Western
Arts&Humanities

Department of English & Writing Studies

Understanding Performance – Draft syllabus
Theatre Studies 2201G (001)
Winter 2019

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. Western values the significant historical and contemporary contributions of local and regional First Nations and all of the Original peoples of Turtle Island (North America).

Instructor: Dr M.J. Kidnie
Email: mjkidnie@uwo.ca
Office hours: M & W 2:30-3:30 pm and by arrangement, UC 4420

Course Location: AHB 1B08

Course Date/Time: Mon 10:30 am-12:30 pm & Wed 11:30 am-12:30 pm

Prerequisites: At least 60% in 1.0 of any 1000-level or above "E" or combination of two 1000-level or above "F/G" courses from any department in the following Faculties: Arts and Humanities, School of Humanities (Brescia), Information and Media Studies (FIMS), or Music; or from any of the following additional Departments: Anthropology, English (King's), English and Cultural Studies (Huron), History (Main and Affiliates), Philosophy (Affiliates), Political Science (Main and Affiliates), the Religious Studies (Affiliates), or permission of the Department.

Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll 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 Description

This course will equip students with the primary tools necessary to conduct basic performance analysis. From costumes to lighting and sound effects to textual alterations, students will learn to analyze a production while exploring the social, political, and aesthetic meanings of the required texts. Much of our work will be pursued through hands-on engagement with live and archived theatre: there are four trips outside of classtime interspersed throughout the term in which you are required to participate. Two are Wednesday evening shows here in London at the Grand Theatre, one is a Saturday evening performance at the Lighthouse Festival Theatre in Port Dover, and one is a trip to the Stratford Festival archives.

Objectives:
By the end of the course, successful students will be able to:

- Recognize and analyze the component parts of live or archived performance;
- Use specialized terminology relevant to the study of performance;
- Engage with scripts as blueprints for performance and theorize that interpretive strategy;
- Think critically about the reception of performance;
- Locate and search library databases to find critical and theoretical analyses relevant to a topic of study;
- Write an essay about a piece of theatre that contains an effective thesis

Course Materials

- August Wilson, *Fences* (available at the bookstore)
- 3 theatre tickets, which you order online or by phone – see booking instructions below
- There are six articles (one is an extract from Atwood's *Penelopiad*) that are required reading for this course, your knowledge of which will be assessed through in-class tests. These articles are posted under "Resources" on our OWL page.

Booking tickets to Taylor's *Cottagers and Indians* at the Lighthouse Festival Theatre, Port Dover (Saturday 26 January, 8pm):

- Tickets are available for $23 (student discount)
- Call 1-888-779-7703 to pay by credit card
- You must book by January 11 in order to guarantee availability. If this isn't possible for some reason, please speak directly to me.

Booking tickets to *Penelopiad* at the Grand Theatre, London (Wednesday 6 February, 7:30pm):

- PRICE: $20 (includes HST and CIF)
- Applicable Seating: A zone, subject to availability
- Maximum ticket limit: 1
- Tickets can be purchased online, by phone at 519-672-880, or at the box office 471 Richmond St.
- PROMO CODE: UWO2019
- Tickets are available for pick up only at the box office and require a valid student I.D.

Booking tickets to *Fences* at the Grand Theatre, London (Wednesday 20 March, 7:30pm):

- PRICE: $20 (includes HST and CIF)
- Applicable Seating: A zone, subject to availability
- Maximum ticket limit: 1
- Tickets can be purchased online, by phone at 519-672-880, or at the box office 471 Richmond St.
- PROMO CODE: UWO2019
- Tickets are available for pick up only at the box office and require a valid student I.D.

Submission of Assignments

All submission dates are listed below. In case of seeming discrepancies, the dates below will be taken as final.

Written coursework will be submitted the day it is due at the beginning or end of lecture. You must also submit written coursework on the due date through our OWL website. OWL will confirm the day and time of submission. Please note that in case of dispute about when your essay was submitted, the OWL submission date will be taken as final.

Late (or early) submissions may be handed in at the Department of English dropbox, which is accessed from the hall outside UC 2401. The secretary will date-stamp your work and put it in my pigeonhole. Anything submitted to the dropbox before 8:30am will be date-stamped with the *previous* day's date. You must also submit any late or early work through the OWL website, which will also provide you with a date-stamp. Please note that in case of uncertainty, the online OWL date-stamp will be taken as final.

