

Department of English & Writing Studies
Theatre Studies Program**Table Work**
Theatre Studies 3208F (001)
Fall 2022**Instructor:** David Leyshon
UC 1424**Office Hours:** Thursday, 10-12:15, or by
appointment.dleyshon@uwo.ca**Course Location:** UC 2105**Course Day/Time:** Thursday 12:30-3:30pm**Delivery Type:** Synchronous/In-person

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

“Table work” is an important phase in leading to the staging of a piece of theatre. It is the moment when the actors, the director and designers gather to read a chosen play-text—the culminating moment where all these perspectives express their vision and ideas about the text that will be embodied on stage. This is a vital part of the process in which the company deepens their understanding of the play and what their production will signify and express. This year, we will close-read *The Visit*, by Friedrich Dürrenmatt. We will analyze the Given Circumstances of the world of the play, experiment with the use of language and the pacing of a scene in terms of “beats,” and shape interpretations of character, tone, and motivation. We will reflect on how to infuse a text with political overtones and the relevance of the play in a contemporary context. This class will culminate in a public reading of the play. 3 hours, 0.5 course.

Objectives:

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

- Read a play through a ‘sensorial’ lens.
- Bring to bear a ‘toolbox’ of script analysis tools utilized by practicing theatre artists on any text to better understand the structure, use of language and rhythm of any scene.
- Examine character through the eyes of an actor – what drives a character through a scene and through a play.
- Think both critically and imaginatively about lifting a play off the page and on to a stage, and what the play says today.

Course Materials

Required Text: *The Visit – A Tragicomedy*, by Friedrich Dürrenmatt,
Translated by Joel Agee, Grove Press, 2010.
This text is available through the UWO Bookstore.

Methods of Evaluation

The grade for the course will be arrived at as follows:

Preparedness, Participation and Attendance: 10%

Preparation for in-class reading and exploration of the text. Students will have read assigned scenes prior to class to ensure the experience of reading with others goes smoothly; that is to say ready to make the effort to keep the play alive, in the air, awake to each moment in the scene – reading with a sense of curiosity, moving the ideas into the mouths of the characters. Attendance is a vital component of this class - each class will build on the next, so attendance is key.

Oral Presentation Sept. 22nd, 2022: 10%

Group presentations on dramaturgical areas vital to understanding the Given Circumstances of the world of the play. These will be discussed and assigned on Day #1. These presentations are intended to deepen our collective understanding of the play – please provide supporting materials so that we may all benefit!

Essay 1, due Oct. 20th: 10% (1000-1250 words)

Using an understanding of the Given Circumstances, guided by the character blueprint, write a character analysis of any character you wish, exploring their journey through the play, including their super-objective, relationships, physical traits and service to the plot.

Group Performance/Presentation Dec. 1st: 35%

- The class will be divided into 4 groups, each tackling a part of the play. Each group will create a 'company', taking on different roles in order to present their section of the play.
- The reading of the section of the play will most likely require all involved to play/read roles, though you may want to assign larger roles to those focusing on acting components, and smaller roles can be taken on by those with other responsibilities.
- This will be each groups' opportunity to present their 'envisioning of the play' - what does the play say to you, and how would this be manifested on stage? Each presentation should include a directorial 'vision', supported by a design concept and dramaturgical thought. Scripts will be broken down into units, with actions and objectives.
- You will NOT be judged on your acting abilities, but on your specific approach to the play and scenes and your preparedness in defending your choices in class. This work is the most important part of the presentation!
- Feel free to engage with the reading as much as you wish - all or part of the scene could be staged, minimal use of props and costumes, should you choose.
- Be prepared to meet outside of class for an hour or two - most likely a couple of times before presentations, in order to get all your ducks in a row. Co-ordinate however you see fit, bearing in mind that aligning schedules is never easy. Do your best to accommodate and support one another!
- Following presentations, we will break off into groups to discuss what you have just seen and prepare questions for each group. Note that questions should be less about any acting choices/performance, and more about probing what you have just seen in terms of critical effects around the group's choices - colleague criticism is designed to be helpful and respectful, promoting growth and learning for us all.

- **Note:** Your group work is the core component of this exercise - assessment is based around your effort and contributions - not your acting skills - your willingness to jump in and play and explore with the text and the imaginative creation of your 'production'.

Public Reading Dec. 8th: 15%

Essay 2, due Dec 8th: 20% (1250-1500 words)

Building off your group performance and critical response, having pondered different interpretations of *The Visit* and how it might be performed, expand on your thoughts here. Dürrenmatt posits that theatre is in part a museum - in the best sense of the word - and in part a field of experimentation. How does *The Visit* continue to resonate within the field of experimentation? Can it shirk the weight of 'museum'? That is to say, can it still impact us today in terms of its 'morality tale'? What would a production today 'say'? Discuss.

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

Attendance is mandatory in all classes and tutorials. In cases of excessive absenteeism (e.g. more than 9 unexcused hours for a half course, 18 for a full course), which are not accounted for by either academic consideration or accommodation, students may be debarred from taking the final examination, and will receive an official warning to this effect by or before the course drop date (see Senate policy). In classes with or without final exams, students who do not attend class will receive 0% for course participation grades. Unless other policies dictate a different set of penalties in specific English and Writing Studies programs, this will apply to all department programs.

Intellectual Property/Copyright

All instructor-written materials (e.g. PowerPoints, lecture notes, oral lectures) for this course are created solely for students' personal use within the course, and remain the instructor's intellectual property. Further reproduction, fixation, distribution, transmission, dissemination, communication, or any other uses, without securing the consent of the copyright owner (the course instructor) may be an infringement of copyright. You may not distribute, email, or otherwise communicate these materials to any other person. These limitations extend to recording, photographing, or sharing lectures (online or in-person) and lecture material without permission. Posting the instructor's content from this course to online course sharing sites like OneClass or Course Hero without permission is both an infringement of intellectual property law and a violation of academic integrity guidelines. The instructor will pass these cases on to the Western University Ombudsperson or their Department Chair as appropriate.

Additional Information

Be prepared to get up and move around – plays live and breathe and are best uncovered in experimentation and play.

Always feel free to email me should you have questions or concerns – my email is always open.

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 Policies

Students with disabilities work with Accessible Education (formerly SSD) which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive testing. The accommodation policy can be found here: [Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities](#).

Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments worth (either alone or in combination) 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 Student Medical Certificate (SMC) can be found at https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf.

The full policy is set out here:

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf.

Religious Accommodation:

Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays, and should give reasonable notice in writing, prior to the holiday, to the Instructor and an Academic Counsellor if their course requirements will be affected by a religious observance. Additional information is given in the [Western Multicultural Calendar](#).

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:

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.

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.

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/>

Academic Support & Engagement <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

September 8th - Introduction. Language.

September 15th - First Reading of *The Visit*

September 22nd - Given Circumstances: **Oral Presentations** - The World of the Play

September 29th - Character. *Discuss Essay #1*

October 6th - Units/Shifts.

Reading Week

October 20th - Objective and Tactic. **Essay #1 Due**

October 29th - Group Assignments and Discussion

November 3rd – Rehearsal Group #1/Discussion

November 10th – Rehearsal Group #2/Discussion

November 17th – Rehearsal Group #3/Discussion

November 24th – Rehearsal Group #4/Discussion

December 1st - **Group Presentations**

December 8th - **Public Reading. Essay #2 Due**