



# THST\*6220 Theatre Theory

Fall 2020

Section(s): 01

School of English and Theatre Studies

Credit Weight: 0.50

Version 1.00 - September 10, 2020

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## 1 Course Details

### 1.1 Calendar Description

This variable content course introduces students to a range of theoretical approaches and to advanced issues and methods within the fields of drama, theatre, and performance studies. The course is required for all students in the Theatre Studies MA Program.

### 1.2 Course Description

The focus of this iteration of THST\*6220 "Theatre Theory" is critical theory and its application to the study of theatre. Critical theory offers perspectives that open cultural texts, allowing scholars to understand how works produce meaning. Contemporary critical theory begins with the premise that each of us is shaped by the particular historical moment in which we live. Artists may provide insightful critiques of the world but they do not enjoy the privilege of a removed, omniscient perspective. Their works feature contradictions, evasions and blindneses. This condition of insight and blindneses is not unique to creative practitioners but is true for each of us, including scholars. As we move through the materials of the course, we will attend not only to the explicit content of the material, but also to what is left unsaid, avoided or assumed. We will try to be aware of ourselves as readers and the assumptions that we bring to our reading practices.

The course begins with the consideration of theatre as a site of scholarly inquiry. Given that theatrical performance is ephemeral, what do scholars of theatre study? How did theatre studies emerge within the academy in United States and Canada? What are the forces that have shaped theatre studies? We will then consider various critical perspectives that are key to the study of theatre in Canada, including issues relating to identity. These include national identity, racialized identities, genders and sexualities, and disabilities.

Contemporary critical theory locates creative and critical practices as being both socially produced and determined. Theoretical perspectives used to read texts can open

opportunities for understanding the world in which we live, particularly in regard to relations of power that silence and negate some within our society.

Each session will begin with a discussion of the assigned readings that include print and video materials. We will then move to a discuss of the implications of these readings for the study of theatre. You may find yourself disagreeing with aspects of some of the assigned material. That is fine. Think through why you disagree and bring your critiques to the discussion in class.

Due to COVID-19, this course is being offered remotely using TEAMS and Courselink.

### 1.3 Timetable

Timetable is subject to change. Please see WebAdvisor for the latest information.

**The course is scheduled to meet on Mondays, from 2:30pm to 5:20pm. Meetings will be on-line, using TEAMS.**

### 1.4 Final Exam

There is no final examination in THST\*6220 "Theatre Theory."

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## 2 Instructional Support

### 2.1 Instructional Support Team

**Instructor:** Ann Wilson  
**Email:** annwilso@uoguelph.ca

### 2.2 Office Hours

I won't be holding regular office hours this semester. If you wish to speak with me, please contact me via email (annwilso@uoguelph.ca) and we can arrange a time to chat on-line.

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## 3 Learning Resources

**THST\*6220 "Theatre Theory"**

**September 14**                      **Introduction and Overview**

**September 21**                      **Critical Theory: What Is It? Why Does It Matter? Or, Understanding Why We Think the Way We Do.**

Althusser, Louis. "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses." *Lenin and Philosophy" and Other Essays* Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation). <http://www.csun.edu/~snk1966/Lous%20Althusser%20Ideology%20and%20Ideological%20State%20Apparatus>

Giroux, Susan Searls and Jeffery Nealon. "Why Theory?" *The Theory Toolbox*. Rowman and Littlefield, 2012. Available online from the University of Guelph.

Gramsci, Antonio. "The Formation of the Intellectual." *The Prison Notebooks*. Ed. And trans. by Quentin Hoare and Geoffry Nowell Smith. 134-147. <http://abahlali.org/files/gramsci.pdf>

Discussion: Reading\_Belsey, Catherine. "Professor Catherine Belsey discusses the Importance of Critical Theory." <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-0Kxa2yERak>

**September 28**                      **Theatre: What Is the Object of Study in Theatre Studies?**

Brecht, Bertolt. "A Short Organum of Theatre." [http://tenstakonsthall.se/uploads/139-Brecht\\_A\\_Short\\_Organum\\_for\\_the\\_Theatre.pdf](http://tenstakonsthall.se/uploads/139-Brecht_A_Short_Organum_for_the_Theatre.pdf)

Jackson, Shannon. "Institutions and Performance: Professing Performance in the Early Twentieth Century." *Professing Performance: Theatre in the Academy from Philology to Performativity*. Cambridge UP, 2004. 40-78. Available online from the University of Guelph.

