

Carleton University*
Fall 2019
Department of English
ENGL 4609A - ENGL 5900F

Topic: Bordercrossings, Conflict, Connections on the Contemporary Stage

Prerequisite(s): fourth-year standing or permission of the department.

Time: Thurs. 11:30-2:30

Location: English Dept. Seminar room, DT 1816

Instructor: Brenda Vellino

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Office: 1815 DT

Office Hours: Tues., Thurs. 3:00-4:30

*On unceded Algonquin territory

“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 bordercrossing 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 bordercrossing. These will include those catalyzed by migration and diaspora, by intersectional issues such as human rights and environmental justice, by location in multiple subject positions, and by the multi-site production history of many of our focus plays. Organized into three thematic clusters—eco-justice, conflict transformation, and migrant 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, decolonial, diaspora, gender, environmental humanities, and human rights humanities theories and methodologies. We will engage playwrights from Irish, South African, Indigenous, U.S., African-American, Asian, Jewish, Lebanese, and Canadian contexts. 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 experiential learning through attending and reviewing one theatre performance.

Course Texts: Available at Haven Books & on Reserve at the Carleton library

Environmental and Climate Justice Theatre:

- Marie Clements. *Burning Vision*. Talonbooks, 2003. (Haven)
- Caridad Svich. *The Way of Water*. NoPassport Press, 2012. (Haven)
- Chantal Bilodeau. *Sila*. Talonbooks, 2015. (Haven)

Conflict Transformation Theatre

- Yael Farber. *Molara*. Oberon, 2009. (Haven)
- Seamus Heaney. *The Burial at Thebes: A Version of Sophocles Antigone*. Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2004. (Haven)
- Lynn Nottage. *Ruined*. Theatre Communication, 2009. (Get this free from professor)
- Wajdi Maouwad. *Scorched*. Playwrights Canada, 2010. (Haven)

Migrant Theatre

- Betty Quan. *Mother Tongue*. J. Gordon Shillingford, 1998. (Haven)
- Sarah Waisvisz. *Monstrous or the Miscegenation Advantage*. alt.theatre 13.3 (2017) – you will need to photocopy this and bring it to class
- Tickets to Hannah Moscovitch's *Old Stock: A Refugee Love Story* (Oct. 16-27, NAC)

Course Assignments for 4th year students

- Participation/Attendance: 10%
- 3 short Scene Analysis Response Papers (3-4 pages): 5% each 15%
- Theatre review: 4-5 pages 15%
- Seminar on play: 30-40 minutes: 25%
- Final Paper Proposal with annotated bibliography: 5%
- Final Paper: 8-10 pages 25%
- Mini-presentation on final papers (complete draft due in class) 5%

Course Assignments for graduate students:

- 3 short Scene Analysis Response Papers (3-4 pages): 5% each 15%
- Theatre review: 4-5 pages 15%
- **Critical Article Review short seminar** 10%
- Seminar on play: 30-40 minutes: 25%
- Final Paper Proposal with annotated bibliography: 5%
- Final Paper: **15 pages** 25%
- Mini-presentation on final papers (complete draft due in class) 5%

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.

Relevant Critical Studies

- Ric Knowles. *Theatre & Interculturalism*. Palgrave, 2010.
- Clare Finburgh. *Watching War on the Twenty-First Century Stage: Spectacles of Conflict*. Methuen, 2017.
- Florian N. Becker et al. *Imagining Human Rights in Twenty-First Century Theatre*. Palgrave, 2013.
- Yana Merzon. *Theatre & (Im)migration* (2017).
- Judith Rudakoff, edited. *Performing Exile: Foreign Bodies*. Intellect, 2017.

Course Policies: Class works when you do, so **it should be understood that in a 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 or except when needed for referring to electronic articles.

Course Calendar

Sept. 5: Course Intro & Seminar Sign-up

Sept. 12: Framing Concepts Discussion: Global, Intercultural, and Transnational 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. **Excerpts on Ares in Cu-Learn.**
- Richard Schechner. Chapter 8: “Global and Intercultural Performances.” *Performance Studies: An Introduction*. 2nd ed. New York: Routledge, 2002. **Chapter on Ares in Cu-learn**
- This is a longish essay (62 pages) with many interesting case studies, discussed through a postcolonial lens, so please allow yourself plenty of time to read it.
- Laura Briggs et al, “Transnationalism: A Category of Analysis.” *American Quarterly* 60.3 (2008): 625-48: available online from Project Muse database, Carl. Library.

Sept. 19: Indigenous Intercultural Eco-Theatre: Marie Clements – *Burning Vision* (2003).

