

Drama 101
Introduction to Drama, Theatre, and Performance Studies

DRM101Y, 2023-2024

Ramsay Wright Lab 117 (Fall) and Sid Smith 2134 (Winter)

Lectures: Tuesdays, 9:10-11

Tutorials: Tuesdays, 11:10-12 or 12:10-1



Zainab Jah in *Venus*, by Suzan-Lori Parks, dir. Lear deBessonet, 2016

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Office Drop-in Hours: Tuesdays 1-4p

Introduction

This year-long course will introduce students to the performing arts today: their aesthetic forms, their practical challenges, and their philosophical implications. It intends to demonstrate that live art provides indispensable tools for understanding modern human society. Indeed, the contemporary currency of phrases such as “gender roles,” “performative,” “blackface/yellowface/redface,” and “the politics of spectacle” already indicate how pervasive theatrical thinking has become. Yet despite their use as metaphors, and their near-universal extension across human civilizations, arts such as theatre, dance, and opera face increasingly difficult economic conditions as they vie for attention amidst the distractions of commercial media. Performance thus seems both definitively “modern” and definitively “pre-modern.” Artists, theorists, and scholars all over the world have committed themselves to trying to understand this contradiction. Together, we will explore some of their ideas and get a sense of how performance fits into our world.

Each week, students will read a text – usually a play, but sometimes manifestos, theoretical treatises, or academic essays – opening up a new way of making and thinking about performance. These texts will be available on Quercus, and some of them will be available at the bookstore. At least once a month, students will also go to the theatre to see a play or dance. Students will further be introduced to work in the academic humanities in general, acquiring skills such as library use, research organization, essayistic writing, reading scholarly texts, and participating in intellectual conversation. When attending a show in Toronto, or watching one of our two screened videos, students will be strongly encouraged to watch together as a community.

Following the title of the class, and its academic home, we will discuss drama, theatre, and ‘performance’ – in that order. Beginning with the realist, modern drama students may have encountered before, we will progress through newer experiments with script-based theatre before arriving at theatre made without scripts, and performance that refuses language and ‘theatre’ altogether. In the Winter term, we will discuss the *performers* – stage actors, celebrities, ritual dancers, and everyday people performing their identities. In our final weeks, we will learn how major political issues of our time such as race, gender, religion, and technology are profoundly *theatrical* -- and what, then, performing artists can teach us about them.

Learning Outcomes

- Students will gain an introductory knowledge of the central concepts, debates, figures, and texts that define the contemporary study and production of the performing arts.
- Students will learn to apply ideas from theatre and performance, such as insight into the performative nature of identity, or the embodied character of social life, as a method of more clearly understanding the world around them.
- Confronted with a broad range of genres and traditions of the performing arts, students will develop an organized understanding of what does and does not unite this diverse cultural field.
- Attending theatre and writing about it regularly, students will build up their critical faculties and practice applying our theoretical lessons to real Toronto performances.
- Students will encounter a general gateway into humanistic methods and forms of knowledge, including composition, library research, and discussion.

Teaching Team

Dr. Eacho (EE-ko) | Professor | douglas.eacho@utoronto.ca

Email policy: I will not email after 5pm or on weekends. Otherwise I will aim to reply within 48 hours to a student email if appropriate, or will forward it to the relevant party. Generally you should not email me first, as you will get a faster and more informed response from your TA or from Jessica. At times your TA may opt to include me in a thread if I can be helpful.

To discuss course content, come to my office hours!

Jessica Thorp | Course Administrator | PhD Candidate, CDTPS | jessica.thorp@mail.utoronto.ca

Email Jessica with any and all issues registering for the class, picking or switching tutorial sections, logging into our Quercus page, figuring out the theatre attendance side of the class, and submitting work.

Yasmine Agocs | Teaching Assistant | PhD Student, CDTPS | yasmine.agocs@mail.utoronto.ca

Tzu-Yu Hung | Teaching Assistant | PhD Student, CDTPS | ty.hung@mail.utoronto.ca

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Office Drop-In Hours

I hold office hours on Tuesdays from 1-4p. This means I'm just sitting around my office with my door open reading a book and hoping someone from this class interrupts me to talk. Office hours chats can explore issues we've introduced in class in greater depth, or inquire about other aspects of the discipline we cannot cover this year, or ask about your academic or professional trajectory, or whatever else may be on your mind.

The typical pattern for all professors is that a lot of students show up at the beginning of a class, and then by the end of the year a small handful of students come every week but the rest feel they've missed their chance to establish that relationship. This is silly! If I have no idea who you are you are still very welcome to drop by at any point throughout the year. If multiple people show up at once, I will prioritize time with those I have not spoken to before.