Taymor, Julie. "Spider Man, The Lion King and Life on the Creative Edge." [https://www.ted.com/talks/julie\\_taymor\\_spider\\_man\\_the\\_lion\\_king\\_and\\_life\\_on\\_the\\_creative\\_edge?referrer=talks\\_for\\_theater\\_geeks](https://www.ted.com/talks/julie_taymor_spider_man_the_lion_king_and_life_on_the_creative_edge?referrer=talks_for_theater_geeks)

Discussion: Thinking About the Etymology of the Word "Theatre"

## **October 5**

### **Presence and the Ephemeral Nature of Theatre**

Dolan, Jill. "Introduction: Feeling the Potential of Elsewhere." *Utopia in Performance: Finding Hope in the Theatre*. U of Michigan P, 2005. 1-34. Available online from the University of Guelph.

Georgi, Claudia. "Introduction." *Liveness on Stage: Intermedial Challenges in Contemporary British Theatre and Performance*. Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2014. 1-15. Available online from the University of Guelph.

Meyer-Dinkgräfe, Daniel. "Liveness: Phelan, Auslander, and After." *Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism*, 29:2 (Spring 2015). 69-79. Available online from the University of Guelph.

Discussion: What is the Nature of Liveness in Theatre?

October 12                      Thanksgiving Holiday—No class (Class re-scheduled to December 4)

**October 19                      Audiences**

Becker, Becky. "Prosceniums and Screens: Audience Embodiment into the Digital Age." *Theatre Symposium* 20 (2012). 30-38. Available online from the University of Guelph.

Bennett, Susan "Theatre Audiences, Redux. *Theatre Survey* 47: 2 (Nov. 2006.) 225-230. Available online from the University of Guelph.

Garner, Stanton B. "Empathy and Otherness." *Kinesthetic Spectatorship in the Theatre: Phenomenology, Cognition, Movement*. Springer International Publishing AG. 2018. 223-265.

Kershaw, Baz. "Oh for Unruly Audiences! Or, Patterns of Participation in Twentieth-Century Theatre." *Modern Drama*, 44: 2 (Summer 2001). 133-154. Available online from the University of Guelph.

Canadian Association for the Performing Arts. Performing Arts Statistics.  
<https://capacoa.ca/en/research/statistics/>

Discussion 1: Thinking About Researching Audiences

Discussion 2: How is Identity Constituted?

**October 26****Nation**

Anderson, Benedict. "Introduction." *Imagined Communities Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Rev. ed., Verso, 2006. 1-7. Available online from the University of Guelph.

Barker, Roberta, Creighton Barrett and Doyle Lahey. "Archival Collaborations: Using Theatre Archives to Teach Canadian Theatre History and Archival Literacy." *Canadian Theatre Review* 156. 46–51. Available online from the University of Guelph.

Filewod, Alan. Alan Filewod. "Erasing Historical Difference: The Alternative Orthodoxy in Canadian Theatre." *Theatre Journal* 41: 2 (May 1989). 201–10. Available online from the University of Guelph.

Blake, Raymond B. and Matthew Hayday. "Introduction. Commemorations, Anniversaries, and National Symbols." *Celebrating Canada*, vol. 2. U of Toronto P. 2018. 3-25. Available online from the University of Guelph.

Discussion: Canada 150: Was Everyone Celebrating?

**November 2****Postcolonial and the Project of Decolonizing**

Bhattacharya, Kakali. *Learning Decolonizing Methodologies in Qualitative Research*. Sage Publications, 2018. Video. Available online from the University of Guelph.

