



DR 355 THEATRE IN LONDON: TEXT AND THE DRAMATIC IMAGINATION

IES Abroad London
Theater Studies Program

DESCRIPTION:

This course draws on the unique theatrical culture of London to explore current, historical and emerging trends in the relationship between dramatic texts and the performances they mediate, from both an academic perspective and that of the creative theatrical professional. The relationships between text, action, fiction, director, performer and audience are being rethought on the London stage through, for example, the emergence of 'post-dramatic', immersive, verbatim and physical theatre as well as through innovative new playwriting and the constant re-imagining of the canonical classics. Texts may be conceived variously as musical scores, incomplete performance blueprints, rules for performer 'play' or as the main thrust and vehicle of dramatic action; as both the semiotic 'leading edge' of a performance and as the source of its defining parameters. Students will attend nine current London theatre productions, ranging from West End and National Theatre shows to London Fringe offerings. Students will also study rare video material from current and historical productions, in their exploration of the use and impact of text in performance as a vital tool, source and inspiration for playwrights, directors, performers, designers, managers and theatre entrepreneurs and as means of engaging with subjects such as theatre history, the work of individual playwrights, as well as the current political, social and economic issues that significantly shape the theory and practice of contemporary British theatre.

CREDITS: 3 credits

CONTACT HOURS: 45 hours

LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION: English

PREREQUISITES: The course is a core module for those who have enrolled in the London Theatre Studies Programme. It is also open to those with a strong interest in theatre studies.

ADDITIONAL COST: None

METHOD OF PRESENTATION:

Lectures, seminar discussions, workshops, play readings and student presentations. There is a guided front and backstage tour of the National Theatre, as well as a weekly theatre production. Each week the course meets for one seminar discussion and one lecture.

REQUIRED WORK AND FORM OF ASSESSMENT:

- Course Participation - 10%
- Oral Presentation - 10%
- Follow-up paper (1,500 words) to oral presentation (20%)
- Midterm Paper (2000 words) - 20%
- Written dramaturgical analysis/production proposal (1,000 words) (10%)
- Written Final Exam – Students will select and answer two essay questions out of six possible questions during a two-hour in-class examination - 30%

Course Participation

Participation in class is assessed on all IES courses. An indicative guide to the criteria used to assess your contribution in class can be found in the IES Essentials Guide. The ways in which these generic criteria are applied necessarily vary from course to course; however, they concern four key activities: (a) doing the **preparatory work** for each class (often some reading, though it can take other forms), (b) **reflecting** on it, (c) **communicating** in class what you have learnt from it, and (d) **responding** constructively to what others communicate, which typically involves coming up with relevant questions, evidence or arguments.



Midterm Paper

A 2000-word paper on a topic assigned by the instructor.

Written Final Exam

Students will select and answer two essay questions out of six possible questions during a two-hour in-class examination.

Oral Presentation & Follow-up Paper

Each student will (at the class immediately following one of the weekly theatre productions, selected as agreed with the tutor) offer a related **short oral presentation**, and subsequently (a week later) submit a **class paper** of 1500 words in relation to the same production with relevant prompt chosen in consultation with the tutor.

Written Dramaturgical Analysis/Production Proposal

Students will complete a 1000-word 'dramaturgical analysis/production proposal' assignment in response to a short UK play text read and explored in class. The assignment will be keyed to their performance discipline (e.g. actor/director/Stage Manager/Stage Designer).

