents of the British Crown. (This particular land acknowledgement come from Kim's new book, *Theory for Theatre Studies: Space*.)*

Courtney is a White settler descended from English, Scottish and French colonists of Nova Scotia. She was born in St. John's, Newfoundland, the ancestral homeland of the Beothuk and Mi'kmaq peoples and grew up on the south shore of Nova Scotia. This territory is covered by the "Treaties of Peace and Friendship" which Mi'kmaq Wəlastəkwiyik (Maliseet), and Passamaquoddy Peoples first signed with the British Crown in 1726. She now lives in London as a guest on the traditional territories of the Attawandaran, Algonquin, and Haudenosaunee peoples. London is the home of the Chippewas of the Thames First Nation, Oneida Nation of the Thames, and Munsee Delaware Nation.

The Online 411

We will use OWL fairly extensively in this class – it's where you will submit assignments, work on Wiki documents together, find course readings, and much more. Kim will upload lesson materials each week via the "Resources" folder, and recommends you look in that folder for anything you might be missing (except a copy of the syllabus – it has a separate link in OWL) before you email her to ask for copies of stuff.

OWL is not pretty, but it works and it keeps everything in one place. Be sure you've logged into OWL by the beginning of term to confirm you can see our class portal. Flag it as a "favourite" so it appears in your top-bar navigation, and be sure that you check your UWO email regularly for messages sent through OWL about important stuff (like theatre trip details).

Course Objectives

A course objective is a goal; Kim and Courtney have some that we'd like to achieve (below), but we also hope you'll make your own. We've created assignments and opportunities for you to fashion your own way through the class according to your interests; set some personal course objectives to help you navigate those opportunities to best advantage.

- ❖ To introduce our class community to a wide variety of Toronto theatre, and to some of the talented people who make it;
- ❖ To ask challenging, sometimes uncomfortable questions about the social, political, and economic circumstances that shape Toronto's theatre and performance communities;
- ❖ To introduce students to fresh perspectives about the "cultural work" theatre does in the wider world today, and why that work matters to a socially just society;
- ❖ To help students become critically attuned audience members, and in the process to help students to hone your critical reading, thinking, viewing, and writing skills;
- ❖ To give students a chance to explore meaningfully the intersections between your own interests and the work shared on our course;
- ❖ To introduce students to different ways to produce high-quality, critically astute course work, including in writing, via audio or video work, via live performance work, or otherwise (feel free to surprise us with suggestions).

<i>Required theatre trips: details, costs, permissions</i>
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Kim has booked five performances for us to attend this term. These are:

- ❖ *I Call Myself Princess* at Native Earth Performing Arts/Aki Studio (18 September, 8pm)
- ❖ *Gertrude and Alice* at Buddies in Bad Times (2 October, 8pm)
- ❖ *The Children* at Canadian Stage (16 October, 8pm)
- ❖ *Men in White* at Factory Theatre (30 October, 8pm)
- ❖ *Come From Away* – the hit musical! – at the Royal Alexandra Theatre/Mirvish Productions (20 November, 8pm)

Students will pay \$150 for all five shows, including bus transport to and from campus, no later than Thursday, 25 September. Please provide a cheque or money order only; bring your cheque or money order to Courtney, in class or during office hours, on or before that date.

Each of these performances is mandatory. You will be asked to fill out a field trip waiver covering the term's travel, and to return this waiver along with your payment for the class.

You may choose to travel to or from shows on your own; however, you will still be required to pay the amount specified below for all shows plus transportation. (Without everyone contributing to all the things, the class can't work economically for the group as a whole.)

Please note that a subsidy of \$100 per students has been provided by SASAH, and by the Hume Cronyn Fund in the Faculty of Arts and Humanities. Thanks to Prof. Patrick Mahon of SASAH,

Prof. Manina Jones of English and Writing Studies, and Dean of Arts and Humanities Michael Milde for their kind support!

Required texts

Beyond attending the theatre, we will read a variety of works about theatre and performance in cities / in Toronto.

Most are article-length, and all are available free of charge via Course Readings on OWL. Visit our OWL portal and click on the Course Readings tab in the left-hand navigation for access.

We also ask that you get hold of one book: Jen Harvie's *Theatre & The City* (Palgrave MacMillan, 2009). Copies are in the bookstore, or buy online. It's small and inexpensive: \$10-\$15 depending on your purchase source. There is also a copy on reserve for you in the library if you prefer not to buy. (The book is short; it will take you about an afternoon to finish.)

A list of our readings, with full bibliographic information, is available at the end of this outline.

Assessment

In Toronto: Culture and Performance, you'll be evaluated like this.

1. 5x 250-word reflections, one per performance (5% each = 25%)
2. 1x 750-word theatre review (25%)
3. 1x final project, form and content very much your choice (30%)
4. 1x teamwork project, answering the question "where are we going next, and what should we know before we get there?" (10%)
5. Participation, which in Kim's classes is A Real Thing (10%)

Details? Read on.

