



Study abroad.

## SYLLABUS

**Winter and Spring Sessions Only**

**LONDON THEATRE**

**Instructor: Althea Stewart**

**Contact Hrs: 40**

**Language of Instruction: English**

**LONDON, ENGLAND (NCSA)**

THIS IS NOT A MUSICAL THEATRE COURSE

**Please note that because the London courses are able to take advantage of the numerous and ever changing exhibits, theatre programs, and local offerings that some topics are subject to change with the schedule of theatre offerings each term. This syllabus outlines the structure of the course, however the specific plays that are visited will not be finalized until shortly prior to the beginning of the term. Please visit the AHA London Centre website at [www.ahalondon.org.uk/](http://www.ahalondon.org.uk/) for the most current syllabus for a particular session**

This course will examine some of the key elements in the development of British and European theatre through a study of plays and dramatists whose work is currently being performed. The study of theatre as a performance art will be emphasized throughout the course. We plan to see at least six plays throughout the term. While the precise shape of the course is dependent on the plays that are on stage at the time of your visit, we will endeavour to include a range of periods and styles. As well as seeing the plays performed, we plan to tour some theatres and/or theatrical institutions and, if possible, invite guest speakers to our classes

This is a particularly exciting time to be visiting the British Theatre. London is vibrant and lively with new plays and revivals. Theatre is always a subjective experience as well as an intellectual and objective one, so it is often disturbing and challenging. Students will be expected to analyse and debate objectively and emotional responses will be respected.

The course is designed to give students experience of the wide variety of theatre available in London, which has a tradition of presenting classics both British and foreign alongside new plays. Students are encouraged to look for theatre wherever they go – in the street, the park and any other place where performance is presented. All the plays will give us new insights into the way we view events in our own time or the way we represent and understand the past and our literary heritage. We shall also acquire an understanding of the way that different theatrical genres function in text and in performance and first hand experience of the way an audience contributes to the performance. Students will be encouraged to read academic critical prose, newspaper and Internet reviews and will acquire an ability to analyse a play in performance with a view to what techniques are used to engage the audience. By the end of the course students will also have gained knowledge of different kinds of London theatre companies. These are diverse in the way that they raise funds and in the way they serve their respective communities.

Elements of production to be considered are:

place of performance	performance space
audience and actors	set
lighting	sound
costume	actor's performance techniques
directorial interpretation	audience reception

**THE AIMS AND OBJECTIVES** of the course are to offer students an understanding of a wide variety of theatrical companies, genres and techniques in the context of the traditions of theatre going in London. Students will also be encouraged to examine theatre as a way of challenging the status quo and to analyse and write critically about theatre.

**COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES:** Students should look forward to increasing their ability to analyse and appreciate the way that writers and performers both respond to and challenge their audiences. By the end of the course students should be able to:

- 1) Write reviews of live performances and read them with discernment.
- 2) Read and analyse a play script.
- 3) Have developed an increased knowledge of the wide variety of theatre on offer, with an understanding of the way theatre of ideas functions.
- 4) Make informed choices about their own theatre going or involvement in performance, based on the knowledge acquired.
- 5) Be willing and able to implement and/or appreciate innovative theatre whenever the opportunity arises.

**ASSESSEMENT:** Late work will be penalised. Five marks will be deducted for every day that your work is handed in after the due date.

Absence from the class or a theatre trip will also be penalised by a loss of five marks for each absence, which will be deducted from your final mark.

The course will be examined as follows:

- 1) An essay 1,500 - 2,000 words in length to be handed in before the half term holiday. 25% of the marks.
- 2) A journal containing about 500 to 1,000 words on each play. A copy of your review of each play should be handed in as indicated in the course outline. Each half of your journal will contribute 25% to the final mark so that the entire journal is worth 50%
- 3) An examination in which you will be asked to write an account of how you would direct a hitherto unseen piece of play text and also answer an essay question. For the second question there will be a choice of topics. The exam lasts for two hours and is worth 25%

**BIBLIOGRAPHY:** Additions/deletions will be made as the course progresses and plays selected to attend.

**General**

Aristotle *The Art of Poetry* - any decent paper back translation.

