



The Faculty of Arts
& Social Sciences

Department of Drama and Theatre

COURSE OPTIONS FOR VISITING STUDENTS

ABOUT THE DEPARTMENT

The Department of Drama & Theatre is a recognised national leader in its field and is the only department within the United Kingdom to have received top scores for research in the four most recent national government audits. We are one of the largest university theatre departments in the UK, so we can offer an unusually wide range of subject areas, all taught by specialists. No other department offers courses covering a comparable range of historical and cultural areas. The ethos of the Department is that practical engagement with dramatic texts is a vital tool for imaginative and analytical development. All courses contain a mixture of practical and conceptual work so that theory and practice are completely integrated.

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

Study Abroad and International Exchange Students: The courses listed below are open to all Study Abroad and International Exchange students. Students must have a cumulative GPA of at least 3.3 out of 4.0.

Erasmus Students:

The Department only accepts applications from Erasmus students from Trinity College, Dublin. Owing to space limitations, Erasmus students from other institutions are not permitted to apply for Drama and Theatre courses.

Previous academic study of Drama, Theatre or a related subject and/or practical theatre experience is essential for entry onto all courses. In addition:

- Second and third year Drama courses are suitable for students with a strong interest and academic background in the subject.
- Most often, visiting students are placed in second or third year Drama courses but in some circumstances, a student with little academic experience of the study of Drama may be offered a first year course.
- Practical experience in theatre or a related discipline will be taken into account when assessing an applicant's suitability for courses.

The information contained in the course outlines on the following pages is correct at the time of publication but may be subject to change as part of our policy of continuous improvement and development.

Level One:

We do not usually offer Level One courses to Visiting Students. In *exceptional circumstances* and at the discretion of the department, we *occasionally* place a student with little previous Drama experience in a first year course.

Level Two:

| DT2100 | Theatre & Performance-Making 2 | 1 unit/ ½ unit* | Full Year/ Term 1* |
|--|--------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• This course is available to all ERASMUS, INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE and STUDY ABROAD students• This course runs for the full year but may be taken in Term 1 only for half the credit.* | | | |

There are FIVE options available under the DT2100 strand. You may choose ONE of the following options:

1. Devising

Tutor: Resident Theatre Company

Students will explore models of collaborative performance making in the work of contemporary practitioners, with a particular focus on methods of generating and composing material for different contexts. Readings and workshops will focus on a range of devised theatre practices, their contexts and forms, and will look at the generative roles of e.g. autobiography, the body, site/place/space, text, and new media. Practical application will develop in parallel to critical study, and students will draw on their theoretical and practical research work to develop their own performance pieces.

Sample bibliography

Harvie, Jen & Lavender, Andy, eds. *Making Contemporary Theatre: International Rehearsal Processes*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010.

Govan, Emma, Helen Nicholson & Katie Normington. *Making a Performance: Devising Histories and Contemporary Practices*. London: Routledge, 2007.

Heddon, Deirdre and Milling, Jane. *Devising Performance: A Critical History*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.

Summative assessment

Critical Assessment: Essay, incorporating research portfolio (3,000- 3,500 words) 50%

Creative Assessment: A group performance of a work-in-progress (20 minutes), devised from material/theme negotiated with the tutor, and a viva. 50%

2. Dance Theatre/Dance Drama

Tutor: Libby Worth

In this option students will explore a range of theatre forms that integrate dance and drama. Seminars will address the variety of ways that practitioners have chosen to bring text and movement into creative dialogue, using scores, play texts, choreography and movement processes. They will examine the values and principles that drive such experimentation and reflect on the historical, political and cultural contexts within which these practitioners worked. Each session will include both discussion and workshop activities associated with one or two practitioners, with the final weeks devoted to developing small group performance devised in response to selected texts and styles of movement/dance.

NOTE: No dance training or experience will be required or expected to take this course!

Sample bibliography

Aston, Elaine & Diamond, Elin. *The Cambridge Companion to Caryl Churchill*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

Climenhaga, Royd. Pina Bausch. *Routledge Performance Practitioners*. Abingdon: Routledge, 2009.

