

**Indigenous Theatre and Performance Studies (TS 3209G)**  
**Theatre Studies Program, Western University**  
**Winter 2023**

**Instructor:** Dr. Pauline Wakeham  
University College Room 4413  
519-661-2111 x. 85815  
[pwakeham@uwo.ca](mailto:pwakeham@uwo.ca)

**Class Day / Time / Location:**

Mondays from 11:30 a.m. – 12:20 p.m.

Wednesdays from 11:30 a.m. – 1:20 p.m.

All classes will be held in-person in Somerville House Room 3305

**Office Hours (In-Person, UC Room 4413):**

Mondays from 10:00 – 11:00 a.m. and 1:00 – 2:00 p.m.

Wednesdays from 1:30 – 2:30 p.m.

**Course Description:**

*Welcome to Indigenous Theatre and Performance Studies!* This course will provide students with an introduction to the dynamic work of Indigenous performance arts. Our course will consider how Indigenous theatre and performance build upon rich histories and practices of embodied oral storytelling specific to distinct Indigenous nations across Turtle Island (North America). Engaging with a range of performance works created in recent decades, this course will provide an understanding of the development of Indigenous theatre and performance across lands claimed by Canada and will consider Indigenous performance art's vital role in addressing contemporary socio-political issues and contributing to Indigenous resurgence.

**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):** N/A

**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.

**Land Acknowledgement:**

At the heart of theatre and performance are embodied actions that materialize through relationships to land and to place. For this reason, it is particularly important in a course about Indigenous theatre and performance to recognize the land that is the essential grounding for our lives.

Western University is located on the lands of the Anishinaabek, Haudenosaunee, Lūnaapéewak, and Chonnonton (Neutral) peoples, on lands connected with the London Township and Sombra Treaties of 1796 and the Dish with One Spoon Covenant Wampum. This land continues to be home to diverse Indigenous peoples (e.g. First Nations, Métis and Inuit) whom I recognize as contemporary stewards of the land.

**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 learn about the history of settler colonialism in Canada and its impact upon Indigenous nations. This course will also consider how Indigenous peoples have utilized cultural practices and arts to resist assimilation and to foster resurgence in their communities.
- To nurture reflexive thought about engaging with Indigenous arts in respectful and culturally attentive and sensitive ways.
- To assist students in honing their critical thinking skills through in-class application of such skills to readings of dramatic texts and performances.
- To facilitate the development and honing of students' writing skills through the provision of feedback on written assignments.
- To cultivate the development of students' distinctive intellectual voices through the practice of engaged listening and participation in dramatic performances and class discussion.

**Course Materials:**

Kim Senklip Harvey, *Kamloopa: An Indigenous Matriarch Story* (Talonbooks)

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.

**OWL:**

- Students are responsible for checking the course OWL site (<http://owl.uwo.ca>) on a regular basis for news and updates. This is the primary method by which information will be disseminated to all students in the class.
- If students need assistance with the course OWL site, they can seek support on the OWL Help page. Alternatively, they can contact the Western Technology Services Helpdesk. They can be contacted by phone at 519-661-3800 or ext. 83800.

**Methods of Evaluation:**

Assignment	% of Grade	Length	Due Date
Class Participation	10%	N/A	Ongoing
Published Essay Synopsis and Analysis	30%	4 pages	February 17 <sup>th</sup>
Stage Reading Participation and Reflection Paper	25%	3 pages	Ongoing and March 24 <sup>th</sup> for the Reflection Paper
In-Class Quizzes	3 x 5% = 10% (students' top 2 grades used)	15 minutes each	January 18 <sup>th</sup> , February 8 <sup>th</sup> , March 29 <sup>th</sup>
Theatre Review of <i>Rubaboo</i>  Or Theatre Review of Jeremy Dutcher concert at Alumni Hall on January 19 <sup>th</sup>	25%	4 pages	April 5 <sup>th</sup>  OR  February 1 <sup>st</sup>

**Department Policy Regarding Final Grades:**

Please note: The department of English & Writing Studies and the Theatre Studies Program do 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 that this course becomes a special time and place

in your regular weeks—a time and place for dialogue and community—that you won't want to miss.

