

**Carleton University  
Winter 2016  
Department of English**

**English 5606: Studies in Twentieth-Century Literature  
Topic: Staging Transnational Encounters in Contemporary Theatre**

**Time: Tues./Thurs.: 2:30-4:00**

**Location: English Dept. Seminar room, DT 1816**

**Instructor: Brenda Vellino**

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**Office Hours: Thurs. 4-5:30 or by appointment**

“There are, after all, people all over the globe living, crossing, resisting, defining, and defending linguistic, cultural, racial, gender, psycho- geographical, cartographic, political and other borders.” Guillermo Verdecchia, *Fronteras Americanas* preface.

In this course, we will consider how contemporary theatre stages transnational encounters between diverse characters, historical and contemporary contexts, cultures, and audiences. We will explore interconnections between localities, communities, nations, hemispheres, and continents from the perspective of multiple forms of transnational border crossing. These will include those catalyzed by migration and diaspora, by intersectional issues such as human rights and environmental justice, by inhabitation of multiple subject locations and affiliations, by the multi-site production history of many of our focus plays, and by the politics of postcolonial, decolonial and multi-directional memory. Organized into two thematic clusters—environmental justice and conflict transformation theatre—this course seeks to engage theatrical responses to historical and contemporary moments of crisis and transition across multiple global contexts. The course is informed by comparative, postcolonial, diaspora, gender, environmental humanities, and human rights humanities theories and methodologies. We will engage playwrights from Irish, Afro-Caribbean, South African, Indigenous, U.S., British, Jewish, and Canadian contexts. For those interested in Canadian literature, please note that four of the ten focus plays are Canadian. Along with reading one play a week, we will read at least one supporting theoretical, critical, or performance focused essay to contextualize the discussion. This course also encourages encounters with the live performance contexts of theatre. To that end, we will attend one live play, experience a voice workshop, and students will produce staged readings of scenes from two focus plays of their group’s choice.

**Course Texts: Available at Haven Books**

**Environmental and Climate Justice Theatre:**

- Marie Clements. *Burning Vision*. Talonbooks, 2003.
- Caridad Svich. *The Way of Water*. NoPassport Press, 2012.
- Shonni Enelow. *Carla and Lewis*. In *Research Theatre, Climate Change, and the Ecocide Project* (2014). On reserve in library for photocopying.
- Mike Bartlett. *Earthquakes in London*. Methuen Drama, 2011.

**Conflict Transformation and Multi-Directional Memory Theatre**

- Yael Farber. *Molara*. Oberon, 2009.
- Seamus Heaney. *The Burial at Thebes: A Version of Sophocles Antigone*. Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2004.
- Robin Soans. *Talking to Terrorists*. Oberon, 2005.
- Darrah Teitel. *Corpus*. (2013) - in *Canadian Theatre Review* special issue on Jewish Performance, available on-line through “Summon” on the Carl. library home-page.
- Colleen Wagner. *The Monument*. Playwright’s Canada, 1996.
- M. NourbeSe Philip. *Zong!* Wesleyan, 2008.

**Course Assignments**

- Participation/Attendance: 10%
- Live theatre review: **Due Feb. 22**: 5 pages 15%
- Seminar on play: Aprox.10 pages notes, 30-40 minutes: 25%
- Scholarly article review: Approx. 4 pages, 20 minutes: 10%
- Scene/Character Analysis Short Paper (8-10 pages): **Due March 14** 20%
- Staged Readings with “Actioning the Text” Notes (**Due March 24**) and Reflection Paper (**Due April 4**: 2 pages): 20%

**Course Policies:** Class works when you do, so it should be understood that in a grad. seminar, attendance is mandatory. (Note: you may have up to two allowable absences without medical or other documentation.) Please do all readings for each class with a pencil in hand and come prepared to bring thoughtful questions and insights to the seminar discussions. Please keep use of electronic devices to a minimum in class and off the table unless needed for note-taking.

