

Indigenous Theatre and Performance Studies
Theatre Studies 3209F (001)
Fall 2017



Inuit Mural Art—one of many forms of contemporary Indigenous storytelling.
Qikiqtani General Hospital, Iqaluit, Nunavut
Photograph: Pauline Wakeham

Instructor: Dr. Pauline Wakeham
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Class Location: Kresge Building Room K103

Class Date/Time: Tuesdays 1:30 – 3:20 p.m.
and Thursdays 1:30 – 2:20 p.m.

Office Hours: Tuesdays from 11:00 a.m. –
1:00 p.m. and Thursdays from 2:45 – 3:45
p.m.

Course Description:

Welcome to Indigenous Theatre and Performance Studies! This course will provide students with an introduction to the innovative and dynamic field of Indigenous performance cultures. In particular, we will focus upon how Indigenous theatre and performance emerge from long histories and practices of embodied oral storytelling unique to Indigenous communities. Studying the work of Indigenous artists from across Turtle Island (North America), we will learn about the diversity of Indigenous nations as well as the particular lands and socio-historical contexts that inform their work. In so doing, we will consider how Indigenous artistic practices express the complexity and vitality of First Peoples' cultural imaginations and ways of knowing.

Prerequisite(s) for TS 3209:

At least 60% in 1.0 of English 1020E or 1022E or 1024E or 1035E or 1036E or both English 1027F/G and 1028F/G, or permission of the Department.

Antirequisite(s):**University Policy:**

Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enrol in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

Course Objectives:

- To introduce students to and/or enrich their knowledge of Indigenous theatre and performance on Turtle Island.
- To consider how the study of Indigenous theatre and performance is enhanced by an attention to Indigenous ways of knowing and, in particular, Indigenous practices of storytelling and their vital importance to many Indigenous communities.
- To consider the relationship between socio-historical contexts and Indigenous cultural production.
- To assist students in honing their critical thinking skills through in-class application of such skills to readings of dramatic texts and live performances.
- To foster the development and honing of students' academic writing skills through the provision of feedback on the writing process as well as the finished product.
- To foster the development of students' distinctive intellectual voices through the practice of engaged listening and participation in dramatic performances and class discussion.

Course Materials:

Tara Beagan, *Dreary and Izzy* (Playwrights Canada Press)

Kevin Loring, *Where the Blood Mixes* (Talon Books)

Yvette Nolan, *The Unplugging* (Playwrights Canada Press)

Custom Course Book (Available at the University Bookstore)

Please note that all texts listed on the syllabus with weblinks are not included in the Course Book. Texts listed with URLs may be accessed directly online.

Methods of Evaluation:

Assignment	% of Grade	Due Date	Length
Group Performance and Reflection Paper	25%	Per schedule	3 pp.
Dramatic Text Analysis	25%	November 30 th	6 pp.
Overall Class Participation	15%	Ongoing	n/a
Final Exam	35%	TBA	3 hrs

Department Policy Regarding Final Grades:

A student must receive a passing grade for both term work and the final examination in order to receive a passing grade for the course. This applies to all courses in all programs offered by the department. Students whose term and final exam grades average 50% or above, even though one of the two is a failure, shall receive a default grade of 48%.

Please note: The department of English & Writing Studies does not release final grades. All undergraduate grade reports will be available online from the Office of the Registrar.

Students are fully responsible for looking at and being familiar with the information posted on the department website at

<http://www.uwo.ca/english/undergraduate/info%20for%20students.html#grade>.

Class Participation:

- The success of our course hinges upon building a learning, performance, and conversation community together. For this reason, regular attendance is a vital part of enrollment in our course. My hope is also that this course becomes a special time and place in your regular weeks—a time and place for dialogue, laughter, and community—that you won't want to miss.
- Repeated absences from class may result in a formal request to be debarred from writing the final exam, as set out in the Western Academic Calendar: "Any student who, in the opinion of the instructor, is absent too frequently from class . . . will be reported to the Dean (after due warning has been given). On the recommendation of the Department concerned, and with the

permission of the Dean, the student will be debarred from taking the regular examination.” Debarment from writing the final exam automatically results in failure of the course.

