THTR 110: Introduction to Theatre. SUMMER 2021

Instructor: Professor Michael Earley
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Course Meeting Days and Time: See Course Schedule (below) and https://harlaxton.evansville.edu/accepted/downloads/summer2021/Summer2021-calendar.pdf

UE Catalog Description:
Acquaints students with the process of creating theatre and enhances their ability to enjoy and appreciate performances. Requires observations of some evening rehearsals and performances in addition to attendance at lectures. Fall, Spring.

Summer at Harlaxton:
The Plays:

- **Oedipus the King** by Sophocles
- **Romeo and Juliet** by William Shakespeare
- **West Side Story** by Leonard Bernstein, Arthur Laurents and Stephen Sondheim
- **Waiting for Godot** by Samuel Beckett
- **Blasted** by Sarah Kane

This course will cover different periods and theatre styles starting with Ancient Greek Tragedy through to Shakespearean and English Renaissance Drama, then on to the American Musical, the Theatre of the Absurd and ending with the so-called In-Your-Face Theatre and Post-Dramatic Theatre.

Over the course of four weeks, we will use a repertoire of 4 plays and 1 musical to explore how theatre makes meaning through space, time and cultures by focusing on four key aspects: text/script; acting, directing and performance; design/architecture/technology and audience reception/criticism and theory.

Alongside weekly lectures, students will have group and individual projects/presentations based on reading, discussion, viewing, research and studio work together. They will also view productions, either live or online, depending on circumstances. Where possible, attendance at the theatre will be arranged and students will write short reflective papers about what they see and her/his interpretations.

Each class session will be shaped as follows: a brief lecture, followed by a group discussion/group analysis and then some studio work (acting, directing and design) to uncover meaning and intention in the plays we are reading and to discover the ‘theatrical’. Depending on the willingness and abilities of the group, the final week of class meetings might culminate in a studio performance of work presented in class (monologues and scenes). This is not an acting, directing or design class. So, no prior, practical knowledge of these artistic skills is necessary or required. You will discover the need for words and the need for design along the way. The ancient origins of the word ‘drama’ means, loosely, ‘action’ or ‘to do’. And so, through action and doing the worlds of these plays will come to life.

This Introduction to Theatre takes cognisance of the fact that we have all been living through a global pandemic. Bear that in mind when you read the selected plays, each of which is a landmark of its time and confusions, paving the way for new dramatic landmarks yet to come.
Credit Hour Policy Statement:

This course conforms to the University of Evansville's Credit Hour Policy:

"For non-semester length courses and semester length courses that are exceptions to the general rule the "learning outcome", rather than "seat time", standard may apply. The "learning outcome" standard requires that the student demonstrate to the satisfaction of the department awarding the credit evidence of actual achievement of course objectives in regards to the credit hour that are at least equal to the intended learning outcome under the Federal definition, i.e., a learning outcome expected from an amount of work equivalent to experiencing one hour of class attendance or faculty instruction per week, for 15 weeks, in a course that requires for the average student two hours of additional work for every one hour of class attendance and/or instruction."

General Education Requirements:

This course is available for Outcome 5 of the Enduring Foundations General Education Program: Understanding of Human Aesthetic Creation and Artistic Creativity.

Course Learning Objectives:

• To gain a broad understanding of the process of theatre-making and an appreciation of the cultural and aesthetic value of plays and performance.
• To explore a variety of performance styles, venues, and actor/audience relationships.
• To enhance students' abilities to understand, enjoy and appreciate contemporary theatrical events.

Methods of Instructions:

The Plays:

• *Oedipus the King* by Sophocles
• *Romeo and Juliet* by William Shakespeare
• *West Side Story* by Leonard Bernstein, Arthur Laurents and Stephen Sondheim
• *Waiting for Godot* by Samuel Beckett
• *Blasted* by Sarah Kane

The course will be conducted via whole class discussions and studio work. The course will work to (1) comprehend the development of Western drama and theatre practice through four distinct historical periods through plays that share similar concerns, (2) understand how to read and analyse a play, a performance and a production, (3) test though practice a range of theatrical possibilities by means of practical workshops and viewing of professional productions both live and over the internet. All these aspects of the course will be addressed in readings, discussions, seeing productions and studio presentations. As the class will meet intensively throughout four weeks, students will be expected to attend classes and engage with the material on the syllabus. In effect, this will be a four-week seminar and students will be guided by the instructor who is always available each day to answer questions and help students reflect on her/his experience.

Withdrawal and Attendance policies:

Harlaxton College expects regular class attendance by all students. Students are considered sufficiently mature to appreciate the necessity of regular and punctual attendance, to accept this personal responsibility and to accept the consequences of failure to attend. When absences occur due to emergency or medical reasons, students are expected to notify their instructors of the absence prior to class or to seek the assistance of the College nurse or a member of the Student Support Team for help in notifying instructors.

Instructors have the authority to grant excused absences for medical, psychological, or personal reasons upon review of appropriate documentation and professional recommendation supporting such a request.

The Principal has the authority to grant excused absences for medical, psychological, or personal reasons.

Each instructor is expected to maintain an attendance policy in keeping with the nature of the Harlaxton program, and may consider it in evaluating performance in their courses.
Policy Governing Unexcused Absences:

Harlaxton College operates an attendance policy that is binding on all faculty and students. The number of unexcused absences that are allowed before incurring a penalty is related to the number of times a class meets each week. For courses which meet three times a week, students are allowed a maximum of three unexcused absences during the semester without attracting penalty points. For courses meeting twice a week two such absences are permitted, and for courses meeting once a week a single absence is allowed. Additional unexcused absences will attract a grade penalty. This will be determined by the course member and included in their syllabus (e.g. a full-letter grade (A to B), or a third-letter grade (A- to B+).

