

Carleton University
Winter 2024 Preliminary Course Outline
Department of English

ENGL 4609A/5900W
Drama Studies: Global Context
Epic Theatre for the 21st Century

Prerequisites: fourth year standing

Tuesdays 11:35 a.m. – 2:25 p.m.
In-person, not suitable for online students

Instructor: Prof. Janne Cleveland
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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:

“Art is not a mirror held up to reality but a hammer with which to shape it.” – Bertolt Brecht

In the early to mid-20th Century, dramatist, and playwright, Bertolt Brecht developed a style of theatre he called Epic Theatre. Emerging from the staging strategies of German Expressionism, Brecht was influenced by Marx in perfecting his craft. He saw a need for theatre to shake off the complacency of bourgeois spectatorship and become something that could entertain but also provoke thought about the world and the nature of human relationships in a politically charged landscape. In this course we will examine Brecht’s theories, alongside some of his well-known plays with an eye to understanding the influence of his work in our contemporary moment, which it can be argued is equally as fraught as the world Brecht navigated in exile in the 1940s. Do we still see manifestations of Epic Theatre in new works? Is there a place for didacticism in the theatre? We will delve deeply into Brecht’s work to see how and where his legacy continues to be felt in contemporary theatre.

Course Objectives/Learning Outcomes:

1. To explore the social/cultural history of Epic Theatre.
2. To consider how the context of mid-20th century theatre making can provide a map of sorts for navigating contemporary cultural issues.
3. To develop a critical analysis the staging strategies of Epic Theatre.
4. To refine the skills of research and the application of theories in real-world scenarios.
5. To become comfortable presenting research with confidence.

6. To develop a deeper understanding of how Epic Theatre reflects and informs the cultural concerns of the social worlds we inhabit.

Evaluation:

CuPortfolio (30%)

Students will be provided with access to cuPortfolio, in which they will create 4 portfolio pages to track their own progress across the term (due dates vary, so check the course calendar). For example, students will produce a bio page (5%), a post-seminar report (10%), a reflection on the annotated bibliography assignment (10%), and a course evaluation (5%). Prompt questions for each portfolio page will be provided.

Seminar Presentation (20%)

Students will prepare a presentation on the materials assigned for one of the modules during the term. You must sign up for your presentation in the first week of the course. You may use the topic of the seminar to build your final research paper. Presentations will be scheduled at the beginning of class and should take 15 - 20 minutes. There will be time for discussion and questions following each presentation.

Annotated Bibliography (15%)

This assignment is the foundation of your final paper. You will present a proposal for your final research paper that includes a thesis statement (argument), and a list of citations that you will use as evidence to support your argument. Undergraduate students in the course must include **7 - 9** scholarly sources; **Graduate students much include 10 – 12 sources**. Each source will be properly cited and annotated in **MLA format*** and will contain a **brief** summary of each article used (no more than 2 sentences), plus a paragraph of a careful explanation of how each resource supports your position, along with how you will use it in your paper. We will go over how to do an annotated bibliography in class, but here are also very good resources to help you:

<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/614/1/>

<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>

Final Paper (20%)

This is a **formal writing assignment**. Using feedback from the thesis/outline assignment and the paper workshop, undergraduate students will present a polished, carefully crafted final paper of **10 – 12** pages (excluding Works Cited page) in **MLA format** with a coherent, arguable thesis supported by evidence from the text and scholarly sources, a conclusion that responds to and resolves the argument. **Graduate students will be expected to produce a paper of 12 – 15 pages**. The most important aspect of your paper is **critical analysis**; in other words, not just what your topic is, but why it is important. As well, elements of writing such as rich vocabulary, proper use of citation style, correct punctuation and grammar, and sentence structure (syntax) will be taken into account. Further, structural elements, such as the logical progression of ideas

that form the basis of your argument, will be expected. This assignment is your opportunity to demonstrate what you have learned in the course. Don't be afraid to show your excitement about your discoveries!

Essay Topics:

Choose one of the topics/texts in connection with the reading schedule to produce a carefully crafted argument. You may choose to develop the argument from your seminar presentation. This is recommended. You are encouraged to discuss your topic, and your approach, in advance with the instructor.

Paper Workshop (5%)

This is an in-class assignment. Each student will present their research for the final paper and will in turn receive peer feedback. You must be in class to participate and receive marks for this.

Class Participation (10%)

This is a seminar class, so it is important to take part in discussions. However, students who are naturally quiet or have difficulty operating in a public speaking format will not be penalized. There are many models for learning and contributing to the learning of others. In-class activities like the paper workshop at the end of the term will count toward your participation grade. This class provides you with the opportunity to share your ideas and learn from others in a safe, supported environment. Take advantage of the chance to use your voice!

All assignments will be submitted on Brightspace.

Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean. This means that grades submitted by the instructor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean.

NOTE: All assignments must be completed to be eligible to pass the course. Failure to hand in all assignments may result in a grade of "F". Assignments submitted after the course has ended will NOT be accepted.