

**Carleton University
Winter 2017
Department of English**

ENGL3609: Intermediate Drama Studies: Contemporary Theatre

Prerequisite(s): third-year standing

Date/Time: Wed. 2:30-5:30

Location: Please confirm location on Carleton Central

Instructor: Brenda Vellino

Email: Brenda.vellino@carleton.ca

Office: 1815 DT

Office Hours: Tues. /Thurs. 1:00-2:00 or by appointment

Course Description: Contemporary Canadian Theatre: Murder, Crime Scenes, Seduction, Dysfunctional Families, Race Politics, Gender Politics, Refugees, the War on Terror. Consider how Contemporary Canadian Theatre engages many contemporary issues relevant to particular communities, as well as to national and global conversations. Stepping off from a short immersion in two of the great modern dramatists (Brecht, Beckett), this course will examine key contemporary Canadian playwrights, techniques, and modes. Theatrical modes will include Epic Theatre, Theatre of the Absurd, Tragi-Comedy, and Documentary Theatre, as well as socially contextualized theatre interventions such as those emerging from Feminist, African-Canadian, Indigenous, Asian, and Arab contexts. Special attention will be paid to how plays engage social, political, and historical questions, especially those addressing gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, class, culture, and political and historical trauma. Because theatre is a performance medium, we will screen scenes from productions where available, attend at least two plays outside of class (at Arts Court and the NAC) and students will produce a selected dramatic scene in groups. (Students in prior classes loved this assignment the most of all their assignments and no theatre experience is necessary). We will also have guest visits from a practicing Ottawa theatre artist to introduce us to theatre exercises that will support scene work.

Course Texts: All Course Books will be at Haven Books @ Seneca and Sunnyside.

Jerry Wasserman, ed. *Modern Canadian Plays*, Vol. II. 5th edition

(2013) <http://talonbooks.com/books/modern-canadian-plays-vol-ii-5th-edition>

Beckett, Samuel. *Waiting for Godot*. Grove Press, 2011.

Anne-Marie MacDonald. *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)*. Vintage, 1998.

Course Assignments

Participation (attendance, in class writing prompts):	10%
Play Review #1 (1500 words):	25%
Play Review #2 (1500 words):	25%
Final Project/Scene Production Paper (Thinking Like a Director Notes, Character Analysis, and Self/Group Assessment, 2000-2500 words):	40%

Course Calendar

Class 1/Jan. 11: Epic Theatre: Bertolt Brecht – *The Resistable Rise of Arturo Ui* (1941):

Discuss the Brecht play that comments on the Trump presidency!

*PDF file of play: <https://waldentheatre.files.wordpress.com/2014/12/arturo-ui-script.pdf>

*Background on Brecht and the play: <http://www.dramaonlinelibrary.com/books/the-resistible-rise-of-arturo-ui-iid-12134/do-9781408167984-div-00000031>

Class 2/Jan. 18: Absurdist Theatre: Samuel Beckett – *Waiting for Godot* (1953) – Grove Press, 2011.

***This play is not in the course anthology and must be purchased separately.**

Class 3/Jan. 25: Robert Lepage and Marie Brassard – *Polygraph* (1988) – Wasserman anthology

Class 4/Feb. 1: Joan McLeod – *The Shape of a Girl* (2001) – Wasserman anthology

***Scene Production Groups meeting #1.**

Class 5/Feb. 8: Daniel MacIvor – *Never Swim Alone* (1991) – Wasserman anthology

Guest Theatre Artist Visit #1

***Outside of Class:** Attend Margot Macdonald's *Elephant Girls*, one woman show on London's all girl gang at Undercurrents Festival, Arts Court, Wed. Feb. 8 or Sat. matinee, Feb. 11. Student prices: PWYC at the Door: suggested price: \$15. <http://www.undercurrentsfestival.ca/the-elfphant-girls/>

Class 6/Feb. 15: MacDonald – *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)* (1998)

***This play is not in the course anthology and must be purchased separately. Carleton's Sock N" Buskin Theatre will be producing this play in March and we will have an opportunity to see it and write an extra credit play review on it.**

Play Review #1: Due in Class (1500 words)

Week of Feb. 20-24: No Class – Winter Reading Week!

