

**Department of English
The Chinese University of Hong Kong**

ENGE1800 Drama in Performance 1

Professor: Professor Joanna Mansbridge

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Course Description

In this course students will study short plays and excerpts from longer plays and workshop them in small groups, with the aim of devising and performing pieces of similar length before an audience. As they become familiar with the major aesthetic styles, figures, and movements in modern drama, students will learn how to interpret a play from a dramaturgical point of view and practice the fundamental techniques of creating a character, developing voice, directing, collaborating, and interpreting a text for performance.

Course E-Learning Platform

Our online platform for this course is Blackboard. An orientation to the site and how it will be used in the course will be given during the first week of classes. All announcements and course materials (lecture ppts, readings, resources, activity outlines) will be posted here: [\[link\]](#)

Course Learning Outcomes

In this course, students will learn to:

- ◇ analyse dramatic texts as performance texts;
- ◇ create and perform a character on stage;
- ◇ use their voice and body to communicate to an audience;
- ◇ apply a theoretical understanding of a dramatic text in performance;
- ◇ collaborate effectively.

Course Content	Course Concepts
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Performance Skills	Voice Production (intonation, pronunciation, clarity, projection); movement and gesture; communicating to an audience; creating a character.
Dramaturgical Techniques	Interpreting a dramatic text for performance; considering nonverbal aspects of a script; collaboratively creating and analysing a dramatic situation.
Dramatic Styles and Forms	Distinctions between realism, epic theatre, theatre of the absurd, political theatre; theatre history; dramatic theory.

Learning Activities

Active involvement and collaborative exchange are central to this course. Teaching and learning activities will consist of interactive workshops and short lectures that deliver content and background knowledge through a combination text, audio, and visual media. Students will be guided through various activities that practice performance skills and interpretive techniques, and they will apply these skills in focused exercises as they work towards adapting/devising their own scripts and dramatic scenarios.

The weekly workload schedule below may help you allocate your time this term:

Interactive workshop	Reading	Writing/Revising	Discussions/ Devising	Rehearsing
In class	Out of class	Out of class	Out of class	Out of class
3 hrs.	2 hrs.	1 hr.	2 hrs.	2 hrs.
M	O	O	O	O

M = Mandatory O = Optional (but highly recommended)

Assessment Scheme

Task	Description	Weighting
Performance	Final performance before an audience. Students will apply their dramaturgical knowledge to devise/adapt and perform a short (20-30 mins) play.	40%
Essay		40%

	<p>Written essay (1000 words, or approx. 4 pages) on aspects of interpreting a play for performance. Essays should include references to the course readings (at least one primary and one secondary text), explaining how they contributed to your learning.</p> <p>Questions to consider in your essay might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ How does interpreting a play for performance differ from interpreting it for a written analysis? ◇ What analytical skills can be applied to a script when reading a play for the purpose of performing it? ◇ What aspects of a play need to be considered, aside from the dialogue, when interpreting a play for performance? ◇ What is the role of the body in interpreting a play for performance? ◇ What is the role of collaboration in interpreting a play for performance? <p>It is recommended that students keep a journal reflecting on these questions as they work through the readings and activities. This will make writing the essay easier.</p> <p>All essays should follow MLA format, 9th edition.</p>	
Production Outline	Plans for production, including script annotations and details on set design, casting, rehearsal schedule, and the roles and responsibilities of each group member.	10%
Workshop Participation	Active involvement in discussions and activities, demonstrating initiative and constructive interactions with peers. Participation includes spoken communication, as well as listening, reflecting, and responding to others.	10%

