EXPANDED COURSE DESCRIPTION
THEATRE
School of the Arts, Media, Performance and Design
Department of Theatre
FA / THEA 4200 3.0 SECTION A
PERSPECTIVES ON CONTEMPORARY THEATRE
FALL 2019 / WINTER 2020

Last Modified Date: 08/26/2019

COURSE CALENDAR DESCRIPTION

Explores some of the innovative and challenging developments in dramatic writing and theatrical performance in the last 25 years, in Canada and internationally. Prerequisites: For theatre majors, FA/THEA 3200 3.00.

Explores some of the innovative and challenging developments in dramatic writing and theatrical performance in the last twenty-five years, in Canada and internationally. Prerequisites: for Theatre Majors, THEA 3200 3.0. Course credit exclusion: FA/THEA 4270J 3.0, FA/THEA 4270K 3.0

INSTRUCTOR(S)
TBD

SPECIAL FEATURES

Time and Location:
Lecture: Wednesday 2:30pm-5:30pm, ACW 303

Instructor Contact Info:
Sean Robertson-Palmer
317 Centre for Film and Theatre
seanrp@yorku.ca
Office hours: by appointment

Prerequisite / Co-requisite:
Pre-requisite: THEA 3200

Special Features

Expanded Course Description:

THEA 4200, Perspectives on Contemporary Theatre, examines the current theories, practices, and politics of performance scholars and practitioners that challenge and/or redefine traditional ideas of theatre. As a class we will examine the boundaries of the theatrical form and unpack its value in its current state. The course will primarily view contemporary theatre and performance through the lens of Canadian theatre artists and scholars, with a particular focus on work that has been done in the past decade. The goal of this geographical and historical scope is to track the current practices of artists that are shaping the theatre ecology that the students will soon be entering. Thus, the students are asked to consider the material as artists themselves, while considering their own positionally and emerging theatre practice in relation to the material. Although the primary focus of the course is the Canadian context, students are exposed to elements of theatre practice
from other cultures that have had an influence on contemporary dramatic theory and practice. This course also emphasizes creative research as a practical tool for the artist.

**Organization of the course:**
This is a seminar course, and will be driven by our in-class discussions about course materials. Each week the class will be required to participate in group discussion, so it is imperative that the assigned readings have been done and the students are prepared to discuss their ideas. During the lecture period, students will also watch films, listen to audio-recordings, and examine images that illustrate important issues raised by the course texts. Seminars will also involve in-class activities, games and other forms of participatory work to enhance the learning experience. There will be in-class work that is graded as participation, so it is imperative that the student arrives on time and ready to work each week. Students are required to attend one contemporary Canadian play and a production of Theatre@York’s Good Night Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet).

**Topics and Concepts**

**Required Texts:**
- Readings posted to Moodle as assigned

**CLASS SCHEDULE (Subject to Change):**

- Sept. 4  Introduction to the Course
- Sept. 11  What is Contemporary Theatre?
  **Reading:** Levin, Laura and EmmaRose MacDonald. "Where Is Theatre Going?" Canadian Theatre Review, vol. 163, 2015, pp. s1-s13., Introduction to Theatre of the Unimpressed

  *BETWEEN SEPT. 11 AND SEPT. 25, EACH STUDENT MUST ATTEND A PROFESSIONAL CONTEMPORARY CANADIAN PERFORMANCE THAT IS PRODUCED BY A TORONTO THEATRE COMPANY.*

- Sept. 18  Colonial Pasts: Performance and Aesthetics in Canadian Theatre's History

- Sept. 25  Decolonizing Practices: Processes of Decolonization in Canadian Performance
  **Reading:** *The Developmental Support to Aboriginal Theatre Organizations Study* by Marie Clements, and *Black Plays Matter* by d’bi.young anitafrika

- Oct. 2  The Internet and Digital Performance
In-class viewing: Jordan Tannahill, Rhiannaboi95

Oct. 9  Immersive Experiences
At home viewing: Landline by New World Theatre/Secret Theatre
Reading: Sound Immersion, Adrienne Wong, BRANTWOOD: Canada’s Largest Experiment in Immersive Theatre, Julie Tepperman and Mitchell Cushman

*Performance Response due: Oct. 9*

Oct. 16  Fall Reading Week

Oct. 23  What is Playing in Toronto Right Now?