Class 7/March 1: Djanet Sears – *Harlem Duet* (1997) – Wasserman anthology

***Scene Production Group Meeting #2: "Thinking Like A Director" Notes Due in class (2 pages): I will check for these while you meet in groups.**

Class 8/Mar. 8: Rahul Varma – Counter Offence (1996) –Wasserman anthology
***Guest Theatre Artist Visit**

Class 9/Mar.15: Marie Clements – The Edward Curtis Project (2010) – Wasserman anthology

***Scene Production Group Meeting #3: Character Analysis Notes Due in Class.**

***Groups should set a rehearsal schedule and coordinate calendars over the next four to five weeks.**

Outside of Class: Attend Infinity at the National Arts Centre Studio Theatre – by Hannah Moscovitz, Thursday March 9 with talkback by the creative team! Group Ticket Price: \$15

Class 10/March 22: Ins Choi - Kim's Convenience (2011) – Wasserman anthology

***Play Review 2 Due in Class**

Class 11/Mar. 29: Marcus Youssef et al - Adventures of Ali and Ali (2005) – Wasserman anthology

Class 12/April 5: Wajdi Mouawad – Scorched (2003) – Wasserman anthology

April: Scene Productions TBA: Scene Productions will require an extra scheduled class at a time to be agreed on with the class.

****Scene Production Assignment Due (2500 words) – submit on cuLearn: (final deadline for Take-home Exams)**

Course Assignments

Theatre Reviews: Write a 1500 word theatre review on each of the two designated live performances. **You must include your theatre program with your assignment.** Make notes at intermission and immediately after seeing a play. Take note of production details in terms of director's interpretive staging choices for design elements such as set, props, lighting, sound, character blocking. How well do the actors convey the character they present? How did the cast as a whole ensemble work together? What is the overall effect of the production? Were there weaknesses? If you were directing this play, what might you do differently? I will provide a rubric on cuLearn. For further details, you may also consult "How to Review a Play," from The Writing Centre at the University of Wisconsin:
<https://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/PlayReview.html>

Group Scene Production: Here you will collaboratively develop your ability to “think like a director.” Once your group has decided on a play and a scene, each member should photocopy the scene and mark it up, then produce two pages of “thinking like a director” point form notes and ideas. **Due date in class for scene production group meeting #2.** Consider how would you begin to envision staging the scene and bringing it to life? With what kind of props, set, lighting and sound design, costuming, character blocking etc.? You will meet with your group in class to share your ideas and decide on roles; for example, not everyone needs to act; you will need a director/producer (who will assist with scene choreography, character blocking, design choices, acting notes, prompting during production); a stage manager (who will assist director with props, set, sound, lighting design, costume design); actors may be double cast if needed to cover parts or if there are fewer parts than actors, the part can be shared among several actors by the use of a shared costume and prop.

Character Analysis as preparation for scene work: Develop a 1500 word character analysis by choosing a focus character from your group’s chosen play. For those who are acting a part, work on your character so that you can develop understanding of your role. You may consider external or direct cues for characterization (conveyed by stage directions, props, costumes, gesture, actions, language or speech style) and internal or indirect elements of characterization (motivations, objectives, hopes, fears, dreams, responses to conflicts, responses to and interactions with other characters). Is your character a major or minor character, protagonist or antagonist? Is he or she a multi-dimensional, complex character or a mono-dimensional character? Is your character paired with another character for contrast? Does your character often appear alone on the stage, with one other character, or with a group? What dynamics define your character’s relationships to other characters? What social and cultural issues contextualize your character’s experience of dramatic conflict and their responses? You may not find all of these questions relevant to every character. Use them as guiding means to develop an interpretation of the significance of your particular character to the play.

