

English 9141: Performance and the Global City

Winter 2019

Tuesday 12:30-3:30, UC4415

Course Description

What is urban performance? How do cities “stage” themselves for citizens, tourists, politicians, and others? What kinds of performances shape the “creative city”? How do human geographers, performance theorists, theatre artists and others engage with urban studies issues in order to shape the city-worlds we now increasingly inhabit?

This course will combine theoretical readings with site visits to performance spaces in Toronto, Detroit, and here in London as we unpack these questions and imagine what urban performance might look like in the years ahead. Thinking through traditional theatrical performance, relational aesthetics, civic “play”, para-theatrical events and civic festivals, we’ll also consider carefully the political impact of linking art and culture to a neoliberal urban agenda.

Meet your Teaching Team!

Instructor: Dr Kim Solga (ksolga@uwo.ca; 519-661-2111 x80118)

Kim’s office and hours: UC3425; Tuesdays 10am-12pm; Thursdays 1-2pm

NOTE: I don’t check my UWO email on weekends. 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!

Our course on the web

We are using OWL. (New students: go to <http://owl.uwo.ca> to get started.) It’s highly imperfect, but it allows all our stuff – including assessment things, readings, and discussion forums – to live in one place. We will be sharing research questions, discussion prompts, and other information online, so this kind of concentration is useful.

Please have a look around the site and check out its various tools – including a course calendar, *and all your readings in one place!*

Objectives and Outcomes

An outcome is something we would like to take away from our course, at the end of the term. An objective is something we will do to make an outcome happen.

Here are the outcomes and objectives I listed for this course the last time I taught it, just over two years ago. What should we keep? What should we change?

Outcomes

Students who take our course seriously and commit to our shared labour can expect to:

- be introduced to a range of urban performance theory and practice;
- explore a range of interdisciplinary methodologies for thinking about performance, including economics, urban studies, and performance theory;
- develop and enhance their teaching skills, including team-teaching skills;
- explore new ways to communicate critical ideas;
- practice, develop, and improve their public presentation skills;
- experiment with collaborative labour;
- take some risks, make some mistakes, and have fun!

Objectives

In order to achieve the above outcomes, students should expect to:

- read widely and critically each week in urban performance studies;
- attend all scheduled field trips (unless legally impossible!)
- spend time investigating London's local arts communities;
- contribute regularly to our class conversation both in person and online;
- work in teams on one in-class teaching presentation;
- complete a mix of traditional written and creative assignments;
- screw up sometimes, and survive!

Required Texts

All of your readings are available free online or (in the case of Harvie) on hard-copy reserve at Weldon; head to our OWL site and click on "Course Readings" for access.

See the week-by-week breakdown below for information on each week's readings, and consult the full bibliography at the end of this outline for more info on where each reading comes from.

Note that we will read *Theatre & The City* in its entirety in Week Two; you may want to purchase this online, as there's no e-book in Weldon (hard copy reserve only).

We will also undertake three field trips – one in London, on 25 February, as well as trips to Toronto (12 February) and Detroit (week of 19 February). For the latter two trips you'll need to arrange to be free most of the day; please see Kim if you have a major conflict you can't shift. We will determine affordable transit options together; for our trip to Toronto, please also budget \$25 for a ticket to Ravi Jain's *Prince Hamlet* at CanStage.

Assessment

A) The Basics

Your grade in English 9141A will consist of the following:

- ✓ Position paper (written; 15%)
- ✓ Two reflections (optional media; 15% x2)
- ✓ Final project (mixed-media; 25%)
- ✓ Peer teaching exercise (in class and online; 15%)
- ✓ Participation (in class and online; 15%)

Your due dates are as follows:

- ✓ **Position paper:** on or before **Friday 15 February**, by midnight, via OWL
- ✓ **Two reflections:** on or before **29 March**, by midnight, via OWL or in person, depending on your media choices
- ✓ **Final project:** presentation component in class on **Tuesday 2 April**; documentation on or before **Friday 12 April**, by midnight, via OWL and/or in person, depending on your media choices
- ✓ **Peer teaching exercise:** TBA (we will choose slots in our first class)
- ✓ **Participation:** ongoing (but with two mandatory, ungraded participation reflections of 500 words each due **Friday 22 February** and **Friday 5 April**, via OWL)

B) The Specifics

POSITION PAPER

(1500 WORDS, OR 5-6PP, INCLUDING CITATIONS)

For this task you will select an article that we have NOT looked at in class from one of the books on our course reading list and engage with it in a deep way, by answering these questions:

1. *What is the author's central claim?*
2. *What is the nature of the author's supporting evidence?*
3. *What are the strengths of the author's argument?*
4. *What are its weaknesses, and how would I address them?*

This is an opportunity for you to develop strong secondary-reading skills, and to become unafraid of challenging a fellow scholar's position in a respectful and reflective way.

