



Instructor: Bruce Barton

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Course Number: DRE344H5F

Course Title: Dramaturgy and Physical Performance

Course description: The term *dramaturgy* is understood in many different ways. For the purposes of this course, we will begin with a general sense of dramaturgy as the process of “meaning-making” and proceed to increasingly specific strategies employed to both create and analyze a broad range of physical performance.

The history of theatre, particularly in western culture, is in many ways shaped by a series of interacting, yet often competing, “dramaturgies.” Many are identified through reference to a single individual, such as Aristotle, Brecht, and Artaud, while others are associated with theoretical or philosophical movements, such as semiotics or postdramatic theatre. However, the majority of these dramaturgical approaches either primarily address issues of *textual* composition and analysis or are framed in terms and concepts adapted from textual strategies.

In this course we will explore strategies of creation and interpretation that are inspired by and focus upon *physical* performance. A wide spectrum of such performance modes will be examined: an incomplete list of forms to be considered includes commedia, bouffon, devised theatre, image theatre, intermedial performance, and dance theatre. By contextualizing these forms within historical, theoretical, conceptual, and practical

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frameworks, we will explore points of interaction, intersection, and overlap among these distinct yet related approaches to performance. A central objective will be the identification of transferable strategies for experience, interpretation, analysis, composition, and collaboration.

This course is directed towards a variety of student backgrounds and interests, ranging from minimal preparation and general theatrical appreciation through specialized training and creative aspirations. As such, a range of evaluation options will be made available, including traditional essay assignments and the potential for practice-based research projects. The course thus provides a strong complement to, and preparation for, the same instructor’s fourth-year seminar offerings in theatrical devising and intermedial theatre and performance. The course is also a direct extension of the instructor’s professional activities, both in terms of his current SSHRC research study on physical dramaturgies and his creative work as a director, writer, and dramaturg of multiple physical theatre projects.

Required Reading:

selected readings will be posted to Blackboard (when possible, in adherence to copyright restrictions) or placed on reserve at the UTM library weekly.

First Authors to be Studied: Keefe, John and Simon Murray. *Physical Theatres: A Critical Introduction*. London: Routledge, 2007. Barton, Bruce. *Collective Creation, Collaboration and Devising. Critical Perspectives on Canadian Theatre in English* Volume 15. Toronto: Playwrights Canada Press, 2008. Lehmann, Hans-Thies. *Postdramatic Theatre*. Trans. Karen Jürs-Munby. London: Routledge, 2006.

Method of Instruction: lecture and discussion

Method of Evaluation: participation; online journaling; written research documents (essays and casebooks); option of practice-based research projects.