

## Theatre and Politics

**Course code:** LIT282

**Semester and year:** Fall 2020

**Day and time:** Tuesday 11:30-14:15

**Instructor:** Prof. Ondřej Pilný, PhD

**Instructor contact:** [ondrej.pilny@aauni.edu](mailto:ondrej.pilny@aauni.edu)

**Consultation hours:** Tuesday 14:15-14:45 and by appointment.

<b>Credits US/ECTS</b>	3/6	<b>Level</b>	Intermediate
<b>Length</b>	15 weeks	<b>Pre-requisite</b>	TOEFL iBT 71
<b>Contact hours</b>	42 hours	<b>Course type</b>	Bachelor Required/Elective

### 1. Course Description

The course examines the depiction of political issues such as colonialism, totalitarianism, controversies concerning domestic and international policies, terrorism, and the resurgence of nationalism in twentieth- and twenty-first-century theatre. It also aims to discuss the role that theatre might play as a form of cultural intervention in these issues.

The exploration of theatre and politics is based on an introduction to principal styles and genres of modern theatre that contemporary playwrights may use to address their themes, such as naturalism, epic theatre, and the theatre of the absurd. Influences of these styles will be traced in recent European, American and Latin American plays, and will be followed by a discussion of new theatrical genres, for instance, the monologue play or verbatim drama.

Classes will be complemented by the screening of extracts from productions and other visual material, and by optional attendance at available theatre productions (live or online).

### 2. Student Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:

- Comprehend and have a clear understanding of how contemporary drama and theatre interacts with political reality.
- Understand the basics of principal modes of modern theatre, such as naturalism, epic theatre, and the theatre of the absurd, and be able to trace their legacies in the work of contemporary playwrights.
- Place in context and lend perspective to the work of principal European, North American, and Latin American playwrights.
- Improve the skills of critical thinking, close reading, oral presentation, academic writing, and independent research.

### 3. Reading Material

#### **Required Materials**

- Texts of the plays (available in NEO) as per the course syllabus:  
Beckett, Samuel. *Endgame*. In: Worthen, W.B., ed. *The Harcourt Brace Anthology of Drama*. 3<sup>rd</sup> edn. Fort Worth, X: Harcourt, 2000. 754-774.  
Brecht, Bertolt. *Mother Courage and Her Children*. In: Worthen, 727-751.  
Churchill, Caryl. *Drunk Enough to Say I Love You?* In: Churchill, Caryl. *Plays: 4*. London: Nick Hern, 2008. 267-309.

Churchill, Caryl. *Seven Jewish Children*. London: Nick Hern, 2009.  
 Friel, Brian. *Translations*. In: Worthen, 1301-1324  
 Gambaro, Griselda. *Information for Foreigners*. In: Worthen, 1256-1274.  
 Hare, David. *Via Dolorosa*. In: Hare, David. *Via Dolorosa and Where Shall We Live?*  
 London: Faber, 1998.  
 Ibsen, Henrik. *A Doll House*. In: Worthen, 601-624.  
 Ireland, David. *Cyprus Avenue*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. London and New York: Methuen, 2019.  
 Kushner, Tony. *Angels in America, Part I: Millennium Approaches*. In: Worthen, 1087-1115.  
 Mamet, David. *Oleanna*. New York: Vintage, 1993.  
 Soans, Robin. *Talking to Terrorists*. London: Oberon, 2006.  
 Stoppard, Tom. *Professional Foul*. In: Stoppard, Tom. *Every Good Boy Deserves Favour and Professional Foul*. London: Faber, 1978.

- Assistance with the selection of secondary sources required for in-class presentations will be provided by the course instructor.

### **Recommended Materials**

Subject to individual consultations over the abstracts of the final essay, and including the following:

Allain, Paul, and Harvie, Jen. *The Routledge Companion to Theatre and Performance*. London and New York: Routledge, 2006.  
 Carlson, Marvin. *Theories of the Theatre*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993.  
 Elam, Keir. *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama*. London and New York: Methuen, 1980.  
 Pavis, Patrice. *Dictionary of the Theatre: Terms, Concepts, and Analysis*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999.

### **4. Teaching methodology**

The sessions will combine introductory comments by the instructor, student presentations focused on the historical and political background of individual plays, and detailed discussions of the assigned reading.

