

Department of English & Writing Studies
Theatre Studies Program

Forms and Genres: The Modern Context
Theatre Studies 2205G (001)

Winter 2020



Instructor: Dr. Jo Devereux
jdevereu@uwo.ca
UC 4433

Course Location: Arts & Humanities
Building 1B06

Office Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays
9:30-10:30 or by appointment

Course Date/Time: Monday 1:30-2:30pm,
Wednesday 1:30-3:30pm

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 traces developments in playwriting, acting, and playhouse design from the Restoration to the present day. This introductory course will explore the theatrical innovations and political interventions of the work of such dramatists as Aphra Behn, Henrik Ibsen, Anton Chekhov, Sophie Treadwell, Harold Pinter, and Suzan-Lori Parks.

Course Materials

Required Texts (4 Texts):

Aphra Behn, *The Rover* (2nd edition), edited by Anne Russell, Broadview, 1999.

Susannah Centlivre, *The Wonder: A Woman Keeps a Secret*, edited by John O'Brien, Broadview, 2003.

Richard Brinsley Sheridan, *Pizarro*, edited by Selena Couture and Alexander Dick, Broadview, 2017.

The Norton Anthology of Drama, second edition, Volume 2.

Plays to be studied (11 plays, all those from Ibsen to Albee are in *The Norton Anthology of Drama*):

Behn, *The Rover* (1697)

Centlivre, *The Wonder* (1714)

Sheridan, *Pizarro* (1799)

Ibsen, *A Doll House* (1879)

Chekhov, *The Cherry Orchard* (1904)

Glaspell, *Trifles* (1916)

Treadwell, *Machinal* (1928)

Genet, *The Maids* (1947)

Pinter, *The Homecoming* (1964)

Parks, *The America Play* (1994)

Albee, *The Goat* (2002)

Methods of Evaluation

Essay 1, due March 4, 2020: 15%

Essay 2, due April 1, 2020: 25%

Two group scenes, each worth 10%, for a total of 20%, see below for dates

Attendance: 5%

Final Exam, April 2020 (date TBA): 35%

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/Student%20Information.html>.

Attendance:

Regular attendance is expected for all classes. Absenteeism may result in debarment from the final exam and, thus, failure of the course.

Here is the sliding scale that will make up the attendance marking for the course:

Days missed	Grade
0-2	5/5
3-5	4/5
6-7	3/5
8-9	2/5
10	1/5
>10	0/5

Essay Due dates, Late policy, Extensions, Plagiarism

All overdue essays will receive a penalty of 1% per day late.

Essays must follow current MLA format and must include a list of Works Cited at the end (see *MLA Handbook* for details).

Essays must be on works studied in **this** section of the course.

IT IS ADVISABLE TO RETAIN AT LEAST ONE COPY OF THE ESSAY IN THE EVENT OF LOSS OR DAMAGE TO THE ORIGINAL.

Method of Submission: attachments in Word (**NOT PDF**) via OWL

Plagiarism:

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea or a 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 (see Scholastic Offence Policy in the Western Academic Calendar).

Plagiarism Checking:

The University of Western Ontario uses software for plagiarism checking. Students may be required to submit their written work in electronic form for plagiarism checking.

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.

Email Policy:

Email is meant for brief inquiries only. Please allow a day or two for a response. Email received over the weekend will be answered the following week.

Participation/Performance Work (20%):

Each Wednesday, beginning January 22nd, we will forgo the formalities of a traditional university lecture and get down to the business of performance. I will be dividing the class into four groups, and each week you, the students, will run the first hour.

Our performance hour will begin with a scene study presentation by the group designated, for that week, as THE COMPANY.

- It will be the Company's job to stage a scene based on one from the week's play, and to take up roles such as actors, director, dramaturge, and designers. The scenes you perform will be "poor" theatre in the best sense of the word: not a formal, heavily rehearsed performance, although you are free to bring props and costumes as you choose. Your primary task will be to work together to select a specific approach to the scene/play, and then be prepared to defend and explore your choices in class. This "thought work" is *the most important* component of your presentation!
- Those who aren't acting or directing in any given week must contribute behind the scenes, by helping to imagine potential visions for the scene, by imagining a design (be prepared to explain and discuss it!), or by applying dramaturgical (that is, critical, close-reading) skills to the text and then offering options to the actors and/or director.

