



**LNDN THTR 3310**  
**THEATRICALITY: UNDERSTANDING THE POSSIBILITIES OF THEATRE**  
**CAPA LONDON PROGRAM**

**Course Description**

Theatricality: *Understanding the Possibilities of Theatre* will place students at the heart of the experience of theatre. What is a play, and what are its qualities, conditions and boundaries? Are there limits to what the theatre can represent in terms of subject matter? How are audiences engaged, stimulated and provoked, and to what end? What philosophical issues does the theatrical experience engage with, and how are they demonstrated within the live performance event? During our journey, we'll consider the origins of theatre, the changing roles of performers and spectators over time, and also assess the theatre's prospects in the twenty-first century.

**Course Aims**

Via a series of texts, both play scripts and philosophical writings on performance, students will engage with the key ideas underpinning the creation of theatricality. Attendance at a range of different performances and tours of specific theatre spaces will supplement our study and augment our developing awareness. Through their attendance, students will consider what it is to be an audience member, and understand that they too are a crucial part of theatrical practice. Students will also understand how different elements: performance, design and the use of technology combine to create the theatrical experience.

**Requirements and Prerequisites**

The course will be suitable for undergraduates from a wide range of subjects and programs. No prior knowledge of performing arts is required, but a keen interest in how people are engaged, stimulated and provoked by ideas, stories and live events certainly is.

**Learning Outcomes**

- a Students will understand theatre as a primarily urban phenomenon, a cultural form that reflects changes in the city itself.
- b Students will have experienced a number of performance forms and genres and be able to appreciate how and why they are successful in engaging an audience.
- c Students will have seen plays in a variety of different spaces, and appreciate the impact of physical space on the presentation of dramatic work.
- d Students will understand the ways theatrical works are produced, ie subsidized or commercially funded, and the implications of such funding.
- e Students will appreciate the 'polyphonic' nature of theatre and how it permits the representation of diverse viewpoints and ideologies.

**Developmental Outcomes**

Students should demonstrate: responsibility & accountability, independence & interdependence, goal orientation, self-confidence, resilience, appreciation of differences.

### Class Methodology

The class will comprise of a series of lectures, student-led presentations inspired by the texts and events we encounter, small-group problem-solving exercises, films and class discussions. Final assessment will occur via class participation, a class presentation and written response, and a paper comprising a written response to a published prompt statement.

### Field Components

CAPA provides the unique opportunity to learn about the city through direct, guided experience. Participation in field activities for this course is required. You will actively explore the Global City in which you are currently living. Furthermore, you will have the chance to collect useful information that will be an invaluable resource for the essays/papers/projects assigned in this course.

### The assigned field component(s) are:

Three study visits to plays in London

A tour of a theatre space **or**

A visitor to class, usually a working theatre professional

Students are also strongly encouraged to participate in **co-curricular** program activities, among which the following are suggested:

A tour of the National Theatre

Additional visits to London shows listed on the My Education calendar

### Final Exams

An examination based on class notes and readings (45 minutes)

And

A class presentation on the theatrical success or failure of a specific live production viewed in London

And

A 2000 word paper response to a prompt statement issued in week 3 of the semester. Example question: 'Are the Classical Unities still the best model for creating effective theatre? Use examples from 2 of the plays we have seen in London'

### Assessment/Grading Policy

Descriptor	Alpha	UK	US	GPA
Excellent	A	75+	93+	4.0
	A-	70-74	90-92	3.7
Good	B+	66-69	87-89	3.3
	B	63-65	83-86	3.0
	B-	60-62	80-82	2.7
Average	C+	56-59	77-79	2.3
	C	53-55	73-76	2.0
Below Average / Poor	C-	50-52	70-72	1.7
	D+	46-49	67-69	1.3
	D	40-45	60-66	0.7 1.0
Fail	F	<40	<60	0

## Grade Breakdown and Assessment of Learning Outcomes

Assessment Task	Grade %	Learning Outcomes	Due Date
Class participation	10%	a, b, c, d, e	Weekly
Exam Based on class lecture notes and readings	20%	a, b, e	Week 5,
Presentation Task Based on one of the plays we have seen	20%	b, c, e	Week 13
Final Paper (2000 words) Response to a published prompt statement	50%	a, b, c, d, e	Week 14

### Dress Code

Smart casual attire is acceptable for London theatre-going.

### Course Materials

Texts from plays and articles on various topics will be supplied in class. It is not necessary to purchase additional text books for this course. Online resources will also be made available.

