

# Theatre 4394 and 4493

## British Theatre

# Summer 2020, Queen Mary University, London

## Contact Information

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## Course Description

From England, have come some of the world’s most important playwrights and plays. This course will focus on the works of a few of those playwrights and their contributions to the art form of theatre.  We will make the most of our time in London by exploring first-hand what cultural and historical findings, relevant to the plays, can be discovered through experiencing London area attractions - visiting and touring theatre, seeing and critiquing live productions, visiting museums and other historic sites- and what insight we can gain from our explorations that allow us a greater understanding of the lives of the playwrights and their works.

This course will include lectures, discussions, presentations, guest speakers, day trips, and visits to museums and theatres.

## Course Objectives

1. To attend theatre productions and participate in discussions on the artistic choices, accomplishments, and shortcomings of the show.

2. To extend knowledge of the London theatre scene and the historic significance of many of the venues.

3. Identify how British history has influenced theatre and been reflected in the works of British playwrights from the past to the present.

4. Recognize social, economical, and historical trends in Britain and how these affected design, staging, and acting on the British stage.

5. Identify a selection of influential British playwrights and be able to discuss their contributions to the theatre.

## Textbook & Instructional Materials

No textbook is required. PDFs of readings and scripts will be made available to you for our Assigned Play Presentations. If you prefer to purchase the scripts, please feel free to do so. Here are the editions that I am using if you prefer the same copies.

*Othello* by William Shakespeare ASIN: B01K0TBRF2 (Folger Digital Text)

*Private Lives* by Noel Coward ISBN: 978-0679781790

*The Deep Blue Sea* by Terence Rattigan ISBN: 0-573-01098-6

*The Homecoming* by Harold Pinter ISBN: 0-8021-5105-1

*The Real Inspector Hound* by Tom Stoppard ISBN: 978-0573614675

*The Gift of the Gorgon by Peter Shaffer* ISBN: 0-670-85069-1

*A Number* by Caryl Churchill ISBN: 978-1-55936-225-2

*The Play That Goes Wrong* by Henry Lewis, Jonathan Sayer, and Henry Shields

ISBN: 978-1-4742-4494-7

## Graded Assignments

| **Assignments** | **Points** |
| --- | --- |
| Participation/Discussion | 30 |
| London Production (pre/post) | (10/10)  20 |
| Assigned Play Presentation | 20 |
| Final Presentation | 30 |
| Total Points | 100 |

## Assignment Details:

## 1. Participation/Discussion – There will be seven plays to read and an additional seven plays to see throughout the course. You need to come to class having read or seen the play that is to be discussed by that given day. Each student should be prepared to participate in the class discussion of the play by adding his or her own critical analysis of the script, design, acting, production value, etc.

## 2. London Production (Pre-Show and Post-Show) – We will be seeing seven plays as a class, and each student will be responsible for presenting on one of the productions. This assignment will have two parts – a pre-show presentation and a post-show presentation.

Pre-Show – Before we see the play, please be prepared to share the information below with the class. Be creative in your presentation of the following information:

1. A brief history of the theatre/venue.

2. A brief history of the production.

3. A short biography of the playwright.

4. A synopsis of the show (no spoilers).

5. Past critical reviews of the play.

6. Critical reviews of the current production.

Post-Show – The class period after we see the performance, please be prepared to lead a discussion on the production. Some ideas to help you along include the following:

1. Share you points of view/personal critique of the show.

2. Re-read a critical review of the current production and discuss if you agree or disagree with the reviewer.

3. Prepare questions on the production for your classmates to prompt discussion.

## 3. Assigned Play Presentation (See Textbook & Instructional Materials) – This assignment is due the day the play is discussed in class. For your presentation, please prepare the following:

1. A brief summary of the play.

2. A biographical sketch about the author, including how the playwright was/is significant to the cannon of British playwrights.

3. A social and/or political perspective of the events that were happening during the playwright’s life that might have influenced his/her writings. Or, if it is more relevant to your play, discuss what was happening during the time period in which your play is set that effects the action and/or the characters.

