

Department of English & Writing Studies
Theatre Studies Program

Theatre Studies 3900G (001)
Destination Theatre Pt 1
Or, PRE-BOARDING!
Winter 2026

Instructor: Kim Solga

Course Day/Time: **TH 6:30-9:30pm**
(ALTERNATE Thursdays – see schedule!)

1. Course Description

YOU GUYS! WE ARE GOING TO LONDON!!!

Destination Theatre is Western Theatre Studies' flagship study abroad class. Its primary goal: to share the joy of live theatre, AND the joy of TRAVELING to see live theatre, with students from across our university.

We have *another* goal, though, and that's to think about how theatre both reflects and shapes cultures, especially across different geographical and political contexts. In the winter term, we'll be reading a series of primers on thinking about "theatre &" other stuff, like politics, tourism, and the city itself. We will also be watching theatre, both live (in LonON and Toronto) and streaming (on Digital Theatre +, accessible through the library), so we can develop some shared understandings about how to "read" a theatre event before we get to Big London.

We will also spend time in winter term planning for our June trip! Together we will research and select the shows we'll see in London, and we'll decide what kinds of paratheatrical activities (ex: touring Shakespeare's Globe? Checking out museums? Chatting with scholars, and reviewers, and artists?) we'd like to slot into our non-theatre time. Imagine if learning also meant planning your vacation!

So buckle up, get ready for takeoff, and WELCOME again to Destination Theatre 2026!

2. Meet Kim (and contact her for help!)

Your instructor is **Professor Kim Solga**. (Call me Kim.) Kim's office is UC3425, above the north stairwell. It is a safe space – you can bring yourself to Kim's room, and she will be there to offer support, care, and kindness. Kim's office hours are drop-in; if, however, you know you want to talk to her, it never hurts to make an appointment first. (Sometimes things get busy.)

Office: UC3425

Contact: ksolga@uwo.ca (NB: Kim tries not to check email on weekends)

Office Hours: in person **THURSDAY 12:30-2:30**; on Zoom **WEDNESDAY 11am-12pm** (Meeting ID: 568 965 9592)

GOOD TO KNOW: Kim used to live and work in Big London, where she was a Senior Lecturer at Queen Mary (our host school!) from 2012 to 2014. She knows the city extremely well. Any questions at all you have about our destination city and/or about QM as our host, just ask.

3. Land Acknowledgement

Western's land acknowledgement and information about Indigenous initiatives on campus can be found at this link: <https://indigenous.uwo.ca/archives/initiatives/land-acknowledgement.html>.

Land acknowledgements can often be perfunctory, standing in for more direct or meaningful action toward reconciliation with the Indigenous communities and nations that are the traditional stewards of Turtle Island. But they can also be made meaningful by using them as an opportunity to reflect on our own relationships to the land, and our own knowledge – or knowledge gaps – about our land's history, and the needs of its keepers today.

In our class, we're explicitly looking forward to leaving Turtle Island in June as we fly across the pond. That doesn't mean, though, that our context as residents of a settler colony, or our experiences as Indigenous or settler folks ourselves, can be left behind; after all, we are literally flying into the heart of the old empire! It's therefore worth reflecting frequently on how our own positions as students at Western, as theatre goers, as members of specific communities, and more can impact the ways we approach a live performance – both before we leave for London and when we're there.

Kim encourages you to offer some reflections about your relationship to the lands you call home in your travel journal – in fact, it's a great way to get your TJ started!

4. Course Objectives

What should you aim for? Here are some objectives Kim has for our class.

1. **To be curious and exploratory:** Above all, I want us to be able to flex our curiosity, to explore new ideas, and to teach each other new things from new perspectives;
2. **To learn the fundamentals of “reading” live theatre as a cultural text:** this includes developing a sense of how both “on stage” elements and “off stage” elements of a show can shape its social meanings;
3. **To practice your critical reflection skills** in our “Four critical reflections” exercise;
4. **To develop your capacity to receive critical feedback and edit your work effectively** when you choose the “do-over” option for one or more of your “Four critical reflections”;
5. **To practice quality studenting and improve your capacity for thoughtful personal reflection** in our “Travel Journal” exercise;
6. **To improve your teamwork skills** as we build our traveling class community and learn how to be effective and supportive community members;
7. **To take a memorable risk** on a final project YOU REALLY WANT TO MAKE. No really!

Beyond these basics, what else would constitute a meaningful take away from our class for you? Create some objectives for yourself – and put them in your Travel Journal!

5. Course Materials

I've ordered five short books to help us work on our objectives above. They are all at the bookstore for you to purchase; you can also read them via Course Readings, either on reserve at Weldon or as e-books (not all of them have e-book editions, alas).