TWO REFLECTIONS (ONE PER CITY!)

(1000 WORDS EACH, WRITTEN; 5 MINUTES EACH VIDEO/AUDIO/EQUIVALENT)

This term we will travel together to Toronto and Detroit, and you'll spend time on a self-guided field trip around London's arts centres. After each field trip, make some notes; you may write them down, record them as audio or video, or use another medium.

Now, choose TWO of these three cities to focus on for your two formal reflections.

Next, select one of the readings *we have worked on together in class*, and use that reading to shape your initial reflections into a “review” of your experience in Toronto/London/Detroit. (Choose a different reading for each reflection paper.)

You may use a formal or an informal tone, but don’t sacrifice criticality in your reflexivity. You may choose to place your urban fieldwork into deep conversation with your chosen reading, or you may choose another route – perhaps making a piece of creative work that refracts what you felt, learned, or saw on the road through the prism of your chosen reading. (Consider the essays by Carlson, Whybrow, or Solnit on our schedule as potential models here. Or surprise me!)

FINAL PROJECT

(10 MINUTE PITCH + 10 PAGES [3000 WORDS] OF DOCUMENTATION)

By the end of this term we will have learned much about the machinations of making art and culture in the “creative” global city. For your final project, **YOU** will take the reins as an urban culture worker and design a new arts festival for a city of your choice – maybe your home city, maybe the city you have longest lived in, or maybe our very own London, Ontario (which I call LonON, for short). Your city may be small, or large, or in-between.

In order to do this well you will need to spend some time doing the kind of “field work” we will do in Toronto, London, and Detroit on our field trips. Scout local venues, signature events, and teach yourself a bit about the economic engines that keep your city afloat. This field work may be done in person, or virtually, but do not skip this step.

Consider:

1. *What festivals does your city already have? Which need replacing, rethinking? What’s missing?*
2. *To whom will your envisioned festival appeal? How will it be funded? What sort of social, economic, or political labour should it DO?*
3. *How will it put your city on the “global city” map, or help energize your city’s existing “creative city” tendencies? OR, will it turn away from that map and try to hack the entire “Creative City” enterprise?*

Your final project will then be completed in two parts:

- ✓ During our second last class of the term, on 1 December, you will pitch your festival to the rest of us, as though we were city hall representatives and you an arts worker from the community seeking funding. We will ask you questions; your presentation should be clear, professional, and your responses well informed.
- ✓ Approximately 10 days later you will hand in your documentation, which will include your pitch material (any/all media welcome!) as well as a critical analysis of your festival plan.

Your pitch should sell the genuine value (social, cultural, economic) of your proposed festival, but the documentation component of this task gives you the room to play both scholar and culture worker (yes, at the same time). In it, you should examine the strengths *but also the weaknesses* of the event you have envisioned by deploying some of the scholarly readings and analytical tools we have developed together over the term. (Your documentation should include a bibliography of your research, both scholarly and popular.)

Do not be afraid in your documentation both to sell your festival *and* to bear witness to its flaws – to explore its economic and social strengths while also critiquing its potentially negative impacts. ***This mix is the whole point of the exercise.***

If you wish, you may work in pairs or small groups for this final project. If you so choose, both your presentation and your documentation must be joint; you will both receive the same grade for all joint materials.

PEER TEACHING EXERCISE

Once this term you will work in pairs to lead the class in an active-learning exercise based on one of our readings. The goal: to help you to try out different ways to connect students with challenging material.

For that reason, I ask you NOT to prepare a lecture-style statement for this task; you should of course have thoughts about your reading you would like to draw out, but the point of this exercise is not to tell us what they are, but to help us make discoveries.

Here's how the task will work:

- ✓ By Monday at NOON of your week to teach, you will post to OWL a provocation (maybe a question, maybe something else...) based on ONE of the readings for that week. **Please let Kim know at least a week in advance which reading you will focus on.**
- ✓ Your classmates will offer preliminary reflections on your provocation on OWL over the following 24 hours. You should read and note these reflections, and be prepared to engage with them in class.
- ✓ You will then prepare a learning exercise to help us explore your provocation thoroughly.
 - There are lots of exercises to choose from; you've likely encountered plenty of group learning activities as undergraduate students or TAs already. To help, you might want to consult some research on "active learning" or the "flipped classroom" – the Centre for Teaching and Learning at Weldon can assist with this, or (of course!) you can have a chat with Kim to discuss some options.
 - Your exercise need not be complicated, but it should be more than you simply asking everyone, "so, what did you think?"

