

HL2045:

Workshop in Theatre Practice

Jan - Apr 2025

Lecturer: A/P Charlene Rajendran (charlene.r@nie.edu.sg / 67903553)

Day/Time/Venue: Monday 1430-1730 @ Nanyang Playhouse Performance Space

Course Description:

This module engages students in theatre making processes that focus on learning and analysing the skills and capacities of directing and dramaturgy. It explores the theories, practices and philosophies that underpin the work of directing and dramaturgy as critical aspects of theatre-making and production.

Students will examine how theatre directing is informed by particular aims and objectives, ideologies and aesthetics that engage a director. Students will also develop dramaturgical approaches to researching, critiquing and questioning how dramaturgical frameworks can be concretised and advanced. Students will engage in directing a short excerpt of a play, and developing a dramaturgical framework in relation to the research and development of a performance process.

Course Structure

The course is taught as an integration of theory and practice, drawing on conversational methods of pedagogy and a seminar-workshop approach that requires the participation of students. Each weekly 3-hour session will include practical sessions and reflective dialogue based on readings and tasks specified. Students would be required to complete the assigned readings and to come prepared for practical exploration and discussion. This workshop will involve:

1. Participatory workshops that involve improvisation and rehearsal, directing and dramaturging.
2. Theoretical and reflective discussions that pertain to directing and dramaturgical processes and readings that relate to theatre making
3. Rehearsals and feedback discussions on choices and decisions, dialogue and listening for theatre making.

Learning Outcomes:

Students will learn to:

1. develop a basic understanding of theatre making through a process of directing and developing dramaturgical approaches to text and performance
2. explore and examine some principles of directing and dramaturgy in relation to text-based theatre-making
3. engage as directors for short performances of already published texts
4. experiment with dramaturgical frames in relation to proposed performance projects

Assessment:

PART I: Production Performance Task ▪ details provided separately below	Team/Individual	40%
	Due: Week 12/13	
PART II: Production Project Book ▪ details provided separately below	Individual	35%
	Due: Week 14	
PART III: Presentation • details provided separately below	Individual	15%
	Due: Week 8/9	
PART IV: Participation	Individual	10%

STUDENT GROUPS WILL BE DECIDED AND ALLOCATED DEPENDING ON THE FINAL SIZE OF THE CLASS AND INTERESTS OF THE STUDENTS

Assessment Deadlines

- Please observe all stipulated deadlines. If there is a non-submission and no exemption has been sought or approved prior, the assignment will receive no mark. Note that reasons such as ‘assignment attachment trapped in “Sent” box’ or other technical or technological explanations will not be entertained.
- All assignments must be uploaded via Turnitin, found in NTULearn.
- Note that there will be a 5 mark penalty for every day that an assignment is late (i.e. after it is logged by Turnitin as a ‘late’ submission).
- If an extension is required, in cases of exceptional circumstance, the lecturer must be informed at least three days in advance. Note that exemptions can only be granted with proof of the exceptional circumstance (e.g. medical certificate).
- Note also that any assignment, even with given extension, will not be accepted after 5 days (including weekends and public holidays).

Attendance & Punctuality

Students should note that NIE takes a serious view to attendance. Attendance is a strict requirement for Theatre-Based modules and absences not covered by valid documentary evidence will be taken into account in the final assessment, as this will impact the student's capacity to execute the assessment tasks. In modules which involve group work / collaboration, students are also expected to be present for group rehearsals when necessary. Should there be issues arising such as, but not limited to, absence from rehearsals, or lack of collaborative effort, the student's performance will be affected and the student will be assessed accordingly. As poor attendance affects the individual student's learning as well as the capacity for group work to be executed effectively, this is done to ensure that all students act responsibly and do not negatively impact the learning and assessment process for their peers. Students are also expected to be punctual for classes. Extreme lateness (i.e. more than 30 minutes) without prior arrangement or valid explanation can be regarded as absence from class. The lecturer is also to be informed prior to the class should you not be able to attend.