These books are all from the acclaimed "Theatre &" series. They are written with an undergraduate student audience in mind, they are each roughly the length of a playscript (aka, not long for a "whole book"), and they are all comparatively cheap. They are:

Theatre & The City (Jen Harvie, 2009)
Theatre & Politics (Joe Kelleher, 2009)
Theatre & Museums (Susan Bennett, 2013)
Theatre & Audience (Helen Freshwater, 2017)
Theatre & Tourism (Margaret Werry, 2023)

We will also be watching the following four performances in winter term:

The Tempest, by Will Shakespeare (recorded, via Course Readings + free)
Primary Trust, by Ebony Booth (live; see below)
The Container, by Clare Bayley (recorded, via Course Readings + free)
White Girls in Moccasins, by Yolanda Bonnell (live; see below)

Primary Trust is at the Grand in late January/early February, and Kim will have a discount booking code for you ASAP. You can choose any date that works for you and book your own ticket.

White Girls... is at Native Earth Performing Arts in Toronto; Kim will arrange for us to attend the performance on 26 March as a group, with transportation costs included in your ticket fee.

NOTE: Your personal cost for the above books (if you purchase copies) and theatre tickets to PT and WGM will be approximately \$125. If you have any concerns whatsoever about these costs (which are in addition to your course fee of \$3000), please just tell Kim and we will figure it out.

6. Grading and Assessment

Your grade in Destination Theatre will be composed of the following elements:

- ✓ Travel Journal (25% of final grade)
- ✓ Four Critical Reflections (40% of final grade; 10% per reflection)
- ✓ Final project (25% of final grade)
- ✓ Class Community Spirit (10%)

A note or two on deadlines:

Kim does not assign penalties for late work. No really. Because if you're super late with everything the only person who suffers is you. There are two exceptions to this rule, and they are below.

If you are graduating in June and need all your assessed work to be completed in winter term, your final deadline to submit your travel journal, all reflections, AND your final project is **Wednesday April 15**. This is a firm deadline to allow Kim to mark your material in time to submit it in line with UWO winter term registrar deadlines.

Once our journey to London is over, those of you yet to complete your coursework have three deadlines to contend with: **June 28** (upload photos of the London portion of your Travel Journal to Brightspace), **July 3** (Critical Reflections 3+4) and **July 15** (final projects). Because Kim and you both need Destination Theatre to complete before the rest of the summer (and god help us fall!) can begin, **July 15 is a firm deadline for all outstanding work**. Beyond that, you'll need to talk to your academic counsellor about formal accommodation.

Assessment Details

1. Travel Journal (DUE: February 12, March 26, both physical submissions; 28 June via Brightspace – as photos of your London pages uploaded to BS)

Your Travel Journal is your personal record of your journey through our class. It's a course workbook, but it's also a travelogue.

It has **TWO purposes**: **1) to chronicle your winter term preparation work** – including your reading and viewing impressions, your impressions from class, and your reflections from exercises we will do in class together; **AND 2) to chronicle your experiences as a DT traveler**, both preparing for our journey in the run-up to June, AND on the ground in London as we experience the “abroad” component of the class together.

In other words: Your Travel Journal is both a really good class notebook, AND a diary of your experiences in Destination Theatre.

How this looks and feels is ultimately up to you. Below are guidelines Kim has prepared to help you figure out what your Travel Journal might be.

Your TJ is for grades, yes, but it's ultimately for you. For this reason, I **STRONGLY encourage you to get a physical notebook to act as your Travel Journal**. Make it something beautiful that will last – that will be a keepsake from the journey of our class! A physical book will allow you to explore in a different way, enabling writing but not limiting you to the physical act of typing, or even of using words. Writing is a form of thinking with your body, and that means it can come in lots of different forms!

Your TJ is a process, not a product. Kim's not looking for answers; she's mostly looking for questions and wandering wonderings! Let your journal model the messy, exhilarating, sometimes discouraging, sometimes dream-like way we explore new ideas.

That said, keep it (somewhat) neat, and please keep things labeled. (Aka, Notes in Class Week Two! Prep ahead of Week Four!) This helps Kim to understand what's what in your TJ and also to observe your consistency. Consistency, with the TJ, will be key.

Once we get to London, your TJ will probably shift a bit. There will be much less “class prep” and a lot more reflecting as a traveler. We will bring our TJs to the theatre and write in them afterwards; we will use our TJ reflections as the spur for our “in class” discussion. More on that later. For now, below are the required components of your TJ for WINTER TERM.