4. A cultural/entertainment perspective. This could include what was happening in the world of fashion, music, entertainment, etc. that may have had an influence on the playwright or that appears relevant to the understanding of the play.

5. Share your personal reactions to the play, and offer the class your own insights.

4. Dramaturgical Final Project – Building on your assigned play from number 3, you will act as the dramaturg for this play. You should proceed as if a fictional, modern-day theatre company (the rest of the class) has hired you, and is aiming to make their production as truthful to the original production as possible.

Your additional research will include traveling to take photographs and/or gathering artifacts in and around the city that will aid and inspire actors, designers, and directors in mounting a production of this play. Your presentation should be visual. Organize and present your images and research in a way that is interesting and exciting to watch as well as informative.

Helpful hints: visit museums, libraries, theatres, conduct interviews, visit buildings that were built in that era, go to locations that are mentioned in the play, etc.

Finally, explain to the company why you think this play is important to do. Please feel free to offer personal opinions and ideas on the play and its future production. If you feel you have another staging/setting option to offer the theatre company, please feel free to offer your ideas and explain them. For example if the play is set in 1948, but you think it would be more impactful to set it in 2020, please do the research on setting it in 1948, but offer additional research and evidence/images on how it would look if set in 2020.

## Policies

1. Attendance – Class attendance is mandatory. Missing a single class will result in a reduction of one final letter grade.

2. Extra Credit - There will be no extra credit.

3. Late Work - I will not accept late work.

4. Punctuality – Be one time for everything. We will leave you behind or count you absent.

5. Dress Code – When we are visiting theatres, museums, or on other excursions, please plan on dressing appropriately/business casual. For the classroom, come dressed to learn.

Cell Phones and Other Recording Devices

## The use of cell phones and other recording or electronic devices is strictly prohibited during class. The instructor may direct, from time to time, on the possible use of cell phones for legitimate class reasons. Recording the class is prohibited, unless it is part of a reasonable accommodation under ADA, or by obtaining written consent by the instructor.

## Student Handbook

Refer to: [Midwestern State University **Student Handbook** 2018-19](https://msutexas.edu/student-life/_assets/files/handbook.pdf)

Academic Misconduct Policy & Procedures

Academic Dishonesty: Cheating, collusion, and plagiarism (the act of using source material of other persons, either published or unpublished, without following the accepted techniques of crediting, or the submission for credit of work not the individual’s to whom credit is given). Additional guidelines on procedures in these matters may be found in the Office of Student Conduct.

[Midwestern State University **Student Handbook** 2018-19](https://msutexas.edu/student-life/_assets/files/handbook.pdf)

## Services for Students With Disabilities

In accordance with Section 504 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Midwestern State University endeavors to make reasonable accommodations to ensure equal opportunity for qualified persons with disabilities to participate in all educational, social, and recreational programs and activities. After notification of acceptance, students requiring accommodations should make application for such assistance through Disability Support Services, located in the Clark Student Center, Room 168, (940) 397-4140. Current documentation of a disability will be required in order to provide appropriate services, and each request will be individually reviewed. For more details, please go to [Disability Support Services](http://www.mwsu.edu/student-life/disability).

## College Policies

### Campus Carry Rules/Policies

Refer to: [Campus Carry Rules and Policies](https://mwsu.edu/campus-carry/rules-policies)

## Safe Zone Statement

The professor considers this classroom (or whatever space this class is meeting) to be a place where you will be treated with respect as a human being – regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, national origin, religious affiliation, sexual orientation, political beliefs, age, or ability. Additionally, diversity of thought is appreciated and encouraged, provided you can agree to disagree. It is the professor’s expectation that ALL students consider the classroom/meeting location a safe environment.

## NoticeChanges in the course syllabus, procedure, assignments, and schedule may be made at the discretion of the instructor. You will be notified of any changes as they occur.

## Agreement/Contract

By staying enrolled in this class, you are indicating you understand and accept the terms of this syllabus.

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