Late Paper Policy:
If you submit a paper after the due date, the paper will be counted as late. The grade will be reduced by a penalty of two marks (2%) for each calendar day that it is late. Note that when a paper is late, every day counts (including weekends), but that the arrangements for date-stamping essays in the Department of English essay box are accepted for late essays. Extensions on any assignment will only be considered if supported by a request for accommodation sent by students' Academic Counsellors in their home faculty (see below, "Accommodation").

Methods of Evaluation (assignment descriptions are below)
The grade for the course will be arrived at as follows:

3 performance analyses:
- Analysis 1: 15% (1000 words) – due Friday 31 January
- Analysis 2: 25% (1500 words) – due Friday 15 February
- Analysis 3: 25% (1500 words) – due Monday 8 April

In-class group archive presentation: 20% (20 min) – due April 1 or April 3
- A component of this grade will be based on participation, which will factor in group- and self-assessment of each group member's contribution

6 in-class tests: 6 x 2.5% = 15%

Plagiarism:
Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea or passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence. All instances of plagiarism will be reported to the Chair of Undergraduate Studies for adjudication.

Additional Information
Laptops and Cell phones:
I do not permit the use of laptops or cell phones in lectures. Students may tape-record lectures if they have difficulty taking notes by hand – feel free to talk to me about this option outside of class.

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 https://www.uwo.ca/english/undergraduate/Student%20Information.html.

Assignment Descriptions

Performance Analyses:
[Live performance is] an event for that moment in time, for that [audience] in that place – and it's gone. Gone without a trace. There was no journalist; there was no photographer; the only witnesses were the people present; the only record is what they retained.
—Peter Brook

We will be seeing three live productions this winter. The purpose of these analyses is to strengthen your critical analysis of live performance. You will write an essay-style analysis of each of the three live performances we will see as a group on this course. The first is 1000 words and worth 15%; the subsequent two analyses are 1500 words and worth 25%. The emphasis is on the staging itself, but you are required to build into your first analysis production information available in the theatre program and, if relevant, on the theatre's website. For your second and third analyses you are required to consult all available reviews, production information available in the theatre program, and production information available on the theatre's website.

Whether or not you liked the production is not especially relevant. This sort of evaluative judgement will probably emerge over the course of your essay, but the primary emphasis must be on *analysis*. In particular, focus on one or two production choices that you consider especially important in terms of the company's staging. You might be struck by costuming decisions, lighting and sound effects, striking gestures or unexpected emphases introduced by actors that introduced a reading of the play that hadn't occurred to you – the list of production choices to which you might attend is endless. In your essay, describe the production choice(s) concisely, and then analyse how it or they shaped a certain interpretation of the action, either in terms of the overall action, or in that particular scene. You might analyze the choices in terms of the tone of the production (happy, melancholy), power dynamics between characters on stage, individual characterisations, homoerotic tensions, the treatment of revenge – again, the potential interpretive significances are endless.

Your essay will be graded according to the following criteria:

- An ability to notice and build into your analysis significant production details;
- An ability to construct an argument that analyses how these staging choices shaped a particular interpretation;
- An ability to communicate your insights effectively: I will be looking for grammatically correct sentences, coherent essay structure, and careful presentation (no typos, titles italicized, pages numbered, essay titled, footnotes and bibliography presented according to MLA guidelines, etc).

I would recommend taking a notepad and pen into the theatre with you, so you can jot down striking details as they occur: you might otherwise have trouble remembering how exactly a scene or moment was played. You should also keep the theatre programme that you'll be given when you enter, as it will tell you who played which parts, who directed the show and wrote the music for it, and perhaps also provide some insight into what the company was trying to achieve. We'll discuss each of the productions in class.

In-class Archive Presentation:
You will be divided into four groups of five or four students. Each group will be assigned a staging of *Hamlet* at the Stratford Festival (1976, 1994, 2000, 2008) which you will research and on which you will present.

Before going to the archives, each group will learn as much about their staging as possible from available materials (print journals such as *Shakespeare Survey* which reviewed the Stratford season in its first few decades; newspaper reviews archived online; peer-reviewed performance articles searchable on the MLA database and World Shakespeare Bibliography; stills, videos, and trailers; free online websites including stratfordfestival.ca and https://archives.stratfordfestival.ca/AIS/, and any other sources you may locate).