Lazarus, Neil. "Introducing Postcolonial Studies." *Postcolonial Literary Studies*. Cambridge UP, 2004. 1-16. Available online from the University of Guelph.

Nothof, Anne. "Imagining a Nation: The Necessity of Producing Canadian Drama." Rønning, Anne Holden and Lene Johannessen. *Readings of the Particular: The Postcolonial in the Postnational*. Rodopi, 2007. 145-156. Available online from the University of Guelph.

Gilbert, Helen and Joanne Tompkins. "Introduction: Re-acting (to) Empire." *Post-colonial Drama: Theory, Practice, Politics*. Routledge, 1996. 1-15. Available online from the University of Guelph.

Discussion: Taking Down Monuments as a Performative Act ... Or Not?

## **November 9                      Racialized Identities 1**

Appleford, Rob. "Cutting into Diane Glancy's Ghost Dance." *English Studies in Canada*, 39(2), 251–275.

Coulthard, Glen Sean. "Introduction: The Subjects of Empire." *Red Skin, White Masks : Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition*. U of Minnesota P, 2014. 1-24.

Loring, Kevin. Video Statement. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KPsCFFuMZxl>

Nolan, Y., & Adams, P. "The Driest Cold: Surviving as a Theatre Artist in a 'Cold Climate': A Dialogue between Yvette Nolan and Philip Adams." *Canadian Theatre Review*, 154 (2013). 7–10.

Parui, Avishek. "Fanon—*Black Skin, White Masks*, Part 1." *Introduction to Cultural Studies*. YouTube. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F\\_6Fc4tUxis](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F_6Fc4tUxis)

Scott, Joan W. "The Evidence of Experience." *Critical Inquiry* 17, 4 (Summer, 1991), 773-797.

[https://lucian.uchicago.edu/blogs/ea-media-project/files/2018/02/Scott\\_TheEvidence\\_1991.pdf](https://lucian.uchicago.edu/blogs/ea-media-project/files/2018/02/Scott_TheEvidence_1991.pdf)

Discussion: Essentialism, Identity and the Authority of Experience

## **November 16                      Racialized Identities 2**

Henry, Frances; Enakshi Dua; Audrey Kobayashi; Carl James; Peter Li; Howard Ramos and Malinda S. Smith. "Race, racialization and Indigeneity in Canadian Universities." *Race Ethnicity and Education*. 2016. [https://www.ufv.ca/media/assets/race-antiracism-network-ran/Henry-et-al\\_RaceRacializationIndigeneity\\_CanadianUniversities\\_2017.pdf](https://www.ufv.ca/media/assets/race-antiracism-network-ran/Henry-et-al_RaceRacializationIndigeneity_CanadianUniversities_2017.pdf)

Pao, Angela C. "Introduction" *No Safe Spaces : Re-casting Race, Ethnicity, and Nationality in American Theater*. U of Michigan P, 2011. 1-22. Available online from the University of Guelph.

Smith, Anna Deavere. "On Black Lives Matter, Intersectionality and Race. TED Talk. 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XRhQTWX2zPw>

Young, Harvey. "The Black Body." *Embodying Black Experience: Stillness, Critical Memory and the Black Body*. Michigan UP, 2010. 1-25. Available online from the University of Guelph.

Young, Harvey, and Bethany Hughes. "Reaffirmation of Life: Dramatic Theory and Race." *Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism*. 32: 2, 2018. 79–87. Available online from the University of Guelph.

Discussion: Casting and Identity Politics: The Case of People's Light Theatre's Production of *Anne Frank*. Your opening into the debate might begin with: Dembin, Russell. "The Diversity of *Anne Frank*. *American Theatre*. 27 March, 2018. <https://www.americantheatre.org/2018/03/27/the-diversity-of-anne-frank/>



**November 23****Genders**

Butler, Judith. "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory." *Theatre Journal* 40:4 (Dec. 1988). 519-531. Available online from the University of Guelph.