### Textbook(s) and Recommended Readings

Aristotle (trans M. Heath). *Poetics* (Penguin)

Ley, G. *A Short Introduction to the Ancient Greek Theatre* (Chicago)

White, M. *Renaissance Drama in Action* (Routledge)

Shepherd and Womack, *English Drama* (Blackwell)

Rebellato, D. *Theatre and Globalization* (Palgrave)

### Course Calendar

Field Studies and class visitors will be confirmed in the first 2 weeks of semester. The existing list is provisional. Please ensure to keep the dates for out of class theatre study free.

#### Week 1: ENGAGING THE AUDIENCE

What is the purpose of theatre? What makes a play a play? How does it set about engaging us, holding us, and making us imagine with it? In this class, we'll consider our own experiences of live performance of all kinds, and consider how dramatic events can create active audiences.

Film: *Agamemnon* by Aeschylus (UK National Theatre, 1982)

Text: Graham Ley: Introduction to the Ancient Greek Theatre Pt 1

#### Week 2: FROM EAST TO WEST

In this class, we will look at how storytelling became performance, and how drama emerged from ancient ritual and religious practice. What are the possibilities of creating the present moment upon the stage, and what are the implications for audiences?

Film: *Ran* by Kurosawa (excerpt)

Text: Graham Ley: Introduction to the Ancient Greek Theatre Pt 2

#### **FIELD STUDY ONE: ART at the Old Vic**

### Week 3: TRAGEDY OR COMEDY 1

The ancient Greeks gave us two great performance genres: Tragedy and Comedy. But how do they work, and how do they differ? We'll look at examples of both, and how they relate to their modern cultural descendants.

Film: Rope by Hitchcock/Hamilton (excerpts)

Text: The Birds by Aristophanes (excerpt); Poetics by Aristotle Pt 1

### Week 4 : TRAGEDY OR COMEDY 2

Here, we'll examine the opinions of one of the great writers on the theater: Aristotle. We'll consider his views on Tragedy: how it was done, and the intended effect upon audiences, and weigh this against the dynamics of comedy. Are Aristotle's rule still relevant, and are they in use in modern plays, too?

Film: Hamlet (Olivier version, excerpts)

Text: Poetics by Aristotle Pt 2

### **FIELD STUDY TWO: THE WHITE DEVIL at the Sam Wanamaker Theatre (Shakespeare's Globe),**

### Week 5: THE PERFORMANCE SPACE

We'll consider the Early Modern performance space and analyze how it worked. What are the requirements of outdoor performance on actors and audiences? What were the opportunities and challenges for theatre-makers in this period and how did they meet them?

Film: Henry V (Olivier and Branagh versions, excerpts)

Text: Martin White: The Renaissance Theatre in Action

### Week 6:: THE THEATRE INSIDE

Here, we will consider the implications, in terms of both practical performance and audience response, of the Jacobean drama. We will also consider new genres of the period, specifically Tragicomedy, and the genre-busting attitudes of commercial theatre-makers of the period.

Text: Shepherd and Womack: Melodrama Pt. 1

The midterm test will be held in the second half of this class.

### Week 7: Semester break

### Week 8: THE MELODRAMATIC MODE

In this class, we'll look at the rise and growth of the most successful genre of the nineteenth century: Melodrama. It's a genre that embraced spectacle and sensation, and often divided audiences and critics. We'll consider the origins of melodrama, and the key aspect that makes it possible: villainy!

Film: Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street (1936 version excerpt), House of Cards (BBC 1989 excerpt)

Text: Shepherd and Womack: Melodrama Pt. 2

### Week 9: THE REAL OR THE NATURAL?

The end of the nineteenth century saw the rise of Realism, the genre that supposedly vanquished the melodrama. With audiences put in the dark, watching through a 'fourth wall', theatre changed a great deal in a matter of decades. But what were the implications of these changes, and why did audiences want to see 'real life' at all?

Film: A Doll's House by Ibsen

Text: Naturalism in the Theatre by Zola (excerpt)

### Week 10: THEATRICAL ENVIRONMENTS

Here, we'll look at the impact of the discoveries of Charles Darwin on the theatre of the nineteenth century. How did the theatre-makers of the time react to evolution, and what was the effect on the presentation of drama? We'll consider the works of Russian playwright Anton Chekhov, and modern inheritors of 'naturalism'.