Academic Dishonesty and Plagiarism Warning

NTU takes a serious view of any form of academic dishonesty. The Nanyang Technological University (NTU) Plagiarism Framework defines Academic Dishonest in the following ways:

Plagiarism: To use or pass off as one's own, writings or ideas of another, without acknowledging or crediting the source from which the ideas are taken. This includes:

- The use of words, images, diagrams, graphs or ideas derived from books, journals, magazines, visual media, and the internet without proper acknowledgement;
- Copying of work from any source (e.g. the internet) and presenting as one's own; and
- Submitting the same piece of work for different courses or to different journals and publications.

Academic Fraud: A form of academic dishonesty involving cheating, lying and stealing. This includes but is not limited to:

- Cheating - Bringing or having access to unauthorised books or materials during an examination or assessment, or in any work to be used by the lecturer, tutor, instructor or examiner as a basis of grading.
- Collusion - Copying the work of another student, having another person write one's assignments, or allowing other students to contribute to one's work when it is not permitted.
- Falsification of Data – Fabrication or alteration of data to mislead, such as changing data to get better experiment results.

- False Citation – Citing a source that was never utilised or attributing work to a source from which the referenced material was not obtained.
- Contract Cheating - Students get academic work completed on their behalf, usually involving the payment of a fee to a third party, which they submit as their own.

Facilitating Academic Dishonesty: This includes allowing another student to copy an assignment that is supposed to be done individually, allowing another student to copy answers during an examination/assessment and taking an examination/assessment or doing an assignment for another student.

Academic Dishonesty affects the University’s reputation and devalues the degrees offered. Plagiarism is regarded as a very serious offence by the University. It is considered as an instance of violation of the NTU Honour Code which could warrant disciplinary actions ranging from failing the assignment, failing the course, suspension and ultimately to expulsion from the University.

Generative AI: generative AI (such as ChatGPT) is not designed for research and is inclined to make things up. If you intend to use generative AI for your work in *any* capacity, you must get written permission from the course tutor first. You must follow the university’s prevailing policies about how to acknowledge the use of generative AI in your work. Although it can be a useful tool, you must not use it to replace your own thinking or learning.

THIS IS A PROPOSED SCHEDULE WHICH MAY BE ADJUSTED ACCORDING TO TOTAL NUMBER OF STUDENTS WHO ENROL IN THE MODULE

Course Schedule: (readings are available on Blackboard)

Week 1	13 Jan	Introduction to Theatre Making: Working with Directorial Vision and Theoretical Frameworks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘The art of collaboration: On dramaturgy and directing’ – Anne Bogart and Jackson Gay (in <i>The Routledge Companion to Dramaturgy</i>) • ‘The Director’s Mind’ – Robert Benedetti (in <i>The Director at Work</i>)
Week 2	20 Jan	Examining a Text for Directorial Purposes: Engaging Artistic Purpose and Envisioning the Performance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘Why the Director?’ & ‘What Is A Play’ – Francis Hodge (in <i>Play Directing: Analysis, Communication and Style</i>) • ‘What A Director Does’ & ‘The Director as Translator’ - Robert Benedetti (in <i>The Director at Work</i>)
Week 3	27 Jan	Examining a Text using Dramaturgical Frames: Explicating Narrative, Story, Character, Plot <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘What is Dramaturgy’ – Cathy Turner and Synne K. Behrndt (in <i>Dramaturgy and Performance</i>) • ‘Dramaturgy as skill, function and verb’ – Lawrence Switzky (in <i>The Routledge Companion to Dramaturgy</i>)