1. 5x 250-word reflections, one per performance

Value: 5% each, 25% total

Due: the FRIDAY after each theatre trip we take (aka: 21 September; 5 October; 19 October; 2 November; 23 November)

Protocol: hand this work in via OWL, by 11:55pm on the due date

Select a critical moment from the performance we saw. (A critical moment is one that grabs you unexpectedly, makes you think in fresh ways, or otherwise strikes you as a thoughtful route into unpacking what a show is trying to do. It is a small but pertinent detail.) Ask yourself: Why is this moment significant for you? How does it advance the "cultural work" of the play as a whole? Or, think more broadly: does this moment reveal something key about the piece's relationship to the place it is being performed, the city as a whole? Does it speak to other issues

we've discussed in class? If you can, link your discussion of your critical moment to one of the readings we have done in class.

2. 750-word review

Value: 25%

Due: bring a draft to class on Tuesday, 13 November for our review workshop with a special guest; your final draft is due Friday, 16 November

Protocol: hand your final draft in via OWL, by 11:55pm on the due date

Pick the show about which you have the most to say. The show that you **ADORED**. The show you **HATED**. Maybe pick the **MEH** show. Whatever you want. Write a professional-grade review.

WTF is that? Check out some pro reviews online and reverse-engineer them. Read some blog reviews; what have they got the pros don't, or vice versa? Give it your best shot.

Bring your **DRAFT REVIEW** to class **on 13 November** and hear pro tips first hand. Spend the class working your review, helping others work theirs, talking about what makes a good, strong review and what sinks a review. With Kim and Courtney, read through some pro work and talk about the problems of implicit bias and how to avoid them.

Your review can be handed in as a traditional piece of written text, or you can choose to make a video of it and upload that to YouTube. **If you choose the latter option**, please make your video private until Kim or Courtney has a chance to mark it. Provide your video's URL via OWL. Note that your video should take as long as it takes to read, comfortably, 750 words.

The very best of your work will get forwarded (with your permission) to Keith Tomasek, editor of StratfordFestivalReviews.com. He may commission the best of our class reviewers for new gigs in winter term, complete with free theatre tix and all the glory!

3. Final project, very much your choice

Value: 30%

Due: bring draft material to class on Tuesday, 4 December for our final project workshop, where you will present your ideas to your peers and solicit feedback; your final draft is due Tuesday, 11 December

Protocol: hand your final draft in via OWL, by 11:55pm on the due date

The content of your final project should follow one of the critical models we will have studied together in our course readings. For example, you might:

- ❖ Do a "case study" economic analysis of one of the theatres we have visited together, following the work of Michael McKinnie;
- ❖ Do a "performance studies" analysis of one of the events we attended (event = the show plus all the attendant stuff you do when you go to/follow a show), based on the work of Levin, Bennett, or Harvie;

- ❖ Do a “cultural materialist” analysis of one of the venues we visited, based on the work of McKinnie, Harvie, Knowles, or Bennett;
- ❖ Think deeply about the intercultural politics of a show we attended, using Knowles, King, or Carter as your model;
- ❖ Pitch something (the earlier the better, please) and surprise us!

The structure/form of your final project can be any one of the following:

- ❖ A written essay, featuring a research question, as well as a thesis statement (IE: an argument developed from your research question and sustained over the course of the paper). This should be 1500 words in length, +/- 10% (150 words);
- ❖ A piece of creative writing responding to the issues you’ve chosen to explore and the critical model you’ve chosen to use. This should be 1500 words in length, +/- 10% (150 words);
- ❖ An audio or video piece responding to the issues you’ve chosen to explore and the critical model you’ve chosen to use. This should be more than 5 minutes in length. (If you choose this option, please upload to YouTube and make your recording private until Kim or Courtney has a chance to mark it. Provide your video’s URL via OWL.)
- ❖ A piece of visual or material art responding to the issues you’ve chosen to explore and the critical model you’ve chosen to use. You may hand this in as hard copy, warning Kim and Courtney about this in advance. (So we know to collect it!) If you choose this option, please be sure to consult with Kim and/or Courtney early, to ensure your creative ideas fit the parameters of the assignment. The creation of your art work should take the same amount of time you would normally spend on a 1500-word essay, or a 5-minute, polished video work.

The final project fine print:

- ❖ Every project, regardless of form, must include a bibliography of works consulted. This bibliography is included in the specified length of the project.
- ❖ On Tuesday 4 December we will hold a final project workshop, as part of our last class together. In teams you’ll share one page, or the equivalent, of draft work (an outline; a draft introduction; snippets of video; a treatment for creative work; etc) and engage one another in feedback. Kim and Courtney will facilitate this, offering feedback as well.
- ❖ **At the end of the 4 December workshop you will hand in a clean copy of your draft work** – print or bring an extra copy so you can take notes on one to keep – to demonstrate that you have engaged meaningfully in this part of the task. **If you do not hand in draft work, you will lose 10% of your final project grade.**

4. Teamwork project

Value: 10% (all team members get the same grade. Yes, we know.)

