

Department of English & Writing Studies - Fall 2022

REVIEWING PERFORMANCE: THEATRE 4216F (Section 001)

Instructor: Taylor Marie Graham

Delivery Type: In Person

Email: tgraha46@uwo.ca

Course Location: UC-1105

Office Hours: Tuesdays 12:30 - 1:30pm and
Thursdays 11:30 - 12:30pm, UC 1423

Day/Time: Tues 10:30am-12:30pm and
Thurs 10:30-11:30

Prerequisites: Prerequisite(s): 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

Welcome to Reviewing Performance! This semester in this open and welcoming class, we’ll work together to examine and discuss the role of the theatre reviewer and performance reviews in today’s society.

This course explores the function of modern arts reviewing. We will study the form across several media platforms including Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, etc., and think critically about the place of the long-form review criticism in contemporary culture.

Driving questions for the class include: Is the “expert” still relevant today? Are we all experts? Who reads reviews and why? How are reviews formatted and why? How have reviews changed throughout the twentieth and twenty first centuries? Should white settler populations be permitted to review Indigenous creator led productions? What power does the review have and how might that change the relationship between reviewer and artist? What is the responsibility of the reviewer to support the artist? How does social media and new technology change the way work is reviewed? What can a tweet review do that a vlog review cannot? What about other social media?

Introductory weeks we will introduce concepts of reader response theory and explore a number of examples throughout the 20th and 21st century of theatre reviews in Nigerian, Canadian, and Indigenous contexts. As a class, we will also apply feminist and decolonial perspectives in criticism. Then, students will take ownership over classes, providing seminar presentations of close readings of existing reviews, providing detailed analyses.

In addition to examining existing reviews, the class will write reviews as well. Throughout the semester as a group we will watch live plays including *Grand Ghosts* by Trina Davies at the Grand Theatre and *Death and the King’s Horseman* by Wole Soyinka at the Stratford Festival. Students will write reviews in multiple styles/forms throughout the semester.

Objectives:

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

- Apply critical theoretical frameworks (reader response theory, feminist theories, and decolonial theories) to reviews and theatrical outputs
- Critically read and examine performance reviews in a variety of Canadian and Indigenous contexts
- Examine performance review formatting including long form reviews and in various contemporary electronic formats
- Write performance reviews conscious of critical theoretical frameworks, audience perspectives, artist perspectives, and various formatting constraints
- Research, critically examine, and present findings to the class focused on reviews of a Canadian or Indigenous theatre production
- Debate and revise interpretations of ideas/texts/histories in dialogue with other students in class with a high degree of professionalism
- Reflect on personal understanding of core class concepts, creative engagement, and other progress throughout the semester

Course Materials

Texts/video/audio will be available through the library's online resources or open source online. No book purchases are required. Instead, students will have theatre tickets to purchase. More details will be provided in class.

Methods of Evaluation

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

Review Analysis	10%
Seminar Presentation (Presentation Skills 5%, Review Analysis 10%, Slides 5%)	20%
Seminar Response	10%
Class Participation	10%
Semester Journal / Commonplace Book (Midterm 10%, Final 10%)	20%
Three Reviews (First 5%, Second 10%, Third 15%)	30%

Note: Each assignment has a full description and a marking rubric available on OWL with full details about evaluation.

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>

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 program.

Student Absences

If you are unable to meet a course requirement due to illness or other serious circumstances, please follow the procedures below.

Assessments worth less than 10% of the overall course grade:

Please contact Taylor directly via email as soon as possible (tgraha86@uwo@.ca) with as much detail about why you cannot meet the assignment expectations including medical notes or other documentation if available.

Assessments worth 10% or more of the overall course grade:

For work totalling 10% or more of the final course grade, you must provide valid medical or supporting documentation to the Academic Counselling Office of your Faculty of Registration as soon as possible. For further information, please consult the University's medical illness policy at

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

The Student Medical Certificate is available at

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

Contingency plan for an in-person class pivoting to 100% online learning

In the event of a COVID-19 resurgence during the course that necessitates the course delivery moving away from face-to-face interaction, affected course content will be delivered entirely online, either synchronously (i.e., at the times indicated in the timetable) or asynchronously (e.g., posted on OWL for students to view at their convenience). The grading scheme will not change. Any remaining assessments will also be conducted online as determined by the course instructor.

Note From Taylor:

Because we are still in the midst of a global pandemic, it is very possible that things may need to change throughout the semester. I am very aware that students may experience a range of emotions and personal difficulties throughout the semester due to the pandemic as well. In setting up this course, I have made it as barrier free as possible including having all required reading available online. It is my hope that this class experience is welcoming to all students. Because we have a seminar style class and it's important that everyone in the class can speak freely; therefore, we will not record or live stream classes as a general rule. If you do require access to class from home, please contact Taylor to discuss options. Please feel free to reach out at any point throughout the semester with questions or just to check in.