- This portion of the grade is 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. **Please note: If you miss more than five class sessions without accommodation, you will forfeit your entire participation mark (that is, 10% of your final grade).**

### Published Essay Synopsis and Analysis (4 pages, double-spaced):

- This assignment is designed to enhance students' knowledge of key debates in the field of Indigenous theatre and performance studies. In so doing, students will have the opportunity to hone their critical thinking skills by reading, summarizing, and analysing one scholarly essay. Additionally, students will be asked to consider how the key points in the essay might inform their own engagements with Indigenous literatures, plays, performance, and film.

- For this assignment, students can choose one (or two, in certain cases) of the essays uploaded to the folder titled “**Eligible Essays for Published Essay Synopsis and Analysis**” in the “Resources” section of the course OWL site. **Before choosing an essay, please read the document in that folder titled “How to Choose an Essay for this Assignment: Rules and Considerations.”**

- I recommend that students read the essay carefully at least twice before commencing the process of writing their synopsis and analysis. It may be useful to go through the essay(s) and highlight the thesis/argument and to summarize each paragraph with some key words that highlight what the paragraph is about.

- The essay synopsis and analysis should include the following components:

- 1.) An introductory paragraph that identifies the essay(s) to be discussed and explains why you chose it. The introduction should also identify the essay's key topics and questions as well as its overarching argument(s).
- 2.) One or two paragraphs that proceed to offer a more detailed synopsis of the essay's key points and the way that the essay develops its argument(s). When writing this synopsis, students are welcome and encouraged to utilize brief quotations from the text from time to time to substantiate their discussion. However, long block quotations from the essay are not recommended because the goal is for students to explain the essay in their own words. To this end, **please watch out for paraphrasing that is too similar to the original text.** A sentence that is basically the same as the original but which substitutes a few words here and there is not proper scholarly paraphrasing; rather, this borders on plagiarism. Be sure to use your own words and, when in doubt about a paraphrase that is too close to the original, please use direct quotations instead.
- 3.) One or more paragraphs that identify what you find compelling about the essay (writing style, examples, particular arguments, and/or insights) and explain why you find

those elements compelling. These paragraphs could also critique arguments or ideas you think are problematic (if so, please explain) or raise additional questions or matters for consideration.

4.) One or more paragraphs that discuss how this essay has impacted how you think about Indigenous arts and/or how you wish to engage with them.

5.) A brief conclusion.

6.) A Works Cited page that lists the essay of your choice in proper MLA format (with all required bibliographic details) as well as any other sources that you mention in your paper.

**Stage Reading Participation and Reflection Paper (3 pages, double-spaced):**

- During this course, we will be working with Mohawk and Tuscarora poet, multi-media artist, and playwright January Rogers, on developing a stage reading of her new play, *Blood Sport*.

- Each student will choose a role in the creation of the stage reading. Some students will be actors/readers in the play while others can choose to be involved in other aspects of production such as the sound designer, the publicist, the costume designer, etc. No single role will be valued more than others. Each student will have a clearly-defined set of responsibilities towards the creation of the stage reading. Those responsibilities will be agreed upon in a “Stage Reading Participation Contract” individualized for each student and established by February 6<sup>th</sup>, 2023.

- Students are expected to commit themselves to the process of developing the stage reading and to attend all rehearsals for the play.

- Following the presentation of the stage reading on the evening of Wednesday March 15<sup>th</sup>, students will write a three-page double-spaced reflection on their participation in the development of the stage reading. The reflection should be written in proper paragraph form with an introduction, body paragraphs, and a conclusion. The reflection should address the following questions:

1.) What role did you choose to fulfil in the development of the stage reading and why?

2.) How did you contribute to the development of the stage reading? What ideas, labour, and contributions did you offer?

3.) What did you learn from the process of developing the stage reading? Please be specific. Your answer should reflect upon what you learned through your particular contributions but you are also welcome to discuss what you learned from your peers, from January, myself, or the process as a whole.

4.) Are there any aspects of your involvement that you would change if you could?

5.) What representational choices did the group make in developing the stage reading that you think were most impactful and why?

6.) If you were the director of the next version of this stage reading, are there any changes you would make? If so, please describe.

- The grade for this assignment will take into account both your contributions and commitment to the development of the stage reading and to the quality of the written reflection.

### In-Class Quizzes

- On three different dates throughout the semester, students will be given 15 minutes during class to answer short quizzes designed to make sure that students have read the course materials.
- The quiz questions will not be complicated. They will either involve very short written answers (one sentence per question) or multiple choice answers. If you've done the readings, the quizzes will not be difficult.
- The top 2 grades out of the 3 quizzes will be counted towards each student's final course grade. This means that if a student misses one of the quizzes, they will have to make sure they attend class on the dates of the other quizzes and complete those two quizzes. There will be no make-up dates for quizzes without formal academic accommodations.