Keefe, John & Murray, Simon. *Physical Theatres: A Critical Introduction*. New York: Routledge, 2007.

Summative assessment

Critical Assessment: Essay (3,000-3,500 words) 50%

Creative Assessment: A small group performance (20 minutes) responding to selected text and movement scores agreed with tutor, and a viva. 50%

3. Theatre Design

Tutor: TBC

Understanding, responding to and making space for theatre to happen is a central concern for designers, and through the study of visual composition and visual language, students will explore the role of spatial design in a performance context. Drawing on the work of a variety of practitioners, students will be encouraged to experiment and test out design ideas in a series of practical and performance workshops focusing on textual analysis, space and place, object, performer and spectator. This research will culminate in an assessed design proposal for a performance. Students are advised that an ability to draw well is not a pre-requisite to taking this course.

Sample bibliography

Aronson, Arnold. *Looking into the Abyss: Essays on Scenography*. Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2005.

Collins, Jane, and Nisbet, Andrew. *Theatre and Performance Design*. London: Routledge, 2010.

McKinney, Joslin, and Philip Butterworth. *The Cambridge Introduction to Scenography*. Cambridge:

CUP, 2009.

Summative assessment

Critical Assessment: Critical Portfolio (3,000-3,500 words) 50% Creative Assessment: Collaborative design project assessed in small groups. This will include a viva. (up to 20 hours preparation) 50%

4. Playwriting

Tutor: Mike Punter

This course will give students an opportunity to immerse themselves in the art and craft of playwriting. Students will develop a portfolio of collaborative and solo writing for performance while also discussing and interrogating the work of published playwrights alongside those of their peers. In the first term, we will explore fundamental dramaturgical principles like structure, scenes, dialogue, subtext, and character. In the second term, we will focus on developing the students' own work through workshop and seminar discussion. Students will work in groups on a collaborative play, which will receive a rehearsed reading, while also working on a short individually-written piece.

Sample bibliography:

Edgar, David. *How Plays Work*. London: Nick Hern, 2009.

Goldman, Lisa. *The No Rules Handbook for Writers*. London: Oberon, 2012.

Waters, Steve. *The Secret Life of Plays*. London: Nick Hern, 2010.

Summative assessment

Critical Assessment: Portfolio of 3 short (1000-1200-word) dramaturgical analyses. 50% Creative Assessment: Solo play (20-30 minutes) + creative commentary on solo and collaborative plays (1500 words) 50%

5. Physical Theatre

Tutor: Dick McCaw

This course gives students an opportunity to explore a range of post-war physical theatre techniques, focusing on the work of Jerzy Grotowski and Eugenio Barba, but touching also the approaches to physicality pioneered by Rudolf Laban, the 'theatre games' approaches on Keith Johnstone and Clive Barker, and the cross-cultural explorations of Philip Zarilli. Students will study the ideas of these pioneering theatremakers and encounter and test out a series of physical techniques for generating theatrical performances, eventually getting an opportunity to bring together ideas and approaches from disparate traditions to create their own physical performance work.

Sample bibliography:

Barba, Eugenio, and Nicola Savarese. *A Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology: The Secret Art of the Performer*. 2nd ed. Abingdon: Routledge, 2006. Print.

Barker, Clive. *Theatre Games: A New Approach to Drama Training*. London: Methuen, 1977.

McCaw, Dick, ed. *The Laban Sourcebook*. Abingdon: Routledge, 2011. Print.

Summative assessment

Critical Assessment: Essay (3,000-3,500 words) 50%

Creative Assessment: A small group performance (20 minutes) responding to selected text and movement scores agreed with tutor, and a viva. 50%

| DT2200 | Theatre & Text 2 | 1 unit | Term 1 |
|---|------------------|--------|--------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• This course is available to all ERASMUS, INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE and STUDY ABROAD students• This course runs in Term 1 only. It cannot be started in January. | | | |

There are THREE options available under the DT2200 strand. You may choose ONE.

