

# Theatre 3205F: History of Performance Theory Fall 2019 – DRAFT Syllabus

See [Western Academic Timetable](#) for Date/Location

---

## Course Description

Performance is one of the most controversial of human activities – because it is also one of the most mundane, ordinary, and pervasive of human activities. Thinkers around the world and across the span of centuries have fretted over who should be represented on stage and how, over whether those representations are good or bad for us (especially if they are spectacular and fun!), over how audiences should respond to performances they see (with heart or with head?), and much more. The history of performance theory is therefore *a history of debates about what it means to represent and be represented, about who watches and who acts, and most importantly about who decides the answers to those questions.*

History is also not just the past: it is what we live through every day as we watch our present recede in the rearview. So, neither will our class “history” be confined to the past. Our readings will let the past bump up against the present, and they will allow the English and European (standard-issue “history of” places) to bump up against the Asian, African, and American as much as possible. We can’t be comprehensive – not in 13 weeks, alas. But we will try our best to be anti-colonial.

## Meet your Teaching Team!

**Instructor:** Dr Kim Solga ([ksolga@uwo.ca](mailto:ksolga@uwo.ca))

**Kim’s office and hours:** UC 3425; Tuesdays 1-3pm, or by appointment

**NOTE #1:** Kim doesn’t check her 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!

**NOTE #2:** Kim lives in Hamilton, and commutes to campus on Tuesdays and Thursdays. You can *always* request an in-person appointment with Kim on these days, OR you can email Kim a request to meet virtually, via Skype or WhatsApp, on Wednesdays. Please make sure you give Kim plenty of notice in that case!

## Land Acknowledgement

At UWO, we live and work on treaty land, the ancestral homes of several Indigenous nations. As we live and work, we hopefully bear in mind that this place is shared, and that it bears the scars of a difficult and often violent colonial history.

Below is one of Western's official land acknowledgements, drawn from the Indigenous Services website ([indigenous.uwo.ca](http://indigenous.uwo.ca)), followed by one from Kim that she's created for herself. She invites you to create a land acknowledgement of your own; it can take any form you wish, as long as it is both respectful and accurate.

*Indigenous Services [at UWO] would like to acknowledge the history of the Indigenous territory in which Western University operates. We would also like to respect the longstanding relationships of the three local First Nations groups of this land and place in Southwestern Ontario. The Attawandaran (Neutral) peoples once settled this region alongside the Algonquin and Haudenosaunee peoples, and used this land as their traditional beaver hunting grounds. The three current and longstanding Indigenous groups of this geographic region are: (1) The Anishinaabe (also referred to as the Three Fires Confederacy including; Ojibwe, Odawa, and Pottawatami Nations); (2) The Haudenosaunee (also known as the Iroquoian people or Six Nations including Mohawk, Oneida, Cayuga, Onondaga, Seneca, and Tuscorora); (3) The Lenape (also referred to as the Delaware and/or Munsee). The three First Nations communities closest in proximity to Western University are: Chippewa of the Thames First Nation (part of the Anishinaabe); Oneida Nation of the Thames (part of the Haudenosaunee); Munsee-Delaware Nation (part of the Lenape).*

*Kim is a White settler, the first-generation child of German immigrants. She was born in a suburb of Montreal, on the lands of the Haudenosaunee, Huron-Wendat, Kanien'hehá:ka, and Mohawk nations, and grew up in Edmonton, on the lands of the Métis, Tsuu T'ina, and Nēhiyawēwin nations. Today, she lives on Treaty 3 land in Hamilton. That land was traditional to the Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee peoples and is governed by the Dish With One Spoon Wampum.*

### Our course on the web

We will use OWL, but only for the basics: written assignment submission; announcements and messages; returning assignments and logging grades.

For everything else, we will use <https://performancetheoryatwestern.wordpress.com> – *you will want to find and bookmark this site now!*

Kim also writes a teaching blog. Check it out: <http://theactivistclassroom.wordpress.com>

### Course Outcomes

An outcome is a (sometimes abstract) thing we would like to take away from our course, at the end of the term. An objective is a (more concrete) thing we will do to make an outcome happen.

On our first Thursday together (5 September), we will create a set of shared outcomes for our class. Kim will then compile these crowd-sourced outcomes and post them to OWL.

## Required Texts

Our readings will come from three sources:

- a) Daniel Gerould, *Theatre/Theory/Theatre*, (ISBN 978-1557835277; this is in the bookstore, and also on reserve at the library);
- b) A selection of Course Readings available on OWL;
- c) Three plays that I will ask you to read by mid-October, and one of which will become the basis for your final performance project. These plays will be on reserve at the library, or you may locate them elsewhere. They are:
  - a. *Mr Burns: A Post-Electric Play* by Anne Washburn
  - b. *The Unplugging* by Yvette Nolan
  - c. *Winners and Losers* by Marcus Youssef and James Long

We will also be seeing some theatre – because theory is more fun that way! Stay tuned for details!