*Assignment Proposal due: Oct. 23*

Oct. 30  Queering Contemporary Performance
Reading: Moynan King’s introduction to Queerplay: an anthology of queer Canadian women's performance and plays, Sunny Drake’s Transitioning the Industry

Nov. 6  Hip Hop Theatre’s Aesthetics, Politics and Dramaturgy
Reading: Introduction to Say Word!, by Daniel Banks, Towards a Hip Hop Aesthetic by Danny Hoch

Nov. 13  The Gamification of Theatre and Performance
Reading: Creating an Escape Room: A Discussion on Experiential Learning and Interdisciplinary Studies, Helena Ciuciura et al, Performing the Game: Demystifying Live Action Role-Play (LARP), David Owen, Grand Theft Terra Firma
Laura Schneider et al., The Scripting of Unscripted: The Game of Making Theatre and the Theatre of Making a Game, Heather Marie Annis et al.

*BETWEEN NOVEMBER 16-20 YOU MUST ATTEND A SHOWING OF THEATRE@YORK’S GOOD NIGHT DESDEMONA (GOOD MORNING JULIET)*

Nov. 20  Contemporary Feminist Performance
Reading: Where Are All the Women? Equity, Post-Feminism, and Canadian Theatre, Michelle MacArthur, Ms. Canadian Reality, Leah-Simone Bowen, Gender and Sexuality in Acting Training.

*Final Paper due Nov. 20*

Nov. 27  Exam Review
LEARNING OUTCOMES

In this course, you will:
• Gain knowledge of major figures, sites, and genres in Canadian theatre and performance history, while also becoming aware of the contingency of genealogical narratives
• Develop an in-depth understanding of the relationship between theatre and cultural geography, and gain methodological tools for analyzing space and place in Canadian performance
• Explore cultural materialist methodologies that situate theatre and performance in relation to social, cultural, and political conditions
• Investigate the key contributions of intercultural performance creators in Canada
• Become familiar with important concepts and critiques of national performance and national identity
• Confront the challenges faced by artists staging texts in performance
• Develop skills in critically analyzing and researching different kinds of performance
• Hone your critical writing skills through reading responses and essay writing

GRADED ASSESSMENT

Evaluation:

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<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Performance Response</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Assignment Proposal</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Assignment</td>
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<tr>
<td>End-of-term Exam</td>
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Assignment Details:

1. Participation

Participation is a crucial element of this course. Your participation grade will reflect your contribution to building an inquisitive, thought-provoking, and supportive atmosphere in class. To begin with, this means providing a space where your peers can both hear and be heard, and where different ideas can be safely expressed and challenged. You can help to create this productive kind of learning environment by listening attentively when others are talking, staying open to other people’s ideas, and questioning your own blindspots. You are expected to read all of the assigned texts by the date that they are listed, and to attend both live productions, so that you are able to engage in lively discussions and group activities. A good participant will consistently take part in discussions and in-class exercises (without dominating them), build upon other students’ comments, raise questions, and offer critical readings of course texts and subject matter.

2. Performance Response

Focusing the Toronto performance you attended, choose two areas of enquiry to write an analysis on. The areas of enquiry are:
1) Plot, Themes, Symbolism and Imagery  2) Production Elements (Costume, Set, Lighting etc...)  3) Playing Space/Architecture  4) The Relationship between the Performer and Audience  5) Social/Historical context

Simply explain what you saw, and the effect that your areas of enquiry had on the overall production. If you thought something was particularly successful or unsuccessful, explain in a detailed manner why you felt that way without slipping into broad, general statements. The idea is to be as specific as possible about what you saw, and why it was important. Remember to avoid basic judgements that speak only to your personal taste. You are encouraged to do a little research to help support your critique, but remember to focus the research primarily on the production you saw.