1. Contemporary British Black and Asian Playwriting

Tutor: Lynette Goddard

This seminar will focus on contemporary British black and Asian playwriting from the late seventies to the present, including Mustapha Matura, Winsome Pinnock, Jackie Kay, Tanika Gupta, Deepak Verma, Roy Williams, Kwame Kwei-Armah, debbie tucker green, Bola Agbaje et al. The seminars will consider how black playwrights reflect concerns in contemporary society with a particular focus on explorations of identity politics and the presentation of topical social and political issues. This will include discussions about the politics of form, black and Asian textual and performance aesthetics, the politics of adaptations, and looking at debates around the representations of themes such as urban teenage crime and violence, institutional racism, and sex tourism. Students will typically read two plays for each session, discussing them alongside relevant contextual materials, and exploring them practically through workshops.

Sample bibliography

Davies, Geoffrey V. and Anne Fuchs, eds *Staging New Britain: Aspects of Black and South East Asian British Theatre Practice*. Oxford: Peter Lang, 2006

Goddard, Lynette. *Staging Black Feminisms: Identity, Politics, Performance*. Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2007

Godwala, Dimple. *Alternatives Within the Mainstream: British Black and Asian Theatres*. Newcastle: Cambridge New Scholars Press, 2006

Summative Assessment

Creative Assessment: A group performance (20 mins) of extracts from a contemporary black British play to explore approaches to staging the plays within a specific critical production framework. This will be followed by a 10-minute assessed Q & A in which you reflect on the critical framework and rationale for your performance. 50%

Critical Assessment: Research Essay (3500 words) 50%

2. Eighteenth-Century Theatre

Elaine McGirr

This seminar will focus on developing historically-sensitive readings of eighteenth-century drama. Plays to be investigated may include *Love's Last Shift* (1696), *The Beau Defeated* (1700), *The Fair Penitent* (1704), *The Beggar's Opera* (1728), *The London Merchant* (1731) and *The Clandestine Marriage* (1766). Seminars will consider historical context for the plays, the intersection of celebrity actor and celebrity role, staging and performance conventions of eighteenth-century theatre and the use and meaning of advertisements, reviews and playbills. Workshops will explore eighteenth-century rehearsal and acting practices in order to unpack how meaning was made and experienced.

Sample bibliography

Cordner, Michael and Peter Holland. Eds. *Players, Playwrights, Playhouses: Investigating Performance, 1660-1800*. London: Palgrave, 2007.

McGirr, Elaine. *Eighteenth-Century Characters*. London: Palgrave, 2007.

Roach, Joseph. *The Player's Passion: Studies in the Science of Acting*. New ed. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993.

Summative Assessment

Creative Assessment: A group performance (20 mins) of extracts from one or more of the plays studied. This will be followed by a 10-minute assessed Q & A in which you reflect on the critical framework and rationale for your performance. 50%

Creative Assessment: Research Essay (3500 words) 50%

3. Shadow Puppets and Puppet Plays

Tutor: Matthew Isaac Cohen

Crudely satirical at times, but also with possibilities of being lyrical, philosophical and other-worldly, shadow puppet theatre has existed in Europe, Asia and elsewhere for millennia and continues to enchant to the present. It has translated and transformed into hand shadowgraphy, shadow pantomime, extended cinema and myriad other forms and experiments. This course surveys a range of shadow plays, including the outrageously bawdy shadow puppet plays of 13th century Egyptian optician ibn Dāniyāl; plays for wayang kulit from Indonesia; scenarios from *Le Chat Noir*, the world's first cabaret; and modern shadow plays by collage artist Kurt Schwitters and Fluxus artist Dick Higgins. We will discuss the textual constraints of the medium; examine

differences between oral and written literature; and study related philosophical and theological writings, including Plato's allegory of the cave. Students will explore texts practically through various techniques of shadow projection, including hand shadows, OHP puppet theatre, wayang kulit and human shadow techniques associated with the California-based company Shadowlight.

Sample bibliography

Becker, A.L. 1980 [1979]. 'Text Building, Epistemology, and Aesthetics in Javanese Shadow Theatre.' *Disposito* 5.13-14 (1980): 137-168.