Covid-19 Policy: Students should not attend class if they are feeling unwell. They should seek to notify their instructors of their absence and, if possible, participate in their classes online.

Policy Governing Excused Absences.

- Excused absences are not given to facilitate student travel independent of College-sponsored travel.
- Students may be permitted to miss class because of participation in academic field trips.
- Instructors must co-ordinate and confirm academic fieldtrips with the Principal and/or Chair, Department of British Studies, prior to the commencement of the Semester to ensure their inclusion in the Semester timetable.
- Where authorization for an academic fieldtrip is requested after the commencement of the semester, the request must be submitted to the Principal/ and/or Chair, Department of British Studies for approval.

The following information is required:
- Purpose and brief description of the official Harlaxton event or academic fieldtrip.
- Dates, location, and times (as applicable).
- Alphabetical list of students involved [Last Name/First Name] along with their student identification number.

If approval is granted:
- Instructors affected will be notified at least one week prior to the class period during which absence is anticipated, or as soon as possible.
- Missed class time due to student participation is to be considered an excused absence.
- The grade of a student may not be lowered in any class due to excused absences.
- It is the student’s responsibility - to take the initiative by consulting with their instructors before the absence occurs, and - to do what is required by the instructor to make up all missed assignments and/or examinations.
- Instructors are required to assist students in these occasional situations of excused absences.

Grading Criteria

Assignments: 3 brief critical writing tasks related to plays and productions on the syllabus plus class participation (33%); group performance work and engagement with one another’s production projects (33%); final seminar paper (1500 words) (34%) based on a topic discussed in Ada Vance with lecturer. Due the final week of classes. Hand-in arrangements tba. All production work will be very basic and rely on students’ imaginative response to their reading and viewing. All material for production must be found objects, as there is no production budget, and set in spaces around the Harlaxton campus.

Disability Policy:

It is the policy and practice of the University of Evansville and Harlaxton College to make reasonable accommodations for students with properly documented disabilities. Written notification to faculty from the Office of Counseling and Health Education is required for academic accommodation.
Honor Code:

All students at the University of Evansville agree to the University honor code: *I will neither give nor receive unauthorized aid, nor will I tolerate an environment that condones the use of unauthorized aid.*

Course Schedule:

**Week 1:** Read *Oedipus the King* and Aristotole’s *Poetics*
- The invention of drama and Greek tragedy
- Aristotole’s *Poetics* and the structure of a play
- Theatre and democracy
- Theatre and the plague
- Friday presentation of scenes

**Week 2:** Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* and *West Side Story* (Bernstein, Laurents and Sondheim)
- The Elizabethan theatre
- Acting Shakespeare
- Theatre and violence
- The American musical theatre
- Friday presentation of scenes
- At the end of this week (or during the following week) we will seek to see *Romeo and Juliet* onstage at either The Globe Theatre or Regent’s Park Open Air Theatre in London. We will also watch a video performance of *West Side Story*

**Week 3:** Samuel Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot*
- The Theatre of the Absurd
- Communication onstage
- Theatrical minimalism
- Site-specific performance
- Friday presentation of scenes

**Week 4:** Sarah Kane’s *Blasted*
- In-Yer-Face-Theatre
- The post-dramatic in theatre and drama
- The uses of technology
- Friday presentation of scenes

The Course Instructor:

**Professor Michael Earley**, who lives in nearby Rutland, is Academic Adviser for Stage Russia. He is writing a new book about the relationship between Russian theatre directors and innovators Konstantin Stanislavsky and Vsevolod Meyerhold. He is currently Dean of Performing Arts and Professor of Drama and Theatre at LASALLE College of the Arts in Singapore. He was previously Professor of Drama, Principal and Chief Executive Officer of Rose Bruford College of Theatre and Performance in Sidcup, London, where he led this top British conservatoire from 2009-17. He is now Professor Emeritus of Drama and Theatre at Rose Bruford. He was previously Professor of Drama and Head of the Lincoln School of Performing Arts and Producing Director of the Lincoln Performing Arts Centre (LPAC), projects that he inaugurated at the University of Lincoln (UK). An American by birth, he had an extensive career in the United States where he was Assistant Professor and Director of the undergraduate Theatre Studies Program at Yale University and on the faculty of the Drama Department at the Juilliard School and also at the Tisch School of the Arts at New York University. He did his undergraduate BA studies in English Literature and Drama at Rutgers University and his postgraduate studies in the PhD Program in Theatre,
University and Graduate Center, City University of New York. Professor Earley has also worked as Editorial and Publishing Director of Methuen Drama publishers in London, where he published such authors as Arthur Miller, Peter Brook, Sarah Kane, Caryl Churchill, the complete works of Stanislavsky, Meyerhold, Bertolt Brecht and many more, including two Nobel Prize Literature Laureates: Wole Soyinka and Dario Fo. As Chief Producer of Plays for BBC Radio Drama he directed over 50 productions for broadcast over Radio 3 and Radio 4. His publications have included books on acting and theatre history, including *Soliloquy! The Shakespeare Monologues*. At LASALLE College of the Arts, Professor Earley leads one of Asia’s top university sector English-language drama programmes that blends Asian and Western practices. He has frequently travelled to Russia on research visits to the Moscow Art Theatre School and the Russian State Academy of Performing Arts in St Petersburg. In China he has done workshops that fuse Eastern and Western approaches to acting, theatre training and arts education. He has lectured and presented workshops at Peking University, Shanghai Theatre Academy, Huazhong University of Science and Technology, Xinghai Conservatory of Music and Tianjin Conservatory of Music.