## Assessment

### The Basics

Your grade in TS3205G will consist of the following parts:

- **Explain, Apply, Extend!** (500 words each; 10% each; 30% total)
- **Five online prompt responses** (2% per response; 10% total)
- **Participation** (includes two 500-word reflections as well as in-class and online evidence of participation, 10%)
- **Write your own theory!** (1500 words, 25%)
- **Final group performance presentation** (10 minutes, 25%)

### The Specifics

#### 1. EXPLAIN, APPLY, EXTEND!

**Length:** 500 words each

**Value:** 10% each, 30% of final grade

**Due:** October 4 (Explain), October 18 (Apply), November 1 (Extend)

**Method of submission:** via OWL

Three times during the term you will select, for yourself, a reading we have discussed/will discuss in class (IE: three responses, three different readings.) You will respond to each of your chosen readings, in turn, using the following prompts.

**EXPLAIN:** Please focus on *explaining* the argument the reading makes. Don't overthink this task; it really is that simple. Explain the argument, as clearly as you can without oversimplifying too much. Catch the key ideas clearly; don't worry about getting EVERYTHING. Decide what seems especially important for the theorist. Explain THAT.

**APPLY:** Please focus on *applying* the argument the reading makes. Can you think of a theatre or performance example that helps to demonstrate the way in which the theory in the reading works? Try to choose an example *other* than one we've discussed together in class – this will help you earn points for originality!

**EXTEND:** Please focus on *extending* the argument the reading makes. What are some of the potential flaws within, or challenges provoked by, the theory the reading works with? What gets missed or left out? Where might we push this theory next?

**Hint:** check the top of the weekly schedule at the end of this outline for more valuable information related to this task.

## 2. FIVE ONLINE PROMPT RESPONSES

**Length:** one link to a piece of work located online, by you, plus one short paragraph explaining why you chose this particular work to share

**Value:** 2% each, 10% of final grade\*

**Due:** throughout the term, by Wednesday evening at 10pm (IE: before Thursday's class, in time that Kim can incorporate your work into her lesson plan!)

**Method of submission:** on the "Apply" page on our Wordpress site, <http://performancetheoryatwestern.wordpress.com>.

\*These responses are not graded. That means, each time you post a response, you earn 2% of your course grade. Do all five of these – meaningfully, please! – and get 10% of your final course grade FREE.

Each week, in hour one of our Thursday class, we will look at potential examples of performance to help "apply" the theory we're exploring that week. YOU will provide these examples, and the more, and more varied, responses we get to the prompt each week, the richer our discussions of the theory will be.

Not everyone needs to respond every week – your goal is to respond five times over the course of the term. Try to space these out; if you leave them all for the end of the term, you may run out of chances, or feel overwhelmed!

To help you on your way, consider these questions:

- *What would this week's theory look like, in practice?*
- *What have I seen – on TV, online, or elsewhere – that might help demonstrate one of this theory's key ideas?*
- *Feel free to be really conventional, OR really creative, in your choices!*

## 3. PARTICIPATION

**Length:** ongoing in class; two (2) 500-word reflections per term

**Value:** 10% of final grade

**Due:** 25 October (complete on your own, upload to OWL), 3 December (complete together in our last class, upload to OWL)

**Method of submission:** hand your reflections in via OWL. The rest of your participation, of course, happens in class and online!

Participation is nebulous to grade. But it is also the most important thing we learn in class: how to engage one another's ideas respectfully, build insight collaboratively, work together productively. When we grade participation, we are taking the measure of our ability to learn to do these things better. So how do we grade participation?

This term, your participation grade is going to rest in significant part on your heartfelt, thoughtful reflection on your own participation practice.

In addition to coming to class, prepared, and engaging in our group activities and discussions, you will prepare two 500-word reflections on your "practice" as a student in our class. (Yes, learning is a practice. We have to keep at it to get better at it!) These will not be graded in a traditional way, and they will be cumulative in nature; that is, you'll be very free to reflect on mistakes you might think you are making, and to address those in your ongoing practice in class.

(The goal isn't for you to "get an A" here – if you are honest with yourself and challenge yourself to develop your learning practice, an A is almost guaranteed! – but rather for you to push yourself to develop stronger participation and teamwork skills.)