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

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

- Explain the development and use of text in the theatre culture of particular historical periods
- Identify a range of contemporary models of performative text use
- Articulate the work of some individual playwrights and contemporary processes of performance writing
- Consolidate their ability to analyse, and extract material from, the text of a play towards the development of a theatre production
- Consolidate their ability to analyse and evaluate a theatre production especially in relation to its use of text
- Broaden their understanding of the possibilities of text use in theatrical performance
- Give a seminar presentation, test out ideas in debate and have respect for the ideas of others

ATTENDANCE POLICY:

Regular class attendance is mandatory. Irregular attendance may result in a lower grade in the course, and/or disciplinary action. The IES Abroad London class attendance policy does not allow for unexcused absences, and grades will be docked one-half letter grade for each such absence. Rare exceptions will be made for the following reasons:

- The student is too sick to attend class. In this instance, the student must call the IES Abroad Centre before class to notify any of the IES Abroad staff. It is not sufficient either to email, send a message with a friend or call the Centre after the class has started.
- **A serious illness or death** in the immediate family requiring a student to travel home. This requires written approval from the Centre Director before departure.

Arriving **more than 10 minutes** late to class may count as an unexcused absence. Immigration laws in the UK are extremely strict, and we jeopardize our legal status in hosting students who do not regularly attend class. Students who do not attend class regularly will be reported to the appropriate officials and risk dismissal from the programme and deportation from the UK. If a student incurs absences representing 25% of the total class hours, they will be contacted by the Academic Programmes Manager (APM) and Centre Director (CD). If these absences are made up exclusively of unexcused non-attendance, this will trigger a disciplinary review. If these absences are made up of excused non-attendance a meeting will be held to discuss the underlying reasons for lack of attendance, and to discuss ways it can be maintained for the duration of the term. If the 25% threshold is reached due to a mixture of excused and unexcused absences, students will also be asked to attend a meeting to discuss.

CONTENT:

In addition to the classes/assignments itemized below, students will attend **nine weekly theatre productions**. Each student will (at the class immediately following one of these, selected as agreed with the tutor) offer a related **short oral presentation**, and subsequently (a week later) submit a **class paper** in relation to the same production with relevant prompt chosen in consultation with the instructor. Students will subsequently complete a **'dramaturgical analysis/production proposal'** assignment based on a

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short play script featured in class or recommended by the instructor and keyed to individual students' performance discipline (e.g. actor/director/Stage Manager/Stage Designer). Further assignments are: a **midterm paper**; the **final exam** takes place in week thirteen .

(N.B. the order of some classes will be flexible in accordance with theater production attendance scheduling)

Session	Content	Assignments
Session 1	<p>1. Introduction to the Course and Creation of our 'Comparative Model' of Theatrical Performance</p> <p>As well as introducing the course and previewing our key concerns and the experiences we will be encountering, we will briefly examine the phenomenon of 'performance' itself and its 'sub-genre' dramatic theatre, in the process looking to build a fundamental 'model' of theatrical performance in relation to its texts. Our ongoing aim will be to make use of this model in comparing the many and varied instances of historical and contemporary theatre practice in London and internationally that we will be exploring - both in class and in live performance - in the coming weeks. We will also prepare the ground for our first production to be attended</p>	Readings:
Session 2	<p>Seminar discussion of the play attended in production and subsequently read immediately prior to class, followed by:</p> <p>2. Musicality and Origins</p> <p>Having established our basic theatrical 'model', we will here touch on the distinctive UK/US Musical Theatre traditions before further refining our model, exploring the phenomenon of 'musicality' as a foundational and yet very varied element in many different theatre forms. We will also introduce the concept of theatre 'conventions' or 'grammars'. We will then trace the origins and continuing influences of the so-called 'Western tradition' of scripted drama by looking at video extracts of a contemporary London theatre re-imagining of an ancient Greek text and of a recent example of mainstream musical theatre in London. If time permits, we will also examine a short extract from a recent performance text in terms of its potential for performative musicality and the possible creative choices involved. We will conclude by briefly previewing our next production visit.</p>	Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The text of the play/production attended prior to class