Week	Topic	Readings & Activities	Due dates
Week 1	Introduction to elements of drama and live performance; overview of theatrical styles; questions to ask a play	Fuchs, "EF's Visit to a Small Planet (distributed in class); warm-up, Augusto Boal's <i>Games for Actors and Non-Actors</i> ; workshop on James Saunders, <i>Over the Wall</i>	
Week 2	Realism: mimetic staging and Method acting (Stanislavski technique)	Performing Chekhov's <i>The Marriage Proposal</i> and <i>The Bear</i> ; warm-up, Boal's <i>Games for Actors and Non-Actors</i>	
Week 3	Epic Theatre: introduction to Brechtian principles	Interpreting Brecht's <i>The Exception and the Rule</i> for performance; Chemers' "The Twelve-Step Program for Script Analysis," in <i>Ghost Light</i> , pp. 69-92	
Week 4	Epic acting techniques in performance	Performing <i>The Exception and the Rule</i> ; warm-up, Brecht's "Street Scene"	
Week 5	Devising workshop I: asking major dramatic questions; developing complex characters; deciding on a location; determining your style	Janet Neipris, <i>A Guide to Writing Plays</i> (pages 9-20); Anne Bogart's "Building Blocks for Devised Work"; Composition exercise	
Week 6	Theatre of the Absurd: diffused conflict and dark comedy	Workshop on Beckett's short plays and scenes from <i>Waiting for Godot</i> ; Esslin, "Theatre of the Absurd"	
Week 7	Devising workshop II: plot; dialogue; theme; endings	Janet Neipris, <i>A Guide to Writing Plays</i> (pages 22-40); Suzan-Lori Parks, "Elements	

		of Style” and “Start Here” in <i>365 Plays/365 Days</i>	
Week 8	Forum Theatre: an introduction to political theatre	Boal, “Forum Theatre,” in <i>Games for Actors and Non-Actors</i> , pp. 253-276	
Week 9	Experimental dramaturgies I: the individual and the collective	Workshop on Gao Xingjian’s <i>The Other Shore</i> ; Fong “Introduction,” <i>The Other Shore: Plays</i> , pp. xviii-xxix	
Week 10	Experimental dramaturgies II: blending styles, spaces, and temporalities	Workshop on Caryl Churchill’s <i>Escaped Alone</i>	
Week 11	Devising workshop III: including broader ecologies and nonhuman perspectives	Climate Lens playbook; devising/rehearsal time	Submit Essays by Sunday midnight
Week 12	Rehearsals, consultations, and student evaluations		Submit Production outlines by Sunday midnight
Week 13	Student performances!		

Learning resources

Primary texts (the plays):

Bertolt Brecht, *The Exception and the Rule*

Samuel Beckett, *Act without Words I, Rough for Theatre I, Come and Go,*

Waiting for Godot (excerpts)

Anton Chekhov, *The Bear* and *The Marriage Proposal*

Caryl Churchill, *Escaped Alone*

James Saunders, *Over the Wall*

Gao Xingjian, *The Other Shore*

Secondary texts (theories and practical guides):

Boal, Augusto. *Games for Actors and Non-Actors*, 2nd ed. trans Adrian Jackson. London: Routledge, 1992.

Brecht, Bertolt. "The Street Scene: A Basic Model for an Epic Theatre," trans. John Willet. London: Wiley, 2004.

Chaudhuri, Una et al. "Climate Lens Playbook." *Theatre without Borders*, <https://theatrewithoutborders.com/climate-lens/>

Chemers, Michael Mark. *Ghost Light: An Introductory Handbook for Dramaturgy*. University of Southern Illinois Press, 2010.

Esslin, Martin. "The Theatre of the Absurd." *The Tulane Drama Review*, vol. 4, no. 4 (May 1960), pp. 3-15.

Fong, Gilbert C.F. "Introduction." *The Other Shore: Plays by Gao Xingjian*. Trans. Gilbert C.F. Fong. Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1999, pp. xi-xi.

Fuchs, Elinor. "EF's Visit to a Small Planet: some questions to ask a play." *Theatre*, vol. 34, no. 2, 2004, pp. 4-9.

Neipris, Janet. *A Guide to Writing Plays*. Digital Theatre Plus, 2022.

