

**Carleton University
Fall 2020
Department of English**

ENGL 3609: *Drama Studies: Contemporary Criticism*
Prerequisites: 3rd year standing, or permission of the Department

Time/Day: Wednesday 11:35 – 2:25 p.m.
Location: online

Format: *Blended*

Instructor: Prof. Janne Cleveland (she/her)

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Office: DT 1913

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Office Hours: TBD

Course Outline:

Writing theatre criticism is more than just summarizing the text being staged; it requires a deep analysis of the mechanisms and staging strategies that go into a production, as well as an understanding of the script. This course focuses on developing the skills to analyze the fundamental elements of staged productions. In class, we will explore the rudiments of a performance, such as acting and directing; relationships between a given dramatic text and its mise-en-scène; theatre and stage space; fictional time and performance time; set and costume design; use of stage objects and hand props; sound and lighting design; significance of music; use of mask and make up. These elements will be considered in relation to the story being performed. Do the elements support and advance the narrative? Students will watch a series of archived performances (see NOTE below) throughout the term, assigned by the Instructor, and learn how to analyze and write critically about their experiences of witnessing and interpreting a staged performance. Throughout the course, we will consider such questions as:

- what is the correlation between the design elements presented in a theatrical performance?
- what is the significance of set, light, and costume design?
- how is the stage space utilized?
- how does the design of the theatre space itself (the architecture) contribute to the meaning of a production?
- what are the choices a director makes in creating their mise-en-scène? are these choices effective or not, and why or why not?

Course Objectives:

1. To introduce students to the fundamental elements of theatrical presentation in order to write about them effectively
2. To help students develop their skills of critical analysis
3. To help students develop and expand a vocabulary of performance analysis
4. To teach students the elemental devices of theatre criticism
5. To train students to develop their skills of observation
6. To extend a discussion of what distinguishes live performance from other forms (audio, film archive, etc.)
7. To develop an understanding of the relation between narrative and performance

Required Reading and Viewing:

A selection of essays will be assigned and available through Ares on cuLearn.

Productions:

Negative Space

A Disappearing Number

The Tempest

Things I Know to Be True

We will examine a selection of archived performances through which we explore the elements of staging (sound, lighting, costume, directing, etc.) in order to learn how to write about them. The performances listed are available on Digital Theatre Plus (a database accessible through the MacOdrum Library). We will adjust our viewing schedule depending on what other opportunities present themselves throughout the term. You should expect at least 2 productions to be added to our list as other things become available, but the number of assignments will NOT change. Check the schedule on cuLearn and your email regularly for changes/additions to the viewing schedule. Students will be expected to view the assigned performances asynchronously prior to discussion in our regular class meeting.

Highly recommended:

Composition handbook (e.g. *The Broadview Guide to Writing*)

- **This is a blended course that will be taught in an online format (platform TBD).**

A **blended** online course is one in which there is a mixture of synchronous meetings and asynchronous activities. In this course, this will mean students need to be prepared to meet online via web conferencing tools – we will use zoom – at scheduled days and times. The asynchronous activities are intended to provide flexibility to students when the class is not meeting synchronously. Students are expected to remain up to date with the deadlines and due dates provided by the instructor. These courses require reliable high-speed Internet access and a computer (ideally with a webcam), and a headset with a microphone.

A list of minimum tech requirements for online learning can be found here:

<https://carleton.ca/its/help-centre/faq-technical-specs-for-new-students/>

Course readings will be posted to cuLearn, and it is the responsibility of the student to join the class meeting having done all readings posted ahead of the date for which the discussion will take place. Students will be expected to view the performances mandated on their own time prior to discussing them in class.

It is unlikely that we will ever meet online for a full 3-hour class, since we would all perish with exhaustion! Rather, you will be expected to view short lecture videos posted to cuLearn, along with the scheduled production, prior to our meeting. I envision our class time being a combination of conversation, discussion, and some lecture material. Discussion questions will be posted to cuLearn in advance, so make sure you check for new questions each week.