Session 3	<p>Seminar discussion of the play attended in production and subsequently read immediately prior to class, followed by:</p> <p>3. Shakespeare - an Artist in Transitions</p> <p>In anticipation of a visit to a current production of a Shakespeare play and using the play concerned as an example, we will explore how his work embodies major transitions in the society and culture of his time with effects that strongly resonate today. We will also touch on ways in which subsequent attitudes to Shakespeare have influenced the development of London theatre and its production practice up to the present day. We will conclude by briefly previewing our next production visit.</p>	<p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The text of the play/production attended prior to class <p>Assignment (throughout the semester)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individual student class oral presentation, with associated class essay to be submitted the following week. (Each student completes ONE of these per semester)
Session 4	<p>Seminar discussion of the play attended in production and subsequently read immediately prior to class, followed by:</p> <p>4. The Realist 'Revolution' and the 'haunting' of Naturalism.</p> <p>Moving forward in time to the Nineteenth Century, we will focus on the revolutionary moment when so-called 'Theatrical Realism' first appeared and caused a sensation on the London stage. We will also examine how subsequent experiments in the 1890s with European Naturalism didn't immediately have such significant effects, but formed part of a vanguard that went on to significantly enrich London theatre culture throughout the Twentieth Century and beyond. We will conclude by briefly previewing our next production visit.</p>	<p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The text of the play/production attended prior to class
Session 5	<p>Seminar discussion of the play attended in production and subsequently read immediately prior to class, followed by:</p> <p>5. Further European 'Incursions' - the Revolution that Settled to an Evolution</p> <p>Carrying on from our identification of 'European Naturalism' we will here identify three more crucial European movements that between 1880 and 1920 'haunted' the London theatre, and which, like Naturalism, had limited initial impact but long-term influence throughout the Twentieth Century and into the</p>	<p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The text of the play/production attended prior to class

	<p>Twenty First. We will conclude by briefly previewing our next production visit.</p>	
<p>Session 6</p>	<p>Seminar discussion of the play attended in production and subsequently read immediately prior to class, followed by:</p> <p>6. The Further Evolution and Prominence of English Realism</p> <p>'English Realism' is one name given to the very distinctive mode of drama and acting style that gradually evolved from the 'realist breakthrough' in London theatre in the 1860s, and which over the first part of the Twentieth Century helped establish mainstream London theatre as highly distinctive internationally. But what was the nature of this 'style' and aesthetic; what experiences were excluded from it; how did it relate to broader notions of 'Englishness' developing at the time and how and why did these, in turn, emerge? We will examine these questions, briefly comparing parallel international developments such as the US 'Method' approach, especially in respect of the broader cultural differences in the use of language. We will conclude by briefly previewing our next production visit.</p>	<p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The text of the play/production attended prior to class <p>Assignment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Midterm Paper (Due Wk 7 after midterm break)
<p>Session 7</p>	<p>Seminar discussion of the play attended in production and subsequently read immediately prior to class, followed by:</p> <p>7. 1956 - The Cataclysm: Revolution 2</p> <p>1956 was a - if not THE - key moment in the development of contemporary London theatre as well as being a hugely significant transitional moment in the recent history of the UK. These two phenomena were arguably linked, and as a result the standing of 'English Realism' as the dominant London theatrical mode collapsed almost overnight. We will explore the cultural and political factors involved, and also the key political</p>	<p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The text of the play/production attended prior to class

