Drama 402.3 Studies in Canadian Theatre

An examination of dominant trends in Canadian theatre practice.

Instructor: Moira Day

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http://www.ualberta.ca/~normang/Pika.html

Office Hours: TT 10:00-11:30

Booklist

Blais-Dahlem, Madeleine. La Maculée. Typescript.


Williams, Kenneth. Three Little Birds. Typescript.

Secondary

Drama 402.3 Readings package


Grades and Course Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class Contribution</th>
<th>10%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Critiques</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Review</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oral presentation</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Essay</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final exam</td>
<td>30%</td>
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100%
Outside of class and office hours, I am usually most accessible by e-mail. Be sure to include the name of the course in the subject line so I know this is high priority and I will respond as quickly as possible either by e-mail or when I see you in class.

I will also be scheduling time to meet individually with students a week prior to seminar presentations, and will do an oral critique of their presentation within a week of the seminar to be followed by a written critique a week after that. Essays will be due at the time of the seminar.

Class participation requires regular attendance. A student who misses for more than three unexcused absences a term will be docked 50% of the participation grade for that term. If you miss more than 1/3 of the classes in any term for any reason other than certifiable illness you will, at minimum, lose the full participation grade for that term. (Please review the Attendance Requirement in All Drama Courses.) Please phone or e-mail if you are unable to attend, preferably in advance of the absence.

Attendance at student class seminars is compulsory because (1) these are graded "live" performances that can be negatively affected by poor audience and participation. For this reason, 5% OF YOUR OWN INDIVIDUAL GROUP GRADE WILL BE DOCKED FOR EVERY UNEXCUSED ABSENCE FROM A STUDENT SEMINAR. IF YOU ARE ACTUALLY IN THE SEMINAR, YOU WILL LOSE 25% OF YOUR GROUP GRADE FOR AN UNEXCUSED NO-SHOW.

Students are expected to be punctual and to submit all class work on time. Any requests for an extension must be submitted one week in advance of the formal deadline. Unexcused late assignments, except in the case of certifiable illness or death in the family, will be heavily penalized (10% per day deducted). NO CLASS WORK WILL BE ACCEPTED BEYOND THE FINAL EXAM EXCEPT IN THE CASE OF AN OFFICIAL INCOMPLETE GRANTED BECAUSE OF ILLNESS OR DEATH IN THE FAMILY.

Students should be aware that there is a $5.00 photocopy fee per term to be paid to the instructor by the end of January.

Instructors are NOT permitted to reschedule final exams at their own discretion. Please take heed of the final exam dates (April 11-30) and do not schedule other activities at that time.

If you find yourself in difficulties and are considering dropping the course late in the term, please come and talk to me first. If you decide to drop the course, please come and notify me so I can take your name off my record book. (Jan 18. Last day to change classes or withdraw without financial penalty. March 15 Last day to withdraw without academic penalty).

Welcome on Board!
Important Dates

Critiques

Tu Jan 18   *Billy Bishop Goes to War (Gray) (e-book through library)

Th Jan 20   *Letters in Wartime (Scriver/Brown) (In West of All Possible Worlds)

Th Jan 27   *Einstein’s Gift (Thiessen) (In West of All Possible Worlds)

Th Feb 10   *Noble Savage, Savage Noble (Armstrong) (In West of All Possible Worlds)

Tu Mar 1    *La Maculée (Blais-Dahlem). Typescript

Th Mar 10   *The Calling Lake Community Play (Wildcat/van Fossen) (In West of All Possible Worlds)

Th Mar 15   *Three Little Birds (Williams) Typescript

Tu Mar 22   *Saddles in the Rain (Bustin) (In West of All Possible Worlds)

Tu Mar 31   *Play Memory (Glass) (e-book through library)

Reviews

Tu March 22

La Maculée (Blais-Dahlem)

Or

Three Little Birds (Williams)

Presentations

Group 1  Saskatoon Theatre and Community – 1911-21
   Th Feb 17  Group meeting
   Tu March 3  Seminar and essay