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Dramaturgy on shifting grounds' – Hans-Thies Lehmann and Patrick Primavesi (in <i>The Routledge Companion to Dramaturgy</i>)
Week 4	3 Feb	Exploring Dramaturgy as Creative, Reflective and Analytical Process <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'The expansion of the role of the dramaturg in contemporary collaborative performance' – Sarah Sigal (in <i>The Routledge Companion to Dramaturgy</i>) • 'Dramaturg as context manager' – Graca P. Correa (in <i>The Routledge Companion to Dramaturgy</i>)
Week 5	10 Feb	Making Choices for Directing a Text <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Forming a Production Concept' – R. Benedetti (in <i>The Director at Work</i>) • 'Dramaturgy as a way of looking into the spectator's aesthetic experience' – Milan Zvada (in <i>The Routledge Companion to Dramaturgy</i>)
Week 6	17 Feb	Developing Ideas for Performance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Directing is Working with Actors' & 'Helping Actors Communication Through Groundplans' – Francis Hodge (in <i>Play Directing: Analysis, Communication and Style</i>) • 'Exploring the Action' – R. Benedetti (in <i>The Director at Work</i>) • 'Acts of Spectating' – Peter M. Boenisch (in <i>New Dramaturgy: International Perspectives on Theory and Practice</i>)
Week 7	24 Feb	Working with Actors and Frames <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'To Be' and 'To Be and Not Be' - Shomit Mitter (in <i>Systems of Rehearsal</i>) • 'Embarrassment' and 'Resistance' – Anne Bogart (in <i>A Director Prepares</i>) • 'The actor's dramaturgy' – Eugenio Barba (in <i>On Directing and Dramaturgy</i>)
Week 8	3 Mar	NTU BREAK WEEK Preparatory Task for Directors Students to finalise selection of text for directing task and meet with actors for first Rehearsal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directors to articulate initial directorial vision and offer reasons for choice of text and approach taken to actor • Rehearsal/Meeting Notes to be submitted as part of the Dramaturgy Portfolio in Week 14
Week 9	10 Mar	PRESENTATION TASK - GROUP 1 Students to Present on Selection of Text, Dramaturgical Frames and Directorial Vision
Week 10	17 Mar	PRESENTATION TASK - GROUP 2 Students to Present on Selection of Text, Dramaturgical Frames and Directorial Vision

Week 11	24	Open Rehearsals and Discussion
	Mar	
Week 12	31	PRODUCTION PERFORMANCE TASK - GROUP 1
	Mar	Students to Direct a Rehearsal during Class and Reflect on Theatre Making Process
Week 13	7 Apr	PRODUCTION PERFORMANCE TASK - GROUP 2
		Students to Direct a Rehearsal during Class and Reflect on Theatre Making Process

The course will focus on two scripts as the basis for exploring Theatre Making in relation to Directing and Dramaturgy. They are: *Waiting for Godot* by Samuel Beckett and *Descendants of the Eunuch Admiral* by Kuo Pao Kun. All students must have a copy of both these plays by Week 3.

Readings taken from:

<p><i>The Director at Work</i> Robert L Benedetti Publisher: Prentice-Hall (1985)</p> <p><i>A Director Prepares: Seven essays on art and theatre</i> Anne Bogart Publisher: Routledge (2003)</p> <p><i>Play Directing: Analysis, Communication and Style</i> Francis Hodge Publisher: Prentice Hall (1988)</p> <p><i>Systems of Rehearsal</i> Shomit Mitter Publisher: Routledge (1992)</p>	<p><i>The Routledge Companion to Dramaturgy</i> Editor: Magda Romanska Publisher: Routledge (2015)</p> <p><i>Dramaturgy and Performance</i> Cathy Turner, Synne Behrndt Publisher: Palgrave Macmillan (2007)</p> <p><i>New Dramaturgy : International Perspectives on Theory and Practice</i> Editor(s): Katalin Trencsényi, Bernadette Cochrane Publisher: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama (2014)</p> <p><i>On Directing and Dramaturgy: Burning the House</i> Eugenio Barba Publisher: Routledge (2010)</p>
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Theatre Journals such as *The Drama Review* (TDR), *Theatre Research International*, *Contemporary Theatre Review*, *Performance Research*, etc.

