



Boston University British Programmes
Contemporary British Theatre
Alan Read
CFA DR 507
Core Phase - Elective A

Course Objective:

DR 507 British Contemporary Theatre and Performance examines the production of current theatre and performance in London with an emphasis on staged performance and written texts. The course concentrates on the witness of live performance, the discussion and exploration of the cultural context of performances seen and the development of historical understanding of the emergence of the phenomena called 'British Contemporary Theatre'. This category is not taken as a given but a term to be contested and argued over with a view to developing the student's coherence of critical aptitude and expression. This is high level course and while it is unlikely the student will have encountered the specifics of British theatre before there is the expectation that students will be in a position to frame arguments, to think critically and to express themselves clearly and confidently with regard to their own particular experience of artistic practice.

Course Overview

DR507 British Contemporary Theatre and Performance takes a beginning point from post second world war political, social and cultural context and the theatre that emerged from the generation of 1950s writing including John Osborne with *Look Back in Anger* and Samuel Beckett with *Waiting for Godot*. The course additionally takes its bearings from the theatre that is currently in production in London drawing on a range of practices including mainstream and fringe venues. On occasions set texts will provide complimentary evidence to consider alongside productions seen. These will be drawn from set plays or critical texts and material drawn from the daily newspapers.

Methodology

The course will be taught through a combination of lecture and seminar session. Each session will include direct informational input from the tutor raising historical, cultural and critical questions for discussion as well as seminar session dedicated to more open critical discussion of the plays seen together as a group. Presence at evening theatre events (see following schedule) as well as attendance at all classes is imperative for successful completion of the course. Theatre visits are

working sessions (as well as social occasions) and as such are factored into the hours of the course. Taking into account a proportion of 'theatre hours' the course delivers over the required minimum of class time.

All students are expected to complete six hours of reading and writing outside class time in each week. This reading could usefully be done using the library resources either side of the seminar discussions and although each session is scheduled for four hours and you are required to be available from 2-6 most days will allow for an hour or so of reading after the session at 5.00pm.

Required Reference Works during course:

Osborne, John: *Look Back In Anger*

Read, Alan: *Theatre and Everyday Life: An Ethics of Performance*

Innes, Christopher, *Modern British Drama, 1890-1990*.

Grading Criteria:

In all assessment elements of the course a combination of 5 criteria of achievement are assessed:

COCOE:

Coherence of thought

Organisation of materials

Critical aptitude

Originality of perception

Effort in preparation and participation

Grading Scale

The following Boston University table explains the grading system that is used by most faculty members on Boston University's British Programmes.

Grade	Honour Points	Usual%	Definition
A	4.0	93-100	Excellent
A-	3.7	89-92	
B+	3.3	85-88	
B	3.0	81-84	Good
B-	2.7	77-80	
C+	2.3	73-76	
C	2.0	69-72	Satisfactory
C-	1.7	65-68	
D	1.0	60-64	Low pass
F	0.0	Unmarked	Fail

“Incomplete” or I grades are not permitted to be issued by faculty, because of the obvious difficulty in making up missed work once the student has left the country. All work must be completed on time. The grades reflect the quality of the work.

It is also important to realise that grades below C may not be transferable to non BU students' home institutions. Lecturers and students should use the following criteria for an understanding of what each grade means.

“Withdrawn” The Boston University Provost has announced that faculty members may no longer assign grades of "W" (Withdrawn). In supporting this policy, the Registrar's Office will no longer assign W grades on individual students' official Boston University records, even if the grade sheet has a "W" recorded for a student. Alternative grades to "W" are "F" (Failing) or "MG" (Missing Grade).

A This exceptional grade is assigned only to work that has persistently outstanding quality in both substance and presentation. The student must demonstrate a sustained capacity for independent thought and extensive study, producing rigorous and convincing analyses in well-ordered prose.

A- Awarded to work that is clearly focused and analytical, and based on wide reading. The student must cover all the principal points of a question and systematically develop a persuasive overall thesis, allowing for one or two venial omissions or inapt expressions.