Group 2  Saskatoon Theatre and Community – 1941-51
   Tu March 10  Group meeting
   Tu March 17  Seminar and essay

Group 3  Saskatoon Theatre and Community – 1971-81
   Th March 17  Group meeting
   Th March 24  Seminar and essay
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jan 6</td>
<td>Introduction - Canadian Drama 1606-1914</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>Canadian Drama 1914-1950</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>The Investigator (Ship)</td>
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<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>*Billy Bishop Goes to War (Gray)</td>
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<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>*Letters in War (Scriva/Brown)</td>
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<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Replaced by Writing North Workshop</td>
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<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>*Einstein’s Gift (Thiessen)</td>
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Critical Views

| 10 | *Noble Savage, Savage Noble (Armstrong) |

Alternative Canadas – French Canada

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<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Québec – 1606-1960 (readings package)</td>
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<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Québec – 1960-1986 (readings package)</td>
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March 1 | ***Reading Week (Feb 21-27)*** |

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<th>Week</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Saskatchewan - *La Maculée (Blas-Dahlem)</td>
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<td>Group 1: Saskatoon Theatre and Community – 1911-21</td>
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<th>Week</th>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Alternative Canadas – First Nations (Rubin *404)</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>*The Calling Lake Community Play (Wildcat, van Fossen)</td>
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<th>Week</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>**Three Little Birds (Williams)</td>
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<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Group 2: Saskatoon Theatre and Community – 1941-51</td>
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Alternative Canadas – Gender (Rubin *362)

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<th>Week</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>*Saddles in the Rain (Bustin)</td>
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<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Group 3: Saskatoon Theatre and Community - 1971-81</td>
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<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Canadian women playwrights of the past</td>
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<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>*Play Memory (Glass)</td>
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April 5 | The Continuing Amateur Tradition |
| 7 | Conclusion |
The Essay

The essay should not be a summary of the presentation, but elaborate on it or develop some aspect or angle of the topic you want to explore further than you were able to in the talk. You can also write on another topic, but clear it with me first. For specifics of style check the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers (7th edition. Available on reserve under Drama 203 materials)), or the Department of English Requirements for Essays, 50% of the grade is assigned for Content (breadth of ideas, depth of treatment, astuteness of analysis, accuracy and effective use of substantiating evidence); 40% for style (coherence and organization, clarity of expression, spelling and grammar, proper documenting and referencing of sources), and 10% for overall effect.

The essay should be 2500-3000 words in length (10-12 pages) and is due the same day as the presentation. Essays will be returned a week after submission. Any submitted after the end of term will be returned at the final exam. ESSAYS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED BEYOND THE FINAL EXAM EXCEPT IN THE CASE OF AN OFFICIAL INCOMPLETE GRANTED BECAUSE OF ILLNESS OR DEATH IN THE FAMILY.

The Critique

The critique should serve as a considered response to the material you are reading for class. It is meant to (a) clarify and focus your own thinking about the material and (b) help initiate class discussion. It should about 250-300 words long and not exceed one page in length. It can expand on one point at length or deal with two or three smaller ones (much more than that and you may be spreading yourself too thin.) It should be submitted at the end of the class when it is due, and will be returned at the time of the next class. If you are unable to attend the class in person, please arrange for the critique to appear even you can't.

Things you may want to comment on:

(1) how the reading illuminates or clarifies for you certain historical, literary or social themes and concerns we have raised in class.

(2) where you find interesting comparisons or contrasts between what you see here and what you have discovered in other of your areas of study or experience.

(3) how this reading sheds a new light on other literary material we have studied in the class.

(4) something about the reading that particularly excited or interested you and you would like to share with others.

(5) something that particularly intrigued or puzzled you and you would like to know more about

(6) something that particularly bothered you or that you disagreed with, and would like to see addressed by the class as a group.