### **5. Course Schedule**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Class Agenda</b>
31 Aug	<b>Topic:</b> Introduction <b>Description:</b> Literature, Theatre, and Politics. A Brief Introduction to the History of Staging Conventions in Western Theatre. <b>Reading:</b> - <b>Assignments/deadlines:</b> -
7 Sep	<b>Topic:</b> Realism <b>Description:</b> Realism in Theatre. The Politics of Naturalist Theatre. <b>Reading:</b> Henrik Ibsen, <i>A Doll House</i> <b>Assignments/deadlines:</b> Presentation: Ibsen. Reviews of <i>A Doll House</i> by Bernard Shaw and Ben Brantley.
14 Sep	<b>Topic:</b> Theatre for Instruction <b>Description:</b> Brecht's Epic Theatre vs. Naturalist Theatre. <b>Reading:</b> Bertolt Brecht, <i>Mother Courage and Her Children</i> <b>Assignments/deadlines:</b> Presentation: Brecht. Brecht, "Theatre for Pleasure or Theatre for Instruction".

21 Sep	<p><b>Topic:</b> The Theatre of the Absurd  <b>Description:</b> The Theatre of the Absurd: Nihilistic or Engaged?  <b>Reading:</b> Samuel Beckett, <i>Endgame</i>  <b>Assignments/deadlines:</b>  Presentation: Beckett. Martin Esslin, from <i>The Theatre of the Absurd</i>.</p>
28 Sep	<b>No class (state holiday)</b>
5 Oct	<p><b>Topic:</b> Contemporary Theatre and Political Reality  <b>Description:</b> A. Colonialism  <b>Reading:</b> Brian Friel, <i>Translations</i>  <b>Assignments/deadlines:</b>  Presentation: The "Troubles" in Northern Ireland.</p>
12 Oct	<p><b>Topic:</b> Contemporary Theatre and Political Reality  <b>Description:</b> B. Totalitarianism 1  <b>Reading:</b> Griselda Gambaro, <i>Information for Foreigners</i>  <b>Assignments/deadlines:</b>  Presentation: Political situation in Argentina, 1960-80.</p>
19 Oct	<p><b>Topic:</b> Contemporary Theatre and Political Reality  <b>Description:</b> B. Totalitarianism 2  <b>Reading:</b> Tom Stoppard, <i>Professional Foul</i>  <b>Assignments/deadlines:</b>  Presentation: Political situation in Czechoslovakia, 1968-77.</p>
26 Oct	<b>Midterm break</b>
2 Nov	<p><b>Topic:</b> Contemporary Theatre and Political Reality  <b>Description:</b> The American Dream? 1  <b>Reading:</b> David Mamet, <i>Oleanna</i>  <b>Assignments/deadlines:</b>  Presentation: Political correctness.</p>
9 Nov	<p><b>Topic:</b> Contemporary Theatre and Political Reality  <b>Description:</b> The American Dream? 2  <b>Reading:</b> Tony Kushner, <i>Angels in America, Part I: Millennium Approaches</i>  <b>Assignments/deadlines:</b>  Presentation: AIDS: history of the disease and its perceptions.</p>
16 Nov	<p><b>Topic:</b> Contemporary Theatre and Political Reality  <b>Description:</b> Terrorism and the Middle East 1  <b>Reading:</b> Robin Soans, <i>Talking to Terrorists</i>  <b>Assignments/deadlines:</b>  Presentation: Background information on the terrorist organisations represented in the play.</p>
23 Nov	<p><b>Topic:</b> Contemporary Theatre and Political Reality  <b>Description:</b> Terrorism and the Middle East 2  <b>Reading:</b> David Hare, <i>Via Dolorosa</i>  <b>Assignments/deadlines:</b>  Presentation: History of Israel up to 1999.  <b>Essay abstracts due.</b></p>
30 Nov	<p><b>Topic:</b> Contemporary Theatre and Political Reality  <b>Description:</b> Terrorism and the Middle East 3  <b>Reading:</b> Caryl Churchill, <i>Seven Jewish Children; Drunk Enough to Say I Love You?</i>  <b>Assignments/deadlines:</b>  Presentation: "War on terror".</p>
7 Dec	<p><b>Topic:</b> Contemporary Theatre and Political Reality  <b>Description:</b> The Current Resurgence of Nationalism</p>

	<b>Reading:</b> David Ireland, <i>Cyprus Avenue</i> <b>Assignments/deadlines:</b> Presentation: The Historical and Cultural Background of <i>Cyprus Avenue</i> . <b>Final essays due.</b>
14 Dec	<b>Final test and feedback on final essays.</b>

## 6. Course Requirements and Assessment (with estimated workloads)

Assignment	Workload (hours)	Weight in Final Grade	Evaluated Course Specific Learning Outcomes	Evaluated Institutional Learning Outcomes*
Class participation in debates based on assigned reading	42 (class time) + 42 (preparation for class)	25%	Close reading skills, critical thinking, debating skills.	1, 2, 3
Presentation	18	20%	Independent research (basic), identification of key issues, presentation skills, ability to explain the studied topic to peers.	1, 2, 3
Final test	18	20%	Knowledge of the texts under discussion.	1, 3
Final essay	30	35%	Critical thinking, ability to do independent research, judicious use of secondary sources, academic writing skills.	1, 2, 3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>100%</b>		

\*1 = Critical Thinking; 2 = Effective Communication; 3 = Effective and Responsible Action

**A pass mark (i.e. A-D) must be reached in each of the assignments listed above.**

## 7. Detailed description of the assignments

### a. Participation in Debates Based on the Assigned Reading

Students are required to do the assigned reading in advance of the class. They are expected to attend class regularly, be on time, and respect the rules and manners of the classroom that are customary at university level. Active participation in debates is a condition of attendance. In case a student is found not to have read the assigned text, they will be marked as absent for the class. Students will be marked absent if they miss 25 percent or more of a class by arriving late or leaving early.

