

ENGL 3990: London, The Theatrical City

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University of Virginia

Syllabus

London possesses a theatrical culture famed for its vibrancy and distinction. Some of the most gifted playwrights, actors, set designers, and directors in the English-speaking world thrive there today, just as they have for 500 years. Here we will explore the exciting work produced by today's most important artists, as well as the rich heritage of performed drama that lies behind it.

Objectives:

- to see as wide an array as possible of kind of performances on the London stage, from classic to contemporary, avant-garde works;
- to meet London theater professionals and learn from them about how they go about translating dramatic texts into performance, addressing questions of interpretation and dramaturgy;
- to experience the central place that theatrical excellence has in British culture;
- to understand the history of the evolution of the London theater;
- to understand the role of London theater not only in Great Britain's national culture but also in the global literary and dramatic public sphere;
 - to understand how globalization and the resulting complex cosmopolitan, post-colonial culture of London are shaping theater today;
 - to practice both textual analysis and performance criticism
 - to understand the institutional structure of the London Theater, with its distinct, but complementary worlds of commercial, subsidized, and fringe theaters;
 - to work towards excellence in analytical essay writing.

How the class will work:

Most mornings, the class will meet for two to two and a half hours for intensive group discussion. Part of each session will be devoted to analysis of the performance we saw the previous evening, while the rest will be devoted to a preparatory and critical discussion of the play we are seeing that night, which everyone will have read in advance.

In the afternoons, we will do practical activities. We will tour significant theatrical sites, including the reconstructed Shakespeare Globe Theatre on the South Bank. We will have workshops with London theater professionals to gain understanding from the inside of characteristically British approaches to interpretation, direction, and performance.

In the evenings we will go to plays; drawing from the best of what is available for us to see, we will sample a range of performances from the West End to Shakespeare in several different kinds of venues.

Requirements:

Attendance and participation in all classes, workshops, and events (20%)

Quiz (10%)

Fieldwork assignments (20%)

Review of a performance (20%)

Critical Essay (30%)

You must successfully complete all five requirements in order to pass the class.

Readings:

TBA

Schedule of class meetings (subject to change):

Sun., Dec. 29

Arrival

Mon., Dec. 30:

10:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. Meet in classroom. Discuss class assignments. Prepare for Play #1.

Reading quiz (short quiz on basics of 5-6 plays that will be assigned by 12/15/18).

6:45 p.m.: Gather in the lobby for departure to play.

7:30-10:00 p.m.: Attend Play #1.

Tues., Dec. 31:

9:00 a.m. -12:00 p.m. Meet in classroom. Discuss Play #1. Prepare for Play #2.

Afternoon and evening free.

Wed., Jan. 1:

Morning and afternoon free.

6:45 p.m.: Gather in lobby for departure to play.

7:30-10:00 p.m.: Attend Play #2.

Thurs., Jan. 2:

9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.: Meet in classroom. Discuss Play #2. Prepare for Play #3.

6:45: Gather in lobby for departure to play.

7:30 -10:00 p.m.: Attend Play #3.

Fri., Jan. 3

9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.: Meet in classroom. Discuss Play #3. Prepare for Play #4.

6:45: Gather in lobby for departure to play.

7:30 p.m.–10:00 p.m.: Attend Play #4.

Sat., Jan. 4:

9:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m. Meet in classroom. Discuss Play #4. Prepare for Play #5.

TENTATIVE - 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m.: Session at National Theatre with producers of Play #TBD.

6:45: Gather in lobby for departure to play.

7:30 p.m.–10:00 p.m.: Attend Play #5.

Sunday, Jan. 5:

Day free. **First fieldwork assignment write-up due via e-mail by 11:59 p.m.**

Mon., Jan. 6

9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.: Meet in classroom. Discuss Play #5. Prepare for Play #6.

6:45: Gather in lobby for departure to play.

7:30 p.m.–10:00 p.m.: Attend Play #6.

TENTATIVE - 10:00 p.m. -11:00 p.m. Private session with producers of Play #6.

Tues., Jan. 7

9:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m. Meet in classroom. Discuss Play #6.

1:15-2:30 Tour of National Theatre

Writing assignment (review of play) due via e-mail by 11:59 p.m.

Evening free.

Wed., Jan. 8

9:00 a.m.-10:00 a.m. Meet in classroom. Prepare for Play #7.

TENTATIVE - 11 am-5:30 pm. : tour, costume demonstration, performance workshop at Shakespeare's Globe Theatre

6:45 p.m.: Gather in lobby for departure to play.

7:30 p.m. - 10:00 p.m. Attend Play #7.

Thurs., Jan. 9

9:00 a.m. – 12 p.m.: Meet in classroom. Discuss Play #7. Prepare for Play #8.

6:45: Gather in lobby for departure to play.

7:30 p.m. - 10:00 p.m.: Attend Play #8.

Fri., Jan. 10

9:00 a.m. -10:30 a.m.: meet in classroom. Discuss Play #8.

Second fieldwork assignment write-up due via e-mail by 11:59 p.m.

8:00 p.m.- 10:00 p.m.: Closing dinner at restaurant TBD.

Sat., Jan. 11:

Students depart

Friday, January 17

Critical essay due via email by 11:59 p.m.

Class Policies:

Assignments will be posted to Collab. You are asked to turn your completed assignments in electronically, as Word documents attached to an email addressed to both professors. We need them in Word because we plan to use the "track changes" function to comment on your papers. If you do not have Word, though, just let us know and we'll figure out a workable solution for you.

You must successfully complete all five requirements in order to pass the class. I.e., you can't fail to hand in an assignment, or participate in class, and still receive a passing grade.

Attendance is required at all class meetings, scheduled workshops, and performances. The one exception is the case of serious illness, in which case you should contact us immediately so that we can make sure that you receive appropriate care.

Being on time: It is crucial that you be **on time** for all course-related events and meetings. We will often meet in the lobby of the Citadines in order to go to an event together, and you must be on time for these meetings. If you text or otherwise tell us in advance, though, you can usually meet up with us at the theater, rather than in the lobby. Be sure to text us, though, because otherwise we will wait for you at the Citadines and/or be worried.

Classroom rule: We're afraid that food and beverages are NOT allowed in the classroom. Believe us, we'd love to bring coffee ourselves. We will take a 10-15 minute break every day during class, though, which is enough time to grab coffee or eat a snack, if necessary.

Exploring London: We hope that you very much enjoy exploring London. If you go exploring by yourself, please let at least one person in the group (your roommate or a friend, for instance) know where (in general or particular), so that we know where to start if we need to find you. If you are exploring after dark (that is, after 4:30), please have at least one trustworthy person with you. London is a pretty safe city, but it's still crucial to be cautious.