

Department of English & Writing Studies

Theatre Studies 1020B (001)**Understanding Performance**

Winter 2026

Instructor: Dr M.J. Kidnie
mjkidnie@uwo.ca

TA: Fatemeh Shahnavaz.
Office hours: TBA

Office hours: after class, in classroom

This syllabus may be subject to some changes during the first week of school concerning productions that we're seeing at the Grand Theatre. Any changes will be communicated in class and the syllabus updated on the OWL site.

Land Acknowledgement

Western University is situated on the traditional territories of the Anishinaabeg, Haudenosaunee, Lunaapeewak and Attawandaron peoples, who have longstanding relationships to the land and region of southwestern Ontario and the City of London. The local First Nation communities of this area include Chippewas of the Thames First Nation, Oneida Nation of the Thames, and Munsee Delaware Nation. In the region, there are eleven First Nation communities and a growing Indigenous urban population. Western values the significant historical and contemporary contributions of local and regional First Nations and all of the Original peoples of Turtle Island (North America).

Course Description

This course introduces students to concepts in Theatre Studies. The course includes hands-on and experiential learning.

Objectives:

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

- Read drama as a blueprint for performance
- Translate an idea for performance into live performance
- Perform a basic theatrical analysis (scripted and in production)
- Describe some key practitioners' approaches to theatre as a political art

Course Materials (required unless otherwise specified):**Scripts and Secondary Reading**

Brecht, "The Street Scene" (available free on BrightSpace)

Childress, Alice, *Wedding Band* (available at BookStore or free through Weldon catalogue, second-hand copy fine) – \$25

Ibsen, Henrik, *A Doll's House*, adapted by Simon Stephens and dir. Carrie Cracknell (text available through Bookstore or free through Weldon databases at Drama Online) – \$35.40 (bundled with Wilde, *Earnest* – see below)

Kaufman, Moisés and members of the Tectonic Theater Project, *The Laramie Project* (text available at BookStore) – \$23 (second-hand copy fine)

Shakespeare, *Hamlet* (text available at BookStore or free through Weldon databases at Drama Online, second-hand copy fine) – \$12.99

Wilde, Oscar, *The Importance of Being Earnest* (text available through Bookstore or free through Drama Online) – bundled with Ibsen, *Doll's House* (see above)

Young, Harvey, *Theatre and Race* (available at BookStore) – \$16.30 (second-hand copy fine).
Unsold copies of this book will be returned to the publisher by mid-March. Make sure you've purchased your copy before then.

Live and Recorded-as-Live Performances

Booth, Eboni, *Primary Trust*, dir. Cherissa Richards, Grand Theatre (January 27, 7:30pm, live performance)

Brecht and Weil, *Threepenny Opera* (free through Weldon databases at Drama Online – performance and text)

Childress, Alice, *Wedding Band*, dir. Sam White (available free through Weldon databases at Stratford Festival's Classroom Connect). See below for instructions on accessing this filmed-as-live production.

Hamilton, dir. Thomas Kail (available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gHej85lf2Rg> or Disney+)

Ibsen, *A Doll's House*, adapted by Simon Stephens and dir. Carrie Cracknell (production available free through Weldon databases at Digital Theatre+)

Rajan, Jacob and Justin Lewis, *Mrs Krishnan's Party*, Grand Theatre (March 3, 7:30pm, live performance)

Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, dir. Simon Godwin and starring Paapa Essiedu (available free through Weldon databases at Digital Theatre+)

Wilde, *The Importance of Being Earnest* (production available free through Digital Theatre+)

Our custom link to our books at the Bookstore is here: https://bookstore.uwo.ca/textbook-search?campus=UWO&term=W2025B&courses%5B0%5D=001_UW/TST1020B

To access Sam White's staging of Childress's *Wedding Band*:

1. Search for Classroom Connect in Omni, and click on the link
2. Authenticate with your Western ID and password
3. This will bring you to a screen entitled "Electronic Journals Requiring Password Access - write down the login and password displayed: wl-ermadmin@uwo.ca / Western2025 (case sensitive)
4. Click on the Classroom Connect link
5. Click Sign In (top right)
6. Enter email wl-ermadmin@uwo.ca
7. Enter password Western2025

Grand Theatre – booking instructions

We're seeing two live performances at the Grand Theatre: *Primary Trust* on Tuesday, January 27 (7:30pm, price \$29.95) and *Mrs Krishnan's Party* on Tuesday, March 3 (7:30pm, price \$48).

Book your ticket by visiting the Box Office at 471 Richmond Street to pay in person, or by calling 519-672-8800 to book with a credit card. Cite the HOLD for "Theatre Studies – M.J. Kidnie" in order to book your ticket to *Primary Trust* at the Student Rush price of \$29.95.