- ✓ When you come to class on Tuesday, you will run your exercise, and then debrief it to draw out our discoveries. Here, you can incorporate your classmates' preliminary responses as much or as little as you feel will be productive.
- ✓ You will have a total of 45 minutes for your teach. (NOTE: this is actually not a lot of time! Use it with care.)

Clear as mud? Don't worry!

Kim will model this task in our second week, using our first shared reading (Harvie) as fuel. We'll also spend time talking meta-critically about the strengths and weaknesses of the teaching tools Kim will demonstrate, so that you can make informed use of them (and/or related techniques) for your own teach.

PARTICIPATION

It's a seminar: we all have to engage. I will reward you for your keen, prepared engagement. You will demonstrate that engagement by paying attention to the following:

1. Come on time, with your readings complete, each week. I've purposefully made our reading load manageable. If I can do it, you can do it!
2. By noon the day before class (that is, by Monday at noon), there will be a provocation, question, or similar prompt up on OWL. Think about it. Offer some preliminary reflections on it. Write something, upload photos or video, you name it. ***Engage thoughtfully with it. When it's YOUR turn to post a provocation, you're going to want your peers to engage, right?***
3. In class, we will do a bunch of different kinds of exercises, sometimes in smaller break-out groups, sometimes as a whole class, to help us think through the implications of what we are reading and experiencing. Participate actively in these. Don't float through them – they all have a purpose.
4. I do not care if you talk a lot: talking is not the same as participating, and it's definitely not the same as participating effectively. If you are a monopolizer of conversations, check that. Help everyone get into the game! Similarly, if you're super shy, I get it – but push yourself a little. Test your boundaries. It will not kill you to talk sometimes!

Participation is nebulous to judge, and sometimes a real challenge to calibrate. It's one of the hardest things to mark, and in fact is one of the hardest things to do well. Conversely, it's also one of the most important things to learn to do well at university – it is the ultimate transferable skill, the ultimate arbiter of strong citizenship.

Part of your participation grade will be based on my observations of your work in class and online. But part of it will also be self-guided and self-judged.

Your two participation reflections are opportunities to take the measure of your own in-class engagement: your preparedness, punctuality, and attendance; your role as

an active class member; your role as a peer; your role as a student-teacher. These aren't formally graded because they aren't essays; think of them as journal entries, opportunities for you to just sit back and ask yourself some hard questions about what is going well, and what is not going as well as it could do, in your personal participation practice.

Unlike in a typical essay, here you will find space to admit mistakes and talk openly about missteps. The more honest you are with yourself, the better your participation practice will develop – and the higher your participation mark will ultimately be.

C) Assignment Submission Rules

- ✓ All written, audio, and video assignments will be submitted through OWL. If you've made a piece of A/V work that is too big for OWL, upload it to Vimeo, YouTube, or similar, mark it private, and send me the URL via OWL.
- ✓ If you've created a piece that cannot be digitized (for example, a physical art work – it's happened before!), contact Kim well in advance to arrange in-person submission.
- ✓ Late submissions are penalized at 2% per business day.
- ✓ Any requests for extensions or accommodation must be approved in advance, wherever possible, by Matthew Rowlinson (Graduate Chair, English), and requests must be accompanied by medical documentation when appropriate. Incompletes are normally only granted for medical or compelling compassionate reasons. Speak to Leanne Trask if you have questions.
- ✓ Plagiarism is a stupid idea, always. Just say no. Remember: the goal here is that we learn and build ideas as a team, whether they are amazing or flawed or somewhere in between. NO mark is worth foregoing that experience. For more on the consequences of plagiarism at the grad level, see http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf

Week by week schedule

WEEK 1 (8 January)

Hello! + WTF is Urban Performance Studies?

Intros all around. Housekeeping; the basics. Thinking about methodologies. Creating some outcomes and objectives for our time together.

WEEK 2 (15 January)

Introducing the performing City

Readings:

1. Harvie, *Theatre & The City* (on reserve at Weldon, or purchase for yourself)

***Peer teach by Kim**

WEEK 3 (22 January)

What is a 'global city'? (Part 1 – suburbs and spectacles)

Readings:

1. de Certeau, "Walking in the City"
2. Saunders, "On the Edge of the City"

***Peer teach by ?**

WEEK 4 (29 January)

What is a 'global city'? (Part 2 – creative/class/colonial politics)

Readings:

1. Florida, "The Creative Class"
2. Massey, "The Future of our World?"
3. Chattopadhyay, "Urbanism, Colonialism, and Subalternity"

***Peer teach by ?**

WEEK 5 (5 February)

Case study #1: Toronto, city of culture

Readings:

1. McKinnie, "Institutional Frameworks: Theatre, State, and Market in Modern Urban Performance"
2. Carter, "Decolonizing the Gathering Place"
3. Knowles, "Multicultural Text, Intercultural Performance"

***Peer teach by ?**

WEEK 6 (12 February)

Today we will travel together to Toronto to visit the Theatre Centre, Native Earth Performing Arts, and Buddies in Bad Times theatres, and to see Ravi Jain's *Prince Hamlet* at Canadian Stage. Travel arrangements TBA, but please seek accommodation from other professors/instructors/supervisors so that you are free to leave no later than noon. Speak to Kim if you have a difficult conflict.