Donnay, Maurice. 1988. 'Elsewhere: A Symbolic Review in Twenty Scenes.' Introduced and translated by Laurence Senelick. *Performing Arts Journal* 11-2: 96-107.

Ibn Dānīyāl, Muḥammad. 2013. *Theatre from Medieval Cairo: The Ibn Dānīyāl Trilogy*. Edited and translated by Safi Mahmoud Mahfouz and Marvin Carlson. New York: Martin E. Segal Theatre Center Publications.

Summative Assessment

Creative Assessment: Working in small groups, students will curate, produce and perform an Evening of Shadow Puppetry, an introduction to the form for a public audience, including excerpts of plays studied. This will include a programme and Q & A requiring critical reflection. 50%

Critical Assessment: Research Essay (3500 words) 50%

| DT2300 | Theatre & Culture 2 | 1 unit | Term 2 |
|---|---------------------|--------|--------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This course is available to all ERASMUS, INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE and STUDY ABROAD students This course starts in January. | | | |

There are TWO options available under the DT2300 strand. You may choose ONE.

1. Family Histories, Migration Histories

Tutor: Emma Cox

In this course students will engage critically and creatively with their family histories and with British migration histories. Before the course starts, you will be given guidance on how to research family history. During the course we will pursue and evaluate different research methodologies, including archives or databases; online collaboration; interviews / conversations (oral histories); analysis of material culture (objects and artifacts such as clothing, jewellery, photographs, toys, drawings, letters, documents); visits to museums or significant sites of cultural memory. Students will study the ways family histories intersect with histories of migration to and from Britain. We will critically examine the emotional and political aspects of family and migration narratives (issues of memory and nostalgia; caring about ancestors versus suspicion of strangers; ethnicity and relatedness; national affiliation and heritage) and explore their

dramaturgical potential. Students will work in groups to devise a performance that uses items of material culture to explore family and migration histories.

Sample bibliography

Ahmed, Sara, Claudia Casteñeda, Anne-Marie Fortier and Mimi Sheller, eds. *Uprootings / Regroundings: Questions of Home and Migration*. Oxford and New York: Berg, 2003.

Jackson, Anthony and Jenny Kidd, eds. *Performing Heritage: Research, Practice and Innovation in Museum Theatre and Live Interpretation*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011.

Knott, Kim, and Seán McLoughlin, eds. *Diasporas: Concepts, Intersections, Identities*. London: Zed Books, 2010.

Summative Assessment

Critical Assessment: Seminar presentation (up to 10 minutes per person + 1500-word write up) 50%

Creative Assessment: Group performance that uses items of material culture to explore family and migration histories, moderated by an individual critical reflection 50%

2. Theatre, Magic and Witchcraft

Tutor: Sophie Nield

From the performative practice of spell-making, to ghosts and vampires on the stage, and the idea of acting as 'possession', theatre has a rich and provocative set of connections to the fields of magic and the occult. This course will examine magical cultures in selected historical contexts, and interrogate their relationship to performance and theatrical practice. We will examine the theatre's on-going interest in the supernatural (devils, ghosts, vampires and alchemy), and explore how theatrical interpretation can extend our understanding of magical practices (spell-making, spectral appearances, haunting and illusion). Material to be studied may include: hysteria and the witch-trial; Dr John Dee and Elizabethan superstition; Demonology; alchemy; Victorian stage magicians and seances in the suburbs; grimoires and spellbooks; ghosts and vampires on the stage; theatrical 'magic' and theories of acting. Fieldwork visits to relevant sites and museums (eg: Mortlake Cemetery; Syon House; Magic Circle) will be undertaken, and archive research in specialist collections of magic and the occult will form part of the course.

Sample bibliography

During, Simon. *Modern Enchantments: the Cultural Power of Secular Magic*. Harvard University Press, 2002.