**See Debra Bruch, “Character Analysis” Guide on-line:

<http://www.fa.mtu.edu/~dlbruch/scriptanalysis/char.html>

*You may wish to use her “Character Exercise Form” as a prewriting exercise to create notes from which to build your character analysis. Caution: do not structure your assignment by the simple step-by-step rubric she offers. These are guiding questions not a template for your Character Analysis.

Each cast member should write up their character analysis notes due for the in class scene production group meeting #3. Do keep costume and props simple for easy set up and tear down. Interpretation of character and ensemble acting should be the primary focus.

Groups should determine the number of outside class rehearsals they will need to produce the scene. **Suggested minimum is three 2-hour rehearsals. Actors are not required to be completely off book but they should need minimal prompting or hidden scripts.**

Writing up your scene production: Please include the following:

- “Thinking like a director” notes (2 pages)
- Character Analysis (1500 words)
- Individual two paragraph assessment of one’s own contribution, short narrative of the group process, including break down of tasks and roles and number of rehearsals with times, dates, and members in attendance. (500 words)
- Marks will be based 50% on these individual papers and 50% on the overall quality of the scene production.

Course Policies

Attendance and Participation: Active participation is essential in this class, which will be based largely on class discussion of plays. I define class participation as both physical and mental presence in class, preparedness, engagement in discussion, and willingness to take risks. **Please undertake active, thorough reading, with a pencil in hand, underlining key passages.**

Please Take Note: Each student is required to bring hard copies of the plays to class. We will frequently be reading aloud from scenes. Students who do not bring textbooks to class will lose participation marks.

Allowable Absences: You may have two allowable absences for sickness, emergencies or appointments. Subsequent absences will negatively affect your participation grade. If you must be absent, out of courtesy, please let me know that you will be absent and the reason for your absence. **Students who are absent for more than 50% of the course will fail the course.**

Late Assignment Policy: Extensions must be arranged with me (for difficult circumstances only) in advance of the due date. Essays handed in late without prior arrangement will not receive any comments. Essays handed in more than one week late without prior notification may not be accepted.

Plagiarism: Intellectual honesty is considered the ground rule of any university level course. Plagiarism is defined in the “Academic Regulations of the University: Instructional Offences” section of the *Carleton Undergraduate Calendar* as “using and passing off as one’s own ideas the work of someone else without expressly giving credit to another.” **Please ensure that all sources (including biographical and internet) you use in character analysis or play reviews are properly credited. Also note that although sources are NOT required so if you Google it and use it, provide a proper Works Cited and use Parenthetical Citation.** Grey areas of plagiarism sometimes arise from confusion about what counts as putting things in your own words or paraphrase. This would include direct quotation or mostly direct quotation from a source or sources you *do* document, but *do not* indicate as direct quotation. If you change a word or two in a critic’s sentence, this is *not* acceptable paraphrase. Put altered words in brackets and put the whole sentence in quotes. If I suspect that a portion of an essay has been plagiarized, I am required to submit the essay to the Associate Dean of the Faculty. The penalties for plagiarism

are very severe, ranging from failure of the assignment, to failure in the course to expulsion from the university. For more information please go to: <http://www2.carleton.ca/studentaffairs/academic-integrity>

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION

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 assignment requiring accommodation (*if applicable*). **Requests made within two weeks will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.** After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with me to ensure accommodation arrangements are made.

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, but no later than two weeks before a due date. 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 must then make an appointment to discuss her needs with the instructor at least two weeks prior to the first academic event in which it is anticipated the accommodation will be required.

STUDENT SERVICES

Writing Services: If you know your writing needs improvement, do consider free tutoring with this service. <https://carleton.ca/csas/writingservices/>

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 check out the Student Alliance for Mental Health: <http://www.samhcarleton.com/>