

Department of English & Writing Studies
Theatre Studies Program

Theatre Studies 2205G (001)
Forms and Genres: The Modern Context
Winter 2026

Instructor: Dr. Jo Devereux
jdevereu@uwo.ca
Office: UC 4433

Office Hours: by appointment

Antirequisite(s): Theatre Studies 2203E.

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.

Course Description

This course traces developments in playwriting, acting, and playhouse design from the Restoration to the present day. This introductory course will explore the theatrical innovations and political interventions of the work of such dramatists as Henrik Ibsen, Sophie Treadwell, Lorraine Hansberry, Harold Pinter, and Suzan-Lori Parks.

Course Materials

Required Text:

The Norton Anthology of Drama, 4th edition, edited by J. Ellen Gainor, Stanton B. Garner Jr., and Martin

Puchner, Norton, 2025.

Paperback: \$90.00 (?)

E-book: \$80.00 (?)

NB: This text is required, and you must bring to class the edition listed above and use that edition for your essays. Failure to use the correct edition will result in a failing grade on your essay. No exceptions.

Plays to be studied:

HENRIK IBSEN *A Doll House* (1879)

OSCAR WILDE *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895)

ANTON CHEKHOV *The Cherry Orchard* (1904)

SUSAN GLASPELL *Trifles* (1916)

SOPHIE TREADWELL *Machinal* (1928)

TENNESSEE WILLIAMS *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947)

SAMUEL BECKETT *Waiting for Godot* (1953)

LORRAINE HANSBERRY *A Raisin in the Sun* (1959)

AUGUST WILSON *Fences* (1985)

SUZAN-LORI PARKS *Topdog/Underdog* (2001)

LYNN NOTTAGE *Sweat* (2015)

Objectives:

This course aims to:

- 1) give students an opportunity to consider modern theatre in its historic, local, and global contexts
- 2) foreground gender, sexuality, intersectionality, race, colonization, etc. as they relate to key texts studied
- 3) give students the opportunity to reflect on their own varied and intersecting positionalities and/or to think critically about ways in which the discipline reproduces existing power structures

Learning Outcomes:

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

- 1) analyze a range of mainstream and alternative theatrical forms and genres in terms of their cultural production
- 2) assess the aesthetic, ethical, social, economic, and political dimensions of modern theatrical works using a range of critical approaches
- 3) conceptualize, design, communicate, and implement creative academic projects, both alone and in collaboration with diverse others

Methods of Evaluation

Essay 1, due 12 February 2026: 15%

Essay 2, due 2 April 2026: 25%

Two group scenes, each worth 10%, for a total of 20%, see below for dates

Attendance: 5%

Here is the sliding scale that will make up the attendance marking for the course:

Days missed Grade.

0-2 5/5

3-5 4/5

6-7 3/5

8-9 2/5

10 1/5

>10 0/5

Final Exam, In-person, April 2026 (date TBA): 35%

Electronic Devices: *No aids are permitted for the exam. Electronic devices of any kind (including calculators, cell phones and smart watches) are not permitted.*

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>.

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**.

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.

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.

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.

Essay Due dates, Late policy, Extensions, Plagiarism

All overdue essays will receive a penalty of 1% per day late.

Essays must follow current MLA format and must include a list of Works Cited at the end (see *MLA Handbook* for details).

Essays must be on works studied in **this** section of the course.

IT IS ADVISABLE TO RETAIN AT LEAST ONE COPY OF THE ESSAY IN THE EVENT OF LOSS OR DAMAGE TO THE ORIGINAL.

Method of Submission: attachments in Word or PDF via OWL

Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence

***The use of generative AI, such as ChatGPT, is not permitted and will be considered a scholastic offence in this course.**

Academic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

Plagiarism

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea or passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence.

Plagiarism Checking

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com <http://www.turnitin.com>.

All instances of plagiarism will be reported to the Chair of Undergraduate Studies. Proven cases of plagiarism will result in a grade of zero for the assignment. Subsequent offences will result in failure for the course.

Email Policy

Email is meant for brief inquiries only. Please allow a day or two for a response. Email received over the weekend will be answered the following week.

Participation/Performance Work (20%)

Each Thursday, starting January 29th, we will forgo the formalities of a traditional university lecture and get down to the business of performance. I will be dividing the class into four groups, and each week you, the students, will run the first hour.

Our performance hour will begin with a scene study presentation by the group designated, for that week, as THE COMPANY.

- It will be the Company's job to stage a scene based on one from the week's play, and to take up roles such as actors, director, dramaturge, and designers. The scenes you perform will be "poor" theatre in the best sense of the word: not a formal, heavily rehearsed performance, although you are free to bring props and costumes as you choose. Your primary task will be to work together to select a specific approach to the scene/play, and then be prepared to defend and explore your choices in class. This "thought work" is *the most important* component of your presentation!
- Those who aren't acting or directing in any given week must contribute behind the scenes, by helping to imagine potential visions for the scene, by imagining a design (be prepared to explain and discuss it!), or by applying dramaturgical (that is, critical, close-reading) skills to the text and then offering options to the actors and/or director.
- I would like each of you to try different roles over the course of the term: if you are shy, challenge yourself to try acting once; if you're a raging extrovert, challenge yourself to pull back a bit and let the quieter members of your group shine.
- The Company will need to read ahead and agree on a scene (or scenes) to perform in advance of their scheduled Wednesdays. You need not clear your scene selection with me in advance, but please choose something that will take approximately 10 minutes to perform.
- Be prepared to meet outside of class for an hour or two, at least a couple of times, before each performance, and establish an informal email discussion list among yourselves in order to hammer out your basic choices and ensure everyone knows their jobs.
- Coordinating your schedules will *not* be easy. In fact, it's part of the challenge. But your groups are large because performance cannot happen with just a couple of people: theatre is made in the messy coordination between different personalities with different schedules and different needs. Do your best to accommodate everyone, to get to know one another, and to support one another; by the end of the term, you'll be glad these people are your colleagues; they may even be your friends!