After you've handed your first reflection in, via OWL, Kim will invite you to come to her office for a chat about it. This chat will help you identify some areas to work on in the rest of the term, and about which you can write in your final participation reflection, which we will complete together in our last class.

We'll talk a good deal about how to reflect on participation in class, starting in week one; meanwhile, however, you can always use these questions to help you develop your participation reflections:

- *Do I come to class, on time, and prepared? Mostly on time, mostly prepared? Not really on time or prepared? Do I need to improve here, and if so, what can I do to improve?*
- *What is my default participation style? Do I talk a lot? Too much? Do I talk a little, or maybe not at all? Do I listen to what others are saying – really listen? Or do I plan my next comment while others are talking? What about my participation style needs some work?*
- *When we work in groups, how do I contribute to our dynamic? Am I "in charge"? Am I content just to follow along? Am I combative? Am I a diplomat or negotiator? What about my group practice needs some work?*
- *Am I fair and respectful to others online? Do I engage meaningfully or just "react"? Do I try to develop discussion, or score points?*

**A final note on participation grading:** Kim will take your reflections, your comments to her about your participation, as well as what she observes about your participation practice in class, into account in grading you at the end of the term. Her hope is to be able to give everyone 100% for participation! (No, really.) Realistically, though, you'll earn your top marks by honestly engaging with this task – really learning about yourself as a student in class during the term – and also by coming to class, prepared to fully engage, each week.

*There's a rubric for participation, as for all the other tasks in our class, in the "Participation" assignment portal on OWL. Check it out!*

***Please also note that your participation grade is to some extent contingent on class attendance. Each time you miss class without accommodation from your academic counsellors, you will lose 5% of a (genuinely) possible 100% for participation. Please try not to miss class unless it's absolutely necessary – and if it is, please try to let Kim know.***

#### **4. WRITE YOUR OWN THEORY!**

**Length:** 1500 words, or 5-6 minutes of audio/video

**Value:** 25% of final grade

**Due:** Friday November 29

**Method of Submission:** via OWL

**\*As above: you decide your own due date. Kim is VERY happy to accept assignments well ahead of 9 April! Remember that if you leave this to the last minute, you'll probably run into other assignments, finals prep for other classes, STRESS. Maybe don't do that: plan ahead now.**

By the end of this course we will have discovered that performance theory is a living, breathing, evolving thing, and that it takes different forms, and frets about different issues, in different times and places.

For this task, you'll identify an issue (maybe one that we've discussed in class? Maybe not? Maybe one you've been itching to discuss but that hasn't come up?) you'd want to make central to your own theory of performance circa spring 2019. Like other theorists we've read, you'll then identify others who have written about, or in relation to, this issue – and you'll identify what you like or don't like about what they have to say. Then, you'll decide what *more* needs saying, exploring, about this issue – where your "original contribution" to performance theory about this topic might lie.

Think of this as a longer, more deeply engaged version of "Extend!" It can also be creative!

Your final submission can take the form of a regular essay if you wish, but it's also very welcome to read as though written by one of the theorists we've read – or by the one you've invented in your head! (Maybe it's "you", but as imagined by Daniel Gerould!) That is, it can be a kind of manifesto, a treatise, a plea to fellow theorists, or something else. It can be written, or it can be recorded as a piece of audio or video. (FYI, some of Kim's favourites in the past have been theories about YouTube uploaded to YouTube...)

## 5. FINAL GROUP PERFORMANCE PRESENTATION

**Length:** 10 minutes of live performance action

**Value:** 25% of final grade

**Due:** Thursday 21 November (everybody!)

**Method of Submission:** in class

In late October, we will divide into groups for this performance presentation, based on our interest in different plays (see Required Texts, above!). You will then have the month of November to develop a performance presentation based on the play of your choice, in relation to a theorist (or maximum two theorists) of your choice.

Your first job, as a team, will be to thoroughly discuss the play you've been assigned – some of you will not have read it, and you'll need to do that now. Then, you'll need to begin exploring options for pairing your play with a theorist; **your goal will be to decide which theorist (or max two) can help illuminate the issues of interest to you in your play, and vice-versa, leading to insights we might not otherwise have uncovered by just talking, or just reading.**

Your presentation can be based on one scene from the play, multiple intercut scenes, or original work you create that riffs on a scene, or scenes, from the play. Be as creative as you wish! (Last year, one group wrote a musical about internet memes! Ask Kim...)

Not everyone loves to act; that's totally ok! You may want to assign the roles of actor(s), director, playwright, theorist, technical director, or some combination of these in order to make sure the workload is evenly distributed, and everyone is participating in ways that are enjoyable for them, and useful to the group.