At its best, it should read as an informal but short personal essay that develops your idea, thesis, argument, query or quibble in a clear, articulate and concise fashion. Humor, and poetic or metaphoric personal touches are fine - it is a personal essay after all - but only as long as they support and advance the ideas you are trying to express and do not become a substitute for them. As with an exam or quiz, I will not be putting a high premium on formal style and mechanics, but I do expect the critique to be clear, neat and legible, and will be paying close attention to how well you express, develop and argue your thoughts in writing.
Oral Presentations

Organization:

The formal part of the presentation should occupy no less than two-thirds of the period. The presenters should then be prepared to answer questions from the instructor and class, and lead discussion afterwards. The presenters should also make available to the class an outline of the talk, a bibliography and any other information (statistics, names, dates) they feel would help the presentation.

The emphasis of the presentation should be on the application of the insights into history, literature, aesthetics performance and production gained in the lecture part of the course, to the major patterns of literary, performance and production development, shaping the specific theatre scene, author or play under examination.

In the case of newspaper work, each group will analyse the major patterns of literary, performance and production development shaping the theatre scene of their designated city during the years under survey. While websites and general reference texts are enormously helpful in finding and contextualizing information, it is important that a good range or articles and reviews from local newspapers be viewed, cited and referenced as part of the research for both the seminar and the paper. Specific, detailed information is important, but it needs to be considered within the context of larger cultural and aesthetic questions. For instance, what major social issues or historical events are occupying the public mind over the period of examination? What reflection of them, if any, do you see in the commercial, popular and art theatre of the time? How well do the entertainments performed during the period examined illustrate the literary or cultural issues discussed in the previous classes? What do you learn about practical performance and production conditions — for better and for worse - of the time? What practical challenges would you face as a designer, theatre manager or actor? To what extent does the day-to-day reality of the local scene both conform to and diverge from the larger picture portrayed in the rest of the course?

In the case of studies on individual authors and plays, the emphasis of the presentation should be on both (I) a contextualization of the work itself within its (A) Canadian and possibly international cultural-historical milieu, (B) literary genre or dramatic movement, and (C) overall career and concerns of the author and (II) a sensitive in-depth analysis of the major thematic, linguistic and stylistic elements of the play itself especially as they arise out of the former considerations. How well do the play and author examined illustrate the trends discussed in the previous class? Where do they fail to illustrate those trends?

If you feel that videos, tapes, slides, pictures, comparative readings and performances will help illustrate points you are trying to make in your talk please feel free to use them.

Grading:

50% of the grade will be assigned to content (accuracy, depth and comprehensiveness of material presented, ability to address questions well), 40% to presentation (effective organizing and structuring of the material, pacing of the presentation, and clarity, variety and expressiveness of delivery), and 10% to the handout (content, clarity, organization, form.)
**Practical Tips:**

1. Practice READING your talk OUT LOUD (preferably before a sympathetic audience) before you give it, and be careful that you time it. Inexperienced presenters are often surprised at how fast the time goes. Also, let people know if questions are welcome during the talk, or if you would prefer them to wait until afterwards.

2. A "live" audience often has to be "cued" more clearly and more often as to where the presentation is going, than a reading audience. A reader can return to puzzle out obscure or difficult passages he/she missed on the first read-through, or was too hurried to absorb properly; a "live" audience has to "get it" the first time or it's gone. So organize well, making your key points or thesis clear early on in the talk, and don't be afraid to highlight or reinforce them as you go on.

3. Humor is fine, but avoid flippancy; if you don't appear to take your subject and yourself seriously and with some enthusiasm, your audience won't take it and you seriously either.

4. The same plethora of facts, figures, statistics, dates and names that may delight a reader, may leave a listener numb and reeling. These are often better included in the handout for quick reference, or chalked up on the board.

The instructor will:
- provide additional guidance and direction as necessary before the presentation
- give each student a written critique and a letter grade within a week of the presentation.
The Review

The review will focus on the local performance of a Saskatchewan play, as written for an arts magazine or journal outside of the province. (Programs and tickets for the events should also be submitted as part of the assignment). It should provide a concise (3-5 pages), lively and informed analysis of the production that aims at the following functions.

1. To entertain the general reader or listener
   Like the editorial or feature column, the review functions as a short personal essay that seeks to entertain and instruct by presenting an informed opinion on issues of immediate concern to both the writer and his or her readership.