	and theatrical disruptors from both within the UK and internationally that led to this explosive transformation and fragmentation. We will conclude by briefly previewing our next production visit.	
Session 8	<p>Seminar discussion of the play attended in production and subsequently read immediately prior to class, followed by:</p> <p>8. Political Theatre and the Politics of Theatre - the 1960s and Beyond</p> <p>A mode of theatre initiated internationally in the period immediately after WW1 - Constructivism (touched on briefly in Class 6) - ultimately led to a huge and fundamental shift in the aesthetic strategies of so-called political theatre's 'relation to the real' and also in its relations between performers and audiences, most significantly through the work of the German playwright/director Bertold Brecht. His work impacted London in the upheavals of 1956, and ultimately led to the explosion of UK political theatre throughout the tempestuous decade of the 1960s. We will trace these developments and their implications, and also ask to what extent and in what ways all theatre is unavoidably embroiled in politics and power. We will conclude by briefly previewing our next production visit.</p>	<p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The text of the play/production attended prior to class
Session 9	<p>Seminar discussion of the play attended in production and subsequently read immediately prior to class, followed by:</p> <p>9. New Writing and 1979 - Revolution 3</p> <p>We will draw on a range of concepts from classes so far as well as new video material to inform our exploration of an unpublished short script by a leading contemporary UK playwright. We will focus in particular on the play's potential staging of tensions between different conceptions and 'performances' of Englishness, and also examine different potential choices in its staging. We will also use the script to unpack the significance of the year 1979, where arguably the whole nature of the UK political and social 'contract' fundamentally shifted, with huge implications for the 'eco-system' of UK and also</p>	<p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The text of the play/production attended prior to class <p>Assignment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creative Text Analysis Assignment (due week 11)

	London theatre up to the present day. We will conclude by briefly previewing our next production visit.	
Session 10	<p>Seminar discussion of the play attended in production and subsequently read immediately prior to class, followed by:</p> <p>10. Contemporary Focus - Revolution or Evolution?</p> <p>In the 21st Century there has been an explosion of new performance forms in UK theatre, with major implications for performance text development and use. We will survey a range of these and analyse particular examples of texts and associated video material, looking to understand and evaluate the theory behind each form and their effectiveness and purpose. We will also ask if these developments are absolutely revolutionary, or are they rather highly creative further modifications and repurposings of the core elements of the existing model of theatre we have been drawing on all semester? We may even create our own post-dramatic performance piece</p>	<p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The text of the play/production attended prior to class
Session 11	<p>11. London Theater Now</p> <p>We will review the productions visited during the semester and look to establish key themes and movements currently being played out in London Theatre</p> <p>No Theater Production</p>	Readings:
Session 12	<p>12. Review for Forthcoming Exam</p> <p>We will review and draw together key questions and concepts of dramatic text-use explored over the semester. There will also be a review of material in anticipation of the forthcoming exam.</p>	<p>Assignment</p> <p>Exam (Wk 13)</p>

REQUIRED READINGS:

Students will be required to read the texts and theatre programmes of each of the nine productions seen. Play texts of each of the nine productions seen; also theatre programme for each of the productions seen. Some programmes simply contain information about the actors, director, designer etc., some also include articles about the playwright, the period during which the play was written, while others consist of the text of the play. All students are required to read each play text prior to the class immediately following attendance at the related production (usually a gap of seven days). As the class outline suggests, productions will usually include (subject to availability) for example an Early Modern or Shakespeare production; an instance of new theatre writing; an instance of musical theatre; a contemporary classic; an instance of US work re-configured in a UK context; an example of contemporary non-conventional performance

RECOMMENDED READING:

