

TORONTO: Culture and Performance
(AKA Theatre 3581F / English 3581F / ArtHum 3390 F)
Autumn 2019
Professor Kim Solga, TA Sheetala Bhat
THURSDAYS 5:30-8:30, UC1110

What are we doing, anyway?

What's a "global city"? Is Toronto one? How does the theatre that appears on Toronto's stages contribute to, or maybe even *contest*, Toronto's "global city" aspirations?

What's an "intercultural city"? Is Toronto one? How do the performing arts help to shape the intercultural structures that now identify Toronto to Torontonians, and to the world? For whom are those structures liberating – and whom do those structures still leave behind?

What does economics have to do with theatre? Is theatre a viable business? What does theatre economics have to do with other kinds of urban economics – like, say, real estate?

Or what about memory? How does the theatre shape our memories (personal, communal, historical) of the city and its inhabitants? And what about labour? Who works in the creative economy in Toronto, what do they do, and how is their work valued (or not)?

All these questions and more we will touch on as we explore Toronto through its theatre culture circa autumn 2019. We will visit the city three times; we will also make visits to Stratford (also a theatre city) and to the Grand here in London (also an aspiring theatre city...) in order to compare and contrast each place's performance "ecology". We will learn about how to talk about urban theatre in a nuanced and sophisticated way. We will learn to write a good theatre review. And we'll explore questions that matter personally to each one of us.

*When/Where are we? *Put this stuff in your calendars now!**

On regular class days, we meet Thursdays at 5:30pm in UC1110.

On the following days, instead of meeting for class, we will travel by bus together to Toronto:

- Thursday 26 September (show = *No Foreigners* at the Theatre Centre)
- Thursday 31 October (show = *Almighty Voice and His Wife* at Soulpepper)
- Thursday 28 November (show = *Between Breaths* at Factory Theatre)

NB: on these days, please assemble at the traffic circle in front of Talbot College at 4pm. Please ensure you make suitable arrangements to be free of class as needed!

On Tuesday 8 October, we will travel to Stratford to see *Birds of a Kind*. The bus will depart in the early evening; more information TBA.

On Tuesday 17 October, you will travel on your own to the Grand in downtown London, where we will see *This London Life*. No class that day; the show is the class!

Meet your teaching team!

This course is led by Professor Kim Solga; call her Kim. Kim's office hours are Tuesdays 1-3pm, or by appointment. Reach her at ksolga@uwo.ca.

Our Teaching Assistant is Sheetala Bhat; Sheetala's email is sbhat22@uwo.ca.

A note about email: Kim doesn't check her UWO email on the weekend. Any messages received by Kim after 6pm on Friday will be addressed first thing Monday morning. This ALSO means that *nothing* for our class is so urgent that you need to worry about it over the weekend – weekends are for self-care. Enjoy them!

Land Acknowledgement

Land is a big part of what we are going to be talking about when we talk about Toronto, culture, and performance: who works on it, how their work is valued, who is recognized as fully human in the city, who is ignored, left out, stepped over. Acknowledging the politics of our inhabiting the land is an important part of starting our work on all of these scores.

Below are two different land acknowledgements: from UWO's office of Indigenous Services, and from Native Earth Performing Arts, Toronto's (and Canada's) oldest and largest Indigenous performance company.

On our first day in class we will work together to create a shared land acknowledgement, and we'll reflect on the history of the territories important to us as individuals.

- 1. Indigenous Services would like to acknowledge the history of the Indigenous territory in which Western University operates. We would also like to respect the longstanding relationships of the three local First Nations groups of this land and place in Southwestern Ontario: The **Attawandaran** (Neutral) peoples once settled this region alongside the **Algonquin** and **Haudenosaunee** peoples, and used this land as their traditional beaver hunting grounds. The three current and longstanding Indigenous groups of this geographic region are: The **Anishinaabe** (also referred to as the Three Fires Confederacy including; Ojibwe, Odawa, and Bodéwadmi Nations); The **Haudenosaunee** (also known as the Iroquoian people or Six Nations including Mohawk, Oneida, Cayuga, Onondaga, Seneca, and Tuscorora); The **Lenape** (also referred to as the Delaware and/or Munsee). The three First Nations communities closest in proximity to Western University are: **Chippewa of the Thames First Nation** (Anishinaabe); **Oneida Nation of the Thames** (Haudenosaunee); **Munsee-Delaware Nation** (Lenape).*
- 2. As we undertake work on and about the space now known as the city of Toronto, we honour and acknowledge the ancestral caretakers of its land: the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, the Wendat and most recently the Mississauga of the New Credit First Nation who have a Treaty relationship with Canada.*