- The course participation mark will be based on students’ attendance and punctuality, thoughtful engagement with course readings, relevant and insightful contributions to class discussion, and respectful engagement with the ideas of other classmates. Preparation for each class involves reading all assigned materials *at least* once and *preferably twice* before class, making notes about these texts (underlining or marking key passages, reflecting on your responses to the texts, etc.), and preparing potential questions or comments to raise in class.
- A key part of being prepared for and ready to participate in class is bringing hard copies of the assigned readings for the week. We will be working with these texts closely in class discussion, so please bring them with you.
- Additionally, because this course involves collaborative learning and performance, a priority will be placed on students’ oral contributions to performance “talk-backs” (or discussion and analysis of in-class performances) and to general class conversation and learning.

Assignment #1: Dramatic Text Analysis (6 pages, double-spaced)

- This assignment involves the writing of an analytic scholarly essay that demonstrates strong critical thinking skills, the development of an original argument, and the careful utilization of textual details or “evidence” to support the contentions made in the thesis statement.
- Essays should include a clear and focused thesis statement followed by the coherent and sustained development of the argument throughout the paper.
- The heart of the project: Students are asked to select one dramatic text on the course reading list and to analyze how it works to gesture toward a performative beyond. In other words, dramatic texts are rarely the complete “act” in and of themselves—they are written with attention to how text will be transformed into living performance via actors, stage directions, lighting, sound, etc.
- Students are also welcome to reference in their analysis insights gleaned from attending the readings at Native Earth Performing Arts, the class visits with actors and playwrights, or the class performances of plays we have studied.
- Here are some potential questions to get you started:
 - 1.) How does the dramatic text enact certain forms of political work? In other words, how does the dramatic text solicit the audience in ways that prompt them to re-think, re-imagine, or confront elements of colonialism and its effects? How does the dramatic text enact social consciousness-raising? What are its unique methods for doing so?
 - 2.) How does the dramatic text encode and create spaces for ways of knowing and ways of telling stories that are unique to particular Indigenous communities’ cultural practices?
 - 3.) How does the dramatic text utilize the features listed in questions 1 and 2 to address issues such as re-membling and re-visioning history from Indigenous perspectives, re-framing contemporary political issues, re-framing gender and sexuality from specific Indigenous cultural

perspectives, etc.? In other words, how might you frame the questions raised in 1 and 2 around a particular topic to develop a more focused, in-depth analysis of a dramatic text?

- Students are not required to consult secondary sources for this paper. A Works Cited denoting the dramatic text should be included (the primary or likely the only source).

Assignment #2: Group Performance and Individual Reflection Paper

- Please note: while there are two parts to this assignment, each student will receive a single grade that takes into account both their work in developing and presenting the group performance and their individual reflection paper about the process.

a.) The Group Performance (max. time is 30 minutes)

- Early in the semester, students will have the opportunity to create their own “Performance Clusters”—collaborative group units in which they will work to develop a group performance of a scene/excerpt from one of the plays we are studying in class.

- The Performance Cluster will be responsible for working together outside of class time to choose the scene they would like to bring to life through performance. This is a weighty responsibility as we will be working with the art of Indigenous peoples—art that has a long history, in Euro-Western culture, of being simultaneously dismissed and appropriated and of being treated without the care it deserves. In engaging in group performances, our goal will be to think carefully and sensitively about the stories being told, as well as our different relationships and responsibilities to those stories, based on our own subject positions.

In doing so, the Cluster should think reflexively about the following representational choices:

- 1.) Why are they choosing to perform this particular scene?
- 2.) What decisions informed their casting for that scene?
- 3.) What decisions are they making in terms of costume (if any), stage layout, music or sound effects, etc.? In making these choices, please think carefully and with sensitivity about the Euro-Western history of representing Indigenous peoples in homogenizing or stereotypical ways. Then consider how Indigenous theatre and performance studies can work to disrupt stereotypes and restore a sense of care and respect to Indigenous stories.
- 4.) What messages are they attempting to convey in the way they have chosen to bring the scene to life through performance?