Office: University College, A307. Head up the staircase tower right behind the UC bookshop! No appointments necessary.

Going to the Theatre

DRM 101 requires students to go out into Toronto and see live performance. Writing about the performances you see will form the bulk of your assessed work in the class. While we recognize that attending theatre requires some planning and commitment, this is a course about the performing arts, and we want you to go see them.

You will need to choose five shows – three in the fall, two in the winter – to attend, from a list of twenty (twelve in fall, eight in winter) that we are curating for you. I intend for this list to offer as diverse array of forms, artists, and genres that Toronto allows, while trying my best to guess what will be good. As not all theatres have announced their full programming yet, the winter list remains incomplete. We will share it by December.

Students will book and pay for their tickets themselves. As is detailed below (in ‘Theatres’), nearly all Toronto theatres offer steep discounts for those under 30 years old, such that most tickets will cost \$15-\$30. This brings the total cost of seeing five shows to the rough equivalent of buying textbooks for other courses. If you are a mature student and are concerned about the cost of paying full price for tickets, please let Jessica Thorp know: we may be able to secure a special discount for you from the theatres to bring you to parity with your classmates.

Every Saturday night, we will host a special outing to one of the shows on the list – Professor Eacho (and maybe a TA) will attend that night, and will help introduce students to each other. This will provide a great way to get to know your classmates, learn more about the show from your teaching team, and not feel awkward going to see theatre by yourself. While not required, we highly recommend choosing your shows from the Saturday night sessions (listed below in the course calendar).

Students are encouraged to go to more than the five required shows. Since you are required to *write* about five, this would also give you options to choose from when you sit down to write.

If tickets present a financial hardship, or if you have a documented disability that prevents you from attending these shows, inform your TA. We will do everything we can to support you attending shows. If your circumstances prevent in-person attendance, we can set up an alternate curriculum consisting of archival video of performances for you.

Books

All texts will be available online, either as PDFs on Quercus or as ebooks accessed via the U of T library website.. All videos will be available online, with the exception of one performance (*Inferno*) we will screen.

Students are strongly recommended to purchase a physical copy of Diana Taylor's *Performance*. This is the closest this class has to a textbook – we will read most of it. It is also a beautifully published book with many colour images and careful layout. But, if you prefer, you can read this book through the ebook platform accessible via the library.

The two 'optional' books are canonical and important texts for Western theatre-making and theatre theory. Each will be covered in just one week of class. We will share the excerpts of them needed as PDFs on Quercus. However, for those of you intending to pursue theatre and performance past this class, you will find yourself going back to these often.

All three should be available at the bookstore soon.

Recommended

Diana Taylor, *Performance*. Duke University Press, 2020

Optional

Antonin Artaud, *The Theatre and its Double*. Trans. MC Richards. Grove Press, 1958
Bertolt Brecht. *Brecht on Theatre*. Trans. and ed. John Willett.

Content Warning

This class will require students to read and think about difficult and upsetting material. Plays will fictionally depict sexual and racial violence in an intense and vivid manner. Performance artists have undergone extreme physical duress, as will be frankly discussed. Images of nude performers will be shared in lecture and in your assigned textbook. I will introduce and share images from several performance practices, such as drag and ta'zieh, which are currently subject to religiously motivated state oppression around the world.

Confronting these themes and topics remains essential for understanding our present. All students are required to do all work. However, not all of this material will impact students equally. If you know that you may not want to speak up in tutorial because of your personal difficulty with such material, please communicate this ahead of time to your TA, who may be able to accommodate you in confidence. If something emerges within tutorial that impacts your participation, please communicate this afterwards to your TA over email.

Course Calendar

September 12 Course Introduction

September 15: *The Master Plan*, at Crow's Theatre, 7:30

Unit 1: Drama

September 19 Modern Drama 1

Read:

Henrik Ibsen, *The Wild Duck*. Trans. Deborah Dawkin and Erik Skuggevik. From *Hedda Gabler and Other Plays*, ed. Tore Rem, Penguin: 2019.

September 22: *asses.masses*, by Patrick Blenkarn & Milton Kim, at Theatre Centre, 6:00

September 26 Modern Drama 2

Read:

Cao Yu, *Thunderstorm*. Trans. Wang Tso-liang and A.C. Barnes, rev. by Charles Qianzhi Wu. From *The Columbia Anthology of Modern Chinese Drama*, ed. Xiaomei Chen, Columbia: 2014.

