

Carleton University
Winter 2024 Preliminary Course Outline
Department of English

ENGL 3904A: *Intermediate Drama Workshop*
Topic: 20th Century Scene Study

Prerequisites: ENGL 2104 or permission of the department

Mondays / 9:05 – 11:55am
Format: In-person, not suitable for online students

Instructor: Mary Ellis
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******This is a preliminary syllabus only—texts and assignments are subject to change.
A complete version will be available closer to the start of the term.******

Course description:

Following on from the Drama Workshop's Introduction to the Actor's Craft, the Intermediate Drama Workshop continues to approach dramatic analysis from the actor's perspective. This highly practical course acquaints students with 20th and 21st century theatre through scene study, and through the study of the various acting methods, such as Stanislavski, Hagen and Meisner, that helped shape our modern acting process. Students will be given the opportunity to explore the unique social contexts that gave rise to new theatrical genres such as the Mid-Century British "Rebellion", Theatre of the Absurd, and Contemporary Canadian Realism. Skills in voice, movement, improvisation, creative impulse, imaginative exploration, and text analysis will be explored through experiential activities, and the rehearsal and performance of modern scenes, putting theory into practice through performance, and discovering the demands that these different genres place on the actor. Students will explore historical context and contemporary relevance through in-class readings, discussions and scene study.

Due to the practical nature of this course, attendance, punctuality and participation are extremely important and highly weighted. **Attendance of all classes is required.**

Because this is a project-based course and there will be group work, students will be relying on one another to be present, prepared and committed. Some rehearsal outside of class time may also be necessary.

Course Objectives:

1. To critically examine 20th century theatrical texts through exercises, textual analysis, rehearsal and performance, and to develop and understand the terminology of various acting methods.

2. To develop techniques and abilities in characterization, and to appreciate how body language and speech variations (such as pitch, tone, volume and pace) can create a positive and dynamic presence.
3. To develop the ability to apply theory to practice, through the analysis and performance of modern text, and to understand the social and historical contexts which gave rise to 20th century theatre.
4. To build confidence, and to acquire the skills to be a more effective communicator.
5. To develop the ability to be more observant of ourselves and the world around us, and to discuss and write critically about these observations.

Learning Outcomes:

Students will develop a greater understanding and appreciation of the actor's process, through the exploration of the creative and collaborative process of rehearsal and performance, the analysis of modern text, the exploration of various acting methods, and exercises in voice, movement and character development.

Students will also develop skills to build confidence and spontaneity, be more open to risk-taking and new ideas, and enhance the clarity and impact of their presentations.

Texts:

The professor will provide the required texts in PDF format on Brightspace. Students will be required to use hard copies of scenes for rehearsals. The texts may include the following -

The Lover, The Dumb Waiter, The Birthday Party by Harold Pinter
Look Back in Anger by John Osborne

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead by Tom Stoppard
Waiting for Godot by Samuel Beckett

Problem Child, Tough! by George F Walker
Concord Floral by Jordan Tannahill

Evaluation:

Participation (15%) - Ongoing

First Scene Written Assignment – Questions on Mid-Century Scene (10%)

First Scene Presentation – Mid-Century Scene (15%)

Second Scene Written Assignment – Questions on Absurdist Scene (10%)

Second Scene Presentation – Absurdist Scene (20%)

Third Scene Written Assignment - Questions on Canadian Scene (10%)

Third Scene Presentation – Canadian Scene (20%)

An Important Note on Participation and Evaluation:

Due to the practical nature of this course, attendance and punctuality are mandatory, and participation is essential. Commitment to the ensemble, and to individual work, is extremely important, and students are strongly encouraged to participate in discussions and exercises. Students must email the professor if they are going to be absent or late. Please inform me if you are dealing with any pertinent medical issues so that accommodations can be made. Students should wear comfortable clothing in order to participate in warm-up activities.

Students will be assessed on their willingness to learn, their progress over the semester, as well as the success of their attempts. Active listening and engagement are crucial, as are curiosity, creativity, cooperation, and a desire to investigate the human condition, which demands energy, drive and commitment.

Students will be graded on participation using the following criteria –

- The student displays active listening and responsiveness, and engages in all class activities with energy and enthusiasm.
- The student displays curiosity, a willingness to take risks and to thoroughly investigate challenging work.
- The student displays focus, as well as energy, drive and a personal commitment to the work.
- The student displays a respectful and collaborative attitude at all times.
- The student comes to class ready to work, displaying punctuality and preparedness.

Assessment details for each of the assignments will be posted on Brightspace.

Assignments, both written work and presentations, must be received on the specified due dates to receive full marks. Deadlines will be strictly enforced. Extensions will only be granted if discussed prior to the due date with the professor. If presentations or written work are late, barring any unforeseen or extreme circumstances, there will be a deduction of 1 mark per day on the assignment. If illness prevents a student from completing an assignment on time, accommodations will be made.

Students must be off-book (have lines thoroughly memorized) for presentations, otherwise their grade will be impacted, and their partner's work will be affected. It is essential that students work from hard copies of scripts for all scenes, so that notes can be made on the text.