Due: By noon on the day of the theatre trip with which your teamwork project is linked

Protocol: via OWL, on the OWL Wiki tool

Each time we go to the city to see theatre we’ll be going to a new venue, in a new part of the city. Each neighbourhood we visit will have its own rich histories and hidden stories. Each

theatre will have a different backstory of its own, sometimes a controversial one. As our course readings will teach us, these stories are integral to our experience at the theatre, and to our understanding of the works that get produced there. So: we need to know these stories.

This task asks you to work in teams to answer the questions: “where are we going next, and what should we know before we get there?” To help you navigate this task, you’ll explore the following sub-questions:

- ❖ What is this theatre? What is important to know about its history?
- ❖ Who runs this theatre, and what is the mandate they follow? What else has this person/these people done?
- ❖ Where are we? What neighbourhood are we in, and how is the theatre connected to it?
- ❖ Who made the play we are seeing? Who are the playwright, director, designer(s)? What else have they done lately?
- ❖ What critical response has this work received so far? Have preview pieces been written? Who wrote them? What do they tell us about what to expect?
- ❖ Is there anything else we should know about this place, this work, the stories it will tell?

Your team’s answers to these questions can and should include links to information you’ve found online, but be sure to include more than just links: write a short (+/- 200 words) synopsis of what you’ve discovered for each question, and let us know (briefly) what to expect from each link we click (IE: annotate your links). Remember that you don’t need to say EVERYTHING you’ve found; a big part of the task is selecting highlights you think the class should know before we go to the theatre.

We know teamwork is hard; it’s also a fact of working life. That’s why you’re working in teams for this task: to learn how to do it in ways that don’t suck. So, YOU decide HOW your team will function. Maybe you just divide up the questions and each contribute independently, foregoing the stress of collaboration. Maybe you assign pairs to each question. Maybe everyone does a bit of everything. Your call.

Your final grade will be a group grade; again, that’s hard, but it’s also reality in most workplaces. Just remember that you’re accountable to one another: if you’re a jackass and do nothing your teammates will not appreciate it, and they’ll show it. On the flip, if you’re the one who always tries to run the whole shebang, and you’re feeling really frustrated, ask yourself what would happen if you backed off. Would you get a poorer grade? Maybe. Will it seriously impact your final course grade? Likely not. (Trust us: likely not.) Make a call that works for you.

If you’re having a serious problem with your team, tell Kim or Courtney. They won’t fix it for you, but they’ll help you strategize a way to deal with it.

5. Participation

Value: 10%

Due: every darn day

Protocol: engage. You decide how. (See below.)

Our class is a community and we work together to make the knowledge with which we come away. Kim and Courtney are the guides: they know some stuff, but more importantly they know how to learn more stuff, where to look and what questions to ask. This is what they'll offer you, primarily, on this class journey.

To earn 100% for participation – and you really truly can (it happens all the time) – do the following things:

- ❖ Come to class. Every day. If you have to miss, ensure you have accommodation from your academic counsellors (see below).
- ❖ Read the stuff we're reading. Think carefully as you're reading. Maybe read it twice if it's a challenge. Take some notes! Bear in mind that the reading load for this class is not heavy; readings have been scheduled to give you lots of opportunities to make time for them, and there are built in re-reading opportunities if you want to take them.
- ❖ Contribute to class. This doesn't mean talking a lot; talking a lot usually means you're not paying attention to how much space you're taking up. It also doesn't mean *never* talking, though: lots of us are shy, but there will be many different ways in this class to share thoughts – including via silent writing, group chats, peer-to-peer conversations, and more. If you're a shy person and you're working hard to contribute, we will notice.
- ❖ Take some risks! Falling on your arse doesn't mean failing the course: it means you have to get up and try again. A risk is worth it if you learn something valuable about yourself in the process. And risks can be small: like speaking up when normally you don't, or keeping mum when normally you talk over others. Risks can also mean trying to create a video when normally you wouldn't, or writing your essay well in advance and bringing it to Kim or Courtney to talk about, when normally you're a last-minute person. Taking a risk means actively taking up an invitation made by our class to push yourself a bit, rather than just showing up for the sake of it. Give it a try.