The requirement that students miss not more than 35% of real-time classes is temporarily suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic; however, any unexcused absences in real time must be made up by the submission of answers to 3 questions assigned by the instructor for the missed class. The minimum length of each submission is 1 000 words; the submissions are going to be graded and the grade is going to count towards the final participation grade.

### Assessment breakdown

Assessed area	Percentage
Critical thinking	30

Close-reading skills	30
Participation in debates	40

**b. Presentation**

Each student will be required to deliver an in-class presentation. The topics of these are indicated in the course syllabus; details should be consulted with the course instructor. Presentations must be based on independent research of relevant sources (online or print); students take the responsibility for any errors of fact copied from their sources. The duration of the presentation should be approximately 20 minutes; each presentation will be followed by a "questions and answers" from the audience. Judicious use of Powerpoint or similar software is recommended, and will be mandatory for any online classes. Should the number of students exceed the number of topics, students will be asked to work in couples based on the decision of the course instructor.

**Assessment breakdown**

Assessed area	Percentage
Independent research (basic)	25
Identification of key issues	25
Ability to explain the topic to peers	25
Presentation skills	25

**c. Final Test**

Students are required to take a brief test at the end of the course. This will consist of simple, mostly multiple-choice questions, the only purpose of which is to verify that they have read all the assigned texts, including those for sessions that they may have missed. The test will take place on **14 December**, either in class or as a NEO quizz. Any students who fail the test are allowed one additional attempt to take the test, provided that their F grade was not the consequence of cheating. The extra date for the re-sit of the test must be requested from the course instructor, and the time for the test will be subject to the course instructor's availability.

**Assessment breakdown**

Assessed area	Percentage
Knowledge of the texts under discussion	100

**d. Final Essay**

The main assignment in this course is a final essay. This is a brief research paper written out of class, the minimum length of which is 3 000 words. Topics are subject to students' choice, within the range of texts and contexts discussed in the course. The choice of topic is approved (or otherwise) in the form of the submission of a 200-word essay abstract (the **deadline for essay abstracts is 23 November**). The course instructor will be available throughout the semester for consultations regarding essay topics. The chief objective of giving the students a relatively free hand in their choice is to ensure that the essay topic is not only relevant to their academic interests, but also exciting enough to result in high-quality work. The **deadline for the submission of essays is 7 December. Essays must be submitted as an MS Word file via NEO.** The use of relevant secondary materials is strictly required; all secondary material must be properly referenced with accordance to the MLA or Chicago style. Sources that are not considered relevant for the purpose of the essay include websites of the gradesaver.com-type, personal websites (excluding those of playwrights, directors or other theatre professionals), Wikipedia or similar online encyclopedias, fan sites or blogs. If in doubt as to whether a source is adequate, please contact the course instructor.

### Assessment breakdown

Assessed area	Percentage
Independent research	25
Critical thinking	25
Judicious use of relevant secondary sources	25
Academic writing skills	25

## 8. General Requirements and School Policies

### **General requirements**

All coursework is governed by AAU's academic rules. Students are expected to be familiar with the academic rules in the Academic Codex and Student Handbook and to maintain the highest standards of honesty and academic integrity in their work.

### **Electronic communication and submission**

The university and instructors shall only use students' university email address for communication, with additional communication via NEO LMS or Microsoft Teams. Students sending e-mail to an instructor shall clearly state the course code and the topic in the subject heading, for example, "COM101-1 Mid-term Exam. Question". All electronic submissions are through NEO LMS. No substantial pieces of writing (especially take-home exams and essays) can be submitted outside of NEO LMS. Responses to questions assigned in place of a missed class are submitted by e-mail to the instructor as an MS Word attachment.

### **Attendance**

Attendance, i.e., presence in class in real-time, is expected and encouraged. However, the requirement that students miss not more than 35% of real-time classes is temporarily suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Absence excuse and make-up options**

Should a student be absent from classes for relevant reasons (illness, serious family matters), and the student wishes to request that the absence be excused, the student should submit an Absence Excuse Request Form supplemented with documents providing reasons for the absence to the Dean of Students within one week of the absence. If possible, it is recommended the instructor be informed of the absence in advance. Should a student be absent during the add/drop period due to a change in registration this will be an excused absence if s/he submits an Absence Excuse Request Form along with the finalized add/drop form.

