

## **THE338G Ethical Dilemmas in Contemporary Theatre (Winter 2020 Online)**

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### **ABOUT THE COURSE:**

**This course fulfills competencies in Civic Knowledge (full coverage), Integrate and Apply (full coverage) and is also a Grand Challenge Course.**

**Welcome to THE338G: Ethical Dilemmas in Contemporary Theatre! In this course you will consider the ways in which the world of theatre engages critical ethical dilemmas facing us today. Together, we will use interdisciplinary strategies to explore moral problems in this course:**

- 1. We will analyze plays whose content poses complex ethical challenges. Plays we read take up such moral problems as: Are acts conducted in virtual reality subject to the same moral scrutiny as acts in the non-virtual world? Do the rich bear any moral obligation to the poor?**

**And:**

- 1. We will explore the ways in which theatre can be used to pose solutions to major moral problems. More than simply a mode of entertainment, live theatre has long been a strong voice in civic discourse and a critical agent of social change. How can live performance engage, examine, and parse the complexities of pressing ethical dilemmas in unique ways?**

### **COURSE GOALS & LEARNING OUTCOMES:**

#### **I. Civic Knowledge (C1 - FULL COVERAGE):**

**In order to fulfill this competency, you will:**

- Acquire deep, extensive knowledge of live theatre as a shared, community experience - its methodologies, common practices, and terminology**
- Demonstrate the ways in which theatre uniquely reflects contemporary social and cultural preoccupations.**
- Recognize that live theatre is a major player in modern civic discourse and consider how live performance can be a critical agent of social change**
- Develop a sense of responsibility towards civic participation by engaging in relevant, politically-minded theatre**

## **II. Integrate & Apply (D1 - FULL COVERAGE):**

**In order to fulfill this competency, you will:**

- **Synthesize your understanding of these two disciplines (moral philosophy and theatre arts) by identifying the ways in which works of art engage pressing ethical dilemmas**
- **Apply this understanding by creating a live performance that grapples with a moral problem that you deem important**
- **Reflect upon your role as a mindful member of your community and develop the temperament to actualize your potential as a fully engaged citizen**

## **III. Grand Challenge:**

**As a Grand Challenge Course, you will:**

- **Engage complex issues of contemporary significance - specifically moral, social or political challenges facing the world around you**
- **Examine and Devise Solutions to compelling problems you identify as socially relevant using the platform of live performance**
- **Pursue interdisciplinary tactics by injecting your understanding of moral theory into the practice of theatre arts AND by using the medium of live performance to process, examine, and and pose solutions to ethical dilemmas.**

## **OVERVIEW OF MATERIAL:**

**Because this course is strongly interdisciplinary, your work will require you to engage both complex philosophical theories and rich dramatic material - both written and live. In Unit One, we will pair plays that describe major moral problems with critical moral theorists who outline the philosophical challenges posed by such issues. In Unit Two, we will pivot from examining moral dilemmas as examined by dramatists and instead consider ways in which theatre artists use live performance for the express purpose of solving moral problem and bringing about social change. Having (1) learned to isolate the moral problems taken up by playwrights in their narratives and (2) learned the methodologies theatre practitioners use in order to foreground moral problems for social change, you will be prepared to create performances of your own. In Unit Three, you will develop an original piece of live theatre that takes up an ethical dilemma you find critical to your own community. Perhaps you will create a short film that raises awareness for sexual assault on college campuses or write a screenplay that examines the impact of fossil fuels on the environment. Although the theme is entirely up to you, the goal of this project will be to use performance to engage a moral problem and propose a solution.**

## **REQUIRED TEXTS:**

**The Nether by Jennifer Haley**

**Good People by David Lindsay Abair**

**“Emphasis on Sport” and “The Modern Theatre is the Epic Theatre” by Bertolt Brecht  
(provided by instructor)**

**“The Poetics of the Oppressed” by Augusto Boal (provided by instructor)**

#### **REQUIRED TECHNOLOGY:**

Internet access is required for this course. Sakai works best with Firefox, which you can download free from the internet at [www.mozilla.com/firefox](http://www.mozilla.com/firefox)

This course requires you to view several videos, so having a device that can play audio and video is necessary.

Although NOT required, some projects give you the opportunity to make a short film or piece of music using your smartphone or similar device.