### Theatre Review of Jeremy Dutcher performance or *Rubaboo* (4 pages, double-spaced)

- Following the class trip to see Jeremy Dutcher at Alumni Hall or *Rubaboo* at the Grand Theatre, students will each write a theatre review of the performance.
- The review should be written in proper paragraph format. The writing should seek to engage the reader, to be clear and detailed.
- The review should include the following elements:
  - 1.) An introductory paragraph that catches the reader's attention and that provides crucial details about the performance. What is the performance about (basic plots or facts about the main concept / themes of the show)? Who wrote and directed the performance? Who acted/performed in it? Are there other details about the production team? When and where was it staged?
  - 2.) In the past, theatre reviewers have not always located their own subject positions as informing their analyses. However, in this course, it will be important for the reviewer to also acknowledge their own subject position and to consider how that might inform their viewing of the play.
  - 3.) Subsequent body paragraphs that discuss the key elements of the performance, what you thought was impactful or effective, and why. What was less effective about the performance? How could the performance potentially be enriched? (For more information about how to address these questions, please see the handout titled "How to Write a Theatre Review" on the course OWL site).
  - 4.) A thoughtful concluding paragraph that sums up the main points of the review and potentially raises further questions.

### Important Information Regarding All Assignments:

- Assignments submitted after the due date will be assessed a late penalty (2% per day, including weekends). Assignments must be submitted as **Microsoft Word documents** uploaded through the course OWL portal.
- **Each student will be given an automatic 5-day extension (weekend days are included in this extension) on one assignment of their choice during the semester. To use this extension, please notify the professor via email in advance of the assignment deadline. Any additional requests for assignment extensions**

**will require formal accommodations from the Academic Counselling office of the student's home Faculty.**

- All written assignments should be formatted with 1" margins, double-spaced, and in Times New Roman 12-point font. Please do not use extra spaces between each paragraph.
- All bibliographic notations should follow the MLA method of parenthetical citation. All assignments should be accompanied with a Works Cited page. For information regarding correct MLA formatting, please consult the PowerPoint Presentation placed on the course OWL site.
- Please retain at least one electronic copy of every assignment you submit. As well, please retain all marked assignments until you receive your final grade for the course.

### **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

### **Accommodation Policies:**

Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact Accessible Education, which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive testing. The policy on [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](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](https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf)

### **Religious Accommodation:**

When a course requirement conflicts with a religious holiday that requires an absence from the University or prohibits certain activities, students should request accommodation for their absence in writing at least two weeks prior to the holiday to the course instructor and/or the Academic Counselling office of their Faculty of Registration. Please consult University's list of recognized religious holidays (updated annually) at <https://multiculturalcalendar.com/ecal/index.php?s=c-univwo>.

### **Academic Policies:**

-The website for Registrarial Services is <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>. In accordance with [policy](#), the centrally administered e-mail account provided to students will be considered the individual's official university e-mail address. It is the responsibility of the account holder to ensure that e-mail received from the University at their official university address is attended to in a timely manner.

### **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 the following website:

[http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_undergrad.pdf](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.



## Support Services:

### Academic Counselling:

- Your Home Faculty's Academic Counselling or Academic Advising Office will support or refer whenever you have an issue that is affecting your studies, including information on adding/dropping courses, academic considerations for absences, appeals, exam conflicts, and many other academic related matters.

- Do not hesitate to reach out to them if you are struggling and unsure where to go for help. Contact info for all Faculties is here:

[https://registrar.uwo.ca/faculty\\_academic\\_counselling.html](https://registrar.uwo.ca/faculty_academic_counselling.html)

### Mental Health Support:

- Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western (<https://uwo.ca/health/>) for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

### Gender-based and sexual violence:

- Western is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence and providing compassionate support to anyone who has gone through these traumatic events. If you have experienced sexual or gender-based violence (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at

[https://www.uwo.ca/health/student\\_support/survivor\\_support/get-help.html](https://www.uwo.ca/health/student_support/survivor_support/get-help.html).

- To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact [support@uwo.ca](mailto:support@uwo.ca).

### Accessible Education:

- Please contact the course instructor if you require lecture or printed material in an alternate format or if any other arrangements can make this course more accessible to you. You may also wish to contact [Accessible Education](#) if you have any questions regarding accommodations.