September 29: *work.txt*, by Nathan Ellis, at Theatre Centre, 8:00

October 3 Epic Drama

Read:

Bertolt Brecht, "Theatre for Pleasure or Theatre for Instruction," "The Street Scene," "Short Description of a New Technique of Acting that Produces a *Verfremdung* Effect," *Brecht on Theatre*, Third Edition, ed. Marc Silberman, Steve Giles, and Tom Kuhn, Bloomsbury: 2015.
Bertolt Brecht, *The Good Person of Szechwan*. Trans. John Willett and Ralph Manheim. From *Brecht Collected Plays: 6*, ed. David Constantine, John Willett, Ralph Manheim, and Tom Kuhn. Bloomsbury: 1994.

October 6: *Topdog/Underdog*, by Suzan-Lori Parks, at Canadian Stage (Berkeley St), 8:00

October 10 Drama in the Street

Read:

Badal Sircar, "The Third Theatre," "Buying and Selling in the Theatre," from *A Poetics of Modernity*, ed. Aparna Dharwadker. Oxford University Press: 2019.
Badal Sircar, *Procession*. From *Three Plays*, Seagull Books: 1985.

October 13: *Heroes of the Fourth Turning*, by Will Arbery, at Crow's Theatre, 8:00

October 17

Drama in Canada

Read:

Marie Clements, *Burning Vision*. Talonbooks: 2003.

October 20: *Fidelio*, by Ludwig von Beethoven, at the Four Seasons Performing Arts Centre, produced by the Canadian Opera Company, 8:00

October 24

Postmodern Drama

Read:

Reza Abdoh, *The Hip-Hop Waltz of Eurydice*. From *Theater of the Avant-garde: A Critical Anthology, 1950-2000*, ed. Robert Knopf and Julia Listengarten. Yale: 2011.

October 27: *(Everyone I Love Has) A Terrible Fate (Befall Them)*, by Cliff Cardinal, at VideoCabaret, produced by Crow's Theatre, 8:00

October 31

Nonfiction Drama

Read:

Joe Robertson & Joe Murphy, *The Jungle*. Faber and Faber: 2018.

TURN IN: Review #1 (optional: + review #2)

November 3: *A Poem for Rabia*, by Nikki Shafeeullah, at Tarragon Theatre, 8:00

Reading Week

Unit 2: Theatre Beyond Drama

November 14

Against Drama

Read:

Antonin Artaud, *The Theatre and its Double*. trans. MC Richards. Grove Press: 1958.

Specifically: "On the Balinese Theatre," "No More Masterpieces," "The Theatre of Cruelty (First Manifesto)," "Letters on Language," "The Theatre of Cruelty (Second Manifesto)," "An Affective Athleticism."

November 17: *Bad Roads*, by Natal'ya Vorozhbit, trans. Sasha Dugdale, at Crow's, 8:00

November 21**Postdramatic Theatre**

Watch:

Societas Raffaello Sanzio (dir. Romeo Castellucci), *Inferno*.

Screening 1: Weds, Nov. 15th, 3-5

Screening 2: Thurs, Nov. 16th, 1-3

Screening 3: Thurs, Nov. 16th, 3-5

Robarts 3-025

OR, DVD available at Media Commons reserve desk in Robarts.

November 24: *The Lehman Trilogy*, by Stefano Massini, at Canadian Stage (Bluma Appel), 8:00

November 28**Guest Lecture: Dr. Samer Al-Saber**

No reading.

December 5**Performance Art**

Read:

Diana Taylor, *Performance*, Chapters 1 & 2: "Framing [Performance]," "Performance Histories" (p.1-72).

December 8: *Natasha, Pierre, and the Great Comet of 1812*, by Dave Malloy, at Crow's Theatre, 7:30

December 12

TURN IN: Review #2 & Review #3

Winter Break

Unit 3: Actors and Performers

January 9

What is Acting?

No work.

January 16

Masks, Costumes, Puppets

Read:

John Emigh, "Playing with the Past: Visitation and Illusion in the Mask Theatre of Bali"

I Nyoman Kakul, *Jelantik Goes to Blambangan*, trans. I Made Bandem & John Emigh
from Emigh, *Masked Performance: The Play of Self and Other in Ritual and Theatre*, Penn State
University Press, 1996: 105-170.

PICK TOPIC: Library Research Assignment

Sunday, Jan 21 – *Natasha, Pierre, and the Great Comet of 1812* at Crow's, 7:30p.

