

Department of English & Writing Studies

English 2041F (001)
Special Topics in Drama: *The Missionary Position*
Fall 2026**Instructor:** Greg MacArthur**Email:** gmacart2@uwo.ca**Office:** UC 1425**Office Hours:** Tuesdays 530-630pm (or please contact me to make other arrangements)**Course Description**

In this course, students participating in a major Western University theatre production explore in theory and practice approaches to text in performance. Only students working as an actor, or in such major production roles as stage manager, assistant stage manager, lighting, set, or sound designer may enroll.

Course Objectives:

- rehearse and present a contemporary Canadian play (*The Missionary Position*)
- engage in the collaborative process of mounting a full stage production, exploring the necessary artistic, technical and administrative skills
- research and write two critical essays examining the themes, ideas and characters present in this work
- reflect on your role/position in this show, considering your personal growth and experience engaging with the material, your other collaborators, and the process of creation in a written statement

Course Materials

The Missionary Position, Greg MacArthur (available as Word document on OWL. You will be responsible for printing the script and preparing a rehearsal-ready document for the first day of classes)

Assignments / Method of Evaluation**Research Paper #1: 20%**

Select one or more theme(s) explored in *The Missionary Position* and demonstrate how this play explores the theme(s) in relationship to your own personal experiences / ideologies, and the current global situation. How and why is this play relevant today? Is it? Please use specific examples / evidence from the play. Please consider other artistic work(s) you could compare this to, both thematically and stylistically. This could include another stage play, a film, a tv series, podcast, video game, etc. Papers must be 750 words in length and conform to MLA style (12 pt Times Roman Numeral font, double spaced, etc.). Word / PDF document.

Paper due: Tuesday October 6

Research Paper #2: 20%

Please select a character from *The Missionary Position* and write a character study referencing specific examples/evidence from the script along with your own personal interpretation. Please consider:

- Character background/biography
- How they reflect the world/themes of the play
- What is their main objective(s): what drives their actions and behaviour?
- What obstacles do they face?
- How do they change/shift over the course of the play, if at all? Where does their personal journey begin and end?

Papers must be 1000 words and conform to MLA style (12 pt Times Roman Numeral font, double spaced, etc.). Word / PDF document.

Paper due: Tuesday October 27

Personal Reflection: 10%

An informal, personal reflection detailing your role/position in the production, your experience working on the show, and what you learned about theatre creation, as well as your own skills and artistic ambitions from this experience – both your successes and areas you feel you could improve upon. Papers must be 1000 words and conform to MLA style (12 pt Times Roman Numeral font, double spaced, etc.). Word / PDF document.

Paper due: Wednesday December 9

Production / Performance: 50%

Participation, attendance, preparation: 15%

Communication, focus, collaboration: 15%

Creative involvement, individual contribution, artistic growth: 20%

Duties of Artistic, Design and Production Crew

The goal for this course is to work as collaboratively as possible building the show, finding suitable roles/positions for everyone (artistic, administration, technical) based on one's skill set, interests and experiences. More specific duties / roles may be added and shifted based on the needs of the production and the number of students involved in the course. The class will decide collectively on the ticket pricing. The following positions will be available:

Actors (11): Roles will be cast based on the experience and ability of the students and at the discretion of the instructor. All performers must commit to being fully present for every class. They will be expected to have the text fully memorized by an agreed upon date. There may be extra rehearsals required outside of class time. Each performer will be responsible for building/sourcing their own costume/costume pieces.

Assistant Director (1): Work with the director in organizing and running the rehearsals, working with the actors and the designers in creating/building the show. You may be asked to take on more responsibilities (individual actor coaching, staging/blocking) depending on experience and interest.

Stage Manager (1): Attend all rehearsals, as well as each performance. Write blocking notes, props notes, and technical cues into prompt script. Supervise the ASM. Give the calls to all cast members and needed production staff for rehearsals and run of show. Call the cues during the run of the show. Take charge of the backstage/ stage during rehearsals and run of the show.

Assistant Stage Manager (1): Work with Stage Manager on keeping blocking and technical notes, and on organizing rehearsals and the run of the show. Assist with properties, costumes, costume changes, and other cues.

Artistic Producers (2): Liaison with the designers, the stage manager(s) and the technical crew in implementing the design of the show, supervising the performance venue, the lighting and sound install, the load in and the load out. Helping to sourcing any technical equipment necessary for the production. Develop and implement a publicity strategy for the promotion of the show, including: photography/video material, managing social media accounts, designing the program/program material, website (if desired), manage media releases, design and distribute flyers/posters. Organize pre-show ticket sales to large classes in English departments, and possibly class visits by the artists.

Set and Properties Designer (2): In consultation with director, design and build, purchase, rent, or borrow props and set pieces before production week. Organize and supervise running, maintenance, storage, repair, and replacement of props during tech and dress rehearsals, as well as during run. Return props at end of run. Submit all receipts to Director.

Sound Designer Composer (2): Compose, source, sound design in collaboration with the director. Perhaps provide a live soundscape for the show.

Lighting/Video Designer (2): Design, build and implement the lighting design and any video / special effects needed in collaboration with director.

Students are responsible for being familiar with the information posted on the department website: <http://www.uwo.ca/english/undergraduate/Student%20Information.html>.

Additional Information

Academic Consideration

Students may request academic consideration in cases of extenuating circumstances – that is, personal circumstances beyond the student’s control that have a substantial but temporary impact on the student’s ability to meet essential academic requirements.