- Carl Lavery. “Intro.: Performance & Ecology: What Can Theatre Do?” *Green Letters*. 20.3: 229-236: available online from Carl. Library.
- Helen Gilbert. “Indigeneity, Time and the Cosmopolitics of Postcolonial Belonging in the Atomic Age.” *Interventions*. (2013) 15.2: 195-210: available online from Carl. Library.
- **Scene Analysis 1 - Group A**

Sept. 26: Water Ecology Theatre (Deepwater Horizon Gulf of Mexico Oil Spill): Caridad Svich – *The Way of Water* (2012)

- Cecilia Chen, Janine MacLeod, and Astrida Neimanis. “Intro: Toward a Hydrologic Turn?” *Thinking with Water*. McGill-Queen’s (2013): 3-22: available from Scholars Portal, Carl library.
- **Scene Analysis 1 - Group B**

Oct. 3: Theatre in the Age of Climate Crisis: Chantal Bilodeau. *Sila*. 2015.

- Nassim W. Balestrini. “Climate Change Theatre & Cultural Mobility in the Arctic: Chantal Bilodeau’s *Sila*.” *Journal of Contemporary Drama in English*, 5.1 (2017): 70–85 : **article available from Ares in Cu-learn.**
- <https://www.theartcticcycle.org/sila>
- Browse articles on “Theatre in the Age of Climate Change” website: <https://howround.com/series/theatre-age-climate-change-0>
- **Scene Analysis 2 - Group A**

Oct. 10: Classical Adaptation & Post-Conflict Northern Ireland:

Seamus Heaney: *The Burial at Thebes: A Version of Antigone*

- Wilmer, Stephen E. “Finding a Postcolonial Voice for Antigone.” *Classics in Postcolonial Worlds*. Ed. Lorna Hardwick and Carol Gillespie. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2007: available as e-book chapter, Carl. Library
- **Scene Analysis 2 - Group B**

Oct. 17: Classical Adaptation & Post-Apartheid South Africa: Yael Farber: *Molara* (a version of Aeschylus’s Oresteia)

- Florian N. Becker et al. “Introduction.” *Imagining Human Rights in Twenty-First Century Theatre*. Palgrave, 2013: 1-23. **Available through Ares on Cu-learn.**
- Brenda Vellino and Sarah Waisvisz, “Yael Farber’s *Molara* and Colleen Wagner’s *The Monument* as Post-Conflict Redress Theatre.” *College Literature* (2013) 40.3: 113-137: available from Carl. Library online.
- **Scene Analysis 3 - Group A**
- Tickets to Hannah Moscovitch’s *Old Stock: A Refugee Love Story* (Oct. 16-27, NAC)

Fall Break Week: Oct. 21-25

Oct. 31: Migrant Theatre: Discussion of Hannah Moscovitch's *Old Stock*

- Yana Meerzon, "Theatre and (Im)migration: the Canadian Theatre of Shimmering Maps." *Theatre & (Im)migration* (2019): **Chapter available through Ares on Cu-learn.**
- **Play Review due in class**

Nov. 7: Gender Violence and Conflict in the Congo (adaptation of Brecht's *Mother Courage*): Lynn Nottage: *Ruined*, 2009.

- Marike Janzen. "Solidarity, Human Rights, and the Poetics of Connection: Articulating Community in Brecht's *Mother Courage* and Lynn Nottage's *Ruined*." *Area Studies in the Global Age* (2016): available as e-book chapter from Carl. Library.
- **Scene Analysis 3 - Group B**

Nov. 14: Lebanese Diaspora Theatre: Wajdi Maouwad. *Scorched/Incendies*

- Yana Meerzon, "Staging Memory in Wajdi Maouwad's *Incendies*: Archeological Site or Poetic Venue?" *Theatre Research in Canada* 34.1 (2013): available through Carl. Library online.
- **Essay Proposal Due in Class**

Nov. 21: Asian Diaspora Theatre: Betty Quan. *Mother Tongue*

- Lily Cho, "Asian Canadian Futures: Diasporic Passages and the Routes of Indenture." *Canadian Literature* 199 (2008): 181-201.

Nov. 28: Afro-Caribbean/Jewish Diasporas: Sarah Waisvisz's *Monstrous or the Miscegenation Advantage*. *alt.theatre* 13.3 (2017)

- The play for this class is on reserve in a journal in the library. You will need to photocopy it and bring it to class.
- We will also have access to the video for this play.
- Daniel G. Reginal et al. "Emerging Paradigms in Critical Mixed Race Studies." *Journal of Critical Mixed Race Studies*. 1.1. (2014): 1-30: available through Carl. Library online.

Dec. 5: Last Class: Mini-presentations on final essays. Complete Essay draft due in class.