---. "Judith Butler: Your Behavior Creates Your Gender." *Big Think*. YouTube.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bo7o2LYATDc>

Cummings, Marti Gould. "Drag is a leadership role model for everyone - kids, too." TEDxProvincetown. YouTube.  
[https://www.ted.com/talks/marti\\_gould\\_cummings\\_drag\\_can\\_be\\_a\\_leadership\\_role\\_model\\_for\\_everyone](https://www.ted.com/talks/marti_gould_cummings_drag_can_be_a_leadership_role_model_for_everyone)

Halberstam, Jack. "Trans\*: What's in a Name." *Trans\*: A Quick and Quirky Account of Gender Variability*. University of California Press. 2018. 1-21. Available online from the University of Guelph.

---. "Making Trans\* Bodies." *Trans\*: A Quick and Quirky Account of Gender Variability*. University of California Press. 2018. 22-44. Available online from the University of Guelph.

Solomon, Alisa. "Introduction: How easy is a bush suppos'd a bear." *Re-Dressing the Canon: Essays on Theatre and Gender*. Routledge, 1997. 1-20. Available online from the University of Guelph.

Discussion: Let's Extrapolate to Theatre Practice—Gender and Sexual Identities Backstage.

**November 30****Disabilities and Theatre**

Bulmer, Alex. "Alex Bulmer discusses Deaf and Disability Arts" <https://nac-cna.ca/en/video/the-cycle-2016-2017-alex-bulmer>

Johnston, Kirsty. "Introduction." *Stage Turns: Canadian Disability Theatre*. McGill-Queen's U P. 2012. 3-16. Available online from the University of Guelph.

Schmidt, Yvonne. "Disability and Postdramatic Theater: Return of Storytelling." *Journal of Literary & Cultural Disability Studies*: 12:2 (2018.) 203-219. Available online from the University of Guelph.

Discussion: The Politics of Inspiration—Are expectations are imposed on people with disabilities and others who, historically, have been marginalized? A starting point for the discussion might be:

[https://www.ted.com/talks/stella\\_young\\_i\\_m\\_not\\_your\\_inspiration\\_thank\\_you\\_very\\_much?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/stella_young_i_m_not_your_inspiration_thank_you_very_much?language=en)

**December 4****What Directions Should Theatre Studies Take?**

**Note:** All the materials for the course are available on-line.

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## 4 Learning Outcomes

## Learning Outcomes for Theatre Studies

To develop artists who thrive on intellectual curiosity, openness to ideas and take measured risk through creative experiences.

To develop informed and creative citizens, empowered to contribute to the world through writing and performance.

To apply critical sensibilities through a familiarity and understanding of a range of significant performance and media work past and present.

To develop well-rounded performance artists, who possess the research tools and disciplinary skills to model their own productive performance practices.

To develop meaningful ways to integrate theory, technology and practice where critical thinking and creativity are equally embraced.

To learn techniques for communication and collaboration, build relationships and to listen and respect different thought processes.

### 4.1 Course Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, you should be able to:

1.
  - Demonstrate the ability to read with care, attending not only to the over content of material but to the silences and omissions in a text.
2.
  - Respond thoughtfully to the current concerns relating to theory and theatre.
3.
  - Extract ideas from material with accuracy, and evaluate the reliability of the material and the source from which it was drawn.

4. • Provide an analysis of a work that engages an approach informed by theory that opens a critical reading of the material.
  5. • Learn to write clear and fluid prose that conveys ideas effectively.
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## 5 Teaching and Learning Activities

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## 6 Assessments

### 6.1 Marking Schemes & Distributions

#### **Reading of a Canadian Play Written in English**

In this assignment, each student will select a Canadian play written in English that has been published between 2014 and 2020. You might find Drama Online a useful resource. It is a collection to which the library subscribes that includes plays published by Playwrights Canada.