Required Travel Journal components: WINTER TERM

Your TJ **during our winter term component** includes the following. You might not do every single one of these things each week, but overall your journal should offer a strong balance among the four.

1. ***Notes and impressions while you are reading for class and watching theatre for class.*** (Once we’re in London, our TJs will become our best theatregoing friends...:-) Are you thinking about DT? Reflecting on stuff you saw or read for DT? Your Travel Journal should be with you, helping with that, every time – even before we get to the UK.
2. ***Notes and reflections made in class.*** To the extent that you want things to stay with you, you should note them down. We’ll do a lot of in-class shared work and discussion in winter term; your travel journal is a good place to keep ideas from these exercises and conversations that feel important to you.
3. ***Your reflections in response to Kim’s prompts, both on Brightspace AND in class.*** Kim likes to offer a lot of brief (2-5 minute) opportunities to write in class, to help us prepare for shared discussion. When you are asked to do so, please reflect in your Travel Journal!
4. ***Reflections about your personal journey as we prepare to travel to Big London.*** We’re only in class every other week in winter term; the above three required items will likely occupy your DT thinking time in those weeks! ***What about the off-weeks, then?*** Use the extra time for some meta-reflection about your preparation for our journey. What’s exciting for you as we come closer to our travel dates? Have you been doing personal research into things you’d like to see, explore, try, learn about? OR, consider some of the trickier stuff. What will this journey mean for you, as a person, a tourist, a traveler, a student? What are you worried about? What’s feeling possibly uncomfortable or scary or hard? This is the “diary” part of the TJ for our winter term. Use it as feels best, most productive, for you.

And GRADING? You will hand your Travel Journal in for assessment **twice during winter term:** once at Reading Week and again on March 26.

At Reading Week, Kim will offer everyone FORMATIVE feedback, encouraging you to improve in the places you might be lacking and celebrating the spots where you’re slaying.

At the end of term, we will go through a self-assessment exercise together. You will have the opportunity to provide a thorough assessment of your own work, and to indicate what you’d like to STOP doing, START doing, and KEEP doing once we’re on the ground in London. **Kim will then take everyone’s books in again, and, taking your self-assessment into account, she will provide summative feedback for your winter term effort and a PROVISIONAL grade.** She’ll let you know, as well, what you need to start or keep doing to maintain, or raise, that grade during DT Part Two (Takeoff!).

2. Four Critical Reflections (DUE March 12; April 9; July 3 [x2], via Brightspace)

Early in our work together you’ll be introduced to something Kim calls “critical moments.” These are moments in a performance where you’ve been sparked: something has caught your

attention and makes you want to talk about it, learn more about it, think about it deeply. Together, we'll practice the art of using critical moments as an analytic reflection tool.

For this assignment, you will select ONE critical moment from a theatre performance we have watched together. You'll reflect, first, on what made that moment especially important for you; then, you'll put your moment into conversation with an idea from one of the other texts we've explored together. These texts can be one of our Theatre & books, or another performance we've observed.

You'll do FOUR critical reflections over the course of our whole time together, including both the winter term and abroad components of our class. **You MUST complete at least two CRs in winter term** so that Kim can help you really get the hang of the task. You can, however, do all four CRs in winter term if you wish; you'll simply need to submit the final three no later than 9 April.

Each critical reflection should have a "so what?" – a central point you're seeking to argue, much like a thesis statement in a larger essay – but because it's so short **it need not have a formal introduction or conclusion**. Indeed, the shortness of this assignment is part of its challenge.

Required CR components:

1. **Critical reflections should be 500 words each.** Kim is fine with a buffer of 10% either side, but no more. This restriction is part of the exercise.
2. **Each CR should include a Works Cited or Bibliography** in whatever citation format is preferred by you. Your Works Cited should include both your main performance and your chosen second text. Your Works Cited is part of your word count.
3. **Because we are all from different backgrounds, and some of us may find this assignment foreign and/or tricky, your first two critical reflections include a "do-over" option.** Kim will offer you plenty of feedback alongside your grade on each CR; for our first two, feel free to take that feedback into account and *do your critical reflection over*. This is a challenge in editing, for one, and in taking feedback fully and thoroughly into account, for another. If you'd like this extra learning and challenge, go for it. Whatever happens, you will be guaranteed the higher of your two grades for the CR in question.

3. Final Project (DUE: July 15, via Brightspace)

Your final project will combine your own interests from your own area of study with some aspect of the work we will have done in class / will do during our experience in London.

What do you want to do when you leave school? What from our work together are you curious about exploring further? Questions like these will shape the direction your project takes; Kim will help you determine what form your project might evolve into (an essay? A performance pitch/proposal? A report? A video? Something else?) as well as what research areas you might want to consider as you develop it.

