

ACM LONDON: ARTS IN CONTEXT

Spring 2013

Course

“Embodying Spaces: Contemporary English Theatre in its Historical, Architectural, Cultural, Geographic, and Moral Settings”

The English theatre is probably the richest in the world in its range and depth. We will attend plays, discuss them, read them, write about them, and occasionally perform parts of them. By becoming more aware of the historical moment the plays dramatize, and the architectural, cultural, and geographic worlds that surround them, we will increase our understanding of the complex moral stories that the English theatre tells. 4 credits.

Faculty

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Texts

- Porter, Roy. *London: A Social History*. Cambridge: Harvard U P, 1995. Print. [or later editions; available in the program library]
- Most of the performances—approximately fifteen per term—will be selected in fall 2012, although a few slots will be left open for short-run productions. The syllabus should be complete by the time each student group arrives in London.
- Students will be expected to buy the dramatic text for a number of productions, although the program library will have multiple copies of some plays.

Strategies and Goals

1. Theatre performances and dramatic texts are intensely interconnected. Most of the best performances grow out of deep intellectual textual study, and the most productive reading of a play draws upon a highly tuned interior sense of the physical theatre. We will therefore study play texts as well as attend theatre performances. Please do some basic biographical reading on each author before our class meeting (use home college databases if possible, but Wikipedia or other readily available websites are probably adequate sources for basic factual material).
2. Theatre is an embodied art. Although our goal isn't to become actors, we will explore plays on our feet—speaking the words, making the gestures, and moving through our self-created theatrical

spaces. This emphasis on theatre as a physical art complements the material emphasis of “London as a Visual Text.”

3. Theatre happens in particular settings that are a part of the theatrical experience. I will provide basic information on the history of all the theatres in which we will see plays so that we can recognize the dialogue between different time periods and the layers of performance history on which particular performances sometimes build. You should also be conscious of each theatre’s particular neighborhood and clientele—walking to and around the area is ideal. This course emphasis on architecture, landscape, and neighborhood complements “London as a Visual Text.”

4. The glory of the London theatre is its range. We will experience the power and polish of the Royal National and the energy of the West End, but I hope that we will also feel the gritty street life that surrounds some urban theatres, the immediacy of small pub theatres, the reserve of some suburban theatres, and the avant-garde vision of the works appearing in London’s abandoned train stations and factories. We will make an overnight trip to Stratford to see the Royal Shakespeare Company in its recently renovated Jubilee and Swan theatres (as well as to see the Shakespeare properties). Theatre tickets for about fifteen plays will be provided as part of the program costs, but I strongly encourage you to seek out other performances on your own and I hope that you will make these experiences part of our class discussions.

5. Theatre happens in many times simultaneously. A Shakespeare performance, for example, might draw upon both Renaissance England and the earlier time period of the play’s setting, but it also intersects with the contemporary English culture that has stimulated the play’s production and the English and global cultures that provide the audience. We will track these different historical layers as background for our discussions. This historical emphasis will build bridges between this course and “London as a Visual Text.”

6. Drama is an intensely ethical art. Rather than discussing abstract ethical systems, we will explore the moral decision-making embodied in the plays themselves. Because the London program immerses us in cultural experiences that should challenge many of our assumptions, we should be ripe for appreciating the ways in which plays can help us live better lives.

7. Rather than seeing your academic work and your personal experiences as separate—or perhaps even in competition with one another—I would like to see your commitment to “Embodying Spaces” and “London as a Visual Text” help you process and deepen your other London experiences. Because reading, writing, and discussion are intimately related to critical thinking and intellectual absorption, they are some of the best ways to increase the value of your time abroad.

Requirements

Note that students earn four semester credits for this course, and another four credits for “London as a Visual Text.” Together, the two courses constitute a full-time academic load.

Participation

You are expected to attend all assigned theatre performances (approximately two per week) and all class meetings (typically two to three per week). Note that personal travel is not a valid excuse for missing a performance or class.

Participation, however, means more than mere attendance: you should be well-prepared (having completed the assigned reading, having handed in any required writing at the beginning of class, and having spent time thinking through the performance or other assignments), alert, and ready to take responsibility for the discussion (this is *your* class; you are not a passive consumer).

In order to keep up with the inevitable schedule changes—that's part of travel!—you are responsible for regularly checking the electronic program calendar.

Examinations

There may be occasional announced or unannounced quizzes or in-class writing. There will be a comprehensive final exam that will test your knowledge of factual material (dates, places, names, biographies, etc.) and your understanding of the course's central intellectual content.

