

**ENGL 3776G-001: Canadian Drama**  
**Western University**  
**London, Ontario**  
**January 2015**

Dr. Michelle Hartley

Class: Monday, 6-9 P&AB 150

TA Cameron Riddell

Office hours: Mondays, 4:30-5:30, Tuesdays 12-  
1 A&HB 2G28D

Office Hours TBA

**Course Description**

What does it mean to “perform” being Canadian? How does the stage help us to evolve a definition of this nation? Should it? This course examines Canada’s comparatively young dramatic tradition, its present, its future, and our role in its making, with a strong emphasis on in-class, group-based performance work.

**Course Objectives:**

Students who successfully complete this course can expect to be able to do the following:

- think, speak and write clearly and coherently about theatre as performance, and about performance’s specific value as a mode of public and cultural communication;
- understand and communicate some of the relationships among theory, history, text and performance in relation to the drama of contemporary Canada;
- speak and perform intelligently and with some confidence in front of their peers;
- craft strong research questions that invite investigation and debate;
- distinguish among poor, fair, good and excellent research materials;
- research and prepare papers of up to 2500 words, sustaining a complex argument and engaging at some depth with secondary source materials.

**Tentative Schedule:**

Jan 5	<b>Introduction and Organization</b>
Jan 12	Questions and the Collective: <i>The Farm Show</i>
Jan 19	Ringwood, “Still Stands the House” (ncr) Group 1
Jan 26	Reaney, “Sticks and Stones” Group 2
Feb 2	Pollock, <i>The Komogata Maru Incident</i> (on reserve; online) Group 3

Feb 9	Tremblay, <i>Hosanna</i>	Group 4
	READING WEEK	
Feb 23	The Audience, Theatre Replacement, "Bioboxes" and Introductory Essay	
Mar 2	Highway, <i>The Rez Sisters</i>	Group 1
Mar 9	Anthony, "da Kink in my hair" ( <i>ncr</i> )	Group 2
Mar 16	Beagan, "Miss Julie: Sheh'mah	Group 3
Mar 23	Blais-Dahlem, "sTain/La maculée"	Group 4
Mar 30	Essay workshop	
Apr 6	Catch up and Review	

#### ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADE DISTRIBUTIONS

Assignment	Value	Due Date	Length
Reading Quizzes	10%	Best 5 of 6	10 questions each
Performance and Participation	25%	Each class	
Research Essay	30%	April 6	2000-2500 words
Exam	35%	TBA	2 hours

**STUDENTS MUST PASS BOTH TERM WORK AND THE FINAL EXAMINATION IN ORDER TO PASS THE COURSE. STUDENTS WHO FAIL THE FINAL EXAMINATION (REGARDLESS OF THEIR TERM MARK) AUTOMATICALLY FAIL THE COURSE.**

#### **Performance Pedagogy Assignment:**

(with credit and thanks to Kim Solga, who pioneered this approach to teaching drama at Western, and Mike Buma, who articulated its components so well)

During one hour of most classes, we will forego the formalities of a typical lecture and get down to the business of performance. Plays are meant to be performed, and, in a way, performance is the ultimate act of interpretation. For the purposes of this assignment you will be divided into groups. You will work with your group during the performance component each week in one way or another, as *THE COMPANY* or *THE COLLEAGUE-CRITICS*.

Each week one group will be responsible for staging the play we've read for that given class. This group will be known as *THE COMPANY*.

The Company's job is to stage a scene from the week's play, and to take up roles such as actors, director, designers, etc. You will NOT be expected to put on a highly formal, heavily rehearsed performance, although you are free to use props, costumes, and set pieces if you choose (have some fun with this!). Your primary task will be to work together to select a specific approach to the scene, to do some research about it, and then to speak critically about your choices in class. This "thought work" is the most important component of your presentation! You don't have to memorize lines, and you will not be marked down for bad acting.

The Company will need to read ahead and agree on a scene (or scenes) to perform in advance of their scheduled class. You don't need to clear your selection with me in advance, but please choose something that will take approximately 15-20 minutes (no more than 20 minutes, please!) to perform.

Members of the group who aren't acting or directing in any given week must contribute behind the scenes: by helping imagine potential angles for the performance, by working on props or design, or by doing research to help shape and frame the presentation.

You will want to do some RESEARCH about the context of the play and the scene on which you're working. Of course we'll be talking about contexts in class, but remember you'll be preparing for your scene well in advance.

Please challenge yourself! I would like to see you try different roles over the course of the year. If you're shy, try acting at least once. If you're a raging extrovert, challenge yourself to pull back a bit and the quieter members of your group shine.

Be prepared to meet with your group outside of class for an hour or two at least a couple of times before each performance. You should establish an informal email discussion list or Facebook page in order to hammer out your basic choices and ensure everyone knows their jobs.

