

Department of English & Writing Studies

ENGLISH 3556E: 20TH CENTURY DRAMA
2015-16 ACADEMIC YEAR
TUESDAY 9:30-11:30; THURSDAY 9:30-10:30
AHB 2R21

1. Course Description

It's 2015. The biggest news happens online. I watch movies through Netflix and "TV" via iTunes. Elections are fought on Facebook and Twitter. So who cares about *the theatre*? Why are people still going – sometimes in huge numbers?

This year's 20th-Century Drama aims to answer these questions, and more. What does theatre give us that no other media technology can? How does it address some of the most politically pressing, socially urgent ideas the modern period has faced?

As we survey the role drama has played in the public sphere through the long modern age (roughly 1880 to now), we will: encounter the original "reality" TV; talk about how modern artists and writers grappled with the politics of staging violence for mass consumption in the period following the world wars; and think about the techniques today's dramatists and performers use to engage with contemporary political challenges, like neoliberalism and globalization.

Could it be that the wireless world needs the power of *live* performance more than ever?

Note: Drama is the name for the literary genre associated with live, theatrical performance; in this class we will read plays, but we will also learn to read performances – multi-sensory, live events that require us to be alive to the meanings of gesture, music and sound, set and design, and much more. Your skills as a critical reader will be invaluable in this work, but be prepared for it to be somewhat different from what you are used to in other English classes.

2. Meet your Teaching Team

Instructor: Dr Kim Solga (ksolga@uwo.ca)

TA: Meghan O'Hara (mohara4@uwo.ca)

Kim's office hours

AHB 3G14

Tuesdays 12pm-1pm; Thursdays 11am-1pm (other times by appointment; just email + ask)

Kim also writes a teaching blog; find it at <http://theactivistclassroom.wordpress.com>. If you want to know what to expect from this class, start there.

3. Our course on the web

OWL: for stuff like messages, assignments, other essentials; this is your class "dashboard".

Our class blog: <http://moderndramaatwestern.wordpress.com>, for class prep, supplementary material, in-class work, events postings, etc. This is the course "newsfeed".

Note: You will be invited to join the blog as a contributor; when you receive your email invite, please follow the prompts to activate your account and join the site.

 Young Jean Lee,

Kim Solga/Meghan

Kim Solga/Meghan

How they work

Each workshop is structured this way: a group performs; when they are finished, they take a short break while the rest of the class reflects, in a timed writing exercise, on what they have seen.

Then, in our regular performance groups, we share our written reflections and develop one or two good questions to ask the performance team during the Q&A. (Kim and Meghan help out with this process.) The performers return for a Q&A about their work; this discussion segment is led

Week 24 (8+10 March)

What's on tap: all things research essay! If you've not started yet, we'll get you moving!

What to prepare: TBA – keep your eyes on OWL and your ears on the blog.

Week 25 (15+17 March)

What's on tap: something completely different. (Trust me: it's better than green beer.)

What to prepare: read Washburn, *Mr Burns: A Post-Electric Play*

Week 26 (22+24 March)

What's on tap: TUESDAY is Performance Workshop #4, based on *Mr Burns* (Groups 4, 5 and 6 will perform; groups 1, 2 and 3 will lead discussion)

THURSDAY we will begin our final peer evaluations. Please do not miss this session!

What to prepare: unless you are performing, nothing. On Thursday, be prepared to complete some writing in relation to the peer evaluation process, which you will hand in at the end of class.

Week 27 (29+31 March)

What's on tap: the year that was, the Final that will be!

TUESDAY there is no class – instead, each performance group will attend a private meeting with Kim and Meghan to complete the peer evaluation process.

THURSDAY we begin our exam review.

Week 28 (5 April)

What's on tap: course evaluations, The Final, Demystified, and a fond farewell. With cake!

What to prepare: TBA. We are going to create the final exam together (no, really), so you'd better bring some ideas + questions!

Thanks for being part of the class. Have a wonderful summer!

Kim + Meghan