## Course Calendar

### **Jan. 11: Framing Concepts: Transnationalism, Globalization, and Intercultural Theatre**

\*Ric Knowles. "Theatrical Interculturalism and Its Discontents," "Theatre has always been Intercultural," "Decolonising the Stage." In *Theatre & Interculturalism*. Palgrave, 2010: 1-13, 30-42. On Res.: Carl. library.

\*Richard Schechner. Chapter 8: "Global and Intercultural Performances." *Performance Studies: An Introduction*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. New York: Routledge, 2002. On Res.: Carl. library.

\*This is a longish essay (62 pages) with many fascinating case studies read through a postcolonial lens, so please allow yourself plenty of time to read it.

\*Florian N. Becker et al. "Introduction." *Imagining Human Rights in Twenty-First Century Theatre*. Palgrave, 2013. On Res.: Carl. Library.

### **Jan. 18: Indigenous Intercultural Eco-Theatre: Marie Clements – *Burning Vision* (2003).**

\*Critical Article: Theresa J. May. "Kneading Marie Clements' Burning Vision." *Canadian Theatre Review*. 144 (2010). (Online – Carl. Library)

### **Jan. 25: Water Ecology Theatre (Deepwater Horizon Gulf of Mexico Oil Spill): Caridad Svich – *The Way of Water* (2012).**

\*Critical Article: "Introduction" from Rob Nixon's *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*. (2011)

### **Feb. 1: "Ecocide" Research Theatre: Shonni Enelow – *Carla and Lewis* (a short play) to be photocopied in *Research Theatre, Climate Change, and the Ecocide Project*. New York: Palgrave, 2014. On Reserve: Carleton Library.**

\*Critical Book Chapter: Una Chaudhuri and Shonni Enelow. "Theorizing Ecocide." *Research Theatre, Climate Change, and the Ecocide Project*.

### **Feb. 8: Climate Change Theatre: Mike Bartlett - *Earthquakes in London***

\*Critical short film in place of article. Dir. Wallace Heim. "Earth Matters on Stage." (2009) [http://www.ashdendirectory.org.uk/featuresView.asp?pageIdentifier=2009521\\_19735354](http://www.ashdendirectory.org.uk/featuresView.asp?pageIdentifier=2009521_19735354)

**\*Thurs. Feb. 11<sup>th</sup> or Sat. Feb. 13: Undercurrents Theatre Festival, Arts Court: We will attend Sarah Waisvisz's one-woman show, *Monstrous: Or the Miscegenation Advantage*. <http://www.undercurrentsfestival.ca/monstrous/>**

### **Feb. 15: Winter Break**

### **Feb. 22: Classical Adaptation & Post-Apartheid Conflict Transformation (South Africa) – *Molara***

\*Critical Article: Cynthia Cohen et al. "Introduction." *Acting Together: Performance and the Creative Transformation of Conflict*. Vol. I. 2011. On Res.: Carl. Library.

**\*Play Review Due**

**Feb. 29:** Classical Adaptation & the War on Terror (No. Ireland): Seamus Heaney – *The Burial at Thebes: A Version of Antigone*

\*Critical Article: Wilmer, Stephen E. “Finding a Postcolonial Voice for Antigone.” *Classics in Postcolonial Worlds*. Ed. Lorna Hardwick and Carol Gillespie. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2007. On Res: Carl. Library.

**\*Staged Readings Groups Meeting – choosing your play, choosing your scenes.**

**Mar. 7:** Verbatim Theatre and the War on Terror: Robin Soans – *Talking to Terrorists*

\*Critical Article: “Introduction” and “Robin Soans” chapter in *Verbatim, Verbatim: Contemporary Documentary Theatre*. Oberon, 2008.