Accommodation and Accessibility

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>

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 can be found at: https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/Academic%20Accommodation_disabilities.pdf

Academic Policies

The website for Registrarial Services is <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>

In accordance with policy, https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/policies_procedures/section1/mapp113.pdf 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 Web site: 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

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

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

To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact 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 at http://academicsupport.uwo.ca/accessible_education/index.html if you have any questions regarding accommodations.

Learning Development and Success

Counsellors at the Learning Development and Success Centre (<https://learning.uwo.ca>) 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.

Digital Student Experience

Western University is committed to a thriving campus as we deliver our courses in the mixed model of both virtual and face-to-face formats. We encourage you to check out the Digital Student Experience website to manage your academics and well-being: <https://www.uwo.ca/se/digital/>

USC

Additional student-run support services are offered by the USC, <https://westernusc.ca/services/>

Timetable

Please see OWL for the most up to date information including links to required and suggested readings, watching, and listening.

WEEK 1: Thursday, September 8th

Introductions, Land Acknowledgement, Class Expectations, Course Outline, Course Central Questions

WEEK 2: Tuesday, September 13th

Re-Introductions, Review Schedule, Discuss Journal/Common Place Book Expectations, Pick Seminar Schedule

TO DO:

- (1) Find a review of a play, a book, a movie, a television show, or an album that is important to you, that tells the group something about who you are. The review can be written by an “expert” or by someone in the general public. It can be a newspaper article, an online review, a post on social media, or a video. You can agree or disagree with the review.
- (2) Review Seminar Presentation Choices. Pick your top two options before class.

Thursday, September 15th

Reader Response Theory, Theatre Audiences, Critical Perspectives

READING:

- (1) [“Making up the audience: spectatorship in historical context,”](#) by Susan Bennett

WEEK 3: Tuesday, September 20th

Death and the King’s Horseman, Wole Soyinka, Nigerian theatre, Post-colonial and Decolonial Theatre, Reading Plays, Reviewer Bias

READING:

- (1) [Death and the King’s Horseman by Wole Soyinka](#)

Thursday, September 22nd

Death and the King’s Horseman, Wole Soyinka, Nigerian theatre, Post-colonial and Decolonial Theatre, Reading Reviews, Evolving Media, Reviewer Bias

READING:

- (1) [“Stage: Soyinka’s Death and the King’s Horseman”](#) by Frank Rich *New York Times*
- (2) [“Review: Theatre: Dazzling recasting of the final act as triumphant entrance: Death and the King’s Horseman National, London 4/5”](#) Guardian by Michael Billington
- (3) Catherine Banks’ Do Not Go Gentle’s Twitter Reviews
- (4) YouTube Comments on [TIFF Trailer](#)

****Saturday, September 24th****

2:00 pm performance of *Death and the King's Horseman* by Wole Soyinka at Stratford Festival with post-performance Q & A

Bus will pick up our class and two other classes from Western. Bus will return to campus as well. Time and place of pick up and drop off TBA

WEEK 4: Tuesday, September 27th

Death and the King's Horseman, Wole Soyinka, Nigerian theatre, Post-colonial and Decolonial Theatre, Stratford Festival, Reading Reviews, Reviewer Bias

Thursday, September 29th

Theatre Criticism History, Place of the Theatre Critic Today, Evolving Media

REQUIRED READING:

- (1) "Chapter 1: Introduction, & "Chapter 2: How to Learn from Critics of the Past" [How to Write About Theatre](#) by Mark Fisher

WEEK 5: Tuesday, October 4th

Indigenous Performance Reviews, Canadian Criticism, Post-Colonial and Decolonial Theatre, Theatre Criticism History, Reviewer Bias

REQUIRED READING:

- (1) [Critics who aren't Indigenous. Black or people of colour aren't invited to 'bug.' Yolanda Bonnell explains why](#) by Karen Fricker
- (2) ["Why We're Not Reviewing Kamloopa: A Conversation"](#) by Aisling Murphy and Karen Fricker
- (3) ["Why it Matters Who Reviews Indigenous Theatre"](#) by Yvette Nolan

Thursday, October 6th

Theatre Criticism History, Place of the Theatre Critic Today, Indigenous Performance Reviews, Review Writing, Reviewer Bias

GUEST:

Aisling Murphy, Toronto Star and Intermission Magazine Theatre Critic

DUE FRIDAY OCT 7:

- (1) Review Analysis 10%
- (2) Twitter Review 5%

WEEK 6: Tuesday, October 11th

Writing Theatre Reviews, Critical Perspectives, Structure, Reviewer Bias

READING:

- (1) "Chapter 3: How to Take on Different Critical Styles," "Chapter 8: How to Structure a Review," and "Chapter 9: How to Write in the Moment" [How to Write About Theatre](#) by Mark Fisher (first four pages of the chapter)

Thursday, October 13th

Workshop: Seminar Presentations

READING:

- (1) [“Chapter 7: How” from Presentation skills: educate, inspire and engage your audience](#) by Weiss, Michael

WEEK 7: Tuesday, October 18th

Seminar Presentation & Discussion Day 1: Canadian Theatre History, Toronto Reviewers, Toronto Star, Nathan Cohen, The “Island” Critic

READING:

- (1) [“Battered Behan”](#) by Nathan Cohen
- (2) [“Cohen Burned in Effigy”](#) by David Cobb
- (3) [“Nathan Cohen”](#) MacLeans

****Wednesday, October 19th****

8:00pm performance of *Grand Ghosts* by Trina Davies at Grand Theatre in London with post-performance Q&A. Students make their own way to the theatre.