Students whose absence has been excused by the Dean of Students are entitled to make up assignments and exams provided their nature allows. Assignments missed due to unexcused absences which cannot be made up, may result in a decreased or failing grade as specified in the syllabus.

Students are responsible for contacting their instructor within one week of the date the absence was excused to arrange for make-up options.

**Late work:** No late submissions will be accepted – please follow the deadlines.

### **Electronic devices**

Electronic devices (e.g. phones, tablets, laptops) may be used only for class-related activities (taking notes, looking up related information, etc.). Any other use will result in the student being marked absent and/or being expelled from the class. No electronic devices may be used during tests or exams unless required by the exam format and the instructor.

**Eating** is not allowed during classes.

### ***Cheating and disruptive behavior***

If a student engages in disruptive conduct unsuitable for a classroom environment, the instructor may require the student to withdraw from the room for the duration of the class and shall report the behavior to the student's Dean.

Students engaging in behavior which is suggestive of cheating will, at a minimum, be warned. In the case of continued misconduct, the student will fail the exam or assignment and be expelled from the exam or class.

### ***Plagiarism and Academic Tutoring Center***

Plagiarism is "the unauthorized use or close imitation of the language and thoughts of another author and the representation of them as one's own original work." (Random House Unabridged Dictionary, 2nd Edition, Random House, New York, 1993)

Turnitin's White Paper 'The Plagiarism Spectrum' (available at <http://go.turnitin.com/paper/plagiarism-spectrum>) identifies 10 types of plagiarism ordered from most to least severe:

1. CLONE: An act of submitting another's work, word-for-word, as one's own.
2. CTRL-C: A written piece that contains significant portions of text from a single source without alterations.
3. FIND-REPLACE: The act of changing key words and phrases but retaining the essential content of the source in a paper.
4. REMIX: An act of paraphrasing from other sources and making the content fit together seamlessly.
5. RECYCLE: The act of borrowing generously from one's own previous work without citation; To self-plagiarize.
6. HYBRID: The act of combining perfectly cited sources with copied passages—without citation—in one paper.
7. MASHUP: A paper that represents a mix of copied material from several different sources without proper citation.
8. 404 ERROR: A written piece that includes citations to non-existent or inaccurate information about sources
9. AGGREGATOR: The "Aggregator" includes proper citation, but the paper contains almost no original work.
10. RE-TWEET: This paper includes proper citation, but relies too closely on the text's original wording and/or structure.

At minimum, plagiarism from types 1 through 8 will result in a failing grade for the assignment and shall be reported to the student's Dean. The Dean may initiate a disciplinary procedure pursuant to the Academic Codex. Allegations of bought papers and intentional or consistent plagiarism always entail disciplinary hearing and may result in expulsion from AAU.

If unsure about technical aspects of writing, and to improve their academic writing, students are encouraged to consult with the tutors of the AAU Academic Tutoring Center. For more information and/or to book a tutor, please contact the ATC at:

<http://atc.simplybook.me/sheduler/manage/event/1/>.

### ***Course accessibility and inclusion***

Students with disabilities should contact the Dean of Students to discuss reasonable accommodations. Academic accommodations are not retroactive.

Students who will be absent from course activities due to religious holidays may seek reasonable accommodations by contacting the Dean of Students in writing within the first

two weeks of the term. All requests must include specific dates for which the student requests accommodations.

## 9. Grading Scale

Letter Grade	Percentage*	Description
A	95–100	<b>Excellent performance.</b> The student has shown originality and displayed an exceptional grasp of the material and a deep analytical understanding of the subject.
A–	90–94	
B+	87–89	<b>Good performance.</b> The student has mastered the material, understands the subject well and has shown some originality of thought and/or considerable effort.
B	83–86	
B–	80–82	
C+	77–79	<b>Fair performance.</b> The student has acquired an acceptable understanding of the material and essential subject matter of the course, but has not succeeded in translating this understanding into consistently creative or original work.
C	73–76	
C–	70–72	
D+	65–69	<b>Poor.</b> The student has shown some understanding of the material and subject matter covered during the course. The student’s work, however, has not shown enough effort or understanding to allow for a passing grade in School Required Courses. It does qualify as a passing mark for the General College Courses and Electives.
D	60–64	
F	0–59	<b>Fail.</b> The student has not succeeded in mastering the subject matter covered in the course.

\* Decimals should be rounded to the nearest whole number.

Prepared by: Ondřej Pilný

Date: 7 May 2021

Approved by: Andrew Giarelli, Chair, Department of Arts, Culture and Society

Date: June 10, 2021