Elaine Aston and George Savona, *Theatre as Sign System: A Semiotics of Text and Performance*, London/NY: Routledge, 1991

Peter Brook, *The Empty Space*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990

John Drakakis and Naomi Conn Leiber, (editors) *Tragedy*, Harlow/NY: Longman, 1998

Richard Eyre, *National Service: Diary of a Decade*, London: Bloomsbury Publishing Ltd., 2003

Peter Mudford, *Making Theatre from Text to Performance*, London/New Jersey: The Athlone Press, 2000

Don Taylor, *Directing Plays* London: A& C Black (Publishers) Ltd., 1996

## Shakespeare

Jonathan Bate, *The Genius of Shakespeare*, Oxford: Picador, 1997. (especially Chapter 8)

John Drakakis ed. *Alternative Shakespeares*, London: Routledge, 1996.

Stephen Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997.

Frank Kermode, *Shakespeare's Language*, London: Allen Lane, 2000.

Isobel Rivers, *Classical and Christian Ideas in English Renaissance Poetry: A Student's Guide*, London: Routledge, 1996 (Useful for its analysis of the way such ideas are evident in literature)

Kiernon Ryan, *Shakespeare (Second Edition)* London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1995.

Kevin Sharpe & Peter Lake, *Culture and Politics in Early Stuart England*, London: The Macmillan Press, 1994.

Leah Scragg, *Shakespeare's Mouldy Tales: Recurrent Plot Motifs in Shakespearean Drama*, London: Longman, 1992

## BELOW ARE EXAMPLES OF RECENT COURSE OFFERINGS AS DETERMINED BY THE THEATER SCHEDULE.

### TERM 1 EXAMPLE

The Royal Shakespeare Company in Stratford Upon Avon is embarking on a marathon doing the entire Shakespeare canon. We shall be thinking about genre but also about gender issues in all the plays that we see this term. Two of the plays we see are new plays, *Coram Boy* by Helen Edmundson and *The History Boys* by Alan Bennett. John Osborne's twentieth-century classic *The Entertainer* has particular resonances for those of us considering American and British policy in the Middle East and will enable us to discuss the kind of theatre that draws attention to the way ordinary folk are affected by political decisions. We shall see three Shakespeare plays at Stratford Upon Avon and at the traditional home of Shakespeare in London, The Old Vic Theatre. One will be done as a musical, and one with an all male cast.

While in Stratford we shall visit some places of interest connected to Shakespeare's family and his life. We shall visit the National Theatre Complex, built in the middle of the twentieth century and a traditional nineteenth-century theatre in London's West End.

We shall be examining history and its relevance to today's political and social decisions but analysing it through the medium of theatre, always a subjective experience as well as an intellectual and objective one. All the plays that we see will represent specific genres i.e. melodrama; comedy; tragi-comedy; tragedy; satire, romance.

### COURSE OUTLINE

- An introduction to the course. A discussion about genre and gender. A very short talk about *Coram Boy* and an introduction to the text.

- A lecture on *Coram Boy* the play and the novel.  
Essay questions will be given out.

- An evening visit to The National Theatre to see *Coram Boy*. PLEASE GET TO THEATRES IN GOOD TIME. LONDON THEATRES DO NOT ALLOW LATECOMERS IN.

- Group discussions about *Coram Boy* with particular reference to the gender issues it highlights. In the second part of the class we shall discuss the relationship of this play to classical melodrama and to the musical. A workshop on writing a review.

- A play reading of a section from *History Boys* and a lecture on Alan Bennett. A workshop on some of the literature referred to in Bennett's play

- An evening visit to Wyndham's Theatre to see *History Boys*.

- Group discussion about *History Boys* and some thoughts on the way women are represented in the play. A workshop on essay writing.

- A lecture on Shakespeare. Work on *Richard III*.
  - All students go to Stratford Upon Avon to see the musical version of Shakespeare's *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (in the afternoon) and *Richard III* in the evening. We shall stay the night and visit places of interest in Stratford in the evening.
  - A discussion about *Richard III* and a lecture on *The Taming of the Shrew*.
  - An evening visit to The Old Vic to see *The Taming of the Shrew* with an all male cast.
  - A talk about street theatre and community theatre.
- Simon Scardifield will visit us at 4.00pm to talk about playing Kate in the *Taming of the Shrew*. Essays must be handed in and the first four entries in your journal must be handed in. (*Coram Boy; History Boys; Merry Wives of Windsor and Richard III*)

#### - MID TERM BREAK

- Group discussions about theatre you have experienced during our holiday. Each student will speak about some theatre experience that is not part of the course. This need not cost any money, some of the best theatrical experiences are free. A journal entry should be made on what you have learned from your fellow students.