ASSESSMENT TASKS – DETAILS

PARTICIPATION: 10%

- You are expected to be prepared for class and to participate actively in discussions and activities. This is especially important given the practical

aspects of this module and the various stages of process and collaboration that are involved in theatre making.

PRESENTATION: 15%

- Students will make a 10-15-minute presentation on the selection of dramatic text made for a short directing project, the dramaturgical frames engaged with and the directorial vision. (See Production Performance Task details below)

You will be assessed on:

- capacity to identify and articulate relevant dramaturgical principles and frames for the directing process,
- capacity to plan and communicate ideas about a production as the director of an already written script
- ability to respond to questions and points raised in the discussion.

PRODUCTION PERFORMANCE TASK: (40%)

Direct an 8-10 minute performance. The text should be an excerpt from one of the two plays explored in the module. Choose a segment/scene that connects with your interests and what you want to explore in terms of form and style. You can adapt the text by choosing different segments but do not amend the script by adding words.

Develop a concept for your performance that is linked to the script and the style/form that you want to use. Link this concept to a design for the staging, using available materials and props in the Playhouse or any other objects that you are able to source. Make a model set that includes important elements for blocking eg. platforms, chairs, stools, etc. Use your model set to help articulate your ideas to your actors.

With your actors, set-up a workable rehearsal schedule and engage in 3-5 rehearsals of at least 45 minutes each – these will have to occur outside of class time. This will mean structuring your rehearsals such that you arrange for the last couple of rehearsals to be about run-throughs and fine tuning.

Rehearsing a Text - 25%

- Students will conduct a 20-30 minute rehearsal and reflect on the directorial process in relation to the text chosen and dramaturgical frames engaged with.

You will be assessed on:

- Suitable directing skills in the context of a rehearsal that indicates ability to execute directorial vision and respond to actors

- Artistry, depth and engagement with the developing of ideas and images that will feed into the production of the script chosen.

Rehearsal Notes - 15%

Write Rehearsal Notes for 3 rehearsals, including the first meeting during NTU Break Week - these must be typewritten for submission, even if they were initially handwritten during the rehearsal. The format is as follows:

Rehearsal – Date and Time	Notes – observations made about the interpretation of the text, actor responses and directorial challenges. These can be written in note form. The notes for each rehearsal should not be less than 200 words.	Actions to be Taken – decisions on how to respond to the issues that arise, new options to explore.

You will be assessed on:

- Clarity of writing that indicates careful focus, awareness of directorial demands, and capacity to identify useful ideas for development of performance
- Relevant observations about the development of performance that indicates thoughtful engagement with actors, the text and directorial ideas chosen to develop the performance

PRODUCTION PROJECT BOOK: 35%

Critical Reflection - 25%

Write a critical reflection of your experience as director of a short performance.

- Comment on aspects of directing you found most interesting and state why these aspects are important to you
- Analyse aspects of directing that challenged you and how you dealt with these issues.
- Give reasons for your comments and analyse the process and frames that you engaged with.

- Draw on the readings suggested to develop a critical perspective that is not merely a description of what you did, but an analytical discussion and interrogation of key ideas and working principles that you were working on.
- Engage with the style and the form, as well as dramaturgical choices made in your process.

Word Length: approximately 2000 words

Dramaturgy Portfolio - 10%

Your portfolio must include the following:

- A copy of the text used for performance. This can include relevant annotations where needed eg. brief adaptations and linkage material.
- Essential research materials used in rehearsal – this can include visual and sonic material where relevant.

You will be assessed based on:

- Critical reflection of directing process with dramaturgical insights that indicate close reading of materials chosen and capacity to engage with key ideas relevant to the process and approach chosen.
 - Critical selection of materials that support your thinking about the play, themes or performance style and contribute to an understanding of the performance being directed
-