- The Performance Cluster will then perform the scene in class and be prepared to answer questions about the items listed above, as well as many other representational choices, during a “talk-back” session that will occur after the performance.

b.) The Individual Reflection Paper (3 pages, double-spaced)

- Exactly one week after the in-class performance, due at the beginning of class, each student member of the Performance Cluster will submit their own 3-page, double-spaced reflection paper discussing the process of developing and presenting the group performance.

- The reflection papers should be written in proper paragraph form and should address the following topics:

- 1.) What did you learn from the process of developing a group performance of a scene from the play?
- 2.) What representational choices did you think were the most significant/impactful for shaping the meaning of the scene?
- 3.) If you could do anything differently about the performance, what would it be and why?
- 4.) What has this process taught you about performance, community, and/or Indigenous history, politics, or art?

- If you do not cite secondary scholarship or dramatic texts, there is no Works Cited required for this assignment. However, if you choose to cite from the play or from one of our critical readings (which could be a great way of making your paper more specific and precise), please include a Works Cited.

Important Information Regarding Written Assignments:

- All written assignments are due at the beginning of class on the scheduled due date. Assignments handed in after the commencement of class on the scheduled due date will be assessed a late penalty of 1%. Any assignments submitted after the due date will be assessed a late penalty (2% per day, including weekends). Assignments must be submitted either directly to the Professor at the beginning of class or submitted as late and handed in to the secure essay drop-off box outside the English Department office (Arts and Humanities Building Room 2G02).
- Extensions will only be granted with medical certification or under other extenuating circumstances and should, when possible, be arranged with the Professor in advance. For further information, please see the section on “Academic Accommodation” in this syllabus.
- All assignments should be submitted on 8.5” x 11” paper, with 1” margins, double-spaced, and in Times New Roman 12-point font. Please do not use extra spaces between each paragraph. Please staple your essay pages together rather than using binders or plastic report covers. Essays must be submitted in paper copy. Email, computer disks, and faxes will not be accepted.
- Please retain one hard copy and one electronic version of every assignment you submit. As well, please retain all marked assignments until you receive your final grade for the course.

Important Information Regarding In-Class Assignments:

- For in-class assignments such as group performances and group talk-back leadership, students must make every effort to attend on the day they are scheduled to present.
- For obvious reasons, extensions cannot be granted for these assignments. Make-up assignments for missed performances will only be granted when legitimate documentation is presented to the Academic Counselling Office. The instructor reserves the right to set the terms of the make-up assignment.

Final Examination:

The final exam will feature two types of questions:

- 1) **Identifying Quotations:** Students will be asked to identify short quotations excerpted from texts studied throughout the term. In proper paragraph form, students should provide the title of the text as well as the full name of the author. Following that, the written response should explain the significance of the particular quotation to the key themes, concepts, and/or arguments developed in the text. Marks will be assigned for the clarity, detail, and insight of the response, as well as attention to spelling and grammar.
- 2) **Formal Essay Responses:** Essays must have a clear thesis statement and structure consisting of an introduction, multiple body paragraphs, and a conclusion. Marks will be awarded for the strength and originality of the argument; for the ability to mobilize textual evidence to support the argument; and for clarity, coherence, style, and grammar.

Additional University Policies:**Accommodation:**

- Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments worth 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. 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

Academic Offences:

- Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a scholastic offence, at

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

Plagiarism:

- It is crucial that students create all assignments (both written and oral) using their own ideas and their own words. If you use a concept, idea, or phrasing from another source, it is imperative to signal the direct borrowing of words with quotation marks and to register the borrowing of ideas and concepts via the use of explanatory footnotes and parenthetical citations.

- When in doubt, please cite your source rather than leaving it out!

- Please also note that the same standards of proper crediting of sources apply to **oral presentations**. Plagiarism is a serious academic offence.

Plagiarism Checking:

- 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.

- For English Department regulations regarding term work, exams, faculty office hours, academic relief (appeals, petitions, complaints), and other matters, please refer to the "Information for Students" on the departmental website at <http://www.uwo.ca/english/undergrd/info.html>.

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/>

Student Development Centre <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.

Accessibility Options:

- Please contact the course instructor if you require material in an alternate format or if you require any other arrangements to make this course more accessible to you. You may also wish to contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at 661-2111 x82147 for any specific question regarding an accommodation. Information regarding accommodation of exams is available on the Registrar's website: http://www.registrar.uwo.ca/examinations/accommodated_exams.html.