The Online 411

We will use OWL fairly extensively in this class – it’s where you will submit assignments, work on Wiki documents together, find course readings, and much more. Kim will upload lesson materials each week via the “Resources” folder, and recommends you look in that folder for anything you might be missing (except a copy of the syllabus – it has a separate link in OWL) before you email her to ask for copies of stuff.

OWL is not pretty, but it works and it keeps everything in one place. Be sure you’ve logged into OWL by the beginning of term to confirm you can see our class portal. Flag it as a “favourite” so it appears in your top-bar navigation, and be sure that you check your UWO email regularly for messages sent through OWL about important stuff (like theatre trip details).

Course Objectives

A course objective is a goal; Kim and Sheetala have some that we’d like to achieve, but we also hope you’ll make your own. We’ve created assignments and opportunities for you to fashion your own way through the class according to your interests; set some personal course objectives to help you navigate those opportunities to best advantage.

Our official course objectives are:

- ❖ To introduce our class community to a wide variety of theatre in Toronto, Stratford, and London, and to some of the talented people who make it;
- ❖ To ask challenging, sometimes uncomfortable questions about the social, political, and economic circumstances that shape urban theatre and performance communities;
- ❖ To introduce students to fresh perspectives about the “cultural work” theatre does in the wider world today, and why that work matters to a socially just society;
- ❖ To help students become critically attuned audience members, and in the process to help students to hone your critical reading, thinking, viewing, and writing skills;
- ❖ To give students a chance to explore meaningfully the intersections between your own interests and the work shared on our course;
- ❖ To introduce students to different ways to produce high-quality, critically astute course work, including in writing, via audio or video work, via live performance work, or otherwise (feel free to surprise us with suggestions).

Required texts

1. *Theatre & The City*, by Jen Harvie (in the bookstore; on reserve at Weldon)
2. A variety of articles available via OWL; click on “Course Readings” and enjoy!

NB: All our theatre trips are mandatory; problems, talk to Kim ASAP!

Assessment

In Toronto: Culture and Performance, you'll be evaluated like this.

1. 5x 250-word reflections, one per performance (5% each = 25%)
2. 1x 750-word theatre review (25%)
3. 1x final project, form and content very much your choice (30%)
4. 1x teamwork project, answering the question "where are we going next, and what should we know before we get there?" (10%)
5. Participation, which in Kim's classes is A Real Thing (10%)

Details? Read on.

1. 5x 250-word reflections, one per performance

Value: 5% each, 25% total

Due: the MONDAY after each theatre trip we take (aka: 30 September; 14 October; 21 October; 4 November; 2 December)

Protocol: hand this work in via OWL, by 11:55pm on the due date

Select a critical moment from the performance we saw. (A critical moment is one that grabs you unexpectedly, makes you think in fresh ways, or otherwise strikes you as a thoughtful route into unpacking what a show is trying to do. It is a small but pertinent detail.)

Ask yourself: Why is this moment significant for me? How does it advance the "cultural work" of the play as a whole? Or, think more broadly: does this moment reveal something key about the piece's relationship to the place it is being performed, the city as a whole? Does it speak to other issues we've discussed in class? If you can, link your discussion of your critical moment to one of the readings we have done in class – this is a pro move, if you're aiming for an A!

2. 750-word review

Value: 25%

Due: bring a **complete draft to class** on Thursday, 14 November; your final draft is due Monday 18 November

Protocol: hand your final draft in via OWL, by 11:55pm on the due date

Pick the show about which you have the most to say. The show that you **ADORED**. The show you **HATED**. Maybe pick the **MEH** show. Whatever you want. Write a professional-grade review.

WTF is that? Check out some pro reviews online and reverse-engineer them. Read some blog reviews; what have they got the pros don't, or vice versa? Give it your best shot.