2. To inform the potential audience member of what is currently on the market
   On a fundamental level, the review serves as a consumer guide telling the reader the name of the play or event, the name of the company, individual or theatre producing it, the dates and times the event is running, and the building or theatre space where it is being produced. It also gives the reader a general idea of what kind of entertainment it is: i.e.: musical, opera, tragedy, comedy, première of a new work, revival of an older work. Finally, it tells the consumer whether the reviewer thinks the production is worth catching and which audience (if any) is most likely to enjoy it.

3. To preserve, promote and advance high artistic standards in the community one serves
   Most critics feel a strong responsibility to both educate audience members about, and hold creative artists accountable to high aesthetic standards, as the critic understands them. This understanding is ideally based on a comprehensive understanding and knowledge of the theatre, both past and present, local and internationally.

   A. Literary or dramaturgical criticism
      The reviewer tries to give the reader some idea of what criteria should be used to determine the quality of a good dramatic script. If the production features the revival, adaptation or translation of an older work, the critic may talk about its production history and of notable past interpretations of the play, its main critical features, its strengths and weaknesses as a staged work and the reasons for reviving or adapting the play at this time and in this place. If it is a new work, the critic may in fact devote a substantial part of the column to discussing the literary and dramatic merits of the work especially if the play is by a new writer who is being heard on stage for the first time. Alternatively, if it is a new work by a playwright who has been produced before, the reviewer may also discuss the play in terms of what the writer has done up to this point and what new developments or directions (if any) this work suggests he/she may be moving in.

   B. Performance criticism
      The reviewer tries to give the reader some idea of what criteria should be used to determine the quality of a good theatrical performance. Quite aside from the quality of the script the reviewer will also comment on the validity of this particular interpretation of it and the ability of the interpreters to effectively realize that vision in concrete production terms (1) the effectiveness of the director's interpretation of the script and his/her ability to realize that vision utilizing all the elements of the production's performance (2) the effectiveness of the actors to interpret their roles both individually and in ensemble with the other actors using the concrete modes of voice, body and movement (3) the effectiveness of the costume and set designer to interpret and realize the script in visual terms (4) the effectiveness of sound, music and lighting in the production to create mood and atmosphere and enhance performance and (5) the effectiveness or appropriateness of the theatre space to the work being performed in it.

4. To argue for the continuing survival, expansion and transformation of the theatre as an important part of the larger psychological, cultural and political life of a people
   The most powerful and influential critics - both currently and historically - have tended to justify the importance of the theatre within the context of the larger cultural, political, socio-economic, psychic and intellectual development of a given people or place. While critics of this kind can talk very astutely about a particular performance or script, their writing is often equally concerned with questions about how the particular event or play sheds light on larger social, cultural or aesthetic concerns relevant to the reviewers’ readership.
Canadian Plays in Saskatoon

Jan to April, 2011

January
Jan 19- Feb 2
Lawrence and Holloman (Morris Panych)  Persephone  RAC Mainstage

Jan 27-29 (8 pm), Jan 30 (2 pm) (English surtitles all performances but Jan 28)
**Theatre à la Carte/Four New Short Plays  Troupe du Jour  Refinery

February
Feb 1-13, 17-20
The Occupation of Heather Rose (Wendy Lill)  Live Five  Refinery

Feb 16- 27
**Velocity (Dan Macdonald)  Persephone Deep End  RAC BackStage

March
March 3-5, 10-12 (8 pm), 6&13 (2 pm) (English surtitles March 3,5,6&13)
**La Maculée (sTain) (Madeleine Blais-Dahlem)  Troupe du Jour  Refinery

March 3-13
*Three Little Birds (Kenneth Williams)  SNTC  RAC Backstage

March 24-27, March31-Apr 3
**Filling Holes (Jaron Francis and Kristina Hughes)  Live Five  Refinery

April
Apr. 27-May 8
**Two Rooms (Mansel Robinson)  Persephone Deep End  RAC Backstage

* Saskatchewan play

** New Saskatchewan play