January 23

Intercultural Performers (+ Visit from Margaret Fulford)

Watch:

Coco Fusco and Guillermo Gomez-Peña, "The Couple in the Cage: A Guatinate Odyssey," on
YouTube.

Read:

Coco Fusco, "The Other History of Intercultural Performance," *English is Broken Here:
Notes on Cultural Fusion in the Americas*, New Press: 1995.

Saturday, Jan 27 – *The Shadow Whose Prey the Hunter Becomes* at CanStage, 8:00

January 30

Dance

Watch:

Yvonne Rainer, "Trio A (The Mind is a Muscle, Part 1)," on YouTube.

Read:

Sally Banes, "Yvonne Rainer: The Aesthetics of Denial" from *Terpsichore in Sneakers: Post-
Modern Dance*. Wesleyan: 1984.

Saturday, February 3: *The Cunning Little Vixen* at Canadian Opera Company, 7:30

February 6**Backstage Performers**

Read:

Christin Essin, "Unseen Labor and Backstage Choreographies: A Materialist Production History of *A Chorus Line*." *Theatre Journal* 67.2 (2015).

TURN IN: Library Research Assignment

Saturday, February 10: *Deciphers* at Danceworks, Harbourfront, 7:30

February 13**Digital Performers w/ David Rokeby**

Read:

Heinrich von Kleist, "On the Marionette Theatre." Trans. Thomas Neumiller. *TDR* 16.3 (1972) [1810].

TURN IN: Revisions of Reviews #1, #2, #3

Reading Week

Unit 4: Is Everything Performance?

Sunday, February 25: *Universal Child Care* at Canadian Stage, 2:00

February 27**Performing Gender**

Read:

Tennessee Williams, *A Streetcar Named Desire*. New Directions: 1947.
Diana Taylor, *Performance*, Chapter 5: "Performative and Performativity"

Saturday, March 2: *Three Sisters* by Inua Ellams at SoulPepper, 7:30

March 5**Performing Race**

Read:

Suzan-Lori Parks, *Venus*. TCG: 2012.

Saturday, March 9: mainstage Drama Centre show (title TBA)

Note: seeing this show (Mar 7-10) is required for all students. There will also be an invited dress rehearsal for our class to attend – details forthcoming. This show does not count for the performance journals.

March 12

Conversation with Andrew Kushnir

March 19

Performing Religion

Read:

Sarah Ruhl, *Passion Play*. Samuel French: 2010.

Saturday, March 16: *Dana H.* at Crow's, 7:30

March 26

Performing for Profit

Read:

Maurya Wickstrom, "Commodities, Mimesis, and *The Lion King*: Retail Theatre for the 1990s." *Theatre Journal* 51.3: 1999

Donatella Gallela, "Being in 'The Room Where it Happens': *Hamilton*, Obama, and Nationalist Neoliberal Multicultural Inclusion." *Theatre Survey* 59.3: 2018

April 2

"Don't Be So Performative," or, Performing On the Internet

Read:

Diana Taylor, *Performance*, Chapters 6 & 7: "Knowing through Performance: Scenarios and Simulation" and "Artivists (Artist-Activists), or, What's to Be Done?"

TURN IN: Review #4, #5

Date TBA: Final Exam

Assignments

Performance Journal – 50%

You will write five *critical reviews* considering and responding to the five live performances you attend. These must be approved performances from our ‘live performance syllabus’ list.

Each review should be 500-750 words long (2-3 pages double spaced.) A ‘critical review’ means that in addition to performing the usual function of a review – letting your reader know whether or not you encourage them go out and see the work – you also consider broader intellectual and aesthetic questions raised by the piece. When evaluating the performance, consider not just narrative, but also formal aspects such as the choices made by actors, by directors (staging, pacing), designers (does the set serve the performance’s goals? Lighting, costumes, media?), and playwrights (why tell this story *in this way*)? Are their works of drama, art, literature, cinema that might offer some comparison for this piece? And, regardless of whether or not the show is wholly successful, try to engage with its ideas. What argument does the performance put forwards? How does it imagine a future for live performance?

While not always appropriate, it can be interesting to consider institutional and economic questions around live theatre and dance. Who was the audience for this piece – the intended audience, and the actual audience? Did its artists feel at home within this institution, or were they trying to change it? Were there issues raised by how the work was presented or advertised? Especially if the piece was not very good, can you guess at some of the material incentives that informed its choices?

Each review is worth 10 points. Students may revise their first three reviews for full credit in the Winter term if they receive under a 9 or 10. The fourth and fifth reviews may not be revised.