Things to avoid!
- Simple evaluation of the show (i.e. “I liked the lighting” or “I hated how the costumes looked”) without further analysis.
- Summarizing the plot.
- Talking in generalities. Specific examples and detailed explanation are really helpful!
- Talking too much about life in general and failing to connect these insights to the plays.
- Offering many different ideas without discussing any one in detail. Focus is important.
- Saying you didn’t understand something without either trying to come to grips with it in your response or suggesting a way that we could try to answer your question in class discussions.

Assignments are to be 3-4 pages in length, double-spaced, 12 point font, 1 inch margins.

Due Date: Oct. 9, 2019
3. Paper

Your final essay (6-7 pages in length) should deal with an issue or set of issues relating to the topics and/or plays that we have studied in this course. Your reading responses will be instrumental in helping to stage ideas that you might later explore in your paper.

This paper aims to develop your skills in research and critical thinking. It will require that you draw on at least three outside critical sources (theoretical, historical, journalistic), in addition to referencing class texts. Your essay should be in MLA format. Be sure to document your sources properly.

You are required to submit a proposal on your topic by October 23rd, 2019. Requirements for the proposal:
• It should be 200-250 words in length.
• It should identify the issues with which you are primarily concerned and the kinds of texts and/or productions that you intend to discuss.
• It should present a provisional thesis statement and/or research question(s).
• Your proposal should be accompanied by a brief annotated bibliography, in MLA format, describing key resources for your project. This should include at least 3 outside critical sources (i.e. not assigned course readings) and each bibliographic entry should be accompanied by an annotation of 2-3 sentences describing the source and explaining how it will be useful to your project.

Here are three options for your essay:

Option 1 – Critical Essay
Write an analytical paper on a topic that we have studied in class. Develop your own thesis based on a close reading of one or more artists’ works and an examination of related critical sources. You may also develop an argument about one or more critical works that we’ve studied in class.
Option 2 – Review Essay

Write a review essay that surveys important developments that have been taking place in contemporary Toronto theatre over the course of the fall term. Develop your thesis based on a close reading of at least three plays that have been produced in downtown Toronto from September to November. Place these productions within a larger aesthetic, cultural, and/or historical context and speculate on the state of contemporary theatre in Canada. YOU CANNOT RESUSE THE PLAY YOU WATCHED FOR THE PERFORMANCE RESPONSE.

Option 3 – Production Proposal

Imagine that you are a director recommending a Canadian play for production at a local theatre. Choose one of the plays we’ve studied this term and write a detailed proposal for a production. Describe your vision for major areas of production (acting, directing, design, etc.). If you choose this option, you must: survey previous stagings and/or critical readings to the play and discuss how your proposed production can be distinguished from those previous approaches. You must also explain how your production takes into consideration the specific material parameters of the theatre site at which it will be staged.

Whether you choose options 1, 2, or 3, it is crucial that you support your arguments with specific examples and details from play texts and productions. The paper is due on November 20, 2019.

4. Exam

The final exam will focus primarily on material covered in lecture period during the fall term, including in-class exercises, formal lectures and discussions that have taken place. Having an in-depth understanding of the key concepts, genres, events, plays, and figures covered in the course is essential for success on the exam, and requires attendance in class. Discussions in the seminar are important for the final exam as they are the main site for grappling with the content, form, and meaning of the material, which you will be expected to write about in the exam.

Marking Scheme:

A/A+ (8-10): Excellent = fulfills assignment guidelines; demonstrates careful, close, and inventive reading of texts; skillfully integrates specific examples and quotes to support interpretation; well-written and focused.

B/B+ (7-7.9) Very Good = fulfills guidelines of the assignment; demonstrates solid critical reading of assigned texts; presents a clear interpretation with only occasional grammatical errors and organizational difficulty.

C/C+ (6-6.9) Satisfactory = partial reading of texts; too much summary or too general; not enough analysis.

D/D- (5-5.9) Unsatisfactory = fails to meet assignment guidelines; incoherent writing; demonstrates little or no reading; does not relate to the assigned writing.

F (0-4.9) Failing = assignment not submitted.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Attendance: Students are reminded that Department of Theatre rules require attendance at all classes. Only 1 unexcused absence and lateness are permitted (i.e. not accompanied by official documentation explaining that the absence was unavoidable); any further absences and lateness will result in a 10% reduction of participation grade in the course, unless excused by a doctor's note, or by special permission from the instructor (permission will only be granted in exceptional circumstances).