**\*“Lifting the Text Off the Page” workshop with Sarah Waisvisz: Vocal Training and “Actioning” the Text**

**Mar. 14:** Post-Genocide Theatre and Multi-directional Memory (Holocaust): Darah Teitel – *Corpus*

**\*Darah Teitel Guest Visit**

\*Critical Article: Michael Rothberg. “Introduction: Theorizing Multi-directional Memory in a Transnational Age.” *Multi-directional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in an Age of Decolonization*

(2009): [http://www.ihc.ucsb.edu/research/identity\\_articles/Rothenburg2009MultidirMemoryIntroOCR.pdf](http://www.ihc.ucsb.edu/research/identity_articles/Rothenburg2009MultidirMemoryIntroOCR.pdf)

**\*Scene Analysis Paper due in Class as preparation for Staged Reading: 8-10 pages**

**\*Seminar presenters may have an extension for this paper.**

**Mar. 21:** Post-Genocide Theatre & Counter-memory (Bosnia & Rwanda): Colleen Wagner – *The Monument*

\*Critical Article: Moberly Luger. “Remounting, Remembering: Gendered Memorials and Colleen Wagner’s *The Monument*.” *English Studies in Canada*. 35.4 (2009): 71-93. (Available through the Carl. library).

**\*Actioning the Text Notes on photocopied Scripts Due in Class for Scene Meetings**

**\*See Actioning the Text instructions below.**

**Mar. 28:** Requiem for Crimes Against Humanity in the Slave Trade: Marlene NourbeSe Philip – *Zong!*

\*Critical Article: Jenny Sharpe (2014) “The Archive and Affective Memory in M. NourbeSe Philip’s *Zong!*” *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies* 16:4, 465-482. Available through the MLA database/Taylor and Francis online (through Carl. library databases).

**Apr. 4:** Staged Reading of several scenes from two plays chosen collectively by group members and rehearsed twice outside of class time.

\*Staged Reading Reflection Papers due after performance.

## Course Assignments

### Scholarly Article Review/Short Seminar: 4 pages.

While all seminar participants are expected to read the critical article assigned for each class, one student will introduce the key issues taken up in a scholarly article. Actively read the assigned essay. Write an abstract, elucidating the central questions, debates, or issues the author develops. Expand on the following questions: Identify the critic or poet's theoretical or philosophical frameworks. Consider the usefulness, appropriateness of this framework to their discussion. Illuminate for your seminar mates what insights this article opens up for the play under discussion. Discuss any areas where you disagree with the critic or would like to see more nuance or further development. Was there sufficient evidence for the critic's reading? Were there relevant issues that were under-addressed in this essay? Prepare to lead a ten minute discussion on this article and hand in your review after the discussion.

### Seminar Guidelines: Approx. 10 pages of typed notes

\*I will introduce the key biographical, political, historical contexts framing each theatrical reading, but seminar presenters should also be aware of these as they may inform your reading of the play.

\***Annotated text:** Each presenting student is required to undertake a detailed annotation of your play in preparation for your seminar. You should hand in your book with your seminar notes. Please annotate in pencil only!

\***Mapping your play:** Based on your annotation, map out the key events, character interactions, major monologues or dialogue exchanges, stage directions, and thematic elements in each Act and Scene of your play. You may literally want to diagram or make a mind-map of your play to visualize key elements. Based on this work, your seminar should preview the key connecting themes/issues, character through lines, imagery, stage directions etc. Always work with some aspects of the visual language of theatre (scenography, props, lighting, screen projections, character gesture, blocking, costuming) as well as the sound-design that may be conveyed in stage directions. In other words, read stage directions as text as well as for staging cues.

\*Create a thesis for your seminar that articulates an overall reading of the play and makes a claim about the play. Put this thesis at the front and centre of your discussion.

\***Critical Debates:** Each presenter should consult several scholarly articles, reviews and/or interviews with the playwright in addition to the one assigned to the class to get a sense of the critical reception and/or genesis of the play. Consult the Literature Resource Centre database (under library databases) as well as Summon and the library Catalogue database. Also consult, the Canadian Periodical Index (CPI-Q and CIBC databases for Canadian topics. If you are stumped, ask me for research leads.