First review: due October 31*

*If you hand in two reviews by this date, both will be evaluated.

Second and Third review): due December 12

Revisions (optional): due February 13

Fourth and Fifth reviews: due April 2

Library Research Project – 15%

A ‘scavenger hunt’ in which students will pick a performing-arts topic from a list we provide, and answer a set of historical questions about that topic by consulting books in U of T’s library system. Further details will be provided on Quercus.

Final Exam – 35%

We will provide eight essay questions reflecting on themes raised in the year's lectures. You will choose three to write responses to (about 500 words each). Most questions will direct students to a specific text, or small set of texts, from the syllabus. The best way to prepare for this exam is to have read/watched all the material from the syllabus, and to have solid notes from lecture. The exam is open-book.

Live Performance Syllabus

Fall shows – pick at least three.

The Master Plan, by Michael Healey, dir. Chris Abraham
at [Crow's Theatre](#)

Sept 5 - Oct 1

A new docu-satire about that time Google said it would build a neighborhood of Toronto and then did not. For those interested in urbanism, architecture, politics.

asses.masses, by Patrick Blenkarn and Milton Lim
at [Theatre Centre](#)

Sep 22-24

A devised, live-performed video game that the audience plays collectively about a group of donkeys who work towards a communist revolution. 7 hours long (with breaks). For those interested in experimental theatre, digital performance, games, Marxism.

Note: Patrick, Milton, and dramaturg Laurel Green will be giving a talk about their work on September 20th at U of T's BMO Lab, in conversation with me.

work.text, by Nathan Ellis
at [Theatre Centre](#)

Sep 27-29

An installation/game in which the audience builds blocks together and meditates about labour. Curated alongside *asses*, but by a different artist. For those interested in play, the everyday, hating their job.

Topdog/Underdog, by Suzan-Lori Parks, dir. Tawiah M'Carthy
at [Canadian Stage](#) (Berkeley)

Sep 22-Oct 8

Perhaps the most widely performed play by Suzan-Lori Parks, who in your professor's opinion is the best English-language playwright alive. A violent and surreal exploration of racial performance and America's ghosts. We will read Parks's *Venus* in Unit Four of class. For those interested in Black theatre, and anyone interested in theatre at all.

Heroes of the Fourth Turning, by Will Arbery, dir. Philip Akin
at [Crow's Theatre](#)

Oct 3-Oct 22

A recent and much celebrated American play about a group of right-wingers and hard-right-wingers debating politics in the age of Trump. I have not read this yet and am looking forward to finally seeing what the fuss is about. For those interested in religion, politics, plays where a group of people have an argument in one space over one evening.

Fidelio, by Ludwig von Beethoven,
at [Canadian Opera Company](#)

Sep 29-Oct 20

Beethoven's only opera follows a woman descending into a horrifying prison to rescue her husband, held prisoner for his democratic beliefs. A classic expression of liberal values with shattering music. This production promises to connect to contemporary debates about incarceration. For those interested in classical music, in prisons, and/or in dressing up in fancy clothes to go see world-class opera.

(Everyone I Love Has) A Terrible Fate (Befall Them), by Cliff Cardinal, dir. Karin Randoja
at VideoCabaret, produced by [Crow's Theatre](#)

Oct 10-Oct 29

A fictional solo show about the apocalypse by the charismatic, comic, and heartfelt Cliff Cardinal – one of the city's most beloved and admired young artists. For those interested in the end of the world?

A Poem for Rabia, by Nikki Shafeeullah, dir. Clare Pruess and Donna-Michelle St. Bernard
at [Tarragon Theatre](#)

Oct 17 - Nov 12

A new play about three queer women fighting oppression in 2053 Canada, in 1953 British Guiana, and in 1853 Calcutta. For those interested in social justice, postcolonial literature, and the history of empire.

Bad Roads, by Natal'ya Vorozhbit, dir. Andrew Kushnir
at [Crow's Theatre](#)

Nov 7 - Nov 26

A documentary play by Ukrainian playwright Natal'ya Vorozhbit about life and gender in the Donbas, host to the beginnings of the Ukraine-Russia war since 2014. Directed by Andrew Kushnir, who will direct a play for U of T this winter, and will come visit the class. For those interested in theatre's ability to explore all aspects of contemporary history.

