THEA-4393 & 4493
Instructor: Brandon Smith, Brevard College
smithbm@brevard.edu

British Studies: British Theatre 4393&4493

Class: THEA 4394 & 4493, British Theatre, summer 2011
Instructor: Brandon Smith
Time: TBA
Location: Queen Mary University, London, Arts G-01
Office Hours: TBA
Textbooks:
Backwards and Forwards, by David Ball
978-0809311101
The Cambridge Illustrated History of British Theatre, by Simon Trussler
978-0521419130

Supplies:
One USB jump drive (for turning in critiques)
One spiral-bound notebook and writing instruments
One folder with pockets and brads
Time Out, daily newspapers, and online reviews

Recommended:
Laptop Computer

Contact info: Email: Brandon.Smith@mwsu.edu
Mailbox: Located in the Fine Arts main office.

Course Description

London offers some of the most diverse and captivating theatre in the world! This course will focus on experiencing theatrical productions across a wide variety of styles and genres, then critiquing and analyzing those performances. To do this, students will be asked to move beyond an appreciation of the art form towards an understanding of what makes theatre compelling to an audience.

Students will take on the role of theatrical investigators, examining how varying dramatic elements coalesce into a final production. We will study acting styles, elements of design, the business of theatre, and of course the history of theatre in London. The class will also include lectures, discussions with industry professionals, and visits to museums and theaters of note. Students will develop a working knowledge of Aristotle’s Six Elements of Drama, Freytag’s Pyramid, and rhetorical, thematic, stylistic, and historical analysis of plays.

Course Objectives
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Students will be expected to…

- Understand and apply Aristotle’s Six Elements of Drama to production analysis
- Apply Freytag’s Pyramid as a reference for dramatic structure
- Develop a working knowledge of seminal British theatre history from 400-the present, and apply this knowledge in production critiques
- Become conversant in basic theatrical vocabulary
- Experience a wide range of venues and production styles in the London area
- Write detailed and thoughtful critiques of productions
- Develop an artistic sensibility based in-part on comparative analysis and experience

Course Requirements

- Participation – In this class the bulk of coursework is based on experiential learning. Therefore students must be present and actively participating in class, during discussion, at performances, in workshops, etc. Every student must attend all scheduled events and classes—no exceptions.

- Artist Workshops – British theatre professionals & scholars of distinction will regularly contribute to the course in the form of lectures, question-and-answer sessions, and/or practical theatre workshops.

- Live Performances are the cornerstone for learning in this class. Students will attend several productions as a group. Tickets for these performances will be included in the course tuition. In addition to the performances organized by the instructor, students will be expected to see a minimum of one performance per week at their own expense. Reviews for productions will be written on a weekly basis.

- Research Paper – Each student will be responsible for a research paper. This paper will cover an approved subject relating to a topic, activity, or event associated with the London experience. The paper should be 10-12 pages in length, double-spaced, and include appropriate research and documentation. Students will be asked to present their paper at the culmination of the course.

  OR

- Research Project--This assignment may be done in lieu of the research paper. Students will be assigned 2 notable London Theatre topics to research (actors, actresses, locations, companies, playwrights etc). This research will include traveling to take photographs in the city, conducting interviews, and scholarly research in museums and libraries. All of the research for this project can and should be completed in London. The top student work from this project will be assembled in a Blurb book and may be submitted for publication.
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- **Critiques/Reviews**-- Each week students will demonstrate an acquired knowledge of theatre terminology, history, & critical technique via written critiques. This critique can be over a class-sponsored event, or an event attended outside of class. During the third week of the trip the class will vote on the most compelling non-sponsored review, and students will be encouraged to attend the production as a group. Reviews will be turned in to the instructor on USB drives.

- **Aristotelian/Freytag Analysis**--Students will be given worksheets outlining The Six Elements of Drama and Freytag’s Pyramid to help guide critiques. These worksheets will be turned in the day after we attend a production, and will be used as a baseline for discussion and critique writing.

- **Notebook/Journal**--Students will be expected to take notes during class in a spiral notebook. This notebook will also be used as a journal. Students will be expected to make bi-weekly journal entries chronicling their experience in London as it relates to the course.

- **Review Reports**--Each student will compile a sampling of published reviews (online reviews, national newspapers, etc.) for one of the productions seen by the group. The student will then create a short report highlighting the various critical responses to the production. This “Review Report” will be shared with the class as a starting point for in-class discussions. Review reports will be assigned the first day of the trip, and should be completed well before the due date.

- **Final Exam**-- There will be one comprehensive exam at the end of the course. The exam may include multiple choice, matching, short answer, identification, & essay questions. Essay questions & a study guide will be provided in advance.

**Disclaimers**

- This syllabus constitutes an agreement between the student & the professor. Your continued enrollment in this course indicates your decision to abide by the terms of this syllabus. If changes must be made to any aspect of the syllabus, all students will be notified as soon as possible. Any changes will apply to all students, & such changes will be announced in class.
- Courses in theatre deal with works of dramatic literature on the page & on the stage. Sometimes the situations, actions & language of these works can be challenging & explicit.

**Evaluation**

There will be a total of 100 points possible in this course.
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Productions Critiques (10 points each)………………………………..40 points
Aristotle/Freytag Analysis…………………………………………….20 points
Notebook/Journal…………………………………………………..…...5 points
Review Report……………………………………………………......…5 points
Final Exam………………………………………………………………15 points
Research Paper/Project…………………………………………………15 points

Grading Policy

A = 90 – 100
B = 80 -89
C = 70 –79
D = 65-69
F = 64 or less

The final research paper will be due to the instructor by 5pm (Central) on September 15th. If students do not receive a confirmation of receipt email from the instructor within 6 hours they should assume that their paper did not go through and attempt to resubmit the assignment. Technical difficulties will not be an excuse for late assignments so do not wait until the last minute.

Additional Policies

- Absences: Due to the nature of the coursework absences are strictly prohibited for any reason. Each absence will result in a deduction equal to one letter grade for the semester. No one gets sick.
- Late work: Assignments are due in class (no email submissions). Any assignment that is turned in after class will receive a 10% deduction for each weekday it is late. Assignments submitted more than one week late will not be accepted. If you know you will be absent (which should never happen anyway), you are responsible for completing/submitting assignments by their due date.
- Grading Challenges: Concerns must be submitted in writing no later than one week after the assignment has been returned. Concerns must be clearly stated, with justifications as to the source of the concern.
- Plagiarism is the use of someone else’s thoughts, words, ideas, or lines of argument in your own work without appropriate documentation (a parenthetical citation at the end and a listing in "Works Cited")—whether you use that material in a quote, paraphrase, or summary. It is a theft of intellectual property and will not be tolerated, whether intentional or not.

Strategies for Success
What will your instructor do to help you achieve an optimal outcome in THEA 4393/4493?

- Start & end classes on time
- Offer substantial & well organized material in all class sessions
- Ensure that opportunities to participate are enjoyed equally by all students
- Treat all students with courtesy & respect

What does a student need to do to achieve the optimal outcome in THEA 4393/4493?

- Attend class on time, well prepared, and with an open, inquisitive mind
- Take notes attentively & keep distractions to a minimum
- Take time and thought with your production critiques
- Respond productively in discussions
- Treat yourself, your classmates, our guests, your instructor, the artists you’ll see, and your host country with respect
- Use courteous, respectful language & behavior in all interactions