Steinmeyer, Jim. *Hiding the Elephant: How Magicians Invented the Impossible*. Arrow, 2005

Thomas, Keith. *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth and Seventeenth-Century England*. Penguin, 2003

Summative Assessment

Critical Assessment: Research presentation (up to 10 minutes per person + 1400-1600 word write up) 50%

Creative Assessment: Group creative presentation (topic and format to be negotiated), moderated by an individual critical reflection 50%

| DT2400 | Theatre & Ideas 2 | 1/2 unit | Term 1 |
|---|-------------------|----------|--------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• This course is available to all ERASMUS, INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE and STUDY ABROAD students• This course runs in Term 1 only. It cannot be started in January. | | | |

There are FOUR options available under the DT2400 strand. You may choose ONE.

1. Theatre & Memory

Tutor: Bryce Lease

This course puts diverse art forms in dynamic conversation in order to ask urgent questions about the nature of art, history, and humanity. In 1949 philosopher Theodor Adorno wrote that it was barbaric to write poetry 'after Auschwitz'. This (much misunderstood) dictum questioned the purpose, value, and nature of art in the aftermath of the cataclysmic events of the Holocaust, or, Shoah. This module aims to explore artistic responses to the Holocaust alongside questions of memory, memorialisation, trauma, and witnessing. We will cover a wide range of textual and performative genres including first-hand testimony, plays, films, graphic novels and public monuments. Questioning the politics and ethics of representation, memory, and memorial, we will also interrogate the limits of trauma as an interpretative lens. The ideas raised by literature and performance that seek to communicate traumatic experiences and events including testimony, witnessing, history, intergenerational trauma, genocide, and the 'unthinkable' will be placed next to philosophical texts on politics, history, art and trauma.

Sample bibliography

Caruth, Cathy. *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996.

Friedlander, Saul. *The Years of Extermination: Nazi Germany and the Jews 1939-1945*. London: Phoenix, 2008.

Luckhurst, Roger. *The Trauma Question*. London: Routledge, 2008.

Summative Assessment

Assessment 1 (Creative): Performance essay (maximum 20 minutes per group) (50%)

2. Theatre & Diversity

Tutor: Ashley Thorpe

The theatre is a global phenomenon in an increasingly global world. How can theatre intervene in this changing world? Is the theatre a site for national self-definition or to create a broader humanitarian vision of the world? What role does theatre and performance play exploring questions of migration and cross-cultural encounter? How do the great and epic changes of the world find themselves reflected in theatre? Is multiculturalism still a useful term to society, and how might theatre critically engage with this debate? The course will explore this area by looking at the experiences and representations of East Asians in British and American theatre. Through this case study, we will explore the problems and possibilities for theatrical representations of race and ethnicity in theatre.

Sample bibliography

Fanon, Franz. *Black Skin / White Masks*. London: Pluto Press, 1986.

Garner, Steve. *Whiteness: An Introduction*. Abingdon: Routledge, 2007.

Knowles, Ric. *Theatre & Interculturalism*. Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.

Summative Assessment

Assessment 1 (Creative): Performance essay (maximum 20 minutes per group) (50%)

3. Theatre & The Body

Tutor: Melissa Blanco

This module examines the body in dance, theatre and mediated/screen performances. Our readings will look explicitly at the social construction of the body (its corporeality) and provide theoretical support for a view of the body as flesh and bone, but also as a socio-historical construction replete with contingent meanings. We will study the body through many of its different articulations in the social, focusing on its function as a discursive site. Readings may range from Friedrich Nietzsche's profound exaltation of the body, to Michel Foucault's writings on docilised bodies in the military and prisons, to Donna Haraway's cyborg post-human body, to Franco 'Bifo' Berardi's critiques of technology and its effects on our bodies and souls. The significance of technology, ideology and power will help us contend with how a body choreographs itself within these domains while also partnering with other components of corporeality such as race, gender and sexuality.

Sample bibliography

Foster, Susan Leigh. 'Dancing Bodies.' *Meaning in Motion: New Cultural Studies of Dance*. Ed. Desmond, Jane. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998. 235-57.

Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Harmondsworth: Allen Lane, 1977. Print.