What seems to have been remarkable, controversial, or otherwise of interest about this particular production? As a group, identify a few potential research questions relating to this staging. What more do you *want* to know about this show in order to answer this question, or potentially push it further? Again as a group, identify a few likely scenes that might help you develop and advance a thesis about this production (these are the scenes on which you'll focus your efforts in the archives).

Once in the archives, study the remnants and fragments of your production with your research questions in mind. Once you get a feel for the materials, focus on one of your questions (one that the archives speak to particularly well). Come prepared with paper and pencil (or laptop), a reliable copy of *Hamlet* in which to record production notes, and be ready to photograph materials that the archives will give you permission to photograph.

Your 20-minute presentation will be in three parts. First, you will document the materials you were able to locate prior to going to the Stratford archives, and reflect on the questions they raised. You will identify the research question your group set out for itself. Second, you will offer a reflective account of what you found in the archives relating to your staging, their usefulness (or not?) to your research, and note any challenges you met with over the course of the day. Finally, you will develop an analysis of this staging that is directed specifically towards your research question and which draws on the specific materials you found in the archives. What questions were provoked by the archival materials that weren't prompted by the preliminary research you undertook?

Your presentation should be supported with visual aids (slides and/or handout); these slides must include bibliographical information for the reviews and research materials you located prior to your work at the archives. These materials will be uploaded to the OWL website after your presentation. Your grade will be based on your group performance on the day, the visual aids that survive the performance, and the participation input provided through group- and self-assessment.

Six In-Class Tests:
Short comprehension assessments based entirely on the day's assigned reading.

Timetable
This class outline is subject to change. Students are expected to stay abreast of coursework through regular attendance at class.

JANUARY
7 Introduction to course
9 The language of theatre

14 Performance Analysis: Framing the Event. FIRST TEST: Marvin Carlson, "How Do Theatres Mean?", in *Places of Performance: The Semiotics of Theatre Architecture* (Ithaca, 1989), pp. 1-13.
16 Framing the Event

21 Performance Analysis: Reading the Bodies. SECOND TEST: Elaine Aston and George Savona, "Semiotics of Performance," in *Theatre as Sign-System: A Semiotics of Text and Performance* (London and New York, 1991), pp. 99-122.

23 Reading the Bodies

Saturday 26 January – Drew Hayden Taylor, *Cottagers and Indians*, in performance at The Lighthouse Theatre, Port Dover, 8pm. Q&A with Artistic Director.

28 Performance Analysis: Reading Visual and Spatial Elements. THIRD TEST: Arnold Aronson, *Looking into the Abyss: Essays on Scenography* (Ann Arbor, 2005), pp. 1-9, 97-113.
30 Reading Visual and Spatial Elements.

First performance analysis due Friday 31 January.

FEBRUARY
4 FOURTH TEST: Selections from Margaret Atwood, *The Penelopiad* (published online, with permission, by Nightwood Theatre in conjunction with their 2012 staging).
6 Atwood, *The Penelopiad*.

Wednesday 6 February – *The Penelopiad*, Grand Theatre, London, 7:30pm. "Speak-Easy" immediately following performance.

11 In-class discussion and analysis of *The Penelopiad* in performance.
13 Atwood, *The Penelopiad*. Introducing archival research.

Second performance analysis due Friday 15 February.

18-22 READING WEEK

25 Performance Analysis: Scripted Drama. FIFTH TEST: Patrice Pavis, "From Text to Performance," in *Performing Texts*, ed. Michael Issacharoff and Robin F. Jones (Philadelphia, 1988), pp. 86-100. *Hamlet* available online at https://www.folgerdigitaltexts.org/html/Ham.html.
27 Archive trip group preparation.

MARCH
4 Trip to Stratford Festival archives
6 Debrief trip

11 Performance Analysis: Theatre as political space. SIXTH TEST: Joe Kelleher, *Theatre and Politics* (London, 2009), pp. 54-75. August Wilson, *Fences*
13 Wilson, *Fences*

18 Group work on archival presentations. M.J. in Toronto at RSA.
20 Wilson, *Fences*

Wednesday 20 March – *Fences*, Grand Theatre, London, 7:30pm. "Speak-Easy" immediately following performance.

25 In-class discussion and analysis of *Fences* in performance.
27 Group work on presentations

APRIL
1 Archival presentations
3 Archival presentations

8 Cake and course evals!

Third performance analysis due Monday 8 April.

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

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.