Assignment Submission: Proper academic performance depends on students doing their work not only well, but on time. Accordingly, assignments for this course must be received on the due date specified for
the assignment. Assignments must be handed in at the beginning of tutorial. Unless otherwise specified, tutorial leaders will not accept submissions via e-mail or Moodle.

**Late Assignment Penalty:** Assignments received later than the due date will be penalized 3% per day (including weekends), unless you have arranged for an extension. Assignments that are more than one week late will not be accepted unless special permission has been granted. If you anticipate having difficulty completing an assignment on time, please contact your TAs for an extension (although don’t expect to receive one if you e-mail them the night before an assignment is due). Exceptions to the lateness penalty for valid reasons such as illness, compassionate grounds, etc., may be entertained by the Course Instructor but will require supporting documentation (e.g., a doctor’s letter).

**Seeing Theatre Productions:**
Attending theatre productions is a critical part of this course. Students will be expected to attend two performances outside of class time. Students are responsible for booking and covering the cost of tickets. All efforts will be made to arrange for discounted ticket prices for off-campus productions. Both of these productions will be discussed in class and tutorial.

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS**

Reminder: Students must maintain a 5.00 (C+) grade point average in their major (i.e. all Theatre courses) to remain in good academic standing in the department. Check the grade point average calculator at the following link if you have any questions:
http://ampd.yorku.ca/current-students/academic-resources/gpa-calculator/?

**A Note on Challenging Content**

One of the central educational goals of the Theatre Department is to produce socially conscious artists — artists who are aware of and capable of participating in challenging dialogues about social injustice and inequality. This means that our courses, public events, and productions often grapple with difficult subject matter, including sex, violence, terror, and illness (among other topics). While these presentations will no doubt provoke strong emotions and cause discomfort, we feel that the diverse experiences they promote are also essential to the development of our students’ critical faculties, empathy, and understanding of the world. Rather than warning our students in advance about every potentially uncomfortable topic that they might encounter in the course of their studies, we instead encourage students to meet them head on in the classroom, in rehearsals, and performances, and to engage in civil and compassionate debate about the possibilities and effects of staging difficult knowledge.

If you require an accommodation related to your participation in Theatre experiences, please ensure that you share relevant documentation with your course director. Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities

**ACADEMIC POLICIES / INFORMATION:** The Senate Academic Standards, Curriculum and Pedagogy Committee (ASCP) provides a Student Information Sheet that includes:
York’s Academic Honesty Policy and Procedures / Academic Integrity Web site
Access/Disability
Ethics Review Process for Research Involving Human Participants
Religious Observance Accommodation
Student Code of Conduct

Alternate Exam and Test Scheduling

“20% Rule” - No examinations or tests collectively worth more than 20% of the final grade in a course will be given during the final 14 calendar days of classes in a term. The exceptions to the rule are classes which regularly meet Friday evenings or on Saturday and/or Sunday at any time, and courses offered in the compressed summer terms. Final course grades may be adjusted to conform to Program or Faculty grades distribution profiles. http://secretariat.info.yorku.ca/files/CourseInformationForStudentsAugust20121.pdf

Grading Scheme and Feedback Policy

The Senate Grading Scheme and Feedback Policy stipulates that (a) the grading scheme (i.e. kinds and weights of assignments, essays, exams, etc.) be announced, and be available in writing, within the first two weeks of class, and that, (b) under normal circumstances, graded feedback worth at least 15% of the final grade for Fall, Winter or Summer Term, and 30% for ‘full year’ courses offered in the Fall/Winter Term be received by students in all courses prior to the final withdrawal date from a course without receiving a grade.

York’s Policy on Academic Honesty

York's Senate Policy on Academic Honesty affirms and clarifies the general obligation for all members of the University to maintain the highest standards of academic honesty. AMPD has establish complementary procedures for the investigation and resolution of alleged violations of the Senate Policy involving students in AMPD degree program courses at the undergraduate level.