Mauss, Marcel. 'Techniques of the Body'. *Zone 6: Incorporations*. Ed. Jonathan Crary and Sanford Kwinter. New York: MIT Press, 1992. 454- 477

Summative Assessment

Assessment 1 (Creative): Performance essay (maximum 20 minutes per group) (50%)

4. The Idea of 'Acting'

Tutor: Sophie Nield

What does it mean to 'act'? What is the relationship of the actor and the character? Can a character be present when the actor is not? What is the 'live'? What is 'bad' acting? Can a child, or a machine, or an animal 'act'? Why (and when) has acting been attacked as a dangerous, and even a seditious practice? When is acting used as a metaphor for social life, and to what end? This option will explore the idea of acting in various historical contexts and moments. We will examine debates about good (and bad) acting; authenticity and fakery; the development of formal actor training. We will review historical and critical arguments about the practice of acting from, for example, Plato, Aristotle, Diderot, Rousseau, Archer, Stanislavski, Brecht and others. Objects of study may include: Stage presence and charisma; 'bad' acting; children and animals on stage; new technology and automata; objects in performance; actors accounts of their process; representations of acting in film and other media; actors in 'rehearsal'; what it means to cry 'real' tears.

Sample bibliography

Mitter, Shomit. *Systems of Rehearsal: Stanislavski, Brecht, Grotowski and Brook*. London: Routledge, 1992

Roach, Joseph. *The Player's Passion: Studies in the Science of Acting*. University of Michigan, 1993

Sher, Antony. *Playing the King*. 2nd ed. London: Nick Hern, 2004.

Summative Assessment

Assessment 1 (Creative): Performance essay (maximum 20 minutes per group) (50%)

Level Three:

| DT3400 | Culture and Creativity | 1 unit | Full Year |
|--|------------------------|--------|-----------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• This course is available to all ERASMUS, INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE and STUDY ABROAD students• This course runs for the full year and you must be enrolled for the full academic year to take it. | | | |

DT3400: Culture and Creativity

When: Weekly, Autumn and Spring

Value: 1 unit (may NOT be taken over one term as a half unit)

This course offers students a further level of engagement with theatre and arts practice, in a way that is focused on life beyond the degree. In the first term, students get lectures in a range of issues in the contemporary cultural industries, Topics may include copyright, censorship, publishing and e-publishing, social media and PR, state subsidy and private sponsorship, the balance in culture between hate speech, religious freedom, and freedom of expression. The course is taught by lectures drawn from staff expertise across the faculty with follow-up seminars in the department.

In the second term, we will focus on contemporary London productions and will use a wide range of theatrical events to engage in debates about the cultural work performed by London theatre; the dominant discourse produced by means of play selection and production processes; what gets marginalised. Particular attention will be paid to issues of race, ethnicity and gender. Although students will be encouraged to see as many productions as possible, they will only be required to see one production. Each week students will engage with at least one theatre text and one critical/ theoretical reading.

Teaching

In the first term, students will attend a lecture/talk and a follow-up seminar. In the second term, the teaching is entirely through seminar discussion. Students will be required to attend theatre events in London and elsewhere. Some of the tickets will be provided.

Assessment

Assessment 1: Either

- (a) Write-up of seminar presentation (which may be supported by an exhibition/installation on arrangement with the course tutor)
- (b) A portfolio of documents towards a 'real world' performance work, which may include a budget, an Arts Council or sponsorship application, touring schedule, and digital or paper 'pitch' presentation. 40%

Assessment 2: Critical Portfolio 4500-5000 words; short (750-1000-word) essays responding critically to material in both terms. 60%

| DT33XX | Research Seminar | 1 unit | Full Year |
|---|------------------|--------|-----------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This course is available to all ERASMUS, INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE and STUDY ABROAD students • This course runs for the full year and you must be enrolled for the full academic year to take it. | | | |

DT33XX Research Seminar

When: Fortnightly, Autumn and Spring

Value: 1 unit (may NOT be taken over one term as a half unit)

The third year Research Seminars are advanced researched based courses in which students work with members of staff at the cutting edge of work in the field. The seminars demand a high level of engagement, independent work and original research.