The following are all available in the IES library or as an electronic resource

Alfreds, Mike. *Different Every Night: Freeing the Actor* Nick Hern Books 2007
 Angelaki, Vicky. *Social and Political Theatre in 21st-Century Britain: Staging Crisis*. Bloomsbury Methuen 2017
 Bentley, Eric. *The Life of the Drama*. Methuen, 1965
 Brook, Peter. *The Empty Space*. London: Penguin Books, 2008
 Carlson, Marvin. *Theories of the Theatre: A Historical and Critical Survey, from the Greeks to the Present*. Cornell University Press, 1993
 Counsell, Colin and Wolf L eds. *Performance Analysis: An Introductory Coursebook*. Routledge 2008
 Day, Gary. *The Story of Drama*, Bloomsbury Methuen 2016
 Edgar, David. *How Plays Work*. Nick Hern Books, 2009
 Fischer-Lichte Erika. *The Transformative Power of Performance* Routledge 2008
 Freeman, John *New Performance/New Writing* Palgrave Macmillan 2014
 Garde, Ulrike *Theatre of Real People*, Methuen, 2016
 Gaskill W. *Words into Action: Finding the Life of the Play* Nick Hern Books 2010
 Gilman, Richard. *The Making of Modern Drama*. New York: Da Capo 1987
 Grochala, Sarah, *The Contemporary Political Play* Bloomsbury Methuen, 2017
 Innes, Christopher. & Shevtsova, M. *The Cambridge Introduction to Theatre Directing* Cambridge University Press 2013
 Innes, Christopher. *Modern British Drama: The Twentieth Century* 2nd edition Cambridge University Press 2009
 Jones, R.D. *Great Directors at Work: Stanislavsky, Brecht, Kazan, Brook* University of California Press; Revised ed. 1992
 Innes, Christopher, *Avant Garde Theatre 1982-1992*, Routledge, 1993
 Keenan, Shioban, *Acting Companies and their Plays in Shakespeare's London*, Bloomsbury, 2014
 Kendrick, John *Musical Theatre* Second Edition Bloomsbury Methuen 2017
 Knowles Rick *How Theatre Means* Palgrave Macmillan 2014
 Laera, Margherita ed. *Theatre and Adaptation*. Bloomsbury Methuen 2014
 Lehmann Hans-Thies. *Post Dramatic Theatre* Routledge 2006
 McConachie, Bruce, *Engaging Audiences: A Cognitive Approach to Spectating in the Theatre*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2008
 Middeke, Martin; Schneirer, Peter Paul & Sierz, Aleks eds. *The Methuen Drama Guide to Contemporary British Playwrights*. Methuen, 2011
 Mitchell, Katie. *The Director's Craft: A Handbook for the Theatre* Routledge 2008
 Mitter, Shomitt. *Systems of Rehearsal: Stanislavsky, Brecht, Grotowski, and Brook* Routledge 1992
 Pickering, Kenneth. *Key concepts in Drama and Performance*. Macmillan, 2005
 Radosavljevic Duska *Theatre-Making: Interplay Between Text and Performance in the 21st Century* Palgrave Macmillan 2016
 Radosavljevic Duska ed. *Theatre Criticism*. Bloomsbury Methuen 2016
 Roose-Evans, James. *Experimental Theatre: From Stanislavsky to Peter Brook*. Routledge, 1991
 Schechner, Richard. *Performance Studies: An Introduction* 3rd Edition. Routledge, 2013
 Schulze, Daniel. *Authenticity in Contemporary Theatre and Performance*. Bloomsbury 2017
 Shepherd Simon. *Direction: Readings in Theatre Practice* Palgrave Macmillan 2012
 Shepherd Simon. & Wallis M. *Studying Plays* Bloomsbury Academic; 3rd Revised edition 2010
 Sierz Aleks. *The Methuen Drama Guide to Contemporary British Playwrights* Methuen 2011

Seirz, Aleks, *Rewriting The Nation: British Theatre Today*. Methuen 2010
 States, Bert O., *Great Reckonings in Little Rooms: On the Phenomenology of Theatre*. University of California, 1985
 Stern, Tiffany *Making Shakespeare: From Page to Stage* Routledge 2004
 Stephens, Simon. *A Working Diary* Bloomsbury Methuen 2016
 Styan J.L. *Modern Drama in Theory and Practice Volumes 1-3* Cambridge University Press 1993
 Thomas J. *Script Analysis for Actors, Directors, and Designers* Focal Press 5th edition 2013
 Trencsenyi, Katalin. *New Dramaturgy*. Bloomsbury Methuen 2014
 Wickham, Glynne. *A History of the Theatre*. Phaidon, 1985
 Thomas, J. *A Director's Guide to Stanislavsky's Active Analysis* Bloomsbury 2016
 Worthen W. B. *Shakespeare and the Authority of Performance* Cambridge University Press 1997



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