Bring your DRAFT REVIEW to class on 14 November and hear pro tips first hand. Spend the class working your review, helping others work theirs, talking about what makes a good, strong

review and what sinks a review. **We'll host Carly Maga from the *Toronto Star* and she will give us all the required intel. Don't miss it!**

Your review can be handed in as a traditional piece of written text, or you can choose to make a video of it and upload that to YouTube. **If you choose the latter option**, please make your video private until Kim or Sheetala has a chance to mark it. Provide your video's URL via OWL. Note that your video should take as long as it takes to read, comfortably, 750 words.

3. Final project, very much your choice

Value: 30%

Due: Thursday 12 December; BUT bring draft materials to our final class on 5 December for feedback!

Protocol: hand your final draft in via OWL, by 11:55pm on the due date, or make arrangements with Kim and/or Sheetala to collect non-traditional project materials

The content of your final project should follow one of the critical models we will have studied together in our course readings. For example, you might:

- ❖ Do a “cultural materialist” analysis of one of the theatres we have visited together, following the work of Michael McKinnie, Jen Harvie, or Ric Knowles;
- ❖ Do a “performance studies” analysis of one of the events we attended (event = the show plus all the attendant stuff you do when you go to/follow a show), based on the work of Harvie, Carter, or Ormsby;
- ❖ Think critically about the politics of walking in or inhabiting the city, following De Certeau or Phadke, Ranade and Khan;
- ❖ Think deeply about the intercultural politics of a show we attended, using Knowles, Carter, or Ormsby as your model;
- ❖ Explore the thesis that Toronto, or Stratford, or London (!), qualifies as a “global city”, using Sassen as a starting point (but note: don't stop at Sassen...!); OR...
- ❖ Pitch something else (the earlier the better, please) and surprise us!

The structure/form of your final project can be any one of the following:

- ❖ A written essay, featuring a research question, as well as a thesis statement (IE: an argument developed from your research question and sustained over the course of the paper). This should be 1500 words in length, +/- 10% (150 words);
- ❖ A piece of creative writing responding to the issues you've chosen to explore and the critical model you've chosen to use. This should be 1500 words in length, +/- 10% (150 words);
- ❖ An audio or video piece responding to the issues you've chosen to explore and the critical model you've chosen to use. This should be 5-7 minutes in length. (If you choose this option, please upload to YouTube and make your recording private until Kim or Sheetala has a chance to mark it. Provide your video's URL via OWL.)
- ❖ Have something else in mind? Come by and tell us about it. We might say no, but we might also say yes.

The final project fine print:

- ❖ Every project, regardless of form, must include a bibliography of works consulted. The bibliography does not count toward your word count.
- ❖ On Thursday 5 December we will hold a final project workshop, as part of our last class together. In teams you'll share one page, or the equivalent, of draft work (an outline; a draft introduction; snippets of video; a treatment for creative work; etc) and engage one another in feedback. Kim and Sheetala will facilitate this, offering feedback as well.
- ❖ If you want to do well on the final project, it's a good idea to come to office hours to chat with Kim or Sheetala well in advance. Pitch your idea and get some assistance, some helpful feedback! If you're on track, or off, we'll let you know, and we'll help you keep moving. Notice that our reading load lightens *considerably* after reading week; use this free space to do some research toward your final project and bring it to office hours to talk it through!

4. Teamwork project

Value: 10% (all team members get the same grade. Yes, we know.)

Due: By midnight the day BEFORE the theatre trip to which your project is linked

Protocol: via OWL, on the OWL Wiki tool

Each time we go to the theatre we'll be going to a new venue in a new place. Each community or neighbourhood we visit will have its own rich histories and hidden stories. Each theatre will have a different backstory of its own, sometimes a controversial one. As our course readings will teach us, these stories are integral to our experience at the theatre, and to our understanding of the works that get produced there. So: we need to know these stories.

This task asks you to work in teams to answer the questions: "where are we going next, and what should we know before we get there?" To help you navigate this task, you'll explore the following sub-questions:

- ❖ What is this theatre? What is important to know about its history?
- ❖ Who runs this theatre, and what is the mandate they follow? What else has this person/these people done?
- ❖ Where are we? What neighbourhood are we in, and how is the theatre connected to it?
- ❖ Who made the play we are seeing? Who are the playwright, director, designer(s)? What else have they done lately?
- ❖ What critical response has this work received so far? Have preview pieces been written? Who wrote them? What do they tell us about what to expect?

