Course outline

This course examines some of the key playwrights and movements of late nineteenth-century and twentieth-century theatre in Britain and Europe. It aims to develop critical understanding of major playwrights, many of whom have had an important influence on both European and American drama. Modern theatre grew up in and alongside modern metropolises like London, and it reflects this environment. One element which we will examine is the ways in which the changing nature of modern urban life is reflected in its theatre.

Theatre is, of course, about performance and visits to the theatre will be included. We will consider the way in which directing, acting, sets, costumes, lighting, sound and other elements contribute to the overall success of a performance. We will consider different genres and modes of theatrical performance. In addition to the productions, a visit to the Theatre and Performance Galleries at the Victoria and Albert Museum will be arranged. However, this is a theoretical rather than a practical course: students will not participate in performance as part of the teaching sessions.

We will also spend time considering different ways of engaging with dramatic texts and the significance of the contexts in which the plays we study are written and performed, including how these changing contexts impact upon the development of plays and their performance. This may involve exploring productions of the same plays in different time periods (where possible) and students may be asked to investigate performances and critical texts beyond those directly covered in the course.

Each classroom session will involve a variety of teaching methods, and student discussion is a key part of this: therefore reading the set text in advance of the session is essential. Students may also be asked to prepare presentations for particular sessions.

This is not an introductory module. Therefore, students should expect to be challenged both through the theoretical and practical examination of dramatic texts (for example, through in-class conversations and rigorous academic essay writing) and the seminar style that all of the modules tend to take. Be prepared to voice your ideas, questions and thoughts.

Learning outcomes

By end of the course, students will have:

• Gained an understanding of the history of modern European and British theatre.
• Engaged with a range of major modern European and British plays, playwrights and dramatic genres.
• Enhanced their understanding of how plays work in performance and of the processes of theatrical production.
• Surveyed a range of critical perspectives related to modern European and British theatre.
• Developed their ability to think and write critically about plays and performances.

Coursework and assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessed component</th>
<th>Basic requirements</th>
<th>Weighting</th>
<th>Deadline</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Essay</td>
<td>2,500 words</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>Week 10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Examination</td>
<td>Two hours to answer two questions</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>Week 14</td>
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Schedule

Seminars take place on Wednesday mornings from 10am-1pm

Students need to attend all classes and performances. Please remember that your grades will be affected by your attendance.

The provisional programme outlined below provides a list of the core texts for discussion during the course. Information about the plays you will attend will be supplied at a later date.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td>Why does theatre matter?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 2</td>
<td>Ibsen, A Doll's House (1879)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 3</td>
<td>Oscar Wilde, Lady Windermere's Fan (1891)</td>
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<td>Week 4</td>
<td>Trip to the V &amp; A Museum's Theatre and Performance Galleries London</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Essay Questions Released</td>
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<td>Week 5</td>
<td>Brecht, Mother Courage (1941)</td>
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<td>Week 6</td>
<td>J. B Priestley, An Inspector Calls (1945)</td>
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<td>Week 7</td>
<td>Samuel Beckett, Waiting for Godot (1953)</td>
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<td>Week 8</td>
<td>Musical Theatre I</td>
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<td>Week 9</td>
<td>Musical Theatre II</td>
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<td>Week 10</td>
<td>Comedians Trevor Griffith (1975) Essay Due</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 11</td>
<td>The Woman in Black (adapted from Susan Hill)</td>
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**Course Texts**

**Required Reading**

- Details of any further reading will be provided in advance of each class.

**Plays:**

- **Week 2:** Ibsen, Henrik, *A Doll's House* (any edition)
- **Week 3:** Wilde, Oscar, *Lady Windermere’s Fan*, (any edition)
- **Week 4:** V & A trip
- **Week 5:** Brecht, Bertolt, *Mother Courage 1941* (Methuen Student edition)
- **Week 6:** Priestley, J.B., *An Inspector Calls* (any edition)
- **Week 7:** Beckett, Samuel, *Waiting for Godot* (any edition)
- **Week 8:** Musical Theatre (texts to be confirmed)
- **Week 9:** Musical Theatre II
- **Week 10:** Griffiths, Trevor, *Comedians*, (Faber and Faber 1979)
- **Week 11:** Mallatratt, Stephen, *The Woman in Black* (1987), adapted from the novel by Susan Hill.
- **Week 12:** Brenton, Howard, *Anne Boleyn* (Nick Hern Books, 2010)

**Recommended Reading**