WEEK 7 is READING WEEK

WEEK 8 (26 February)

Case study #2: The Other London

Self-guided walking tour, during class time, of downtown LonON and "East of Adelaide" featuring stops at the Grand Theatre, TAP Centre for Creativity, and Old East's Aeolian Hall – details TBA.

WEEK 9 (5 March)

Performing Public Memories

Readings:

1. Carlson, "Looking, Listening, and Remembering"
2. Whybrow, "Losing Venice: Conversations in a Sinking City"

***Today's class will feature no peer-teach exercise; instead, we'll spend the first half discussing the take-aways from our recent field trips.**

WEEK 10 (12 March)

Case study #3: Saving Detroit

Readings:

1. Hamera, “Domestic(-ated) Desires, Tanked City”
2. Solnit, “Detroit Arcadia”

***Peer teach by ?**

WEEK 11 (19 March)

Today we travel together to Detroit to investigate our third case study in depth. Our hosts will be Stefanie Cohen and Corey Gearhart of Lightbox Performance. Again, please arrange for leave from other Tuesday commitments; if there is a preference/appetite for moving our session to Friday, we can also discuss that option.

WEEK 12 (26 March)

Performance, politics, and urban social change

Readings:

1. Bennett, Susan. “China’s Global Performatives” (in *Performance and the Global City*)
2. Martinez, “Distrito Federal: ‘Global City, Ha, Ha, Ha!’” (in *Performance and the Global City*)

WEEK 13 (2 April) – final project “pitch day”!

WEEK THE LAST (9 April)

What have been the take-aways? What questions remain? Let’s enjoy some cake, debrief our shared readings and discoveries, and ask some meta-critical questions. What outcomes did we achieve? When and where did we miss the mark? What would you change, if we had to do it all again? This is the last phase of the peer-teaching labour we’ve undertaken this year: the hard work of assessing how it all went, as a team.

List of Readings (with complete citations)

Looking for an article for your position paper? Have a look inside any of the books listed in BOLD.

Bennett, Susan. “China’s Global Performatives: ‘Better City, Better Life.’” ***Performance and the Global City***. Ed. D.J. Hopkins and Kim Solga. Performance Interventions. Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2013. 78-96.

Carlson, Marla. “Looking, Listening, and Remembering: Ways to Walk New York after 9/11.” *Theatre Journal* 58 (2006): 395-416.

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.

Chattopadhyay, Swati. "Urbanism, Colonialism and Subalternity." *Urban Theory Beyond the West*. Ed. Tim Edensor and Mark Jayne. London: Routledge, 2012. 75-92.

De Certeau, Michel. "Walking in the City." *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Trans. Steven F. Rendall. Berkeley: University of California P, 1984. 91-110.

Florida, Richard. "The Creative Class." *The Rise of the Creative Class, Revisited*. New York: Basic Books 2011 (2002). 35-62.

Hamera, Judith. "Domestic(-ated) Desires, Tanked City." *TDR* 58.4 (2014): 12-22.

Harvie, Jen. *Theatre & The City*. Theatre&. Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009.

Knowles, Ric. "Multicultural Text, Intercultural Performance." *Performing the Intercultural City*. Ann Arbor: U Michigan P, 2017. 23-43.

Martinez, Ana. "Distrito Federal: Global City, 'Ha, Ha, Ha!'" *Performance and the Global City*. Ed. D.J. Hopkins and Kim Solga. Performance Interventions. Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2013. 183-201.

Massey, Doreen. "The Future of our World?" *World City*. London: Polity Press, 2007. 1-25.

McKinnie, Michael. "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. 17-33.

Saunders, Doug. "On the Edge of the City." *Arrival City: The Final Migration and Our Next World*. Toronto: Vintage Canada, 2011. 5-36.

Solnit, Rebecca. "Detroit Arcadia: Exploring the Post-American Landscape." *Harper's* July 2007: 65-73.

Whybrow, Nicholas. "Losing Venice: Conversations in a Sinking City." *Performance and the Global City*. Ed. D.J. Hopkins and Kim Solga. Performance Interventions. Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2013. 99-119.