Dec. 6: Final essay copy due: 5 p.m. at English Department drop box.

Course Assignments

Seminar Guidelines: Approx. 10 pages of typed, point form notes

- **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.
- **Preview the key connecting themes/issues,** character through lines, imagery, stage directions for your seminar-mates 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 **focus** for your seminar that articulates an overall reading of the play and makes a claim about the play.
- **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.
- **Critical Debates:** Each presenter should consult several relevant scholarly articles, reviews and/or interviews with the playwright (when available) in addition to the one assigned for the class to get a sense of the critical reception and/or genesis of the play. 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.
- **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, 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 asks you to develop a few key ideas in thoughtful, specific 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 this 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/Analysis Short Response Papers:

These short scene analysis responses are designed to help you really get inside several different plays so that you can contribute even more thoughtfully to class discussions. You may wish to consider the following questions to prepare notes for your response papers. 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?

Final Essay Proposal & Annotated Works Cited Guidelines: Due Nov. 14 : in class

- This proposal should include a **working thesis and project preview** and a **plan of development** that sets forth your preliminary argument and identifies primary and secondary resources in two full paragraphs.
- Your project should have a minimum of **5 critical/contextual secondary sources**.
- **Annotated Works Cited.** (Each annotation should provide a three-sentence summary of the main pts. and regarding statement on the usefulness for your working thesis).
- Your works cited should include diverse kinds of sources such as one article, one book, one essay or interview where available. You are allowed only 1 Internet source unless cleared with me; Sources from the electronic library-based databases are not considered Internet!)

Final Essay Guidelines:

- **Please note two deadlines: complete working draft due in class: Dec. 5th with “point form” notes for 5 minute research findings presentations.**
- **Final essay due Dec. 6th at 5 p.m.** in the English Dept. drop-box.
- **NOTE: To ensure full engagement with the writing process: final essays must be submitted with the marked proposal, pre-writing notes, and one hand-edited draft attached.**

Theatre essays should do the following:

- Identify the author, artist, director by any specific community and contexts they locate from and/or that are depicted in the play.
- Search and apply appropriate **contextual research** into artistic, community, cultural, historical, and political elements that inform the play’s themes and questions.
- Undertake careful **analysis** based on **close attention to textual details and visual/theatrical rhetorics**.
- Demonstrate effective **engagement with theatrical devices**: See the play review and scene analysis guidelines for tips on these.
- Offer a **clear, focused, specific thesis** that advances a clear argument or set of claims based on your analysis of the play and previews the main sections and supporting points in your essay.
- Offer **well-organized and logical essay development** through **well-chosen and specific textual examples** that provide **supporting evidence** for your claim(s).

- Provide clear **analysis of the significance of your examples** from either text or artistic/cultural event.
- Check the **transitions** between ideas within and between paragraphs for smooth flow and **logical coherence**.
- Use clear, concise sentences with **correct grammar and punctuation**.
- Demonstrate **careful editing and proofreading** for key errors of typos, missing words, wordiness and repetition, run-on sentences, sentence fragments, and comma splices.
- Use **proper citation practices** (parenthetical citation with a works cited) in MLA format: See the Online Writing Lab, Purdue University:
https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/mla_style/mla_formatting_and_style_guide/mla_formatting_and_style_guide.html

Scholarly Article Review/Short Seminar: for Graduate Students ONLY!

While all seminar participants are expected to read the critical article assigned for each class, graduate students will lead a short seminar to 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 in class. This review should be approximately 4 pages.

Plagiarism

Please ensure that all sources (including biographical and internet) you use in any of your work are properly credited. Also note that secondary sources are NOT required, but if you do Google it and use it, provide a proper Works Cited and use Parenthetical Citation. If I suspect that an essay or portion of an essay has been plagiarized, I am required to submit the essay to the Associate Dean of the Faculty.

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 serious offence that cannot be resolved directly by the course's instructor. The Associate Dean of the Faculty conducts 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 a final grade of "F" for the course.

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

Please contact your instructor 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, visit the Equity Services website: carleton.ca/equity/wp-content/uploads/Student-Guide-to-Academic-Accommodation.pdf

Religious obligation

Please contact your instructor 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, visit the Equity Services website: carleton.ca/equity/wp-content/uploads/Student-Guide-to-Academic-Accommodation.pdf

Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

If you have a documented disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact the Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) at 613-520-6608 or pmc@carleton.ca for a formal evaluation or contact your PMC coordinator to send your instructor your Letter of Accommodation at the beginning of the term. You must also contact the PMC 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 your instructor as soon as possible to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. carleton.ca/pmc

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 its 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: carleton.ca/sexual-violence-support

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. Please contact your instructor 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>