- I would like each of you to try different roles over the course of the term: if you are shy, challenge yourself to try acting once; if you're a raging extrovert, challenge yourself to pull back a bit and let the quieter members of your group shine.
- The Company will need to read ahead and agree on a scene (or scenes) to perform in advance of their scheduled Wednesdays. You need not clear your scene selection with me in advance, but please choose something that will take approximately 10 minutes to perform.
- Be prepared to meet outside of class for an hour or two, at least a couple of times, before each performance, and establish an informal email discussion list among yourselves in order to hammer out your basic choices and ensure everyone knows their jobs.
- 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 the term, you'll be glad these people are your colleagues; they may even be your friends!
- After each performance, and a short break, 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 class will involve a post-performance "talk-back" or discussion.
- When the week's performance is over, the Company will take their break while the rest of us get into our designated groups. You will be given 10-15 minutes in your group to discuss the performance you've just seen, and to prepare two or three good challenging questions about the Company's performance choices.
- In order to ensure that your group's discussion runs smoothly, each of you will need to take some notes during the Company's performance, bring those notes with you to your group's "huddle," and be prepared to talk about them.
- NOTE that the questions you develop must delve below the surface of what the Company is doing. Colleague-critics are reviewers with a difference: your task is to explore what worked and what didn't, to probe the critical effects of the Company's choices, to offer alternative readings, 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.
- We hope to get a lively discussion going and will bounce from group to group until either our time or your notes are exhausted. Support a strong, engaged class discussion!

Assessment

- Your group work is the core component of your participation grade; you will be judged on the amount of effort you put into the work—NOT on your acting skills—and on your willingness to push yourself in new directions, beyond your comfort zone. Note that you need not play a major role in each presentation: balance your commitments to the group work as needed, but ensure that you are contributing helpfully in some way each time your group is The Company, and that you challenge yourself to contribute during your group's discussions.
- Attendance. One of the keys to doing well at this assignment is attending regularly; the other key is being engaged when you attend. Attendance will be taken. Even if your group is not performing, your attendance is still required and appreciated.

Essay 1: Choose ONE play and write an argumentative essay that focuses on one of the following ten topics listed below. Be sure to narrow and refine your topic so that it is very specific and clear. Do early research on the topic so that you can develop your essay gradually, rather than writing it at the last minute. Engage with at least three secondary sources to help contextualize your argument.

Length: 1500 words

Format: MLA 8th edition for undergraduate research essays

Worth: 15%

Due: March 4, 2020

Possible Topics:

Gender

Violence

Historical context

Staging technique (be specific)

Performance history

Method of Submission: OWL: one attachment in Word (**NOT a PDF**)

Essay 2: Choose TWO different plays from the one you examined in Essay 1. As with the first essay, choose ONE of the broad topics listed above (which you must narrow down very specifically to construct a clear argument). Engage with at least six secondary sources.

Again: do some preliminary research on this topic with reference to the play you are exploring.

You may write more than once on the same topic (for example, Gender), but **make sure you cover TWO different plays from the one you examined in Essay 1.**

Length: 2500 words

Format: MLA 8 for undergraduate research essays

Worth: 25%

Due: Apr.1, 2020

Method of Submission: OWL: one attachment in Word (**NOT a PDF**)

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.

Timetable

Jan.6-8	Introduction
Jan.13-15	Behn, <i>The Rover</i> (1697)
Jan.20-22	Centlivre, <i>The Wonder</i> (1714); Group 1
Jan.27-29	Sheridan, <i>Pizarro</i> (1799); Group 2
Feb.3-5	Ibsen, <i>A Doll House</i> (1879); Group 3
Feb.10-12	Chekhov, <i>The Cherry Orchard</i> (1904); Group 4
Feb.17-19	READING WEEK
Feb.24-26	Glaspell, <i>Trifles</i> (1916)
Mar.2-4	Treadwell, <i>Machinal</i> (1928); Group 1; Essay 1 Due March 4
Mar.9-11	Genet, <i>The Maids</i> (1947); Group 2
Mar.16-18	Pinter, <i>The Homecoming</i> (1964); Group 3
Mar.23-25	Parks, <i>The America Play</i> (1994); Group 4
Mar.30-Apr.1	Albee, <i>The Goat</i> (2002); Essay 2 Due Apr. 1