Parks, Suzan-Lori. "Elements of Style" and "Start Here," *365 Plays/365 Days*. New York: Theatre Communications Group, 2006.

Feedback for evaluation

At the end of the term, students will have an opportunity to complete evaluations of the course. Students are also welcome to give feedback on the course at any time during the term. They can do so by communicating with the professor directly or by email.

Academic honesty

Veriguide:

Each student must upload a soft copy of their essay to the plagiarism detection engine Veriguide. The system will issue a receipt that also contains a declaration of honesty (see below). The declaration should be signed and the receipt attached to and submitted with the assignment. Assignments without the receipt or the signed declaration of honesty will not be graded.

University policy and regulations on honesty in academic work, and to the disciplinary guidelines and procedures applicable to breaches of such policy and regulations, may be found at <http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/> .

With each assignment, students will be required to submit a statement that they are aware of these policies, regulations, guidelines and procedures.

Statement:

I declare that the assignment here submitted is original except for source material explicitly acknowledged. I also acknowledge that I am aware of University policy and regulations on honesty in academic work, and of the disciplinary guidelines and procedures applicable to breaches of such policy and regulations, as contained in the website <http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/>

Signature

Date

Name

Student ID

Course code Course title

Course Grade Descriptors

Grade A / Excellent: Outstanding performance on ALL learning outcomes. Demonstrates the ability to synthesize and apply the principles or skills learned in the course in a manner that would surpass the normal expectations at this level and typical of standards that may be common at higher levels of study. The 'A' grade should be reserved for truly excellent work that exceeds the level expected for the majority of students and are expected to be achieved only by a small minority.

Grade A- / Very Good: Generally outstanding performance on ALMOST ALL learning outcomes. Demonstrates the ability to synthesize and apply the principles or skills learned in the course in a manner that would fully fulfil the

normal expectations at this level and occasionally reaches standards that may be common at higher levels of study.

Grade B+ / Good (Plus): HIGH performance on all learning outcomes, OR HIGH performance on some learning outcomes which compensates WELL for slightly less satisfactory performance on others, resulting in overall substantial performance. Demonstrates the ability to apply WELL the principles or skills learned in the course in a comprehensive manner that would sufficiently fulfil the normal expectations at this level WELL.

Grade B / Good: SUBSTANTIAL performance on all learning outcomes, OR SUBSTANTIAL performance on some learning outcomes which compensates for slightly less satisfactory performance on others, resulting in overall substantial performance. Demonstrates the ability to apply the principles or skills learned in the course in a MORE COMPREHENSIVE manner that would sufficiently fulfil the normal expectations at this level.

Grade C+ / Satisfactory (Plus): SATISFACTORY performance on all learning outcomes, OR SATISFACTORY performance on some learning outcomes which compensates for slightly less satisfactory performance on others, resulting in overall satisfactory performance. Demonstrates the ability to apply the principles or skills learned in the course in a SATISFACTORY manner that would sufficiently fulfil the normal expectations at this level.

Grade C / Satisfactory: ACCEPTABLE performance on all learning outcomes, OR ACCEPTABLE performance on some learning outcomes which compensates for slightly less acceptable performance on others, resulting in overall acceptable performance. Demonstrates the ability to apply the principles or skills learned in the course in a manner that would sufficiently fulfil the normal expectations at this level.

Grade D / Unsatisfactory: Pass. UNSATISFACTORY performance on all learning outcomes, OR UNSATISFACTORY performance on most learning outcomes so there is little room for compensation, resulting in overall unsatisfactory performance. Does not sufficiently demonstrate the ability to apply the principles or skills learned in the course in a manner that would sufficiently fulfil the normal expectations at this level.

Grade F / Poor: Fail. POOR performance on all learning outcomes, OR POOR performance on most learning outcomes. Does not demonstrate the ability to apply the principles or skills learned in the course in a manner that would sufficiently fulfil the normal expectations at this level.