Your team's answers to these questions can and should include links to information you've found online, but be sure to include more than just links: write a short (+/- 250 words) synopsis of what you've discovered *for each bullet point*, and let us know (briefly) what to expect from each link we click (IE: annotate your links). Remember that you don't need to say EVERYTHING you've found; *a big part of the task is selecting highlights you think the class should know before we go to the theatre.*

We know teamwork is hard; it's also a fact of working life. That's why you're working in teams for this task: to learn how to do it in ways that don't suck. So, YOU decide HOW your team will function. Maybe you just divide up the questions and each contribute independently, foregoing the stress of collaboration. Maybe you assign pairs to each question. Maybe everyone does a bit of everything. Your call.

Your final grade will be a group grade; again, that's hard, but it's also reality in most workplaces. Just remember that you're accountable to one another: if you're a jackass and do nothing your teammates will not appreciate it, and they'll show it. On the flip, if you're the one who always tries to run the whole shebang, and you're feeling really frustrated, ask yourself what would happen if you backed off. Would you get a poorer grade? Maybe. Will it seriously impact your final course grade? Likely not. (Trust us: likely not.) Make a call that works for you.

If you're having a serious problem with your team, tell Kim or Sheetala. They won't fix it for you, but they'll help you strategize a way to deal with it.

5. Participation

Value: 10%

Due: every darn day, PLUS two informal participation reflections, due Friday 1 November and Friday 6 December

Protocol: upload your reflections to OWL by 11:55pm on the due dates

We don't need to tell you all what it means to participate; you already know the spiel. What you might not realize is that nobody is awesome at participation all the time; participation is a practice. So in this class we ask you to do three things in order to aim for 100% participation:

1. *Work on engaging in ways that are usual for you, but also ways that are new for you.* That might mean you challenge yourself to talk more than usual, or you challenge yourself to talk less than usual. That might mean you work harder to support your peers. That might mean you think more carefully about how and when you take on a leadership role. Be a *reflective* participant, as well as a respectful one.
2. *Keep some notes on your participation.* When and where do you do well? What needs work in your practice? These notes will help you process what is and isn't working for you in class; they will also help you easily to craft your two participation reflections, which are 300-500 word documents due twice in the term.
3. *Remember to upload your reflection documents!* These reflections are not graded for grammar, spelling, or anything else – they are NOT essays. They are meant simply to reflect your own, honest thinking about your participation practice. Enjoy this process! We'll spend some time in class working on these, but you'll get the most out of this part of the task if you take it seriously all through the term.

NB: If you miss more than one class without accommodation, you will forfeit your entire 10% participation mark; if you fail to hand in a participation reflection, you will forfeit half of your 10% participation mark (or the whole thing, if you hand in neither reflection).

Three key protocol notes for assessments

One: RUBRICS

Every assessment above has a rubric that Kim and Sheetala use for marking. The rubric tells you what an “A” assignment, a “B” assignment, a “C” assignment, and a “D” assignment looks like. Find these on OWL, in the portal for each individual assignment. There’s also a “hard” virtual copy of all rubrics in the Resources folder on OWL.

Two: LATE WORK AND ACCOMMODATION

Late work *for which you do not have accommodation* is penalized at 2% per day, *not including weekend days*.

You can request official accommodation due to extenuating circumstances online (through the self-report portal, twice per academic year), or through your academic counsellor.

- The new UWO Policy on Accommodation can be found here:
https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/Academic_Consideration_for_absences.pdf
- Information from the Faculty of Arts and Humanities academic counselling office is here:
https://www.uwo.ca/arts/counselling/procedures/medical_accommodation.html

Three: PLAGIARISM

Just say no to stealing stuff! Your original work is way more interesting, and contains fewer errors, *guaranteed*. 😊

- Students must write/create their assignments in their own words. Whenever you take an idea or passage from another author, you must acknowledge your debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence.
- All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com <http://www.turnitin.com>.
- All instances of plagiarism will be reported to the Chair of Undergraduate Studies. Proven cases of plagiarism will result in a grade of zero for the assignment. Subsequent offences will result in failure for the course.

September 5: Welcome! All things introductory.