Class Schedule:

Please note that the Professor reserves the right to make minor changes to the class schedule during the semester. Any changes at this point would involve only the deletion of a reading from the schedule or a change of date. All changes will be announced in class ahead of the scheduled date where a change would take place.

September 7: Welcome and Introduction

September 12: Introduction to Indigenous Performance Cultures

Drew Hayden Taylor, "Alive and well: Native theatre in Canada"

Floyd Favel Starr, "The artificial tree: native performance culture research, 1991-1996"

Tomson Highway, "On native mythology"

September 14: Introduction to Indigenous Performance Cultures (cont.)

De-ba-jeh-mu-jig Theatre Group, *The Gift*

September 19: Introduction to Indigenous Performance Cultures (cont.)

De-ba-jeh-mu-jig Theatre Group, *The Gift* (cont.)

Jill Carter, "Towards Locating the Alchemy of Convergence in the Native Theatre Classroom,"

doi:10.1353/ctr.2012.0011

- Setting up Performance Clusters

September 21: Introduction to Indigenous Performance Cultures (cont.)

Jill Carter and Erika A. Iserhoff, "Negotiating Tensions betwixt Presence and Absence amidst a Big Sadness: Cultural Reclamation, Reinvention, and Costume Design,"

doi:10.1353/ctr.2012.0072

September 26: Re-Visioning History through Theatre

Daniel David Moses, *Almighty Voice and His Wife*

Yvette Nolan, "The Drum"

September 28: Re-Visioning History through Theatre (cont.)

- Same readings as for September 26

October 3: Performance, Gender, and the Subversion of Stereotypes

Monique Mojica, *Princess Pocahontas and the Blue Spots*

October 5: Performance, Gender, and the Subversion of Stereotypes (cont.)

- Same readings as for October 3

October 10: Fall Reading Week – No Classes

October 12: Fall Reading Week – No Classes

October 17: Performance in Practice Session

- Group performance of a scene from *Princess Pocahontas and the Blue Spots*

October 19: Performance Culture Spotlight: Class Visit With Actor and Playwright Candace Brunette**October 24: Living History: Staging Residential Schools' Ongoing Impacts**

Kevin Loring, *Where the Blood Mixes*

J.R. Miller, "Residential Schools and Reconciliation" (available here:

<http://activehistory.ca/2013/02/new-paper-by-j-r-miller-residential-schools-and-reconciliation/>)

- Watch the introductory video to a series of articles on the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement (IRSSA) on APTN's website here:

<http://aptnnews.ca/2017/06/19/aptn-investigates-indian-residential-schools-settlement-agreement/>

October 26: Living History: Staging Residential Schools' Ongoing Impacts (cont.)

- Same readings as for October 24

October 31: Performance in Practice Session

- Group performance of a scene from *Where the Blood Mixes*

November 2: Performance Culture Spotlight: Indigenous Hip Hop Culture

- In preparation for the class, please spend some time on the Beat Nation website:

<http://www.beatnation.org/index.html>

November 7: "The Things We'll Do For Love": Enacting Kinship

Tara Beagan, *Dreary and Izzy*

November 9: "The Things We'll Do For Love": Enacting Kinship (cont.)

- Same readings as for November 7

November 14: "The Things We'll Do For Love": Enacting Kinship (cont.)

- Same readings as for November 7

November 16: Class Cancelled for Trip to Native Earth Performing Arts in Toronto

- As part of NEPA's Weesageechak 30 Festival, we will travel to NEPA on November 16th to view readings of the following new works:

"Bury" by Alanis King

"White Noise" by Taran Kootenayoo

"The Weekend" by Moogahlin Performing Arts (Australian First Peoples)

"Bad Indian" by Brefny Caribou

November 21: Staging Life After the Apocalypse

Yvette Nolan, *The Unplugging*

November 23: Staging Life After the Apocalypse (cont.)

- Same readings as for November 21

November 28: Class Visit with Playwright and Actor Monique Mojica**November 30: Course Review and Exam Preparation**

Dramatic Text Analysis Due

December 5: Course Review and Exam Preparation**December 7: Course Review and Exam Preparation**