Thursday, October 20th

Seminar Presentation & Discussion Day 2: Canadian Theatre History, Toronto Reviewers, NOW Magazine: Jon Kaplan, Glenn Sumi, Collective Approach

READING:

- (1) [January 2000 NOW Magazine Theatre Reviews](#) by Jon Kaplan and Glenn Sumi (pp.79-81)
- (2) [Aug 11, 2005 NOW Magazine Theatre Reviews](#) by Jon Kaplan, Glenn Sumi, and Kate Pederson
- (3) [“Jon Kaplan was all heart and no ego”](#) by Glenn Sumi

WEEK 8: Tuesday, October 25th

Seminar Presentation & Discussion Day 3: Night Mother, Feminist Spectator as Critic, Jill Dolan, New York and Women in the Theatre

READINGS:

- (1) [“Feminism and the Canon: The Question of Universality.”](#) *The Feminist Spectator as critic* by Jill Dolan (pp. 19-22)
- (2) [“Night Mother”](#) by Marsha Norman

Thursday, October 27th

Seminar Presentation & Discussion Day 4: Canadian Theatre History, Shakespeare Reimagined, Freelance Reviewers, Blogs, BIPOC Performers, Women in the Theatre, Paula Citron, Lynn Slotkin

READINGS:

- (1) [“SCRUTINY | Stratford’s Fresh Take On ‘Hamlet’ Will Get You To See It Anew”](#) by Paula Citron
- (2) [“Review: Hamlet”](#) by Lynn Slotkin

DUE FRIDAY OCT 28th:
First submission of Journal / Commonplace Book at 11:59pm (10%)

FALL BREAK: Tuesday, November 1st & Thursday, November 3rd
Fall Break! No Class!

WEEK 9: Tuesday, November 8th

Seminar Presentation & Discussion Day 5: Social Media, Accessibility in Theatre Creation

READING:

- (1) "[Access Me](#)" Chapter from *Interdependent Magic: Disability Performance in Canada* by Jessica Watkin
- (2) [TikTok Theatre Accessibility Review](#)

Thursday, November 10th

Seminar Presentation & Discussion Day 6: Site-Specific Theatre, Caravan Theatre, Customer Reviews (trip advisor and facebook)

READING:

- (1) [Caravan Theatre Trip Advisor Reviews](#)
- (2) [Caravan Theatre Facebook Reviews](#)
- (3) "[Sailing theatre troupe brings final production back to where it started over 50 years ago](#)" by Liz McArthur

WEEK 10: Tuesday, November 15th

Seminar Presentation & Discussion Day 7: Site-Specific Theatre, Digital Theatre, Online Video Translation, *The Container* by Clare Bayley

WATCHING:

- (1) [The Container](#) by Clare Bayley (in digital theatre plus search for "the container")

READING:

- (2) "[The Container: A Digital Theatre Review](#)" by Elijah Arie

DUE FRIDAY NOV 11th:
Review of Grand Ghosts by Trina Davies (10%)

Thursday, November 17th

Seminar Presentation & Discussion Day 8: Digital Theatre, Podcast Plays, *Buffoon* by Anosh Irani

LISTENING:

- (1) [Buffoon](#) by Anosh Irani (podcast)

READING:

- (2) "[Theatre review: Buffoon explores the comedy of unhappiness](#)" by Jerry Wasserman

WEEK 11: Tuesday, November 22nd

Seminar Presentation & Discussion Day 9: Digital Theatre, Online Workshop, Academic Peer Reviewed Critical Engagement, Augusto Boal, Theatre of the Oppressed, Forum Theatre

WATCHING:

- (1) [Forum Theatre Workshop by Augusto Boal](#) (in digital theatre plus search for "Augusto Boal")

READING:

- (2) "[Review: The Aesthetics of the Oppressed](#)" by Ronaldo Morelos

Thursday, November 24th

Seminar Presentation & Discussion Day 10: Social Media, Celebrity Performers, Broadway, Cancel Culture

READING:

- (1) All the social media reviews about Lea Michele and Funny Girl you can find on TikTok, Twitter, etc.

WATCHING:

- (2) Funny Girl by score by Jule Styne, lyrics by Bob Merrill, and book by Isobel Lennart (in digital theatre plus, search for "funny girl")

WEEK 12: Tuesday, November 29th

In-Class Workshopping Final Review Assignment

Thursday, December 1st

In-Class Workshopping Final Review Assignment

DUE FRIDAY DEC 2nd:

Final submission of Journal / Commonplace Book at 11:59pm (10%)

WEEK 13: Tuesday, December 6th

In-Class Workshopping Final Review Assignment

DUE FRIDAY DEC 9th:

Final Assignment Submission at 11:59pm (15%)