

B.A. (Honours) in Contemporary English Studies

Course Title	:	Theatre as Visual Spectacle
Course Code	:	ENG382
Recommended Study Year	:	2 nd & 3 rd Year
No. of Credits/Term	:	3
Mode of Tuition	:	Lecture and Tutorial
Class Contact Hours	:	2 hours Lecture/week 1 hour Tutorial/week
Category in Major Programme	:	Disciplinary Elective
Prerequisite(s)	:	N/A
Co-requisite(s)	:	N/A
Exclusion(s)	:	N/A
Exemption Requirement(s)	:	N/A

Brief Course Description

This course is designed to help students to process their experience of aesthetic / cultural products and dramatic phenomena from a visual perspective. It will be both creative and critical, and will thereby encourage and facilitate students' efforts to respond articulately, knowledgeably and with personal evaluation to aspects of the theatre experience in general. Students will be expected not only to produce reviews of performances they attend, but also to keep a record or journal of their experiences. They will also need to complete a short study of the relationship between pictorial art and live performance, with an emphasis on performance venue and stage décor, as well as to produce creative ideas of their own.

Aims

The intention is for this course to promote a semi-autonomous but guided learning mode and give students a greater sense of confidence in their own judgment and response to aesthetic and cultural experience. Students will be encouraged to explore their own creative and critical sensibilities collectively and individually. The target language will be English but Chinese cultural products will be included for aesthetic consideration.

Learning Outcomes

Students will be expected to 1) develop their aesthetic awareness and sensitivity to cultural products and their ability to express the same through the target language; 2) increase their appreciation and understanding of the semiotic features of texts in performance; 3) enhance their critical writing and listening skills; 4) promote their fluency, confidence and questioning skills through discussion and dialogue; 5) reflect on cultural, intercultural and cross-cultural phenomena as experienced in their visits to venues and performances; 6) develop powers of creative design and increase their

awareness of matters of aesthetic judgment.

Indicative Content

1. Study areas and input
 - a) Aesthetics and perspectives. Theatre design; theatre sets, lighting, costumes, décor; masks; theatre as ritual
 - b) Audiences: cultural production and reception; theatre semiotics
 - c) Venues – symbolic and literal spaces Proscenium arch; pictorial stages;; stylized theatre; naturalism; minimalism
 - d) Theatre types – east and west – e.g. Greek tragedy / comedy; Chinese Opera; western ballet; kathakali Grand opera; Musicals; Kabuki and Noh; Commedia del Arte, Playback, Street theatre; Modern dance; Puppet theatre
 - e) Hong Kong venues and Hong Kong arts policy
2. Theatre visits – Visit to theatre(s) as venues plus attendance of at least ONE live performance for review purposes
3. Gallery / museum visits – Visits to at least 2 of the following:
 - a) Hong Kong Arts Centre
 - b) Hong Kong Cultural Centre and Museum of Art
 - c) Hong Kong Academy of Performing Arts
 - d) Hong Kong History Museum
 - e) Hong Kong Heritage Museum
 - f) Hong Kong Fringe Club
4. Project work on theatre design (Small group work) – Assisted by talks given by visiting theatre designers and performance artists

Teaching Method

Seminar; discussion (as appropriate); experiential visit; workshop

Measurement of Learning Outcomes

Students' progress towards the learning outcomes outlined above will be measured by continuous assessments of their engagement with lectures, individual and group readings and tutorial discussions and presentations. Speaking/ presenting/ performing tasks will be of a group nature while written tasks will be individual.

Assessment

1. 1 short piece of writing, reviewing a theatre production / performance (15%)
2. 1 medium-length essay on the relationship between pictorial art and performance with reference to theory and practice (30%)
3. 1 generic journal / log-book covering the totality of the course experience (25%)

4. 1 short project in groups presenting plans for a theatre production design, plus an oral presentation showcasing the project (30%)

Required Readings

Students will be expected to familiarize themselves with the scripts/scenarios of performances they attend as far as possible. They will also be expected to read reviews of a number of local and / or international performances in order to familiarize themselves with the appropriate style for review-writing / criticism. Other cultural, aesthetic and socio-historical reading material will depend on the emphasis they give to their project. Typically students can be expected to read newspapers and magazines such as *SCMP*; *BC magazine*; *HK magazine* and others.

Bennett, Susan, *Theatre Audiences: A Theory of Production and Reception*, London: Routledge, 1997 (extracts).

Brandt, George (Ed.), *Modern Theories of Drama*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998 (Extracts).

Russell-Brown, J. (Ed.), *The Oxford Illustrated History of Theatre*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.