Film: The Cherry Orchard by Chekhov

Text: The Street Scene (Brecht)

### Week 11: THE EPIC AND AFTER

Here, we'll encounter the work and philosophy of a theatrical revolutionary: Bertolt Brecht. Brecht viewed the theatre as a provocative, political form for representing oppression and proposing solutions. This entailed radical changes to performer-audience relations. We'll consider these, and assess their validity for the contemporary theater.

Film: Dogville by Lars Von Trier (excerpt)

Text: Brecht by Raymond Williams (excerpt)

### Week 12: STRANGE VISIONS

In the period after the Second World War, the theatre increasingly became a place to offer radical and controversial visions of the world. We'll examine this tradition, and look at the work of post-war and contemporary theatre-makers who push the boundaries of what's acceptable in the theatre.

Film: The Caretaker by Harold Pinter (1962 version)

Text: Stoning Mary by Debbie Tucker Green

### Week 13: PRESENTATIONS

In this class, we'll each present on the plays we have particularly enjoyed during semester, assessing how and why they work. We will particularly focus on how the elements of performance have combined to open 'the eye of the mind'.

Please see the assessment criteria on CANVAS for full details of this assignment.

### Week 14: THEATRICAL FUTURES

Finally, we'll consider the prospects for the theatre in the twenty-first century. Are traditional forms of representation still relevant? How will technology change the relationship between performers and audiences, and can the theatre take a more active role in making a better world? Are the conditions for theatrical engagement timeless, or must they change as audiences do?

Film: NY Homeless Project Forum Film (2011)

Text: Augusto Boal: Theatre of the Oppressed (excerpts), Dan Rebellato: Theatre and Globalization (excerpts)

## **Attendance, Participation & Student Responsibilities**

**Attendance:** CAPA has a mandatory attendance policy. Attendance is taken at the beginning of every class. Unauthorized absence from class will result in a reduction of the final grade and potentially a failure for the course.

**Missing classes for medical reasons:** If you need to miss a class for medical reasons or for a family emergency, **you must send an e-mail** to let the Associate Director of Academic Affairs (ADAA) know at least one hour in advance of your class or meeting at the following e-mail: [excused.absence@capa.org](mailto:excused.absence@capa.org). Note that calling the CAPA Centre (0207 370 7389) is acceptable only if you do not temporarily have access to the internet. An e-mail is still required as quickly as you can get access to the internet again. You will need to provide evidence of the reason for your absence. Unexcused absences will result in a grade reduction. In the event of a missed class or field trip, it is your responsibility to contact your instructor and make up any missed assignments.

**Class Participation:** Students are expected to participate actively and critically in class discussions, and the participation portion of the class will be graded accordingly. Students must read assignments BEFORE the class, and come in on time.

Participation is a vital part of your grade: students are expected to participate orally in seminars and in online forums and discussions in a critical and evaluative manner; to interact with the faculty and fellow students

with respect and tolerance; and to actively engage in discussion. Derogatory or inflammatory comments about the cultures, perspectives or attitudes of others in the class will not be tolerated.

**Academic Integrity:** A high level of responsibility and academic honesty is expected. Because the value of an academic course depends upon the absolute integrity of the work done by the student, it is imperative that a student demonstrates a high standard of individual honor in his or her scholastic work and class behavior. Plagiarism and cheating will result in dismissal from the program. See the Handbook of CAPA Academic Policies for more information and resources on plagiarism.

**Use of electronic equipment in class:** All devices such as laptops, i-pods, i-pads, netbooks, notebooks and tablets, smartphones, cell phones, etc. are **NOT** allowed unless you have express permission from the faculty or you have been instructed to do so. If you require an accommodation to use any type of electronic equipment, inform the Associate Director of Academic Affairs at the beginning of Term.

**Use of Electronic Translators:** In Language courses students are NOT allowed to use electronic translators for writing texts in the target language: those submitting compositions and texts of whatever kind translated in such a fashion will receive a final F grade for the course.

**Late Submission:** Late submission of papers, projects, journal entries, pieces of homework and portfolios is only permitted with prior approval. A request must be made to the relevant Faculty member no later than two days prior to the due date. Late submission without prior approval will result in a full alpha grade penalty. In either case, work cannot be submitted after feedback has been provided to the rest of the class on the relevant assessment or one week after the due date whichever comes first, after which point a grade of F will be given for the assessment.

**Behaviour during Examinations:** During examinations, you must do your own work. Unless specifically instructed by the lecturer or instructor, talking during an exam is not permitted, nor may you compare papers, copy from others, or collaborate in any way. Any failure to abide by examination rules will result in failure of the exam, and may lead to failure of the course and disciplinary action.