

TH355-15 Theatre and Colonialism

24/25

Department

SCAPVC - Theatre and Performance Studies

Level

Undergraduate Level 3

Module leader

Rashna Nicholson

Credit value

15

Module duration

10 weeks

Assessment

100% coursework

Study location

University of Warwick main campus, Coventry

Description

Introductory description

What are the links between theatre and colonialism? How have theatrical ways of seeing, knowing, and performing shaped colonialism and how has performance been imbricated in colonial logics? Concurrently, how has theatre and performance resisted imperialist expansionism? This module explores these questions while avoiding any claims to providing a comprehensive survey of theatre and colonialism. It invites students to analyse the relationship between theatre, performance and colonialism in diverse political, economic and socio-cultural forms through specific case studies from the eighteenth to the twenty-first centuries—Shakespeare and the British Raj, neoliberalization and Disney, development and applied theatre, the modern university and decolonization. Activities in class will take a number of formats. Through seminar discussions, lectures, workshops, play readings, and performance analyses, the module will introduce students to a range of research topics, critical concepts, and socio-political debates stemming from diverse geographic contexts.

Module aims

This module explores how theatre and performance intersect with colonialism in its numerous, diverse forms. Through the lens of theatre, students will learn to critically understand key transnational debates and issues regarding colonialism's cross-cultural historical legacies, contested continuities and resistance movements. They will also acquire an interdisciplinary

understanding of how postcolonial theory and decolonial methodological frameworks can be employed in theatre research and performance practice.

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.

Part 1: Colonial History, Theatre and Performance

Week 1 The British Empire, Shakespeare and Victorian Theatre.

Week 2 – Parsi Theatre

Week 3 – Slavery, African Decolonization and Fanon.

Week 4 – Edward Said, Kanafani and the issue of Palestine

Week 5 – Postcolonialism and postcolonial theatre

Week 6 – Reading Week

Part 2: Neocolonialism, Theatre and Performance

Week 7 – Exhibitions, Tourism and Performance

Week 8 – The Politics of Development and Applied Theatre

Week 9 – Disney and Urban Development

Week 10 – Decolonising Theatre and Performance Studies.

Learning outcomes

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

- Evaluate the multidirectional impact between theatre and performance and colonialism from historical, geopolitical, and affective perspectives.
- Demonstrate an understanding of postcolonial theory and decolonial methodologies as well as their practical applicability to social and cultural problems.
- Analyse how theatre makers have reinforced, intervened in, and subverted colonialist modes of knowledge production.
- Develop communication and analytical skills that will enable them to critically interrogate their own and others practice.

Indicative reading list

- Gainor, J. Ellen (1995) *Imperialism and Theatre*, Routledge.
- Poore, Benjamin (2016) *Theatre and Empire*, Bloomsbury.
- Leichman, Jeffrey M.; Bénac-Giroux, Karine (2021) *Colonialism and Slavery in Performance: Theatre and the Eighteenth-century French Caribbean*, Liverpool University Press
- Viswanathan, Gauri (2014) *Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India*, Columbia: Columbia University Press.
- Bratton, J. S.; Cave, Richard; Gregory, Brendan; Pickering, Michael (2021), *Acts of Supremacy: The British Empire and the Stage, 1790-1930*, Manchester University Press.
- Fanon, Frantz (2020) *The Plays From Alienation and Freedom*, Bloomsbury.
- Said, Edward (1993) *Culture and Imperialism*, New York: Knopf.
- Gilbert, Helen; Tompkins, Joanne (1996) *Post-Colonial Drama: Theory, Practice, Politics*,

Routledge.

- Kanafani, Ghassan (1969) *Returning to Haifa*, adapted by Ismail Khalidi and Naomi Wallace, Faber.
- Roy, Arundhati (2006) *An Ordinary Person's Guide to Empire*, Penguin Books Limited.
- Prentki, Tim (2015) *Applied Theatre: Development*, Bloomsbury.
- Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Barbara (1998) *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums, and Heritage*, University of California Press.
- Wickstrom, Maurya (2006) *Performing Consumers: Global Capital and Its Theatrical Seductions*, Routledge.
- Werry, Margaret (2023) *Theatre and Tourism*, Bloomsbury.
- Bhambra, Gurinder K.; Gebrial, Dalia; Nişancioğlu, Kerem (2018) *Decolonizing the University*, Pluto Press.
- Bala, Sruti (2017) 'Decolonising Theatre and Performance Studies', *Tijdschrift voor Genderstudies*, Volume 20, Issue 3, p. 333 – 345.

Research element

Each week students will need to understand the context in which canonical concepts and theories, performances and written plays, were produced. As part of the module, students will need to conduct independent research related to the concepts and methods being discussed.

Interdisciplinary

The module engages with issues that are comprehensively covered in fields such as comparative literature, cultural studies, modern history and tourism studies.

International

This module considers concepts and case studies from the Indian subcontinent, the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Algeria and the US.

Subject specific skills

- Identify colonialism as a social category and historical formation that shapes frameworks and systems of the present comprising theatre and performance.
- Develop a critical understanding of the mutual impact between theatre and colonialism.
- Gain knowledge of key debates and ideas in the study of colonialism in relation to theatre and performance.
- Apply canonical theories and modes of analysis acquired from the module to consider theatre and performance in relation to power.

Transferable skills

- research skills • critical thinking • problem solving • analytical skills • reflective practice • cross-cultural understanding

Study

Study time

Type	Required
Seminars	9 sessions of 2 hours (12%)
Tutorials	2 sessions of 1 hour (1%)
Private study	50 hours (33%)
Assessment	80 hours (53%)
Total	150 hours

Private study description

Students will need to prepare for class by reading the required texts and watching videos. They will also have to conduct independent research and reading for their assignments.

Costs

No further costs have been identified for this module.

Assessment

You must pass all assessment components to pass the module.

Assessment group A

	Weighting	Study time	Eligible for self-certification
Assessment component			
Essay	50%	40 hours	Yes (extension)
Students are invited to write an essay that explores the relationship between theatre and performance and colonialism, using one or two specific historical examples and a clearly denoted critical angle. What does the term colonialism mean according to the historical time-frame under consideration? Does the performance function as a form of resistance against or a reinforcement of imperialist frameworks? You are expected to refer to one or more of the texts that we have studied in class to illustrate your arguments and to include a bibliography.			

	Weighting	Study time	Eligible for self-certification
Reassessment component is the same			
Assessment component			
Radio Drama/Documentary	50%	40 hours	Yes (extension)
The final assignment for this course is a radio drama/radio documentary. Students are invited to create an mp3 sound recording of a play, docudrama or non-fictional discussion that they have written based on the theme of theatre/performance and colonialism. The recording should demonstrate critical engagement with one or more of the issues and methodologies discussed in class.			
Reassessment component			
Reflection on Decolonization and theatre			Yes (extension)
The student should reflect critically on theatre's role in the contemporary decolonization movement within or outside the university. Some of the questions that may be explored are: can performance decolonize theatre history; how can decolonizing methodologies be meaningfully applied to contemporary performance practice; how does the decolonization trope itself become a tool for colonization?			
Feedback on assessment			
Written feedback via Tabula			

Availability

Courses

This module is Optional for:

- Year 4 of UENA-QW35 Undergraduate English and Theatre Studies with Intercalated Year
- Year 3 of UTHA-W421 Undergraduate Theatre and Performance Studies

This module is Option list B for:

- Year 3 of UTHA-QW34 Undergraduate English and Theatre Studies
- Year 3 of UTHA-W421 Undergraduate Theatre and Performance Studies