B+, B, B- This range of grades indicates that the student has shown some evidence of original thought and intellectual initiative. The student has cited sources beyond the class materials, and shown a degree of originality in perception and/or approach to the subject. The work will show thoughtful management of material, and a good grasp of the issues. The differences between a B+, a straight B and a B- may reflect poor presentation of the material, or mistakes in punctuation, spelling and grammar.

C+, C, C- Work in this grade range is satisfactory, but uninspiring. If the work is simply a recitation of the class materials or discussions, and shows no sign of genuine intellectual engagement with the issues, it cannot deserve a higher grade. Should an essay fail to provide a clear answer to the question as set, or argue a position coherently, the grade will fall within this range. Quality of presentation can lift such work into the upper levels of this grade range. Work of this quality which is poorly presented, and riddled with errors in grammar, spelling and punctuation, will fall into the lower end of the range. To earn a C grade, the work must demonstrate that the student is familiar with the primary course material, be written well enough to be readily understood, be relevant to the assignment, and, of course, be the student's own work except where properly cited.

D A marginal pass can be given where some but not all the elements of the course have been completed satisfactorily.

F The failing grade indicates the work is seriously flawed in one or more ways:

- *Obvious lack of familiarity with the material
- *So poorly written as to defy understanding
- *So brief and insubstantial that it fails to properly address the subject
- *Material presented is not relevant to the assignment
- *Demonstrates evidence of plagiarism (see below)

Plagiarism

Boston University's *Code of Student Responsibilities* states:

The value of any grade, credit, honour or degree received by a student presupposes that all work submitted by a student is his or her own. A student who uses or relies upon the work of others or who, except under conditions expressly permitted by the instructor, furnishes assistance to another student, violates the standards of the University. Students must insist upon academic honesty and integrity from their fellow students and must report promptly any case of alleged violation of academic conduct. Failure to do so is a violation of this code.

Plagiarism can take many forms, including the reproduction of published material without acknowledgement, or representing work done by others as your own. This includes the increasingly common practice of purchasing and downloading work from Internet "paper mills." You should be extremely careful when submitting work for this course that all work is correctly sourced. Prints outs of websites that have been used in research may be required by the lecturer in cases of a grade dispute and all website based reference material should be kept by the student until after the end of the semester

Terms and Conditions

*****Attendance at all classes and visits is mandatory. Students missing lectures without a doctor's letter or authorisation from the Director or from the Placements' Team will automatically be docked a – or a + from their final grade. Persistent lateness will also be penalised in the final grade. A register of attendance will be taken at the beginning of each session and marks will be awarded for attendance. Absence can be conveyed either by advising a senior member of staff in the Academic Affairs Office with a request that the information be passed on to me. Leaving it to another class member to convey messages will not be acceptable. Appointments for interviews for internships should not conflict with attendance at classes.***

Any student who is unable to attend a class, or take part in an assignment because of religious reasons, must give notice in advance of class. He/she will be required

to make up for time lost. In this situation arrangements must be made with another student for class notes to be shared. Written papers must be delivered before agreed deadline, failure to hand in the paper will result in deducted marks.

I will make some time available in each session for students to raise questions etc. Should students wish to discuss matters with me in person I will also be available during the break mid-lecture and at the end of class. Alternatively, please feel free to e-mail me with questions. If you have problems with the availability of reading materials (all of which should be in the library) please contact me either through the Academic Affairs Office or via e-mail.

DR507 Schedule—meeting times and places subject to change depending on the theatre visit which follows each discussion.

Session One

Introduction to Drama, Theatre and Performance Studies.
Theatre in the expanded field of performance.
Issues of disability and canonical expectations.

Session Two

Seminar discussion of play.
Theatre Capital: How the city performs itself.
Preparation for Presentation Assessment.

Session Three

The National Theatre and its politics.
National Theatre Backstage tour (5.15pm - 6.30pm)
Follow up.

Session Four

Seminar discussion of play.
Irish theatre, writers and matters of national identity.

Session Five

Theatre Capital Preparation and Tutorials

Session Six

1956 and All That
The end of deference

The Royal Court Theatre and its new writing traditions.

Session Seven

Seminar discussion of play.

Session Eight

Research Paper revision and tutorials

Session Nine

Seminar discussion of play.

Session Ten

Theatre Capital Presentations

All students must be prepared and available to submit a hard copy of their research paper in to the academic office.