You are to offer a reading of the play. This might involve identifying major themes; commenting on the playwright's depiction of characters and how each character is established; addressing the significance of setting and time of day in which a scene is set. These are suggestions. You are free to discuss any other dramaturgical strategies employed by the playwright. You might also want to identify key moments in the action of the play. The objective is to read the play closely and with care. The analysis of the play should be 10 pages or between 2000 and 2500 words.

Date Due: Monday October 5

Weight of Final Grade: 15%

Submit Through Dropbox in Courselink

#### **Three Postings**

During the semester, each student will post three times, on three different weeks. The postings should be brief, identifying a moment in one of the readings. The "moment" might be one that you find insightful—or highly problematic. It might be a moment when you find the author is contradicting their own position or making a claim without adequate support of the assertion. You are being asked to identify a moment in the authored, scholarly text (either an article or a chapter from a book) that you find significant in three readings, over three weeks. You will be called on to speak to this moment during our discussion in class.

Date Due: various points in the semester  
 Weight of Final Grade: 30% (Each posting is worth 5%; each of your three comments to the class about the posting is worth 5%).

Note: You can only post once on the same week. You are asked to engage with three different topics during the course of the semester.

Please keep your comments to the class short and focused, no longer than 2-3 minutes.

### **Leading a Discussion**

Each meeting will begin with discussion of the assigned materials after which we will take a break. When we return, we will explore the implications of the assigned materials to a topic relating to theatre or to the study of theatre. There are suggestions for topics that might be discussed. These topics are listed in the schedule. You are free to revise the topic or devise another one, but if you do, check with me the Friday before the class. I'll let the class know on your behalf. In leading the discussion:

- Introduce the topic, very briefly, in under five minutes.
- Call on someone to comment.
- Try to ensure that each member of the class contributes to the discussion.

Date Due: various points in the semester  
 Weight of Final Grade: 15%

### **Essay—Return to the Play**

In this assignment, you will return to the play that you wrote about earlier in the semester. In returning to the play, consider it through the lens of a theoretical approach that we have addressed this semester. Many playwrights are concerned citizens who use their plays as ways of addressing social issues. It is important to acknowledge this work. There may also be points in the play when the playwright's attempts to engage socially hit snags. A snag might be as the result of discussions between characters that become polemical, with each of the characters in the scene representing a particular perspective on an issue resulting in a loss of theatricality. In your discussion, you could discuss what it means for the pacing of the play to have a discussion that might be quite static in terms of action.

Theatre is a material practice that makes a significant contribution to the economy. You might research the promotional materials that are associated with productions of the play and how the play is presented. What is the role of promotional materials in summoning an audience to a production? Do the promotional materials assume an audience for the production?

These are but two suggestions. You are open to offer a reading of the work from whatever

perspective that you choose, as long as it is informed by theory.

Please support your reading with evidence from the text (understood broadly as the primary sources with which you are working). Supplemental materials relating to writing an academic essay will be available on the course site in Courselink.

Length: 12 pages (or roughly 2500 words)

Date Due: December 11; please submit through Dropbox in Courselink

Weight of Final Grade: 25%

### **Participation in the Course**

You are expected to attend each of the class meetings on TEAMS and to arrive prepared having engaged with the materials thoughtfully. You are expected to contribute to the discussion and to respect other discussants.

Weight of Final Grade: 15%

**Note:** Materials must be cited using MLA citation style.

## **7 University Statements**

### **7.1 Email Communication**

As per university regulations, all students are required to check their e-mail account regularly: e-mail is the official route of communication between the University and its students.

### **7.2 When You Cannot Meet a Course Requirement**

When you find yourself unable to meet an in-course requirement because of illness or compassionate reasons please advise the course instructor (or designated person, such as a teaching assistant) in writing, with your name, id#, and e-mail contact. The grounds for Academic Consideration are detailed in the Undergraduate and Graduate Calendars.