The Lehman Trilogy, by Stefano Massini, dir. Philip Akin
at [Canadian Stage](#) (Bluma Appel)

Nov 14 - Nov 26

Three actors tell the story of the family that founded and controlled the Lehman Brothers bank from its 19th-century origins to its 2008 collapse, where it formed a centre of the financial crisis and ensuing Great Recession. Surprisingly epic and dramatic for a play about a bank. For those interested in history, economics, and HBO-style men in suits yelling at each other.

Prophecy Fog, by Jani Lauzon, dir. Franco Boni
at [Coal Mine Theatre](#)

Nov 12 – Dec 10

A multimedia solo-show “ceremony” by Métis artist Jani Lauzon about sanctity and desacralization. Note: this is for a deliberately small audience, and discounted student tickets are limited. For those interested in indigenous performance, auto-ethnography, spiritual ritual, and experimental theatre.

Natasha, Pierre, and the Great Comet of 1812, by Dave Malloy, dir. Chris Abraham,
at [Crow's Theatre](#)

Dec 5 – Jan 28

A musical. And you thought I wouldn't put a musical on this list! *Natasha...* adapts Tolstoy's *War and Peace* in a somewhat 'immersive' staging. A notable example of a successful Broadway commercial project helmed by otherwise experimental NYC performance-makers. A big romantic celebration to take your mind off exam season. For those interested in musicals or 19th-century Russian literature.

Winter Shows: Choose two.

Natasha, Pierre...

Dec 5 – Jan 28

This show's first week of performances were canceled due to illness, so Crow's extended the run through January. Those with rebooked tickets can attend this as their #3 show, or anyone can see this as their #4. This show will sell out.

The Shadow Whose Prey the Hunter Becomes, by Back to Back Theatre
at [Canadian Stage](#)

Jan 18-28

Excellent essayistic piece about intelligence, AI, and cognitive disability by the celebrated Australian company Back to Back. Small in scale, but effective and clear. I have seen this before and firmly recommend it.

The Cunning Little Vixen, by Leoš Janáček, dir. Jamie Manton
at [Canadian Opera Company](#)

Jan 26-Feb 16

A very different sort of opera than *Fidelio*: a modernist fable about woodland creatures, here in a celebrated UK production that makes connections to the climate emergency. This is the rare work which is just as often performed as a comedic children's show as it is embraced as a bleak tragedy by experimental directors.

Deciphers, by Naishi Wang and Jean Abreu
at [Habourfront, via DanceWorks](#)

Feb 8-10

Fusion of Mandarin and Brazilian-Portuguese spoken word and dance styles in a new duet about the problem of translation. Regrettably the only work of dance on the syllabus (the ballet's schedule did not match ours, I'm sorry!), but this piece appears to be worth its special status.

Universal Child Care, by Quote Unquote Collective
at [Canadian Stage](#)

Feb 13-25

New devised theatre work about child care and gendered inequality by the Ottawa feminist performance group QUC. Also "part concert"? I will be attending the Sunday matinee on the 25th, along with my 1-year-old son, as this performance invites young children to attend.

Three Sisters by Inua Ellams, dir. Mumbi Tindyebwa Otu
at [Soulpepper Theatre](#)

Feb 29-Mar 24

Nigerian-British playwright Inua Ellams loosely adapts Anton Chekov's Russian classic into the Nigerian Civil War of 1967-70. An all-too-rare chance to see an African story on a Toronto stage, here in a play that was *very* well received in its London premiere.

Dana H. by Lucas Hnath
at [Crow's Theatre](#)

Mar 12-Apr 7

An experimental yet Broadway-successful solo play in which the playwright's mother recounts her experience being abducted and held captive for five months. We watch an actor playing Hnath's mother, but listen to an audio recording of Hnath's actual mother, which the actor lip-synchs to. We are left with basic questions as to the nature of acting, memory, and trauma. One of my most anticipated pieces of the whole year.

Theatres

Crow's Theatre

What? Prolific theatre focused on new drama.

Where? Located in Leslieville just a few blocks off the 506 College-Gerrard streetcar.

How? Book tickets with a coupon code: DRM101 for a \$20 ticket.

Theatre Centre

What? A 'presenting' theatre, which curates work made by local and visiting artists.

Where? On an active stretch of Queen Street West.

How? Their 'Pick Your Price' program allows \$15 tickets.

Canadian Stage

What? Toronto's largest theatre stages a wide range of drama and dance.

Where? Two venues: Berkeley, and Bluma Appel, both at the east edge of downtown near the St Lawrence Market, kind of in the middle of nowhere to be honest.

How? Tickets are \$20 if you are under 30 via the 'C-Stage' program.

Coal Mine Theatre

What? A small new theatre that does whatever it pleases, really.