THE ACADEMIC HONESTY PROCESS

An Overview
1. Investigation
2. The person discovering the suspected violation will notify the course director. The course director should not meet with the student or discuss the case at this point.
3. The course director will notify his or her department Chair, providing all documentary evidence.
4. The Chair will consult with the Manager, Faculty Governance & Policy. It will then be determined whether there has been an infraction, and if so, whether it is minor or more serious. In either case, if there has been an infraction, an exploratory meeting will be held (Part B, below). A case is minor where the infraction is small in extent, can reasonably be construed as an error on the student’s part, and where there appears to be no intent to deceive.
5. If, on consultation, it is determined that an infraction has taken place, the Manager will place a “flag” in the student’s file, block enrolment activity in the course, and investigate whether there is a prior history. If it is a repeat offence, then the matter must proceed directly to a formal hearing (Part C, below).
6. Exploratory Meeting

If Minor:
1. The department Chair will conduct an exploratory meeting, attended by the course director and the student. If there is more than one student involved, each should be met with separately. Each may bring a representative.
2. If the student admits to a breach of academic honesty, a suitable penalty — not exceeding failure in the course — will be agreed upon.
3. In all cases, outcomes are reported to the Manager, Faculty Governance & Policy. Where a penalty is imposed, a joint agreement is signed by both parties, and approved by the Associate Dean Academic.

If Serious:
1. The Manager, Faculty Governance & Policy will chair an exploratory meeting, attended by the course director and student and their representatives.
2. If the student admits to a breach of academic honesty, a suitable penalty — not exceeding failure in the course — will be agreed upon. The Associate Dean, Academic may be consulted on a penalty, if necessary.
3. A joint agreement is signed by both parties, and approved by the Associate Dean, Academic.

1. Formal Hearing

A formal hearing by AAPPC will be held in cases where:
1. a) It is not the student’s first offence.
2. b) The student neglects to attend the exploratory meeting and it is found that there are grounds to proceed with a charge of a breach of academic honesty.
3. c) The student admits to a breach of academic honesty, but no penalty can be agreed upon.
4. d) The student does not admit to a breach of academic honesty.

For further information on the penalties for academic misconduct, please see AMPD’s Policy on Academic Honesty.

As approved by AMPD Faculty Council, March 21, 2018

COUNSELLING & SUPPORT SERVICES

Personal Counselling Services (PCS) aims to help York students realize, develop and fulfill their personal potential in order to maximally benefit from their university experience and manage the challenges of university life. Students come to PCS because of a wide range of concerns including, but not limited to: depression, anxiety, abuse, stress, self-esteem, relationship issues, eating and body image as well as issues related to sexuality.

PCS provides:

- Short-term individual, couple, and group counselling services to York University students
- Personal development workshop and workshop series
- Crisis intervention for York students
- Consultation to the York Community regarding students in distress/crisis and issues related to mental health in general
- Critical incident response de briefings and consultations
- Clinical training for graduate students in Psychology, Social Work, and Psychotherapy

Learn more about other York University resources related to mental health and wellness at York.

The Centre for Sexual Violence, Response, Support & Education coordinates supports and resources for all members of the community that have experienced sexual violence, receives disclosures and complaints, facilitates safety planning, and assists survivors through the complaint process.

If you or someone you know has experienced sexual violence and is in need of support, the Sexual Violence Response Office (SVRO) can help. Please call 416-736-5211 or find them online at yorku.ca/svro.

You shouldn’t ever feel guilty or be made to feel guilty about reporting a problem.

COURSE-RELATED DISPUTES: The following steps are the steps to be taken in the event of unresolved issues within the class:
- If your class has a tutorial leader or studio instructor, speak to your instructor first.
- If unresolved, speak to the Course Director.
- If unresolved, contact the Chair of the Department at thechair@yorku.ca.