The theatre is holding 80 tickets for us for *Primary Trust*. Any tickets in our block that are not purchased by mid-January will be released for general sale. Students who miss the deadline can still book for the same price, subject to availability. If you need to come on a different date, you

can book a Student Rush ticket (same \$29.95 price) on the day of performance.

Tickets to *Mrs Krishnan's Party* are extremely limited. Book your ticket immediately. If there is no availability on March 3, please book for an earlier date.

Methods of Evaluation

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

First test (multiple choice and short answers): 15%

Second test (multiple choice and short answers): 15%

Final project: 25%

Participation: 10%

Exam (multiple choice and short answers): 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>.

Additional Information

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.

Extensions will only be considered if supported by a request for accommodation sent by students' Academic Counsellors in their home faculty (see below, "Academic Consideration").

Statements

Academic Consideration

Students may request academic consideration in cases of extenuating circumstances – that is, personal circumstances beyond the student's control that have a **substantial but temporary** impact on the student's ability to meet essential academic requirements.

1. Requests for academic consideration are made to the Academic Advising office of the student's Faculty of Registration.
2. Requests for academic consideration include the following components:
 - a. Self-attestation signed by the student;
 - b. Indication of the course(s) and assessment(s) relevant to the request;
 - c. Supporting documentation as relevant.

Requests without supporting documentation are **limited to one per term per course**.

Instructors may designate one assignment or assessment as exempt from this allowance. In this course, requests for academic consideration pertaining to the final project **must** be accompanied by supporting documentation.

Assignments with flexible deadlines and any term work that does not count towards the course grade are **not** eligible for additional consideration.

Documentation for medical illness, when required, includes the completion of a [Western Student Medical Certificate \(SMC\)](#) or, where that is not possible, equivalent documentation, by a health care practitioner.

Requests linked to examinations scheduled by the Office of the Registrar during official examination periods as well as practice laboratory and performance tests typically scheduled in the last week of term **always** require formal supporting documentation.

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.

Gender-Based and Sexual Violence

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

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.

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

Attendance will be taken each day; if you can't make class for some reason, please email Dr. Kidnie to explain your absence. See the policy on attendance below.

Accommodation for Students with Disabilities

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](#).

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 includes, but is not limited to, the unauthorized use of AI tools such as ChatGPT to create content that is submitted as one's own. In this course, students are permitted to use AI tools exclusively for information gathering and preliminary research purposes. Students must however critically evaluate the obtained information, exercise independent thinking, and engage in original research to synthesize and develop their own ideas, arguments, and perspectives. The use of AI tools can serve as a starting point for exploration, however students are expected to uphold academic integrity by appropriately attributing all sources and avoiding plagiarism. Assignments should reflect the student's own thoughts and independent written work.

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.

Schedule of Classes and Assignments

Test 1 – Jan 28

Test 2 – March 9

Final Projects – March 18, March 25, April 1

Exam

FINAL PROJECTS (choice of project)

- 8-10 minute group staged scene; scripts are permitted for the performance. Not everyone has to act but everyone has to have a role in the group and a job description (director, stage manager and props, actor). At the end of this project, each of you will give feedback on each other's contributions and provide a grade for each other's work. I will take this feedback into consideration when determining your final grade. Each person will receive an individual and a group grade; your final grade will be the average of the two.
- 8-10 minute roundtable discussion of one production with reference to criticism. You'll settle on a live or recorded-as-live production we've watched on this course. One of you will moderate the discussion. Each of you will locate, read, and build into your discussion of the production a minimum of two articles. Ideally, each of you will advance for your listeners an independent perspective on the production. You can agree with one or more participants in the roundtable, but you need to develop your own ideas. This is an unscripted discussion, but you'll need to work with each other in advance to know the others' perspectives and you'll prepare your speaking points in advance. The moderator, in collaboration with the group, will develop and share with the others at least two weeks in advance of the day a few questions to give structure to discussion. The roundtable will happen during classtime in the last two weeks of class. At the end of this project, each of you will give feedback on each other's contributions and provide a grade for each other's work. I will take this feedback into consideration when determining your final grade. Each person will receive an individual and a group grade; your final grade will be the average of the two.
- Devised piece based on headphone project (record people's voices and transform it into a staged piece around a particular topic). Pick an issue or event about which you have something to say and that you think might resonate with an audience. Interview a minimum of ten people and record their thoughts about the selected issue or event. Keep a diary of your own thoughts and ideas as you conduct the interviews. Then fashion this raw material into a play (look at the script of *The Laramie Project* as an example of how you can turn over stage time to one voice or intercut voices together, and also for how you can insert your own diary material. While this project provides an opportunity to hear voices that might not otherwise be heard, it is also a creative work of art that has a beginning, middle, and end. You will partly be assessed on how you fashion your raw material into a finished product. You can work on this project in pairs or solo. If you work in pairs, you're required to undertake a minimum of twenty interviews. The final submission will be all of your raw material (the audio or video recordings, plus your diary entries), the script, plus a recording of one or two "moments" or scenes from your play (this can be performed by you or someone else, or by a group of actors). Scripts are allowed for the recorded performance. If you work in pairs, at the end of this project, each of you will give feedback on each other's contributions and provide a grade for each other's work. I will take this feedback into consideration when determining your final grade. Each person will receive an individual and a group grade; your final grade will be the average of the two.

