

Dangerous Drama: How Theatre Changes the World

A Global Humanities Learning Community

ENGL102 Critical Reading, Writing, and Research / P. Rachael Wilson, English

THET100 Introduction to Theatre/ KenYatta Rogers, Theatre



What's So Dangerous?

Theatre comments powerfully and radically on cultural and ideological milieus, and helps to foment socio-political and even spiritual change. It's not surprising that theatre can threaten cultural stability, and that in many countries dramatists and actors have risked censorship, exile, and sometimes death, at the hands of those resisting change.

Plays are rhetorically powerful. Through the prism of theatre, audiences are affected immediately, viscerally, and publicly. Theatre pushes us to "try on" new ways of looking at the world – or, and even overtly threatens the status quo in a crowd setting.

What will happen?

Our students will experience global theatre traditions and plays (including "banned plays") as audience, reader and performer, studying the contexts in which works were written and performed. They will discuss and write about how these plays have served as social "provocateurs," draw parallels among various cultural theatre traditions and texts, and analyze the socio-political and cultural contexts of the conventions and texts studied.

Playwrights, drama theorists and theatre groups whose transformative work we will read or stage include: Lola Arias (Argentina), Wole Soyinka (Nigeria), Danai Gurira (Zimbabwe), Athol Fugard (South Africa), Bertolt Brecht (Germany), Pussy Riot (Russia), Motti Lerner (Israel), and Farid Uddi Attar (Persia/Iran). Students will also investigate global theatre conventions and styles, such as modern realism, Augusto Boal's Brazilian Forum theatre, Ta'zieh (Iran), and West and South African improvisational techniques.

Our student learning outcomes...

- To produce well organized, thoughtful written responses to global plays, live productions, and associated course materials in college level writing;
- To analyze global dramatic texts using formal scholarly and dramaturgical techniques;
- To synthesize and apply theatrical conventions and practices to a collaborative effort resulting in a theatrical presentation;
- To create an interpretive framework for analysis of global plays and performance allowing for multiple perspective-taking;
- To be able to find, navigate, analyze and synthesize scholarly texts about global plays, theatre traditions, in their socio-political contexts;
- To develop an awareness of how theatre uses rhetorical strategies to challenge, reflect, comment upon, and change cultural milieus.



Our Global Competencies...

- **Cultural diversity:** Adapting and applying a deep understanding of multiple world views , experiences, and power structures, while initiating meaningful interaction with other cultures to address significant global concerns;
- **Global awareness:** Effectively addressing significant issues in the world, based on articulating one’s identity in a global context
- **Perspective taking:** Evaluating and applying diverse perspectives to complex subjects within natural and human systems in the face of multiple and even conflicting positions.



Specific integrative assignments...

Specific integrative assignments include:

- An improvised role-play, “The Rhetorics of Status: Establishing Authority in Word and Action” and discussion of cross cultural communication patterns
- Written reflections and analyses of performances of “dangerous” theatre world wide
- An integrative 8-10 page dramaturgical research paper on a global theatre-related topic, combined with a dramaturgical theatre practicum
- An end-of-term reflection statement that draws explicit connections between world drama and global issues