September 12: Concepts and methods in urban theatre and performance studies

- **Reading:** Harvie; Sassen

September 19: Backstories – Toronto in/as Performance

- **Reading:** Knowles; Bennett; Wilson

September 26 : Theatre trip to THE THEATRE CENTRE to see NO FOREIGNERS

- Meet at 4pm in front of Talbot College (at the parking circle)
- **Reading:** McKinnie (make a start; finish for next week)

October 3: The intercultural city vs the global city

- Debrief of *No Foreigners*; discussion of McKinnie

TUESDAY OCTOBER 8: Theatre trip to STRATFORD to see BIRDS OF A KIND

October 10: Toronto vs Stratford! Ecological observations...

- Debrief of *Birds*
- **Reading:** Ormsby

October 17: Theatre trip to THE GRAND THEATRE to see THIS LONDON LIFE

- Curtain is 7:30pm; get yourself there for 7:15pm!
- **Reading:** De Certeau; Phadke, Ranade and Khan (make a start, finish for next week)
- **TASK:** take a walk in the city. (London, that is.) Define a start point, and set a time limit, but don't make any other maps or plans. Where do you end up? What did you see, hear, feel? Take some photos, or video, or make some notes. Bring them to class next week.

October 24: Walking in the city

- Debrief of *This London Life*; discussion of De Certeau, Phadke, Ranade and Khan, and your walks!

October 31: Theatre trip to SOULPEPPER to see ALMIGHTY VOICE AND HIS WIFE

- Meet at 4pm in front of Talbot College (at the parking circle)
- **Reading:** Carter (make a start; finish for next week)

November 7 is READING WEEK!

November 14: Decolonizing the city? The theatre? The audience?

- Debrief of *Almighty Voice*; discussion of Carter

November 21: Reviewing workshop with Carly Maga from the *Toronto Star*!

- Remember to bring your draft reviews to class!

November 28: Theatre trip to FACTORY to see BETWEEN BREATHS

- Meet at 4pm in front of Talbot College (at the parking circle)
- **No reading this week!** Have you started your final project yet...?!

December 5: We made it!

- final project workshop – bring your work in progress!
- Final participation reflection – we will work toward it...
- ... plus concluding thoughts + holiday treats

<i>Course readings with full citations</i>
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Bennett, Susan. "Toronto's Spectacular Stage." 2005. *Theatre and Performance in Toronto*. Ed. Laura Levin. Toronto: Playwrights Canada Press, 2011. 105-18.

Carter, Jill. "Discarding Sympathy, Disrupting Catharsis: The Mortification of Indigenous Flesh as Survivance-Intervention." *Theatre Journal* 67.3 (2015): 413-32.

De Certeau, Michel. "Walking in the City." *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Trans. Steven F. Rendall. Berkeley: University of California P, 1984. 91-110. **(91-102 ONLY)**

Harvie, Jen. *Theatre & The City*. Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2009.

Knowles, Ric. "Multicultural Text, Intercultural Performance." *Performing the Intercultural City*. Ann Arbor: U Michigan P, 2017. 23-43.

McKinnie, Michael. "Institutional Frameworks: Theatre, State, and Market in Modern Urban Performance." *A Cultural History of Theatre in the Modern Age*. Ed. Kim Solga. London: Bloomsbury, 2017.

Ormsby, Robert. "Intercultural Performance and The Stratford Festival as Global Tourist Place: Leon Rubin's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Twelfth Night*." *Shakespeare and Canada: Remembrance of Ourselves*. Ed. Irena R. Makaryk and Kathryn Prince. Ottawa: U Ottawa P, 2017. 35-56.

Phadke, Shilpa, Shilpa Ranade and Sameera Khan. "Why Loiter? Radical Possibilities for Gendered Dissent." *Dissent and Cultural Resistance in Asia's Cities*. Ed. Melissa Butcher and Selvaraj Velayutham. London: Routledge, 2009.

Sassen, Saskia. "The Global City: Introducing a Concept." *Brown Journal of World Affairs* 11.2 (2005): 27-43.

Wilson, Carl. "The Party Line: Toronto's Turn Toward a Participatory Aesthetics." *The State of the Arts: Living With Culture in Toronto*. Ed. Alana Wilcox, Christina Palassio, and Jonny Dovercourt. Toronto: Coach House Books, 2006.