1. Requests for academic consideration are made to the Academic Advising office of the student’s Faculty of Registration.
2. Requests for academic consideration include the following components:
 - a. Self-attestation signed by the student;
 - b. Indication of the course(s) and assessment(s) relevant to the request;
 - c. Supporting documentation as relevant.

Requests without supporting documentation are limited to one per term.

Assignments with flexible deadlines and any term work that does not count towards the course grade are not eligible for additional consideration.

Documentation for medical illness, when required, includes the completion of a Western Student Medical Certificate (SMC) or, where that is not possible, equivalent documentation, by a health care practitioner.

Requests linked to examinations scheduled by the Office of the Registrar during official examination periods as well as practice laboratory and performance tests typically scheduled in the last week of term always require formal supporting documentation.

Attendance

Attendance is mandatory in all classes and rehearsals. In cases of excessive absenteeism (e.g. more than 9 unexcused hours for a half course, 18 for a full course), which are not accounted for by either academic consideration or accommodation, students may be debarred from taking the final examination and will receive an official warning to this effect by or before the course drop date (see Senate policy). In classes with or without final exams, students who do not attend class will receive 0% for course participation grades. Unless other policies dictate a different set of penalties in specific English and Writing Studies programs, this will apply to all department programs.

Late assignments

All written assignments are due in hard copy at the beginning of class. They should be typed and formatted correctly. Late assignments will be docked 1% per day, including weekends. Failure to complete all assignments may result in an “F” grade.

Plagiarism / A.I.

In this course, students are permitted to use AI tools exclusively for information gathering and preliminary research purposes. These tools are intended to enhance the learning experience by providing access to diverse information sources. However, it is essential that students critically evaluate the obtained information, exercise independent thinking, and engage in original research to synthesize and develop their own ideas, arguments, and perspectives. Students are expected to uphold academic integrity by appropriately attributing all sources and avoiding plagiarism. Assignments should reflect the students’ own thoughts and independent written work.

Subject material / Class discussions

There may be sensitive and difficult material, ideas and language that some students may find challenging. The goal is to be open to the work, regardless of your own personal ideologies. I do not want to censor anyone’s creative output or critical discussions. Thus, it is VITAL that we all treat one another with respect, openness, and generosity in the class/rehearsal hall. If at any time you feel uncomfortable, please talk to the instructor.

Gender-based and sexual violence

Western University is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence (GBSV) and providing compassionate support to anyone who is going through or has gone through these traumatic events. If you are experiencing or have experienced GBSV (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at the following website:

<https://www.uwo.ca/health/studentsupport/survivorsupport/get-help.html>. To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca.

Religious Accommodation

Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays, and should give reasonable notice in writing, prior to the holiday, to the Instructor and an Academic Counsellor if their course requirements will be affected by a religious observance. Additional information is given in the Western Multicultural Calendar.

Support Services

Registrarial Services <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>

Student Support Services <https://student.uwo.ca/psp/heprdweb/?cmd=login>

Services provided by the USC <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

Academic Support & Engagement <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/>

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to MentalHealth@Western:

<http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Grading Scheme

A+	90-100%
A	80-89%
B	70-79%
C	60-69%
D	50-59%
F	0-49%

Letter Grade	Criteria
A	Actively makes discoveries and achieves personal growth in every exercise. Quality of work exceeds expectations of class Perfect Attendance, always early for class and prepared to work, authentically engaged in exercises and discussions without judgment of self or others
B	Actively makes discoveries and achieves personal growth in most exercises. Quality of work meets expectations of class Good attendance - maximum of 2-3 class missed, rarely tardy, participates and engages with minimal coaxing, minimal lack of preparation
C	Actively makes discoveries and achieves personal growth inconsistently. Quality of work slightly below expectations of class. 4-5 classes missed or frequently late for class, unprepared for class on more than one occasion, engages in exercises and discussions with difficulty or frequent coaxing
D	Rarely makes discoveries or achieves growth. Poor attendance, over 5 classes missed or always late and/ or unprepared for class. Rarely engaged in exercises and discussions and/or displays a negative attitude to the work.
F	Never makes discoveries or achieves personal growth Has missed more than half of the classes, disinterested in the class and unprepared to work.

Class Schedule

Week #1 Course overview

Tues Sept 15: intros / script read-thru / play discussion

Week #2.

Tues Sept 22: text/table work (part one): everyone

Week #3.

Tues Sept 29: text/table work (part two): everyone

Week #4.

Tues Oct 6: staging + initial design presentations (**research paper #1 due*)

Week #5.

Tues Oct 13: reading week (off)

Week #6.

Tues Oct 20: staging/blocking

Week #7.

Tues Oct 27: staging/blocking (**research paper #2 due*)

Week #8.

Tues Nov 3: staging/blocking

Week #9.

Tues Nov 10: stumble-thru (**off book*)

Week #10.

Tues Nov 17: notes/works scenes

Week #11.

Tues Nov 24: notes/works scenes

Week # 12.

Tues Dec 1: dress rehearsal

Thurs Dec 3: show #1 (tbc)

Fri Dec 4: show #2 (tbc)

Sat Dec 5: show #3 (tbc)

Week #13.

Tues Dec 8: wrap up

Wed Dec 9: **final reflection due*

**Please note: this schedule is subject to change*