Your project will be the equivalent, roughly, of a 2000-word research paper / report, or 6-8 minutes of recorded audio or video. This is a ballpark measure of **the effort** you should expect to put into your FP.

Every project will look and feel different; this open-endedness might sound scary now but it will, I promise, give you the chance to exercise scholarly creativity like you've rarely had before. **To**

ensure you make the most of the opportunities this task presents for you, you should begin speaking to Kim about possible avenues of investigation in early March.

4. Class Community Spirit (ongoing! In person!)

This class is about having an experience unlike that an everyday classroom affords. It's a chance for us to work together to expand our horizons, test our boundaries, and shift our comfort zones. To do that safely we will work toward becoming a community during winter term, and we will act as an ad-hoc family during our time in London.

In practice, this means you need to come to every winter term meeting, on time and prepared; you need to take part in the exercises and workshops we do in class; you need to ask questions; you need to come see Kim if you need help. In London, you need to show up to performances, to workshops, and to scheduled group discussions. You also need to look out for each other, help each other make smart choices, and keep each other safe – but also accountable.

We'll work on good collaborative studenting throughout winter term, to set us all up for success in London. **Meanwhile, though, note that if you miss more than two winter term sessions without speaking to Kim and crafting a make-up plan, you'll forfeit 50% of your CCS grade.**

7. Accommodations and Flexibility

Of course things will go wrong! Kim's last two years have been a reality-TV-show-like example of what happens when Everything Goes Wrong All At Once. She knows! So: if you have a need that requires accommodation, come talk to her. You and she will figure out what's required together. You may be asked to seek formal accommodation, or you may simply work it out between you. Big Reveal: academics are late with stuff ALL THE TIME. Our editors give us extensions; our Department Chairs offer us support. You take responsibility for bringing your needs to Kim in good time, and Kim will offer you support. We're modeling the profession here.

Do you identify as disabled or living with a disability? Academic Accommodation is "a means of adjusting the academic activities associated with a course or program of student in order to permit students with disabilities to participate in those activities at the University and to fulfill the essential requirements of a course or program."

<https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academicpolicies/appeals/Academic%20Accommodationdisabilities.pdf>. **Students with disabilities are encouraged to register with Accessible Education at the earliest opportunity.** This simply gives Kim a formal mechanism to grant you blanket accommodation; less paperwork is always a blessing!
<http://academicsupport.uwo.ca/accessibleeducation/index.html>

8. Twenty Five Students and a Generative AI Walk Into A Bar...

Can you use ChatGPT and its pals in our class? Yes, of course. We are all using generative AI all the time now; it's hard to escape. It's no longer a question of *if* but of *how*. In this class, Kim trusts you to use AI – IF you want to – in a way that encourages you to evaluate sources, think about reliability and accuracy, and to build your own ideas, not to borrow others' (or a robot's).

Our class has one hard and fast rule around AI: if you use it in any meaningful way to support the creation of your assignments, you need to show your work. This means chronicling in your Travel Journal how you used the tool, how you assessed its efficacy, and how you then went on to dig deeper into your topic(s) independently. It means citing your AI pathway in any assignments that include material supported by generative AI. Basically: use AI as a research tool responsibly and treat it as a research source. Ask the same questions of it that you'd ask of any source: where did this come from? Can I trust it? Where should I go next to deepen my engagement?

This is not for nothing, friends. Kim's Favourite Human (KFH) works in high-level tech in the UK; he talks to Kim about the future of AI in the world all the time. The future will be owned not by people who use AI to cheat, but by people who know how to use AI to their best, most creative advantage. And by people who are honest about that usage. **Want a job? This stuff matters.**

THAT SAID: if Kim suspects you've been using GenAI and *not showing your work*, she will invite you for a chat. If things don't improve from there, Kim reserves the right to report you and your work to the departmental officers in charge of managing academic offenses. Using AI without citation is a form of plagiarism.

9. Do You Need Some Extra Help?

Kim is always here for support, but she's not a registered therapist or a medical doctor. Here are some places on campus you can go for added support.

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 University is committed to 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/studentsupport/survivorsupport/get-help.html>. To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca.

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, reading help, exam preparation, and more. Individual support for a range of students – including undergrads, grad students, international students, and more – is offered throughout the Fall/Winter terms in the drop-in Learning Help Centre, and year-round through individual counselling. Visit this link: <https://learning.uwo.ca>.