Class Schedule

Jan 5 Introduction and welcome

Jan 7 Purposes of playing

Reading: Oscar Wilde, *The Importance of Being Earnest* (Drama Online)

Jan 12 Theatre as Social Experiment

Reading: Henrik Ibsen, *A Doll's House* (Drama Online)

Jan 14 Political theatre

Reading: Brecht, "The Street Scene" (5-page essay – uploaded to BrightSpace)

Viewing: Brecht, *The Threepenny Opera* (Drama Online – 2 hours, 24 minutes)

Jan 19 Headphone project – set up

Jan 21 Headphone project – put it together, performance, discussion

Note: Half the class will be in our usual room; the other half will be in **FNB 1220 from 12:30 to 1:30** and **FNB 1200 from 1:30 to 2:30**.

Jan 26 *The Laramie project*

Viewing: Scenes from the 2000 world premiere: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9PjlrUVqJRY> (3 minutes). You might also like to watch or at least dip into the Left Coast Theatre Co's 2020 production (2 hours, 5 minutes): https://www.google.com/search?client=firefox-b-d&hs=XpQU&sca_esv=16f09f52f58857e4&sxsrf=AE3TifPT4P3VPDISMW0Z5MiLi4wDcoMLsQ:1767470630951&udm=7&fbs=AllpHxU7SXXniUZfeShr2fp4giZ1Y6MJ25_tmWITc7uy4KleoJTKjrFiVxydQWql2NcOhYPURiv2wPgv_w_sE_0Sc6QogS5TvEDp7UpbJYBVowPi9ym-G7Xu3tQvIcC4Gcv3U1clDKR698d-90olcl3mLqTWzpmE5QmyD2hwYs8azRwC3TBuGPMrvV9dlOW5yea9CTKQiN9Xj11qGCBG8jO5HpSBGX_Pw&q=laramie+project&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwi8kO-YIfCRAxWzEzQIHQIEAA8QtKgLegQIEhAB&biw=1230&bih=687&dpr=1.25#fpstate=ive&vld=cid:70c7225f,vid:JOCMonXXuqQ,st:0.

JAN 27 7:30PM – Primary Trust at the Grand Theatre
(booking instructions above)

Jan 28 FIRST TEST (multiple choice, short answers). Post-performance discussion.

Feb 2 *Hamlet*

Reading: Shakespeare, *Hamlet* (text at BookStore or Drama Online)

Feb 4 *Hamlet*

Feb 9 *Hamlet*

Feb 11 *Hamlet* (dir. Godwin modernization). Group work on staged scenes.

Viewing: Simon Godwin (dir.), *Hamlet* (Digital Theatre+), 2 hrs, 30 minutes

Feb 14-22 READING WEEK

Feb 23 Harvey Young, *Theatre and Race*; Alice Childress, *Wedding Band*

Reading: Harvey Young, *Theatre and Race* (available at BookStore), Alice Childress, *Wedding Band* (available at BookStore and through Weldon catalogue)

Feb 25 Alice Childress, *Wedding Band*

Mar 2 *Wedding Band*

**MAR 3 7:30PM – *Mrs Krishnan's Party* at the Grand Theatre
(booking instructions above)**

Mar 4 *Mrs Krishnan's Party* (post-performance discussion)

Mar 9 SECOND TEST

Mar 11 STUDIO DAY – Independent time to work on final projects

Mar 16 *Hamilton*

Viewing: *Hamilton* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qHej85lf2Rg> or Disney+), 2 hrs, 30 min

Mar 18 Final projects – Day 1 – **CONRON HALL (UC 3110)**

Mar 23 *Hamilton*

Mar 25 Final projects – Day 2 – **CONRON HALL (UC 3110)**

Mar 30 Exam Review

Apr 1 Final projects – Day 3 – **CONRON HALL (UC 3110)**