

TH114-30 Theatre and Performance in Context

22/23

Department

SCAPVC - Theatre and Performance Studies

Level

Undergraduate Level 1

Module leader

Bobby Smith

Credit value

30

Module duration

27 weeks

Assessment

100% coursework

Study location

University of Warwick main campus, Coventry

Description

Introductory description

n/a.

[Module web page](#)

Module aims

In this module students will explore the inter-related disciplines of theatre and performance, considering some of the key conceptual and artistic frameworks that have shaped the fields. Throughout the module students will engage with the sociopolitical and historical contexts that have informed these frameworks and the ways in which theatre and performance not only reflects, but also seeks to change and shape, society. The autumn term introduces key concepts and paradigms in theatre and performance studies, questioning the boundaries of both disciplines, the role of the performer and of audiences, and uncovering how theatre and performance can tell us more about our histories, cultures, societies and identities. In the spring term, these understandings are applied to more rooted case studies, with a series of lectures and seminars focusing on key events in theatre and/or performance. This term introduces students to a range of examples ranging from European to non-European performance, 'canonical' events and

alternative practices. The module aims to hone academic writing and presentation skills, with formative and summative assessments designed to enable students to develop their writing and research skills in relation to the contexts of theatre and performance which will serve them throughout their degree.

The module therefore aims to:

- Equip students with a broad understanding of the key issues and theoretical concepts underpinning the study of theatre and performance
- Investigate how theatre and performance can inform understandings of wider society, including politics, cultures, identities
- Explore the sociopolitical and cultural contexts in which particular theatre and performance events and practices emerged
- Examine how politics and culture intersect with the study of theatre and performance

Outline syllabus

This is an indicative module outline only to give an indication of the sort of topics that may be covered. Actual sessions held may differ.

AUTUMN TERM: INTRODUCING THEATRE AND PERFORMANCE: KEY CONCEPTS AND PARADIGMS

This first term will seek to develop a varied conceptual framework through which students can begin to understand and contextualise theatre and performance practices and events

WEEK 1: What is theatre?

WEEK 2: What is performance?

WEEK 3: Challenging theatre and performance: ritual and non-European forms

WEEK 4: Modes of performance and representation

WEEK 5: Audiences and spectatorship

WEEK 6: READING WEEK

UNIT 1: PERFORMING IDENTITIES – This first block will engage with two key questions: how does theatre and performance respond to, and shape, understandings of identities? And how can theatre and performance studies help us to raise questions about identity, or to understand identities more fully?

WEEK 7: Performing identities 1: Race and ethnicity

WEEK 8: Performing identities 2: Social class, ideology and hegemony

WEEK 9: Performing identities 3: Gender and sexuality

WEEK 10: Summative written assessment feedback

SPRING TERM: SIGNIFICANT MOMENTS AND EVENTS IN THEATRE AND PERFORMANCE

Members of the Department will focus on a significant theatre or performance event, considering the sociopolitical and historical context against which this event emerged, investigating the aims and ambitions of the example they present but stopping short of performance analysis.

Throughout this term, the seminar session will challenge students to engage with what the examples of theatre and performance tell us about the questions raised around identity covered in the previous term. Some seminar sessions will specifically reflect back on some of the themes

raised in the previous term, as indicated below.

UNIT 2: THEN AND NOW – This first block considers historical examples of theatre and performance and how they relate to the contemporary context

WEEK 1: Greek Theatre: Then and now (e.g. *Lysistrata* and *The Common Chorus* with seminar focus on gender and sexuality)

WEEK 2: Elizabethan playhouses

WEEK 3: Performance, colonialism and postcolonialism (e.g. Ngugi wa Thiong'o: *I will marry when I want* and *Decolonising the Mind* with seminar focus on hegemony, race and ethnicity)

UNIT 3: RADICAL ACTS: This second block will focus more specifically on some of the contemporary radical moments in theatre and performance that have reshaped the field

WEEK 4: Community and participation (e.g. Joan Littlewood and *Theatre Workshop* with seminar focus on social class, ideology, hegemony)

WEEK 5: Revolt (e.g. French street theatre and/or US political theatre in the 70s with seminar focus on ideology and hegemony)

WEEK 6: READING WEEK

WEEK 7: Deconstructions (e.g. *Wooster Group* with seminar focus on modes of performance and spectatorship)

UNIT 3: FUTURE CONTEXTS: This final block offers a provocation of the future of theatre and performance.