Where? Down the Danforth – take the subway, Line 2, to Woodbine.

How? Tickets are \$25 for those under 25, or \$35 by rush or for a preview.

Tarragon

What? Longstanding theatre devoted to new Canadian drama.

Where? North of the Annex. Take Line 1 to Dupont.

How? Student tickets from \$15.

Canadian Opera Company

What? World-class Western opera company.

Where? The Four Seasons Performing Arts Centre – walking, or Subway Line 1.

How? \$22 tickets for under 30s. Easily the best bargain in Toronto.

Soulpepper

What? Legacy Toronto theatre company.

Where? The Distillery district! Take Line 1 to King and transfer to the 504A.

How? Soulpepper is free for under 25s if you attend a preview or get rush tickets. The rush tickets are given away from 8:00am every morning; contact the theatre for details.

Harbourfront Centre Fleck Dance Theatre

What? Dance venue next to the (excellent) Power Plant art museum.

Where? Queens Quay – near the CN Tower, Union Station, and the Islands ferries.

How? Tickets are \$29 for under-30s.

Marking Scheme

As is regular practice at U of T, we consider the marks of “A-” and “A” (80-89) as the benchmark of excellence we hope a successful student in Drama 101 will reach. A mark of A+ (90-100) is highly unusual, and represents truly exceptional performance.

Please note that those planning to pursue a Drama major and/or enter our acting classes must achieve a grade of 70 (a B-) or higher in this course. For this reason, I will personally review the work of any student falling below this mark to confirm that they have been assessed fairly.

While failing Drama 101 likely means a student has not turned in all their work, or missed many deadlines without extensions, or has not read instructions, this still happens to a handful of students every year. It is an introductory class, but this also is a rigorous university. We will not hesitate to fail students who do not do their work.

Tutorials

Your tutorials provide a space for intensive conversation around the reading done for class, and the concepts covered in lecture. They are taught by the Centre’s first-year PhD students – highly impressive individuals who have already pursued significant careers in the arts and intellectual life, and are now entering training to become professors or related professions. In addition to being brilliant, they share the virtue of not being me (your professor), and may be able to explain my ideas if I’ve done a poor job of that, or confess that they made no sense and should just be forgotten. They are also enrolled in a full slate of doctoral courses with their own deadlines and responsibilities, so do keep in mind that they are balancing many claims on their time.

When you read, and when you take notes in lecture, try to think of questions that bubble up which may prompt interesting discussion from your classmates. Consider connections between the themes of that week’s play, or my lecture, and everyday life, politics, or pop culture. Write them down and see if there is time in tutorial for you to share them. Those connections may help your classmates further understand the course material.

I will reserve time at the end of every lecture for questions for me, and hold office hours weekly. But learning is often best furthered with peers, in group conversation. Tutorials are where you really will cement and deploy the concepts you encounter in texts and my lectures. Treasure them.

Attendance

Students are expected to attend all lectures and tutorials. Consistently absent students will compromise their ability to succeed. This is a university lecture class – we do not take roll call, and we do not have a participation grade. If your TA notices that no one by your name has ever introduced themselves at tutorial or at lecture, then we may judge that you have not fulfilled the basic expectations of the course and ask you to withdraw. Otherwise, we will focus on our work as teachers, and will assume you can manage your own time.

Course Policies

Attendance

Students must attend all lectures and tutorials. Your attendance will be tracked, and will make up a part of your participation grade.

Late Work

All assignments, *except for the final exam*, can be handed in late if and only if an extension has been granted by your TA. This extension must be requested 48 hours before the due date, or, must be accompanied by recognized documentation (ACORN declarations, VOI illness forms, Registrar's letters, or Accommodation letters.) If you do ask ahead of time, though, your TA is likely to agree to an extension.

The exam must be handed in on time. If you have a serious conflict with the exam timeslot, we will arrange to give you the exam early.

Professor's Note: The written assignments for this class are neither long nor onerous, and have been spaced out in order to allow your work for the class to continue at a regular and steady pace. If you keep up, you should do fine.

Revisions

As explained under 'Assignments,' we will accept the revision of the early performance reviews, unless they receive a mark of 9 or 10. We will not accept revisions of the research assignment or the final exam.

Auditing

Auditors are welcome to lectures so long as we physically have room in the class. They cannot, however, participate in tutorials.

Recording

I do not grant permission to record my lectures, unless you have a specific accomodation from Accessibility Services. As the lectures are my intellectual property, recording them violates Canadian law.