A discussion about *The Taming of the Shrew*, a play that always gives rise to a discussion about gender.

- More student presentations. A verse workshop and a lecture on the Old Vic.
- More student presentations. A lecture on John Osborne and *The Entertainer*.
- An evening visit to The Old Vic to see *The Entertainer*.
- A discussion about *The Entertainer*. A lecture on the founding of The National Theatre.
- A backstage tour of the National Theatre. IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO WAIT FOR LATE COMERS SO PLEASE BE PROMPT.
- A discussion about theatre funding and the ethics of using taxpayers' money to fund a theatre. What kind of responsibilities does such a theatre have?
- A lecture on genre. A discussion about the kind of research undertaken by playwrights, directors and actors when working on a play. A talk on different kinds of Community and Amateur Theatre in and around London.
- A visit to The Foundling Museum. The last journal entries must be handed in. (What you have learned from other students; *The Taming of the Shrew; The Entertainer*)
- Revision and exam preparation.
- Exam

#### **TERM 2 EXAMPLE**

The course is designed to give students experience of the wide variety of theatre available in London, which has a tradition of presenting classics both British and foreign alongside new plays, such as *The History Boys* by Alan Bennett, *Kindertransport* by Diane Samuels and *The Reporter* by Nicolas Wright. We shall see two classics of the post war period *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* by Bertolt Brecht and *The Skin Game* by John Galsworthy. Shakespeare's *Othello* will be seen in the reproduction of the Globe theatre on the south bank of the Thames. There will be discussions about all plays and we shall examine how relevant these plays are to life in the twenty first century. We shall take tours of The Globe and at least one other theatre. We shall study community theatre and attend a production presented by Scene and Heard (the London version of the 52<sup>nd</sup> Street Project).

## COURSE OUTLINE

- An introduction to the course. A short talk about Alan Bennett, an introduction to *The History Boys* and an introduction to *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*.
- A Visit to Wyndham's Theatre to see *The History Boys* .PLEASE GET THE THEATRE IN GOOD TIME - LONDON THEATRES DO NOT ALLOW LATECOMERS IN.
- An evening performance of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* at the National Theatre.
- A discussion about *The History Boys* and a discussion about *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* and Bertolt Brecht. Essay questions will be given out.
- A review workshop. A lecture on Brecht.
- An essay writing workshop. A lecture on John Galsworthy.
- FIELD TRIP It is hoped to arrange a backstage tour at a London Theatre for this class.
- An evening visit to The Orange Tree Theatre to see *The Skin Game*.
- A discussion about *The Skin Game*. An introduction to *Kindertransport*.
- More work on *Kindertransport*. A lecture on The National Theatre and The Orange Tree Theatre.
- An evening visit to Hampstead Theatre to see *Kindertransport*.
- A discussion about *Kindertransport*. An introduction to street theatre. Essays must be handed in.
- It is hoped that Sophie Boyack will visit us to talk about Scene and Heard.  
The first four entries in your journal must be handed in. (*The History Boys*; *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*; *The Skin Game*; *Kindertransport*)
- No class (Manchester trip)
- Group discussions about theatre you have experienced during our holiday. Each student will speak about some theatre experience that is not part of the course. This need not cost any money; some of the best theatrical experiences are free. A journal entry should be made on what you have learned from your fellow students. Preparation for seeing *The Reporter*.
- An evening visit to the National Theatre to see *The Reporter* by *Nicolas Wright*.
- Group discussion about *The Reporter*. More student presentations of other theatre.
- Preparation for seeing *Othello*. A verse workshop.
- An evening visit to Shakespeare's Globe to see *Othello*.
- A discussion about *Othello*. A lecture on Tragedy.
- An evening visit to Teatro Technis to see a performance by Scene and Heard.
- FIELD TRIP. This class WILL START AT 10.00 AT THE GLOBE. It is hoped to arrange a workshop followed by a tour of the South Bank and Shakespeare's Globe. We shall meet in the foyer of Shakespeare's Globe. IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO WAIT FOR LATE COMERS SO PLEASE BE PROMPT.
- Discuss the Scene and Heard performance and surrealism. A video about Shakespeare production in Britain in the twentieth century. The last four journal entries must be handed in. (What you have learned from other students; *The Reporter*; *Othello*; The Scene and Heard performance.)
- Revision and exam preparation
- Examination