Undergraduate Calendar - Academic Consideration and Appeals

<https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-ac.shtml>

Graduate Calendar - Grounds for Academic Consideration

<https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/graduate/current/genreg/index.shtml>

Associate Diploma Calendar - Academic Consideration, Appeals and Petitions

<https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/diploma/current/index.shtml>

### 7.3 Drop Date

Students will have until the last day of classes to drop courses without academic penalty. The deadline to drop two-semester courses will be the last day of classes in the second semester. This applies to all students (undergraduate, graduate and diploma) except for Doctor of Veterinary Medicine and Associate Diploma in Veterinary Technology (conventional and alternative delivery) students. The regulations and procedures for course registration are available in their respective Academic Calendars.

Undergraduate Calendar - Dropping Courses

<https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-drop.shtml>

Graduate Calendar - Registration Changes

<https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/graduate/current/genreg/genreg-reg-regchg.shtml>

Associate Diploma Calendar - Dropping Courses

<https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/diploma/current/c08/c08-drop.shtml>

### 7.4 Copies of Out-of-class Assignments

Keep paper and/or other reliable back-up copies of all out-of-class assignments: you may be asked to resubmit work at any time.

### 7.5 Accessibility

The University promotes the full participation of students who experience disabilities in their academic programs. To that end, the provision of academic accommodation is a shared responsibility between the University and the student.

When accommodations are needed, the student is required to first register with Student Accessibility Services (SAS). Documentation to substantiate the existence of a disability is required; however, interim accommodations may be possible while that process is underway.

Accommodations are available for both permanent and temporary disabilities. It should be noted that common illnesses such as a cold or the flu do not constitute a disability.

Use of the SAS Exam Centre requires students to book their exams at least 7 days in advance and not later than the 40th Class Day.

For Guelph students, information can be found on the SAS website

<https://www.uoguelph.ca/sas>

For Ridgetown students, information can be found on the Ridgetown SAS website

<https://www.ridgetownc.com/services/accessibilityservices.cfm>

### 7.6 Academic Integrity

The University of Guelph is committed to upholding the highest standards of academic integrity, and it is the responsibility of all members of the University community-faculty, staff, and students-to be aware of what constitutes academic misconduct and to do as much as possible to prevent academic offences from occurring. University of Guelph students have the responsibility of abiding by the University's policy on academic misconduct regardless of their location of study; faculty, staff, and students have the responsibility of supporting an environment that encourages academic integrity. Students need to remain aware that instructors have access to and the right to use electronic and other means of detection.

Please note: Whether or not a student intended to commit academic misconduct is not relevant for a finding of guilt. Hurried or careless submission of assignments does not excuse students from responsibility for verifying the academic integrity of their work before submitting it. Students who are in any doubt as to whether an action on their part could be construed as an academic offence should consult with a faculty member or faculty advisor.

Undergraduate Calendar - Academic Misconduct

<https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-amisconduct.shtml>

Graduate Calendar - Academic Misconduct

<https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/graduate/current/genreg/index.shtml>

## **7.7 Recording of Materials**

Presentations that are made in relation to course work - including lectures - cannot be recorded or copied without the permission of the presenter, whether the instructor, a student, or guest lecturer. Material recorded with permission is restricted to use for that course unless further permission is granted.

## **7.8 Resources**

The Academic Calendars are the source of information about the University of Guelph's procedures, policies, and regulations that apply to undergraduate, graduate, and diploma programs.

Academic Calendars

<https://www.uoguelph.ca/academics/calendars>

## **7.9 Disclaimer**

Please note that the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic may necessitate a revision of the format of course offerings and academic schedules. Any such changes will be announced via CourseLink and/or class email. All University-wide decisions will be posted on the COVID-19 website (<https://news.uoguelph.ca/2019-novel-coronavirus-information/>) and circulated by email.

## **7.10 Illness**

The University will not normally require verification of illness (doctor's notes) for fall 2020 or



winter 2021 semester courses. However, requests for Academic Consideration may still require medical documentation as appropriate.

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