One very important participation caveat:

Stuff happens, that's life. You might need to miss. But we only have 12 meetings together, 5 of which are theatre trips. So: you cannot miss this class more than ONCE without accommodation from your counsellor (see immediately below for more on accommodation). **If you miss more than one class without accommodation, you will forfeit your entire 10% participation mark.**

Three key protocol notes for assessments

One: RUBRICS

Every assessment above has a rubric that Kim and Courtney use for marking. The rubric tells you what an "A" assignment, a "B" assignment, a "C" assignment, and a "D" assignment looks like. Find these on OWL, in the portal for each individual assignment. There's also a "hard" virtual copy of all rubrics in the Resources folder on OWL.

Two: EXTENSIONS + LATE PENALTIES

We cannot grant extensions, unless we've been asked to do so by your academic counsellor. To seek an extension, visit your counsellor with medical or compassionate documentation. Otherwise, late work is penalized at 2% per day, not including weekend days.

The UWO Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness and further information regarding this policy can be found at

http://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf.

Downloadable Student Medical Certificate (SMC):

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

Three: PLAGIARISM

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

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.

Class schedule (cross-reference readings with the list on the following page)

September 11: Welcome! All things introductory.

- Reading: Harvie (the whole thing, thanks!)

September 18: Theatre trip to Native Earth Performing Arts to see I CALL MYSELF PRINCESS by Jani Lauzon

- Meet at 4pm in front of Talbot College (at the parking circle)
- Reading: Knowles 1; Carter

September 25: Backstories – Toronto in/as Performance

- Expect a full debrief of our trip to NEPA
- Reading: Levin and Solga (Please also bring Knowles 1 and Carter to class)

October 2: Theatre trip to Buddies in Bad Times to see GERTRUDE AND ALICE by the Independent Aunties

- Meet at 4pm in front of Talbot College (at the parking circle)
- Reading: King

OCTOBER 9 is READING WEEK

October 16: Theatre trip to Canadian Stage to see THE CHILDREN by Lucy Kirkwood

- Meet at 4pm in front of Talbot College (at the parking circle)
- Reading: McKinnie 1

October 23: The gentrification effect: artists and the urban fabric

- Expect a full debrief of our trip to CanStage, as well as discussion of our trip to Buddies before reading week (bring your notes!)
- Reading: McKinnie 2 (Please also bring McKinnie 1 and King to class)

October 30: Theatre trip to Factory Theatre to see MEN IN WHITE by Anosh Irani

- Meet at 4pm in front of Talbot College (at the parking circle)

November 6: In the intercultural trenches

- Expect a full debrief of our trip to Factory
- Reading: Knowles 2 (Please also bring Knowles 1 to class)

November 13: Reviewing workshop: best practices (w/a special guest!)

- Please bring drafts of your reviews-in-progress to class

November 20: Theatre trip to The Royal Alexandra Theatre to see COME FROM AWAY

- Meet at 4pm in front of Talbot College (at the parking circle)

November 27: On the global stage!

- Expect a full debrief of our trip to Theatreland
- Reading: Bennett

December 4: final project workshop, concluding thoughts, holiday treats

- Remember to bring at least one page of draft work on your final project; if you do not hand draft work in you will lose 10% of your final project mark!

<i>Course readings with full citations</i>
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*All of these readings are available free of charge, via Course Readings in OWL, *except* Harvie. Please purchase Harvie or grab the copy on reserve at the library.

Bennett, Susan. "Toronto's Spectacular Stage." 2005. *Theatre and Performance in Toronto*. Ed. Laura Levin. Toronto: Playwrights Canada Press, 2011. 105-18.

- Carter, Jill. "Decolonizing the Gathering Place: Chocolate Woman Dreams a Gathering House in Toronto." *Theatre and Performance in Toronto*. Ed. Laura Levin. Toronto: Playwrights Canada Press, 2011. 176-90.
- Harvie, Jen. *Theatre & The City*. Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2009.
- King, Moynan. "The Foster Children of Buddies: Queer Women at 12 Alexander." *Theatre and Performance in Toronto*. Ed. Laura Levin. Toronto: Playwrights Canada Press, 2011. 191-202.
- Knowles, Ric (1). "Introduction." *Performing the Intercultural City*. Ann Arbor: U Michigan P, 2017. 1-16.
- Knowles, Ric (2). "Multicultural Text, Intercultural Performance." *Performing the Intercultural City*. Ann Arbor: U Michigan P, 2017. 23-43.
- Levin, Laura, and Kim Solga. "Building Utopia: Performance and the Fantasy of Urban Renewal in Contemporary Toronto." *TDR* 53.3 (2009): 37-53.
- McKinnie, Michael (1). "Urban National, Suburban Transnational: Civic Theatres and the Urban Development of Toronto's Downtowns." *City Stages: Theatre and Urban Space in a Global City*. Toronto: UofT Press, 2007. 25-47.
- McKinnie, Michael (2). "Institutional Frameworks: Theatre, State, and Market in Modern Urban Performance." *A Cultural History of Theatre in the Modern Age*. Ed. Kim Solga. London: Bloomsbury, 2017.