NOTE: Many of us are navigating uncharted territory with the new reality of fully online classes. I will continue to check in with students throughout the term to make sure that your learning needs are being met. In this we will work together, being mindful of the watchwords collaborate and co-operate. Like live performance, anything can happen! So be prepared for adventures ☺

Quick Calendar

Date	Topic	Assignment
September 25	<i>Negative Space</i>	1 st Critical Review
October 9		cuPortfolio reflection
October 16	<i>A Disappearing Number</i>	2 nd Critical Review
November 2		cuPortfolio reflection
November 6	<i>The Tempest</i>	3 rd Critical Review
November 20		cuPortfolio reflection
November 27	<i>Things I know to be True</i>	Final Critical Review
December 11		Final cuPortfolio reflection

Course Evaluation:

Critical review papers (3 X 15% = 45%)

Students will write **3** short critical reviews of **2 - 3 pages** (double-spaced). In each case, students will give primary focus to one theatrical element in a particular production in relation to the material studied during the course (i.e., lighting, use of stage space, costumes, etc.) Class readings will help you focus your observations and comments, along with prompt questions corresponding to these topics.

cuPortfolio Reflections (15%)

These assignments are an opportunity for students to reflect on their own learning as it develops throughout the term. Students will be given access to cuPortfolio, along with a tutorial on how to use it, for this course. A template will be provided along with prompt questions to structure the reflections. Students will create reflections on 2 of the 3 critical review papers, as well as an overall course reflection, each of which is worth 5% of the total grade. The performance review reflections are due after the assignments and their feedback has been returned. The final course reflection is due in the week of our last class.

Final paper (a critical performance review of **7 - 8** double-spaced pages **30%**)

This assignment will operate as a take-home exam. All students will write on the same production, which will be determined by the instructor once we have a list of productions confirmed.

Note: This final assignment will represent the cumulative knowledge acquired throughout the course that includes critical commentary on all applicable elements of the production in question. These will include such aspects as set/lighting/sound, use of stage space, acting, directing, costumes, multi-media, and the relevance of the performance space in relation to the production.

Participation 10%

Students are expected to attend class having read the assigned materials and viewed the performances in order to fully participate in discussion. Discussion will be divided into a focus on the readings as well as the elements connected to the productions.

IMPORTANT: All assignments are submitted electronically, either on cuLearn or cuPortfolio.

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.

REQUEST FOR ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION:

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. For an accommodation request, the processes are as follows:

Pregnancy obligation: write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details click [here](#).

Religious obligation: write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details click [here](#).

Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: The Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (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 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, and no later than two weeks before the first in-class scheduled test or exam requiring accommodation (if applicable). After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with me to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. Please consult the PMC website for the deadline to request accommodations for the formally-scheduled exam (if applicable).

Survivors of Sexual Violence

As a community, Carleton University is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working and living environment where sexual violence will not be tolerated, and where survivors are supported through academic accommodations as per Carleton's Sexual Violence Policy. For more information about the services available at the university and to obtain information about sexual violence and/or support, visit: <https://carleton.ca/equity/sexual-assault-support-services>

Accommodation for Student Activities

Carleton University recognizes the substantial benefits, both to the individual student and for the university, that result from a student participating in activities beyond the classroom experience. Reasonable accommodation must be provided to students who compete or perform at the national or international level. Write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. <https://carleton.ca/senate/wp-content/uploads/Accommodation-for-Student-Activities-1.pdf>

PLAGIARISM

The University Senate defines plagiarism as “presenting, whether intentionally or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or 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 or direct, verbatim quotations, or paraphrased material, concepts or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment;
- using another’s data or research findings;
- 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, or suspension from a program. For more information please go to: <https://carleton.ca/registrar/academic-integrity/>

Class Schedule*

September 9	Introduction: what's on the syllabus?; what are the course expectations?; what counts as performance?
September 16	cuPortfolio: tutorial what is performance criticism? Comparing reviews
September 23	“Performance, Audience, and Critic”; the job of the theatre critic/reviewer
September 30	“Space, Time, Action”, “Staging the Text” <i>Negative Space</i> (Digital Theatre Plus)
October 7	“The Scenic Designer”
October 14	“Art and Design”, “The Lighting Designer”
October 21	“The Playscript” <i>A Disappearing Number</i> (Digital Theatre Plus)
October 28	Fall reading week – no class
November 4	“Reading the Image”
November 11	“The Director”, “Actors” <i>The Tempest</i> (Digital Theatre Plus)
November 18	“The Costume Designer”, from “Theatre Props”
November 25	“The Audience and Performance”
December 2	“Other Material Elements of Performance” <i>Things I Know to be True</i> (Digital Theatre Plus)
December 9	Wrap up!

***Subject to change. Check cuLearn frequently for notification of new materials or changes to the schedule.**