- After each performance, and a short break, the Company will be asked to get back on stage and participate in a question-and-answer period. Each member of the Company should try to contribute something during the Q&A, especially those whose work has been primarily behind the scenes. This is the time for you to explore in depth, with your colleagues, the terrific thought work that has gone into your presentation!
- The final part of the class will involve a post-performance “talk-back” or discussion.
- When the week’s performance is over, the Company will take their break while the rest of us get into our designated groups. You will be given 10-15 minutes in your group to discuss the performance you’ve just seen, and to prepare two or three good challenging questions about the Company’s performance choices.
- In order to ensure that your group’s discussion runs smoothly, each of you will need to take some notes during the Company’s performance, bring those notes with you to your group’s “huddle,” and be prepared to talk about them.
- NOTE that the questions you develop must delve below the surface of what the Company is doing. Colleague-critics are reviewers with a difference: your task is to explore what worked and what didn’t, to probe the critical effects of the Company’s choices, to offer alternative readings, and to examine how others in the class received the performance (it’s a good idea to address some questions to your fellow audience members as well!). One important proviso: colleague criticism is designed to be helpful and respectful, not hurtful and derogatory.
- We hope to get a lively discussion going and will bounce from group to group until either our time or your notes are exhausted. Support a strong, engaged class discussion!

Assessment

- Your group work is the core component of your participation grade; you will be judged on the amount of effort you put into the work—NOT on your acting skills—and on your willingness to push yourself in new directions, beyond your comfort zone. Note that you need not play a major role in each presentation: balance your commitments to the group work as needed, but ensure that you are contributing helpfully in some way each time your group is The Company, and that you challenge yourself to contribute during your group’s discussions.
- Attendance. One of the keys to doing well at this assignment is attending regularly; the other key is being engaged when you attend. Attendance will be taken. Even if your group is not performing, your attendance is still required and appreciated.

Essay 1: Choose ONE play and write an argumentative essay that focuses on one of the following ten topics listed below. Be sure to narrow and refine your topic so that it is very specific and clear. Do early research on the topic so that you can develop your essay gradually, rather than writing it at the last minute. Engage with at least three secondary sources to help contextualize your argument.

Length: 1500 words

Format: MLA 8th or 9th edition for undergraduate research essays

Worth: 15%

Due: Feb. 12, 2026

Possible Topics:

Gender
Race
Historical context
Staging technique (be specific)
Performance history
Acting style or technique
Set pieces
Props or costumes
Audience response
Political influences

Method of Submission: OWL: one attachment in Word (NOT a PDF)

***The use of generative AI, such as ChatGPT, is not permitted and will be considered a scholastic offence in this course.**

Essay 2: Choose TWO different plays from the one you examined in Essay 1. As with the first essay, choose ONE of the broad topics listed above (which you must narrow down very specifically to construct a clear argument). Engage with at least five secondary sources. Again: do some preliminary research on this topic with reference to the play you are exploring. You may write more than once on the same topic (for example, Gender), but **make sure you cover TWO different plays from the one you examined in Essay 1.**

Length: 2500 words

Format: MLA 8 or 9 for undergraduate research essays

Worth: 25%

Due: April 2, 2026

Method of Submission: OWL: one attachment in Word (NOT a PDF)

***The use of generative AI, such as ChatGPT, is not permitted and will be considered a scholastic offence in this course.**

Schedule of Classes and Assignments

(G = Group, P = Performance)

Jan.6-8	Introduction
Jan.13-15	HENRIK IBSEN <i>A Doll House</i> (1879)
Jan.20-22	OSCAR WILDE <i>The Importance of Being Earnest</i> (1895)
Jan.27-29	ANTON CHEKHOV <i>The Cherry Orchard</i> (1904) G1, P1
Feb.3-5	SUSAN GLASPELL <i>Trifles</i> (1916) G2, P1
Feb.10-12	SOPHIE TREADWELL <i>Machinal</i> (1928) G3, P1; Essay 1 Due Feb.12
Feb.17-19	READING WEEK
Feb.24-26	TENNESSEE WILLIAMS <i>A Streetcar Named Desire</i> (1947) G4, P1
Mar.3-5	SAMUEL BECKETT <i>Waiting for Godot</i> (1953) G1, P2
Mar.10-12	LORRAINE HANSBERRY <i>A Raisin in the Sun</i> (1959) G2, P2
Mar.17-19	AUGUST WILSON <i>Fences</i> (1985) G3, P2
Mar.24-26	SUZAN-LORI PARKS <i>Topdog/Underdog</i> (2001) G4, P2
Mar.31-Apr.2	LYNN NOTTAGE <i>Sweat</i> (2015) Essay 2 Due Apr.2
Apr.7-9	Wrap Up
April	Final Exam (in-person, 2 hours)