**IMPORTANT UNIVERSITY SESSIONAL DATES** (where you will find classes and exams start/end dates, reading/co-curricular week, add/drop deadlines, holidays, University closings and more.
http://www.registrar.yorku.ca/enrol/dates/index.htm
Manage my Academic record http://myacademicrecord.students.yorku.ca/

- Last date to drop a fall term (F) course without receiving a grade: Nov. 8, 2019
- Last date to drop a winter term (W) course without receiving a grade: March 13, 2020
- Last date to drop a full year (Y) course without receiving a grade: February 3, 2020

**DEGREE STATUS – BA AND BFA:** All students accepted into the Department of Theatre in the School of the Arts, Media, Performance and Design (AMPD) enter as Specialized Honours BA Theatre-Theory majors. The first year is a program common to all Theatre students, and offers courses in Acting, Production/Design and Performance Creation & Research. At the end of the first year, there is a selection process (either by audition or interview) to proceed into the various areas of interest.

**POLICY REGARDING LOSS, DAMAGE AND THEFT OF PERSONAL EQUIPMENT AND BELONGINGS:** The School of Arts, Media, Performance & Design at York University will not be held responsible for the loss, damage or theft of personal equipment or any other personal belongings that are left in studios, classrooms, storage areas or any other space within the School. It is each individual’s responsibility to take care of their own property. Under no circumstances will the School incur liability for loss, damage or theft of such property.

Please take all reasonable measures to protect your personal belongings. If you do experience loss, damage or theft of personal property, please report it immediately to the Department of Security Services at (416) 736-5333 or extension 33333 from any University phone.

**ROOM BOOKING POLICY:** Rehearsals for mainstage productions take precedence when assigning rooms, followed by faculty assigned work. Personal projects, including playGround, will be considered only if space allows.

First-year Theatre majors are not eligible to book studios.

Adopt professional standards by agreeing on a rehearsal schedule with group members and by having one group member do the arranging of the space in advance. Please ensure that the floors and walls are clean. **All garbage must be removed.** Please treat the studios with respect.

The studios are available only within the following hours: **Mon-Fri 8:00am-10:00pm and Sat-Sun 10:00am-6:00pm**

All spaces must be booked one week in advance and will be accepted **only until 4:00pm on Thursday the previous week.**

Requests will be confirmed Friday by 4:00pm.
Requests must be sent by e-mail only to rehearse@yorku.ca

Include your full name, student ID, program, brief explanation of what the space will be used for and what kind of space you need (studio / classroom / big / small).

Requests must be submitted each week for a room unless special arrangements have been made.

You cannot “claim” a space by writing in your name or the course name in an empty slot on the weekly schedules posted outside each space (exception – Light Lab CFT 153).

Spaces must be returned to neutral at the end of each booking session. There will be a picture of what “neutral” is in each studio.

The sign-off sheet must be checked and signed at the end of your studio time. If you enter a space and find it not “neutral”, please e-mail rehearse@yorku.ca.

Anything left behind in the spaces after your booking will be thrown out.

**Procedures for use of studios after-hours:** These procedures are designed to enhance the safety of authorized students when working alone in one of our studios after-hours - Monday through Friday from 11:00pm to 6:30am, and Saturday/Sunday from 10:00pm to 8:00am.

An After-Hours Use form will be completed and emailed to University Security at: scc@yorku.ca;

Be advised of the University’s emergency protocols (e.g. contact 911 in the event of a life threatening situation) and University Security’s urgent number (416.736.5333);

Contact University Security non-urgent number - 416.650.8000 - upon arrival and departure.

**SITE-SPECIFIC PROJECTS:** All site-specific theatre projects anywhere on campus must be cleared by the course director, York University’s Security Services, and the department or governing body of the proposed site. This request should be made in writing at least three weeks in advance of the date required.

All public spaces on Campus require contact with the Office of Temporary Use of University Space - http://tuus.info.yorku.ca/space-room-reservations-forms/

The course director will also need to complete a “Temporary Use of University Space Application and Notification Form” and submit it two weeks in advance of the date required.

For ALL site specific work, the course director must send the request to security@yorku.ca outlining where and when the work is to take place.

Please note: at no time shall any form of replica, prop, or real weapon (handguns, rifles, shotguns, swords, daggers, knives, etc.) be used in any site specific work.
Many courses utilize Moodle, York University’s course website system. If your course is using Moodle, click here to access it.

Moodle @ York University