**Everyone will present their work on Thursday, 21 November, in class.** After each presentation there will be a 10-minute break, during which the rest of the class will discuss what they observed and develop questions to ask the group that has just performed; then, there will be a 10-minute talkback with members of that group.

**Marking creative work is hard!** That's why we will develop a shared marking rubric for this assignment, together in class, in the middle of November.

### Three key protocol notes for assignments

#### One: RUBRICS

Every assignment above has (or, in the case of #5, will have) a rubric that Kim uses for marking. The rubric tells you what an “A” assignment, a “B” assignment, a “C” assignment, and a “D” assignment looks like. Find these on OWL, in the portal for each individual assignment. There’s also a “hard” virtual copy of all rubrics in the Resources folder on OWL.

### **Two: EXTENSIONS + LATE PENALTIES**

Kim cannot grant extensions, unless she’s been asked to do so by your academic counsellor. To seek an extension, visit your counsellor with medical or compassionate documentation. Otherwise, late work is penalized at 2% per day, *not including weekend days*. (Hint: this means, if a task is due Friday at midnight... you decide. 😊)

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](http://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf).

Here’s the downloadable Student Medical Certificate (SMC): [http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf)

### **Three: PLAGIARISM**

Students must write/create their assignments in their own words. Whenever you take an idea or passage from another author, you must acknowledge your debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence.

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.

## **Week by week schedule**

### **Three notes on the schedule:**

**1. Each week, the principles of “explain, apply, and extend” will govern our work.** Tuesday’s one-hour class is “explain” day; Thursday’s first hour is devoted to “apply”, and Thursday’s second hour is for “extending” the theory – probing it for blind spots, exploring its politics, maybe thinking (in the case of historical stuff) about what it can, or cannot, do for us here and now.



**2. This schedule isn't complete yet; that's because, on Thursday 5 September, in class, we will complete it together.** You will help to select what we read, based on a range of readings Kim has curated. That means you need not worry about picking “wrong” – all choices will be potentially right.

**3. As a helpful reminder, our research questions for the term, which we will govern all of our reading and work together, are:**

- *Who or what is allowed to be represented (and why)?*
- *Is this representation “good” for us (why or why not)? What exactly does, or should, representation “do”?*
- *Should audiences think, or feel? Enjoy, or learn? (Is there a third option?)*
- *Most of all: who decides??*

### **Week 1 | September 5**

#### **Introduction**

Names + faces. The syllabus clarified (by you). A discussion of shared outcomes; notes toward participation; selection of remaining texts on the syllabus.

### **Week 2 | September 10 + 12**

READ: Aristotle, from *Poetics* (in your textbook)

### **Week 3 | September 17 + 19**

READ: Students' choice! (Stay tuned!)

### **Week 4 | September 24 + 26**

READ: Sidney, from *The Defense of Poesy* (in your textbook)

### **Week 5 | October 1 + 3**

READ: Students' choice! (Stay tuned!)

### **Week 6 | October 8 + 10**

READ: Students' choice! (Stay tuned!)

REFLECT: we will do a short participation check-in this week, ahead of your first participation reflection paper (due next Friday!)

PREPARE: in our second hour on Thursday, we will select plays for our final performance presentations! ***Please ensure you have read all three plays by this date, so you can make an informed choice!***

### **Week 7 | October 15 + 17**

ADJUST: ***no formal class Tuesday. Instead, please spend our class hour meeting with your performance presentation groups for the first time!***

READ: Boal, *Theatre of the Oppressed* (in your textbook)

EXPERIENCE: on Thursday, a hands-on Boal workshop with guest teacher Danielle Carr!

**Week 8 | October 22 + 24**

READ: Students' choice! (Stay tuned!)

**Week 9 | October 29 + 31**

STUDIO WEEK!

This is your opportunity to really get down to work on your final performance project. Kim will lead a planning session on Tuesday, give you an hour of free time on Thursday to work together on preliminaries, and then we will begin building our marking rubric for the performance presentation task.

**Week 10 is READING WEEK! Enjoy!**

**Week 11 | November 12 + 14**

READ: Catanese, "Bad Manners: Talking about Race" from *The Problem of the Color(blind)*, 2011 (available via Course Readings on OWL)

**Week 12 | November 19 + 21**

Performance project presentation week!

**Week 13 | November 26 + 28**

READ: Harvie, "Labour: Participation, Delegation and Deregulation" from *Fair Play: Art, Performance and Neoliberalism*, 2013 (available via Course Readings on OWL)

**Week 14 | December 3**

Creating our final participation reflections; looking again at course outcomes; cake; final questions; farewells!

*Thanks for being part of TS3205!*