Timeline

In order to help you distinguish the present from the past—and the difference between old, very old, and ancient—you will keep a timeline that records the important materials from “Embodying Spaces” and “London as a Visual Text.” At a minimum, you should record dates for the original performance of plays, the construction of major buildings (including theatres, museums, historic homes, public buildings), and major historical events. The timeline might be best organized by centuries and/or historical/cultural periods. Most students will find it most convenient to keep their timeline in a revisable computer file. Feel welcome to add visual illustrations or personal mementos. In order to help you find an appropriate level of detail, I will collect and evaluate the timeline at the end of the second week. The timeline will be judged on its accuracy, thoroughness, and usefulness. The complete timeline will be due before the final exam.

Writing

The course will require approximately six Position Papers in which you will develop a strong, grounded thesis in a brief space (approximately 800 words [= approximately 3 pages]. These papers, which will be quite different in tone from the blog or journal that you might be keeping on your own, will, ideally, contribute ideas to your Final Paper.

The Final Paper will develop an argument about some aspect of the whole course, but will focus on approximately three readings or performances. Ideally, the paper will draw upon your Position Papers. You will have an opportunity for a peer review of a complete draft. The final paper should be approximately 2500 words (approximately 8 pages).

The purpose of the course writing is to stimulate discoveries, to organize insights, and to provide opportunity for you to commit yourself to your own ideas. Here are some suggestions to help push you towards these three goals:

- Please include the class title, your name, a label (e.g., Position Paper 1), and the due date.
- Like a formal essay, your Position Paper ought to include a title and begin with an introduction that establishes the context for your argument (it would be a very unusual introduction that would not include the author, play title, play date, and performance venue very early in the paper).
- To be arguable, the thesis needs to identify both the position you yourself are taking (the “I say”) and the position you are arguing against (the counter-argument, or “they say”). The best thesis statements are quite particular (not “religion is important in this play,” but “the play’s central character is torn between a religion of love and hope and a religion of sin and condemnation”).
- The paper, in turn, even though brief, needs to be grounded in the particularities of the text, the performance, or the assigned topic and must therefore include (when possible) precise quotations, paraphrases, and specific physical details.
- Your conclusion ought to briefly encapsulate your argument and will often hint at the argument’s larger implications.
- Just below your text (= no need to waste paper by beginning at the top of a new page), include a Wordcount, a List of Works Cited (when appropriate), and a signed Honor Pledge. (This Honor Pledge is your promise to follow all ethical standards for doing your own work and accurately citing sources.)
- For consistency, please use the MLA citation system for all your writing, including Position Papers. You will find a complete explanation in many writing handbooks and on various websites. But here, for your convenience, is the system in a nutshell:
 - On your Works Cited list, your citation begins with the author of the work you’re citing, the title, and then the place where the work is available (usually the place, publisher, and date, but sometimes fuller information if, for example, the work is reprinted in a larger collection. In the latest version of the system, the medium is listed at the end of all citations. Play performances, presentations, and class discussion have somewhat similar formats.

Ibsen, Henrik. *Hedda Gabler*. *The Norton Anthology of Drama*. Ed. J. Ellen Gainor, Stanton B. Garner, Martin Puchner. Shorter Edition. New York: W. W. Norton, 2010. 716-771. Print.

Muggli, Mark Z. “The Implausibility of Being.” ACM London Program. Hyde Park, London. 23 Feb. 2013. Lecture.

Shakespeare, William. *The Winter’s Tale*. Stephen Orgel, ed. The Oxford Shakespeare. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1996. Print.

The Taming of the Shrew. By William Shakespeare. Dir. Adrian Noble. Perf. Judy Dench. The Red Lion Pub, London. 13 Jan. 2013. Performance.

- After a quotation or a paraphrase contained within the paper, you include a parenthetical citation that includes the first word of the appropriate item from the Works Cited list, followed by the page number or more specific identification. Notice the punctuation.

Hedda Gabler begins with a seemingly innocent comment by Tesman's aunt, "Well, then—let them enjoy a good rest" (Ibsen 716).

After the almost painfully slow pace of the statue's rebirth, Shakespeare accelerates the action all the way up through Leontes's final words, "Hastily lead away" (5.3.155).

Grading

Grades are assigned using the 4.0 -0 scale that corresponds to the 4.0 G.P.A. system common at many colleges (4=A, 3.7=A-, 3.5=A-/B+, 3.3=B+, 3=B, etc.). Because the assigned writing is timed to the course's development, late work will be penalized.

Attendance/attentiveness/participation:	30%
Timeline:	10%
Examinations:	15%
Position Papers (ca. 5% each):	30%
Final Paper:	<u>15%</u>
	100%