\***Focus Passages/Reading Aloud:** Pick two or three central segments from the play to focus intensive discussion around.

\***Reading Aloud:** Invite seminar colleagues to take turns reading character parts from your selected focus passages. Hearing the play can have a surprising impact.

**\*Screening Clips from Plays:** Do use performance clips or interviews with performers/playwrights where available.

**\*Handout:** Offer a handout (1-2 pages), which should include your Thesis/Claims, “Key Quotations” from critics, reviews, playwright interviews, as well as your two Discussion Questions and a Works Cited page.

**\*Focusing Questions:** Identify two discussion questions to invite seminar conversation. You may intersperse these throughout your seminar. Do invite dialogue, discussion, and participation from your seminar-mates.

**\*Presentation Style:** I discourage simply reading a seminar paper, but I do require well-developed seminar notes to be handed in at seminar’s end. I also discourage Power Point Presentations because they typically take away valuable time from reading and thinking and also render the classroom experience passive and screen-centric. I am open to discussion on this point.

**\*Proper oral crediting of sources in seminars:** Oral quotations in seminars should be indicated orally with such markers as “I Quote from critic x” to begin and “End Quote” to end or “these ideas are informed by critic x in his/her study titled x.”

### **Play Review Guidelines: 5 pages**

\*Bring your notebook to the performance and make jot notes of your impressions during the play and at intermission.

\*Write a second level of more developed notes after you see the performance.

\*Take an interpretative stance on the play and production.

\*Review Introduction: offer brief summary of the plot and character arcs and a thesis that takes a stand on the creative team’s interpretation of the play.

\*Review Development: For a focused and coherent review, be careful to concentrate on a few important ideas and aspects of the production and focus your attention on only what you consider the most significant parts of the production itself. You are not asked to cover a wide variety of production elements (i.e. performance of every actor, every costume change, every set change, every directorial decision, and so on); instead, the assignment demands that you develop a few key ideas in thoughtful detail.

### **Consider some of the following categories selectively:**

You will not need to discuss all of these elements if they do not seem important to the production. Remember that your theatre review should critique the play rather than just describing it. It should give a sense of your overall impression of the performance and a critical analysis of both the themes of the play and their presentation through the acting and production elements.

**1. Theme/Concept/Dramatic Structure:** What were the central dramatic conflicts and/or themes developed in the play? How was the play structured (conventionally with clear subdivision into acts or with major motifs such as poetic imagery, narrative devices)? What were the effects?

**2. Directing/Creative Team:** Were there any defining features or choices made by the director or other members of the creative team in this production that shaped interpretation, reception, impact of the play? Were all of the production elements appropriate and well integrated (music, lighting, set, costumes, staging)?

**3. Acting:** Were roles appropriately cast? Was there an aspect of the acting that was especially effective? Ineffective? In what ways?

\*How did the actor use his or her voice and body to convey emotional tension and subtlety?

\*How did the actor engage with the space, other characters, or the audience? What was the effect of these interactions?

\*Were special skills required (dancing, singing etc.): how well did the actor meet these challenges and how did vocals or movement enhance or detract?

#### **4. Visual Elements:**

\***Scenic Design:** describe the performance space. What did the scenic design convey about the play? What kind of space was created? How was it created (through props, furniture, screen projections etc.) If it was minimalist, why might the director have made this choice?

\***Lighting design:** how did lighting effects contribute to the production?

\***Costume design and makeup:** describe the use of costumes and makeup or their absence: how did they contribute (or not) to the overall production?

**5. Sound Design:** Discuss elements of sound effects, musical themes, or musical transitions.

\*\*Adapted from the play review rubric for Theatre 101, Midlands Technical College.