Beyond Western

Middlesex County has a number of community supports, from help with addiction and mental health, to help if you've experienced violence, to help with food and meals and even tax planning. Check out the options here: <https://www.middlesex.ca/socialservices/communitysupports>

If you've experienced sexual harm of any kind, recently or in the past, and feel like you need more support than you can access on campus, Anova (on Wellington South, not far from downtown) offers a lot of terrific support. Visit <https://www.anovafuture.org/support/sexual-violence-counselling/>.

10. WINTER TERM Weekly Schedule with Readings+

Remember, folks: because we'll be working hard in London in June, we meet in winter term on ALTERNATING Thursdays only, for a total of 8 classes. See below for specifics.

WEEK 1, SESH 1 (January 8): All Things Intro!

Welcome! Today we're talking about WTF we're doing, we're spreading excitement for our journey, and we're getting to know each other. Kim will introduce our winter term work; for that, please bring your copy of *Theatre & The City*. And, expect a rather cool homework task...

WEEK 2, SESH 2 (January 15): Travel planning pt 1, with Pin Sun

This week is the SINGLE exception to our "alternating Thursdays" rule; that's because we'll be hosting Pin Sun, from Western International, for our mandatory pre-departure workshop. Pin will join us for an hour; after the break, we'll debrief the rest of Harvie's *Theatre & The City*, along with your homework task from last week...

Prepare ahead:

- please finish reading *Theatre & The City* for today's session (approx. 2 hours of work)

WEEK 4, SESH 3 (January 29): Shakespeare, England, and US

Today we'll talk about the Stratford Festival production of *The Tempest* in conjunction with Helen Freshwater's *Theatre & Audience*. Who is Shakespeare? What's an audience? Who is Shakespeare to an audience like us, and (why) does it matter?

Prepare ahead:

- watch *The Tempest* (approx. 2.5 hours, via Course Readings)
- read *Theatre & Audience* (approx. 2 hours of work)

WEEK 6, SESH 4 (February 12): Primary Trust and the politics of the ordinary

Today we will talk about Ebony Booth's *Primary Trust* in conjunction with Joe Kelleher's *Theatre & Politics*. This is an ordinary play about ordinary people navigating their way through a somewhat stressful world. What on earth could be political about that?!

Prepare ahead:

- please be sure to attend *Primary Trust* at the Grand Theatre (downtown) before today's class
- read *Theatre & Politics* (approx. 2 hours of work)

FIRST TRAVEL JOURNAL HAND-IN

WEEK 7 IS READING WEEK!

...BUT: you've got homework. During your RW set yourself up for success like this:

- visit a museum. ANY museum!
- spend some time researching WHAT'S ON in London in the second half of June! Make a shortlist of plays you think we should see. Make a shortlist of galleries or museums we might want to visit! Prepare well: you'll be defending your choices in class next week!

WEEK 8, SESH 5 (February 26): Travel planning pt 2!

Today we'll talk about what museums have to do with theatre, city spaces, and culture-making. Did you attend a museum (any museum!) during RW? Come prepared to talk about it. Did you make a shortlist of great theatre and museum options for London in June? Don't forget to bring it!

Prepare ahead:

- read *Theatre & Museums* (approx. 2 hours of work)

WEEK 10, SESH 6 (March 12): Theatre as tourism

Today we will talk about *The Container*, a "site specific" theatre piece that took place at London's Young Vic theatre about a decade ago, in conjunction with Margaret Werry's *Theatre & Tourism*. When is a theatre like a museum...? When is it something more?

Prepare ahead:

- watch *The Container* (approx. 1 hour, via Course Readings)
- read *Theatre & Tourism* (approx. 2 hours of work)

FIRST CRITICAL REFLECTION DUE

WEEK 12, SESH 7 (March 26): Now WE'RE the tourists!

Today's class takes place on the hoof, as we travel together to Native Earth Performing Arts' Aki Studio in Toronto's Corktown to see Yolanda Bonnell's/Manidoons Collective's *White Girls in Moccasins*. WGM premiered at Buddies in Bad Times (also downtown TO) a few years back, where Kim first saw it; it's HELLA funny and joyful and sometimes painful but mostly hilarious. We will put all of our learning from winter term into practice as we become theatre tourists, in a practice run for what's about to come!

SECOND TRAVEL JOURNAL HAND-IN

WEEK 14, SESH THE LAST (April 9): Ready for takeoff?

Gang, it's happening! We are going to London! Join Kim for today's final winter term sesh; we'll talk final planning details, Kim will host any and all questions you've been holding onto, and we'll do some final project planning and workshopping. You'll get your Travel Journals back, and if you've been procrastinating about your second Critical Reflections, you can work on those too.

SECOND CRITICAL REFLECTION DUE

...see you in London!!!