### Learning Development and Success:

- Counsellors at the [Learning Development and Success Centre](#) are ready to help you improve your learning skills. They offer presentations on strategies for improving time management, multiple-choice exam preparation/writing, textbook reading, and more.

- Individual support is offered throughout the Fall/Winter terms in the drop-in Learning Help Centre, and year-round through individual counselling.

- The [Writing Support Centre](#) at Western is also available to help students learn to edit and improve their scholarly writing.

## Class Schedule

Please note that the Professor reserves the right to make minor changes to the class schedule during the semester. All changes will be announced in class ahead of the scheduled date where a change would take place.

### **January 9: Welcome and Introduction**

### **January 11: Introduction to Indigenous Performance Cultures**

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

Yvette Nolan, “More Makes More: Indigenous Theatre in Canada”

### **January 16: Introduction to Indigenous Performance Cultures (cont.)**

Michelle Olson, “She Begins to Move”

Jill Carter, “My! What Big Teeth You Have!': On the Art of Being Seen and Not Eaten”

Excerpt from “The Indian Act”

### **January 18: Introduction to Indigenous Performance Cultures (cont.)**

Michelle Olson, “She Begins to Move”

Jill Carter, “My! What Big Teeth You Have!': On the Art of Being Seen and Not Eaten”

Excerpt from “The Indian Act”

### **In-Class Quiz**

### **January 23: Performing Identity and The Pretendian Phenomenon**

Drew Hayden Taylor, [The Pretendians](#) (please view this film prior to class)

Rebecca Nagle, [“How ‘pretendians’ undermine the rights of Indigenous people”](#)

### **January 25: Introduction to *Blood Sport* with January Rogers**

*Content Advisory: Please note that this play discusses the removal of Indigenous children from their families and communities via the child welfare system. One scene depicts violence from an adoptive settler mother against an Indigenous child.*

Students are expected to have read the script and watched the digital recording of the stage reading of January’s play prior to January’s visit.

### **January 30: Thinking Deeply about *Blood Sport***

### **February 1: Finding our Roles for the Stage Reading of *Blood Sport***

In this class, January will return to help us begin our casting process and to collaboratively discuss our roles and relationships to the stage reading

### **February 6: Odawa Storytelling on Stage**

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

**February 8: Odawa Storytelling on Stage (cont.)**

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

**In-Class Quiz****February 13: Odawa Storytelling on Stage (cont.)**

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

**February 15: Rehearsal: First Reading of *Blood Sport*****February 20 and 22: Classes Cancelled for Reading Week****February 27: Enacting Indigenous Women's Strength**

Kim Senklip Harvey, *Kamloopa: An Indigenous Matriarch Story*

**March 1: Rehearsal: Second Reading of *Blood Sport***

This reading of the play will incorporate tech cues, sound, etc.

**March 6: Enacting Indigenous Women's Strength**

Kim Senklip Harvey, *Kamloopa: An Indigenous Matriarch Story*

**March 8: Dress Rehearsal of *Blood Sport* at the Wampum Learning Lodge**

This reading of the play will take place at the Wampum Learning Lodge during our regularly scheduled class time.

**March 13: Enacting Indigenous Women's Strength**

Kim Senklip Harvey, *Kamloopa: An Indigenous Matriarch Story*

**March 15: Final Preparation for Stage Reading**

Students are expected to reserve the evening of March 15<sup>th</sup> from 4:00 – 7:30 p.m. for the stage reading of *Blood Sport*

**March 20: Stories of Métis Peoplehood: Preparation for Rubaboo**

Chris Anderson, excerpt from "Introduction" to *Métis: Race, Recognition, Rights*

**March 22: Class Field Trip to [Rubaboo](#) at the Grand Theatre**

On this date, the class will meet at the Grand Theatre at 10:45 a.m.

**March 27: Staging Indigenous Futures**

Yvette Nolan, *The Unplugging*

Grace Dillon, "Imagining Indigenous Futurisms"

**March 29: Staging Indigenous Futures (cont.)**

Yvette Nolan, *The Unplugging*

**In-Class Quiz**

**April 3: Staging Indigenous Futures (cont.)**Yvette Nolan, *The Unplugging***April 5: Staging Indigenous Futures (cont.)**Yvette Nolan, *The Unplugging***April 10: Final Class: Concluding Thoughts**