\*\*For further details, see the following website at the Writing Centre at U of Wisconsin: <https://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/PlayReview.html>

### **Scene/Character Analysis Paper Guidelines: 8-10 pages**

This short essay is designed to help you really get inside the play your group will be presenting several scenes from in your staged reading. You may want to do modest research for this, but the primary focus is analyzing the issues/themes/questions arising in the play and in the character dynamics as manifest in your focus scenes. You may wish to consider the following questions to prepare notes for this short paper. All of them may not pertain to your chosen scene.

- 1) How does the scene fit into and contribute to the rest of the play in terms of theme, character conflict, character development, and character insight? What is the main dramatic conflict of this scene?

- 2) What clues do stage directions give us about the setting, lighting, props, character posture and gesture, tone of voice and character interactions? How do these contribute to the dramatic action, the theme, and purpose of the scene?
- 3) How is the physical world of the scene created? What is the place and time of the setting? How does the setting contribute to mood, tone, and theme?
- 4) What is the effect of dramatic speech: monologue, dialogue, and ensemble acting?
- 5) Are there particular words or images that define each character or character relationships in this scene? What are the major character actions, postures, and gestures? What does each character want or need in this scene? What obstacles does this character face? How does this character attempt to get what/he she wants or needs?
- 6) Are there shifts in action and interaction that define this scene?
- 7) What are the elements that structure the scene? Is there a tempo to the scene: moments of stillness, moments of intensity? Is there a progression in the scene? Does something change?
- 8) What is the total effect of the scene?

**Staged Reading Guidelines: Participation in a 15 – 20 minute staged reading: submit “actioning the text” notes (on photocopied scenes) and short group reflection paper (3 pages)**

Typically, a staged reading is a reading of a new play presented by actors to a select audience. We are adapting this tactic to the purposes of bringing a selection of scenes from two plays from our course reading to life beyond the page. This reading will have been rehearsed at the level of voicing and vocal interaction with other character voices, but it is not memorized and not a full production with costumes, set, blocking ect. In the case of your class assignment, developing a staged reading as a group will allow for class members to participate in learning how to lift the text off the page without having to commit to a full rehearsal process.

“As a form of public performance, a staged reading is **like experiencing a radio play** before a live audience, with emphasis on the use of imagination, music, and acting over sets, props, lighting, and effects. It's all about the play. . . .The actors read from scripts, at music stands (or in chairs), incorporating minimal stage movement, without sets or costumes - yet the performance feels like a complete production. A narrator may read stage directions and most presentations are followed by a talkback discussion with the writers and director.” --From “Festival of Works in Development” blog

### **Actioning the Text Notes on Scenes**

For this assignment, you will work on “actioning” each line of dialogue or monologue for the character whose lines you are bringing to life by asking **what actions are implied by each of the character’s spoken lines?\***

**\*\*Some pointers from *Actions: The Actor’s Thesaurus: An Essential Companion for Actors in Rehearsal*.**

\*Part of your character assignment asks you to try out a rehearsal technique known as “actioning the text.”

\*Actioning is derived from the famous Russian modernist director Stanislavsky’s concept of “Method Acting.” He focused on defining character objective and tactics (how a character sets out to achieve their goals).

**Here’s how The Actor’s Thesaurus explains it:**

\*”Actioning provides the stimulation for the actor to directly play each line of the text and develop alternative ways of bringing their character to life.”

\*”Actions are active verbs. In order to perform a line truthfully an actor needs to find exactly the right action to suit that particular situation and that particular line.”

\*”Actors need actions . . . They need to be doing something with every line. They need verbs. They need an aim to achieve, and a verb to help achieve that aim.”