Academic Integrity

As with all classes at U of T, we are governed by norms and procedures of academic integrity. You are expected to do your own work as instructed by this syllabus and not improperly collaborate or plagiarize.

All suspected cases of academic dishonesty will be investigated following procedures outlined in the [Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters](#). If you have questions or concerns about what constitutes appropriate academic behaviour or appropriate research and citation methods, please reach out to me. Note that you are expected to seek out additional information on academic integrity from me or from other institutional resources (for example, the [University of Toronto website on Academic Integrity](#)).

Plagiarism

Plagiarism will be not be tolerated, and can serve as grounds for failing the course.

We will use U of T's automated plagiarism detection tool for flagging potential violations. This will apply as a default to all Quercus submissions of writing. Normally, students will be required to submit their course essays to the University's plagiarism detection tool for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the tool's reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of this tool are described on the Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation website (<https://uoft.me/pdt-faq>). If you wish to opt out of this system, inform your TA.

Professor Note: I know this sounds like we are cops. Honestly, plagiarism happens very rarely in this course, and the assignments are designed such that it would be pretty hard to do. But this system is fairly reliable, makes our TA's jobs easier, and helps discourage you from making a bad choice on some stressed-out impulse.

So-Called AI

Use of generative large language models (LLMs) like ChatGPT will not be tolerated, and can serve as grounds for failing the course. We do not trust the automated tools available for 'detecting' LLM use, as they do not work, but may approach you if we suspect you are using them.

Professor Note: My primary research area concerns the use of digital automation technologies, like LLMs, in theatrical performance. I have been following what they

can do, how they work, and what the larger economic forces lie behind them for years. I am well aware I have colleagues who believe that AI is “the future” (as if we academics play no role in establishing such a norm) or can serve as a “copilot” aiding you in your work. They are wrong.

LLMs will not help you learn. If they offer you a draft essay that you then revise or reprompt so it doesn't sound so AI-ish, or serve as an interlocutor for your thoughts, what they are doing is pulling your original ideas and questions towards a probabilistic average of writing on the internet. Rather than push you to a better essay, they start you off with vacuous text to which you somehow have to add the appearance of ‘you’ and the context of ‘this class.’ None of this is intended to help you do what we teach when we teach writing – to make your own propositions, to test them against the truth, to ask questions and answer them with authority, and to use the basic mechanics of language as a way to propel your thought forwards, as has been the basis for human intellectual accomplishment for millenia.

LLMs cut past all of that procedure, as they are not designed to improve your cognitive capabilities. On the contrary, they are designed to *deskill you* as a writer and thinker. Their makers hope that all of the work poured into language production by so many kinds of professionals could soon be done by untrained, precarious, low-wage workers. They would *especially* like if they and other capitalists did not have to pay the salaries expected by graduates of universities in return for the specialized skill of knowing how to write and think, and could instead pay a desperately oppressed person on the other side of the world to check LLM text for egregious errors in return for pennies. Most of all, they would love it if everyone lost the skill of writing and thinking and all needed to pay LLM subscription fees forever, all while commanding lower wages for labour that in this future anyone paying that fee could numbingly perform.

I trust it is apparent that this world threatens your own prospects as a worker, as a reader, and as a human who cares about the achievements of culture. Do not help bring it into being. Do not use so-called AI.

(Also, if a bunch of you use LLMs during the final exam, we will force next year's students to take the exam as a hand-written test. Nobody wants that to happen.)

Further reading: <https://www.publicbooks.org/now-the-humanities-can-disrupt-ai/>

Accomodations

We strongly support the ability of any student at the University of Toronto to enrol and flourish in this class. This course is untraditional in several ways, particularly concerning the need to go see live performance, that we recognize may take some effort to make fully accessible. If you have a consideration that may require accommodations, please contact Accessibility Services, and we will work with you and AS to find a way to support you.

URL: <https://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/as>

Phone: 416-978-8060

Email: accessibility.services@utoronto.ca

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

The University of Toronto is committed to equity, human rights and respect for diversity. All members of the learning environment in this course should strive to create an atmosphere of mutual respect where all members of our community can express themselves, engage with each other, and respect one another's differences. U of T does not condone discrimination or harassment against any persons or communities.

Professor Note: This class is founded on the premise that performance is an extraordinarily diverse and globally constituted form, and that it can serve as a particularly vital lever with which to force tough conversations about race, gender, religion, and identity. Respecting each other, respecting art forms made by people very different from you, and respecting the challenge of navigating these conversations all form fundamental parts of this class. We trust you will all take this spirit as seriously as students here always do.