NOTE: below are general areas, not seminar titles. Seminar details will be devised over summer 2014 in response to student interests. Visiting students must demonstrate a high level of interest and experience in Drama and Theatre in order to be placed on one of the research seminars.

1. Race and Representation on Stage and Screen

Are you interested in how identities play out in our culture? Are you interested in how different cultural groups are represented – or have represented themselves – in theatre, film and television? What does it mean to represent an identity accurately? Is such a thing possible? Does the theatre always betray the truth of who we are? Can the theatre play a role in combatting racism and prejudice? Might the theatre or television itself be racist? In order to fully consider these questions we need to look not only at the content of our stages and screens, but at the broader structures and allegiances that give rise to particular practices of authorship, direction, casting, promotion and reception.

2. Women, Violence and Stage History

The theatre is marked at all levels by gender and by sex and sexuality. Paying close attention to the surprising complexity of how gender works in theatre can tell us a great deal about theatre and a great deal about gender. Sexuality itself is something which, some have argued, has a performative dimension; conversely, there are sexual dimensions to the way theatre functions, in the relationships between characters, between actor and character, between audience and actor. Theatre histories reveal the extent to which plays that engage with gender and sexuality intersect with themes of violence (both symbolic and real) and relations of power. Choose this theme if you're interested in exploring the dynamic variety of theatre's relationship to sex, gender and sexuality.

3. European Theatre History

The theatre has been a vital force in European culture for two and a half millennia and taken a number of strange and thrilling new turns, generating stories that continue to fascinate us hundreds, even thousands of years later. It can often give us a sharp new perspective on the present to look at earlier periods when theatre was practised, valued and understood in very different ways. Immersing yourself in another period of theatre – whether that be Jacobean theatre, say, or Naturalist theatre – will broaden and enrich your understanding of all theatre and enrich your own creative and critical engagement with theatre.

4. Performance and the Body

The body is at the heart of almost all theatre, but it's not often talked about. The body of the audience, the body of the actor, even the body of the designer, writer, and director, all of these bodies shape the kind of theatre we make. The body itself is sometimes directly the subject of theatre, whether in a dance piece, a body art performance, or even a play addressing physical violence. And different cultures have different attitudes to the body: what are the key ways that our own society constructs the body? And how are those bodies reflected in performance? Paying attention to bodies can, in other words, change the way we think about theatre.

5. Philosophies of Theatre

Can the theatre think? How far can the theatre engage profound philosophical questions? Some of Shakespeare's plays seem to ask very serious questions about the nature of the world but also some contemporary plays seek to go beyond merely representing the way the world is to ask fundamental questions about who we are, the nature of the world, the value of our lives. By looking at theatre through philosophy and looking at philosophy through theatre, you'll be enriching both your understanding of drama and your confidence in dealing with fundamental questions about the nature of the world.

6. Performing Contemporary Politics

The theatre is unavoidably political. It is political in its own practices, relationships, subject matters and effects. And it is political because it had a real material relationship to the society around it which is shaped by political structures and principles. For at least 2500 years, the theatre has both reflected and tried to challenge the dominant political values of its time. What are the key issues in the world that matter to you? How can theatre help to articulate the problems and contribute to the solutions?

7. Performance and International Spectacle

Our increasingly globalized world is generating increasingly globalized forms of theatre: think of the spectacular Opening Ceremony of the London Olympics in 2012 with its enormous worldwide audience; think of the way that megamusicals are designed to be global – tried out in one continent, bankrolled in another, rolled out right across a third and fourth; think of the growing international theatre festival circuit. Spectatorship across cultures can also take place in turbulent or undisciplined contexts, such as protests or riots, or it can be an intimate experience, in

museums or galleries. What do we learn about our complicated, contradictory global cultures by paying attention to the ways they participate in spectacle and spectatorship? How do nations negotiate their relationships through performance? And what can we learn about contemporary performance by paying attention to the dynamics of global culture?