**Example: Two actors: “Would you like some coffee?”**

**\*”Play” this with different action verbs behind it: welcome, dominate, seduce, befriend, intimidate**

**How to “action the text”:**

1. Subdivide the scene into units or subsections
2. Identify what your character wants, what their objective is in each subunit (jot this in margins of text)
3. Consult your Action Verbs List handout.
4. Identify a verb that conveys the action behind each line of your character’s dialogue and jot the verb down on your scene photocopy; this action should convey the impulse under each sentence that helps the character achieve their objective. Try saying each line informed by a particular action aloud. There is no one right action for a line. Try it out. Does it work? Try some other verbs. Play around. Experiment with how many ways you might “play” an action. Pick a verb that feels instinctively right.
5. Notice where this exercise deepens your understanding of the character in particular lines or exchanges. Star this on your scene photocopy and jot a phrase that conveys any new insights.

**Scene Production Reflection Paper: 2 pages**

This invites you to provide a self-assessment of how your group’s staged reading went, based on of one’s own preparation for and contribution to the reading, as well as the part you played and what you learned about your character through rehearsal and preparation), and a short narrative reflection on group process and other member’s

contribution, including break down of who played what roles and the number of rehearsals attended with times/dates.

## ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION

**For Students with Disabilities:** The Paul Menton Centre (PMC) provides services to students with Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/mental health disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), chronic medical conditions, and impairments in mobility, hearing, and vision. If you have a disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact PMC at 613-520-6608 or [pmc@carleton.ca](mailto:pmc@carleton.ca) for a formal evaluation. If you are already registered with the PMC, contact your PMC coordinator to send me your Letter of Accommodation at the beginning of the term. After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with me to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. See [www.carleton.ca/pmc](http://www.carleton.ca/pmc)

**For Religious Observance:** Students requesting academic accommodation on the basis of religious observance should contact their instructors for alternate dates and/or means of satisfying academic requirements. Such requests should be made during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known. Instructors will make accommodations in a way that avoids academic disadvantage to the student.

**For Pregnancy:** Pregnant students requiring academic accommodations are encouraged to contact an Equity Advisor in Equity Services to complete a *letter of accommodation*. The student should also meet with the instructor to discuss accommodations required.

## STUDENT SERVICES

**Carleton Health and Counselling Services** offers confidential consultations with medical doctors, lab testing, and emotional support for difficult times from Monday to Friday, 8:00-4:00.

They are located in the Carleton Technology Building on the east side of campus. Check out their website at <https://carleton.ca/health/contact/>

\*\*Also visit Student Alliance for Mental Health for peer support. They meet Wed. 6 p.m., Library, Room 481: <https://www.facebook.com/CarletonSAMH/>

## PLAGIARISM

The University Senate defines plagiarism as presenting, whether intentionally or not, the ideas, expression of ideas, or the work of others as one's own. This can include:

- reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else's published or unpublished material, regardless of the source, and presenting these as one's own without proper citation or reference to the original source
- submitting a take-home examination, essay, laboratory report or other assignment written, in whole or in part, by someone else

•using ideas, quotations, or paraphrased material, concepts or ideas without appropriate acknowledgement in an essay or assignment •failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another's works, and/or failing to use quotation marks, handing in substantially the same piece of work for academic credit more than once without prior written permission of the course instructor in which the submission occurs

Plagiarism is a form of intellectual theft. It is a serious offence that cannot be resolved directly with the course's instructor. The Associate Deans of the Faculty conduct a rigorous investigation, including an interview with the student, when an instructor suspects a piece of work has been plagiarized. Penalties are not trivial. They can include failure of the assignment, failure of the entire course, suspension from a program, suspension from the university, or even expulsion from the university.

You should familiarize yourself with the University's Academic Integrity policy online at [http://www2.carleton.ca/studentaffairs/ccms/wp-content/ccms-files/academic\\_integrity\\_policy.pdf](http://www2.carleton.ca/studentaffairs/ccms/wp-content/ccms-files/academic_integrity_policy.pdf). For more detailed discussion of the issue of plagiarism and proper use of sources, consult the following website: <http://www.utoronto.ca/writing/plagsep.html>.