Your groups will be large, so coordinating your schedules will *not* be easy. In fact, it's part of the challenge. But your groups are large because performance cannot happen with just a couple of people: theatre is made in the messy coordination between different personalities with different schedules and different needs. Do your best to accommodate everyone, to get to know one another, and to support one another. By the end of term you'll be glad these people are your colleagues; they may even be your friends!

After each performance, the Company will be asked to get back on stage and participate in a question-and-answer period. Each member of the Company should try to contribute something during the Q&A, especially

those whose work has been primarily behind the scenes. This is the time for you to explore in depth, with your colleagues, the terrific thought work that has gone into your presentation!

The final part of the hour will involve a post-performance discussion, led by either Cameron or myself, but built by you. Those not performing in any given week will be designated ***THE COLLEAGUE-CRITICS***.

When their performance is over, the Company will take a quick break while the rest of us get into our groups. In your groups, you will be given 10 minutes to discuss the performance you've just seen and to prepare on or two good, challenging questions for the Company. Learning to ask good questions will be a key part of this work!

Note that the questions you develop must delve below the surface of what the performance is doing. Colleague-Critics are reviewers with a difference: your task is to explore the critical effects of the Company's choices, to offer alternative readings of the scene, and to examine how others in the class received the performance (it's a good idea to address some questions to your fellow audience members as well). One important proviso: colleague criticism is designed to be helpful and respectful, not hurtful and derogatory.

In order to ensure your group's discussion runs smoothly, each of you will need to take some notes during the performance. Bring those notes to your group's "huddle" and be prepared to talk about them.

When your discussion time is up, we will reconvene the class and ask each group in turn to offer one of its questions. We'll get a lively discussion going, and will bounce from group to group until either our time, or your notes, are exhausted.

#### **ASSESSMENT:**

Participation and performance are worth 25% of your overall course grade. This component of your grade will be determined by three categories of evaluation:

- 1) **ATTENDANCE (10%):** You start the course with a total of 10 attendance marks. Each time you miss a class *without prior leave* in which your group is the Company, you will lose four attendance marks. Each time you miss any other class *without prior leave* you will lose one attendance mark.
- 2) **GROUP MARK (10%):** After each of your performances, your group will receive a sheet of comments from your professor. These will include a grade. Taken together, the grades from your two performances will account for 10% of your course mark. Again, please remember that you are being assessed on the level of thought you put into your performance and talk-back, not on your acting skills.
- 3) **INDIVIDUAL PARTICIPATION (5%):** At the end of the term I will assign each student an individual participation grade based on your general level of engagement in the class. This will take into account your participation and willingness to challenge yourself in the group assignment, as well as your general participation in class.

#### **Research Paper and Late Penalties**

You will find essay topics and a discussion of the research paper on OWL a few weeks into the term. See due dates above. All assignments must be submitted to me in person after being submitted to OWL. The time and date of their arrival is acknowledged by OWL. When there is a question about the date submitted, I will take the OWL date. Essays may not be faxed, emailed, or slipped under my door. Late papers will be penalized 3% per day, and they will receive few if any comments. Papers will not be accepted 10 days after the due date.

REMEMBER to TURN ASSIGNMENTS in TO OWL in addition to bringing a PRINTED COPY TO CLASS.

### **ESSAY BASICS**

**Grading criteria:** Originality of argument, the ability to support the argument with reference to the primary text in the form of quotations, and a good use of secondary research; rhetorical persuasiveness; syntax, grammar, spelling; and accurate bibliographic citation in MLA style will all be factors in the grading of the essay.

**Formal features:** Essays should be written according to the standard essay style: typed, double-spaced, 12 point Times New Roman font, on white 8.5" paper with 1" margins. You should include your name, the course number, my name, and the date on the top left-hand corner of the first page, which is not a title page but the first page of your paper itself. Your title should follow centred on the page. Pages should be attached by a paperclip or staple; please avoid binders, plastic report covers, etc. Page numbers along with your last name should appear in the top right-hand corner of each page following the first.

**Turnitin.com:** All required papers must be submitted for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted 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.

**Plagiarism:** Don't. Please find a further discussion of what plagiarism entails on your INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS sheet, but it is your responsibility to ensure that you hand in your own work. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me with details.

**Class Cancellations:** Anticipated class cancellations will be announced in class and an announcement will be posted on OWL as far in advance as possible. Please check OWL regularly: in case of unanticipated class cancellations, an announcement will be included. University closures and service interruptions are posted on the University web site.

### **Accessibility @ Western**

For information on accessibility see <http://accessibility.uwo.ca/>. General service disruptions will be posted at this site.

### **Important General Information for Students**

For English Department regulations governing Term Work, Exams, Faculty Office Hours, Academic Relief (appeals, petitions, complaints), and other matters, please consult "Information for Students" page on the English Department website.

### **University Policies**

**Prerequisites:** Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enrol in it, you will be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. The decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees.

**Academic Accommodation:** 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.

For more information on Western's Mental Health Services visit  
<http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/>.