WEEK 8: Performance and the digital revolution

WEEK 9: Emergent dramaturgies

WEEK 10: Plenary session: Where do we think theatre and performance studies will be in 10 years?

SUMMER TERM: OVER TO YOU

During this term, students will research the contexts that shaped one moment or event in theatre and performance. They will then share their research through a 10-minute poster presentation in their seminar groups during week

WEEK 1: Introducing the task

WEEK 2: Creating a research poster

WEEK 5: Research presentation skills

WEEK 8: Research poster presentations (assessed)

Learning outcomes

By the end of the module, students should be able to:

- - Demonstrate an increased awareness of the sociopolitical and historical contexts against which key events, practices or movements in theatre and performance have taken place
- - Position their analyses of theatre and performance events in terms of their sociopolitical and historical contexts and significance
- - Utilise their increased understanding of how wider society shapes, and is shaped by, theatre and performance to consider the significance and value of art to society

- - Draw on a range of conceptual and artistic frameworks to interrogate theatre and performance
- - Independently draw on relevant theories to research theatre and performance, presenting their findings using appropriate academic conventions

Indicative reading list

Bial, H. (Ed.) (2007) *The Performance Studies Reader*, Abingdon, Routledge.

Fisher et al. (2016) *Theatre Histories: An Introduction*, London, Routledge.

Mangan, M. (2013) *The Drama, Theatre and Performance Companion*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan.

Reynolds, B. (2014) *Performance Studies: Key Words, Concepts and Theories*, Red Globe.

Schechner, R. (2013) *Performance Studies: An Introduction*, London, Routledge.

Shepherd, S. (2016) *The Cambridge Introduction to Performance Theory*, Cambridge, CUP.

Journals:

Contemporary Theatre Review, New Theatre Quarterly, Studies in Theatre and Performance, Performance Research

Subject specific skills

- Demonstrate an increased awareness of the sociopolitical and historical contexts against which key events, practices or movements in theatre and performance have taken place
- Position their analyses of theatre and performance event in terms of their sociopolitical and historical contexts and significance
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Transferable skills

- Independent writing and research skills
- Skills in developing and presenting research and information

Study

Study time

Type	Required
Lectures	18 sessions of 1 hour (6%)
Seminars	22 sessions of 2 hours (15%)
Tutorials	2 sessions of 1 hour (1%)
Project supervision	3 sessions of 30 minutes (0%)
Fieldwork	10 sessions of (0%)
Other activity	4 hours 30 minutes (1%)
Private study	230 hours (77%)
Total	300 hours

Private study description

- Reading for each lecture
- Reading for each seminar
- Independent research for assessments (in particular final assessment)

Other activity description

Group tutorials: 3 x 1.5 hour research poster presentation sessions in seminar groups

Costs

No further costs have been identified for this module.

Assessment

You do not need to pass all assessment components to pass the module.

Assessment group A2

	Weighting	Study time
1000 word timed task (Autumn Term)	10%	
Students set a range of questions to respond to with a week deadline		
10 mins research poster (Summer Term)	40%	
10 mins Research poster presentation (summer term)		
2500 word essay (Spring Term)	50%	
2,500 word essay (spring term)		

Feedback on assessment

Formative 1,000 word written task: 30 mins oral feedback and written feedback in autumn term
Written feedback on 2,500 word essay in spring term
Written feedback on research poster presentation in summer term

Availability

Courses

This module is Core for:

- Year 1 of UTHA-QW34 Undergraduate English and Theatre Studies
- Year 1 of UGEA-RW24 Undergraduate German and Theatre Studies
- Year 1 of UHPA-R4W4 Undergraduate Hispanic Studies and Theatre Studies
- Year 1 of ULNA-R3WA Undergraduate Italian and Theatre Studies
- UTHA-W421 Undergraduate Theatre and Performance Studies
 - Year 1 of W421 Theatre and Performance Studies
 - Year 1 of W421 Theatre and Performance Studies
- Year 1 of UTHA-W422 Undergraduate Theatre and Performance Studies (with Intercalated Year)
- Year 1 of UIPA-W4L8 Undergraduate Theatre and Performance Studies and Global Sustainable Development

This module is Core option list B for:

- Year 1 of UGEA-RW24 Undergraduate German and Theatre Studies