



DR 315 THEATER IN LONDON: AN INTRODUCTION

IES Abroad London

DESCRIPTION: This theatre course uses the city of London to provide a unique opportunity for students to develop their existing knowledge of the theatre, in the context of nine theatre productions. The focus is on smaller fringe venues and theatre companies, as well as the National Theatre and the West End. Students will read new and innovative plays as well as the classics. They will then assess the way those plays are interpreted for the stage, taking into account direction, design and acting, as well as other staging elements. The course lectures will closely relate to the productions seen. Those subjects include theatre history, individual playwrights, as well as 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: None. The course is designed for students who are not Theatre or English majors and/or who have not previously taken a course in Theatre.

ADDITIONAL COST: Students in any class that requires attendance at theater performances are charged a fee to help cover the cost of these performances. Classes subject to this fee are DR315, DR355, TH350, TH355, and TH390. If students are in two or more of these classes in the same term, they are charged only once. For more information on the fee, please see the program fee sheet. This additional fee is not charged to students in the Theatre Studies Program, as performances are included in their program fee.

METHOD OF PRESENTATION:

- Lectures
- Seminar discussions
- Student presentations

Each week the course meets for one seminar discussion and one lecture.

REQUIRED WORK AND FORM OF ASSESSMENT:

- An oral presentation: students choose a play that is seen in production and talk about both the text and the performance. 10%
- A follow-up paper to the oral presentation approximately 1,300 words in length, based upon a particular aspect of the play and its production, drawing upon the student's presentation and the general seminar discussion. The instructor will discuss the choice of topic with the student. The paper is handed in a week following the presentation. 20%
- Students will attend a production of their own choice during the term, and will write a review of this production, to be presented in class and handed in the following week. 10%
- A take-home mid-term essay approximately 2,000 words in length. The titles will be given prior to midterm and are general, drawing upon lecture material, plays read and productions seen. Essays are due the following week. 20%
- A final unseen two-hour examination consisting of questions referring specifically to plays read and seen in productions. Two questions must be attempted. Play texts can be taken into the examination. 30%
- Attendance and contribution to class discussion. Discussion is one of the best ways of learning but only if all students prepare and participate. In order to participate fully, students must make sure they have read and brought to the seminar: the text of the play, the programme for the production, the reviews of that production (if available) and any relevant article. Copies of reviews and relevant articles will be handed out whenever possible. 10%

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

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

- Understand the significance of some historical periods in the development of theatre

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- Understand the work of some individual playwrights
- Understand the structures that shape British theatre
- Analyse the text of a play and the theatre production of that play
- Analyse the process whereby a text is transformed into a theatre production
- Give a seminar presentation, test out ideas in debate and have respect for the ideas of others

CONTENT:

Week	Content
Week 1	There are a number of key elements that define theatre: the style of acting, the fact that it is live, the relationship between actor and audience, the characteristics of the stage and the theatre venue, and the role of those who interpret the play for the stage. These elements will be considered in the context of students' previous experience of theatre, and/or their assumptions and expectations of the plays to be read and productions to be seen. Students will attend a theatre production.
Week 2	Seminar discussion of the play read and seen in production the previous week. William Shakespeare is a seminal figure in any study of theatre. We will consider relevant aspects of the Elizabethan and Jacobean period during which he wrote his plays, and focus particularly on a play by Shakespeare that is read and seen in production.
Week 3	Seminar discussion of the play read and seen in production the previous week. There was a profoundly significant revolution in theatre during the late nineteenth century. A number of playwrights tackled new and often controversial subjects and the realist nature of staging presented an unprecedented challenge to theatre audiences. This period is considered in relation to one of these classic plays that is read and seen in production.
Week 4	Seminar discussion of the play read and seen in production the previous week. The twentieth century saw a range of reactions against realistic theatre by playwrights, directors and designers, who dramatised the meaning of the play by means of stylised techniques. The greatest practitioner of this kind of theatre is the German playwright and director Bertolt Brecht who has had a great influence on European, British and American theatre over the last sixty years. A play by Brecht or Brechtian in technique is read and seen in production.
Week 5	Seminar discussion of the play read and seen in production the previous week. The several developments of British post-war theatre will be considered, of which we will read and see in production one or more examples.
Week 6	Seminar discussion of the play read and seen in production the previous week. Any understanding of British theatre must include its structures: West End, the major subsidised companies which are the National Theatre and the Royal Shakespeare Company, and fringe. In turn, the structure of theatre can only be understood in relation to income or financial support. Financial source and artistic policy are inseparable. We will consider whether the State has a responsibility to provide financially for the theatre. In this context, there will be a front and back stage tour of the National Theatre. Students will attend a theatre production.
Week 7	Seminar discussion of the play read and seen in production the previous week. We will consider the history of theatre censorship. Before 1968 when the Theatre Act was passed, censorship was clearly and narrowly defined in legal terms. Post-1968, censorship is more diffuse; but still exists. The fact that theatre is live makes this a particularly important issue. We will debate our own views. Students will attend a theatre production.

Week 8	Seminar discussion of the play read and seen in production the previous week. Historically, political theatre has sometimes been censored when it is considered to undermine the state. There will be a survey of political theatre, including classic revivals and contemporary docu-drama. Students will attend a theatre production.
Week 9	Seminar discussion of the play read and seen in production the previous week. The reception of theatre contributes significantly to its development. We will look at the history of audience expectation, behaviour and understanding, and how this leads to the contemporary review. We will also consider the function of the theatre review in the light of the students' own choice of production to be reviewed. No theatre production; students choose their own production to review.
Week 10	Seminar discussion of productions chosen by the students. The history of theatre design will be examined in the light of productions seen throughout the course. There will also be a summing up of the contributions of the directors. Students will attend a theatre production.
Week 11	Seminar production of the play read and seen in production the previous week. At this stage of the course, we will begin to pull together the several issues considered thus far; namely, the nature and function of politicised theatre, the balance between new plays and classic revivals, the current debate regarding theatre funding. Incorporated will be an informal revision, anticipating the final examination.

COURSE-RELATED TRIPS:

There is a guided front and backstage tour of the National Theatre, as well as a weekly theatre production.

REQUIRED READINGS:

- 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 combine production details with the text of the play.
- Play text of each of the nine productions seen.

RECOMMENDED READINGS:

The following are all available in the IES library:

- Bentley, Eric. *The Life of the Drama*. London: Methuen, 1965
- Bentley, Eric. *The Theory of the Modern Stage*. London: Penguin, 1992
- Brook, Peter. *The Empty Space*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1990
- Brook, Peter. *The Shifting Point*. London: Methuen, 1987
- Carlson, Marvin. *Theories of the Theatre: A Historical and Critical Survey, from the Greeks to the Present*. Cornell: Cornell University Press, 1993
- Cook, Philip. *How to Enjoy the Theatre*. London: Piatkus, 1983
- Gilman, Richard. *The Making of Modern Drama*. New York: Da Capo 1987
- Hall, Peter. *The Necessary Theatre*. London: Nick Hern Books, 1999
- Pickering, Kenneth. *Key concepts in Drama and Performance*. London: Macmillan, 2005
- Roose-Evans, James. *Experimental Theatre: From Stanislavsky to Peter Brook*. London: Routledge, 1991
- Russell Brown, John ed. *The Oxford Illustrated History of Theatre*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995
- Wickham, Glynn. *A History of the Theatre*. Oxford: Phaidon, 1985