#### **ASSESSMENT:**

**You will be assessed in the following ways:**

- 1. Forum Posts (25 points) *Rubrics for Discussion Posts can be found under "Forums"***
- 2. Quizzes (25 points) *All quizzes are "true/false" but require you to provide a rationale for your response. Rubrics for quizzes can be found under "Quizzes"; I drop the lowest quiz grade***
- 3. 2 Written Assignments (10 points for Assignment 1 + 15 points for Assignment 2) *Rubrics for Written Assignments can be found under "Assignments"***
- 4. Summation Project (25 points) *Rubrics for Summation Project can be found under "Assignments - Summation Project"***

**Feedback:** You should expect to receive grades and/or feedback from me on each assignment within 3-5 days. Generally, quiz grades are posted much sooner - usually about 48 hours after the quiz is due. Feedback on written assignments will generally be within 3-5 days. Forum posts are also graded within 3-5 days of the final posting.

**Lateness:** Except in documented emergencies, I do not grant extensions on deadlines. This includes discussion forum deadlines. Failing to post to the online discussion by the deadline will result in an automatic reduction of possible points by half (automatic 2 out of 4 possible points removed). Failure to meet writing assignment or summation project deadlines will result in an automatic reduction of your grade 10 points (10 out of possible 25 points removed).

**Please note the following University of Rhode Island policy on academic integrity:**

*Students are expected to be honest in all academic work. A student's name on any written work, quiz or exam shall be regarded as assurance that the work is the result of the student's own independent thought and study. Work should be stated in the student's own words, properly attributed to its source. Students have an obligation to know how to quote, paraphrase,*

*summarize, cite and reference the work of others with integrity. The following are examples of academic dishonesty.*

- *Using material, directly or paraphrasing, from published sources (print or electronic) without appropriate citation*
- *Claiming disproportionate credit for work not done independently*
- *Unauthorized possession or access to exams*
- *Unauthorized communication during exams*
- *Unauthorized use of another's work or preparing work for another student*
- *Taking an exam for another student*
- *Altering or attempting to alter grades*
- *The use of notes or electronic devices to gain an unauthorized advantage during exams*
- *Fabricating or falsifying facts, data or references*
- *Facilitating or aiding another's academic dishonesty*
- *Submitting the same paper for more than one course without prior approval from the instructors.*

#### **EXPECTATIONS:**

The work in this course is intensive and may be different than what you have experienced in more traditional, face-to-face courses. For example, you will likely be required to be self-motivated and accountable so as to stay on track and participate actively and productively. To ensure your success in this course, please visit the Online Learning website (<http://web.uri.edu/teachonline/>) to access resources on study skill strategies, time management tips, and participation guidelines targeted at online and blended students. If you have any questions about online learning, you can contact The Office of Online Education at [online@uri.edu](mailto:online@uri.edu).

You should expect to participate in some way every day for approximately 2-3 hours/day. This might mean posting to an online discussion thread, reading through the posted material, or watching a short video. Please make time in your schedule to stay on top of the work.

There is a lot of reading and writing in this course. This means you will be expected not only to complete the reading by the date assigned but participate in online discussions with your classmates in a timely fashion. You will also be called upon to frame those responses in several writing assignments. Please treat the plays and performances with the same academic devotion you would pay to the philosophical essays we read. Just as I will expect you to quote directly from the text in order to backup your ideas, so will I expect you to cite scenes, dialogue, etc from the art work we study in this course.

Also please note: This course delves into several controversial topics: race, sex, cloning, etc. These issues pose important opportunities to apply our knowledge of Ethics and will enable you to debate knowledgeably and eloquently some of the most pressing issues

facing us today. Because much of what we will cover is provocative and controversial, I expect students to behave with integrity, sensitivity, and intellectual curiosity as we analyze and debate the unique ethical dilemmas posed by the course's material. In all of your exchanges - the forum posts especially - I expect students to conduct themselves with respect for each other and to employ a conversational tone that is appropriate for academic discourse. Remember: tone is hard to detect via electronic communication. So take extra care to be clear, respectful, straightforward and curious in your communications!

Please bear in mind: My role as an instructor in this course is very different from a lecture course. My "lectures" are the weekly lessons. Your forums will involve discussions of course material. I will monitor these discussions and provide input as I deem necessary or when asked to do so by you or your group members. Think of me as facilitator in this process. Students who are used to instructors guiding them may feel insecure at first until they catch on to the process.

#### **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

**The Writing Center:**

The Writing Center is for "all writers, all disciplines, at all levels, and all stages of writing." If an instructor suggests that you go to the Writing Center, it is not a punishment, and does mean that you are a terrible writer. It means the instructor wants you to receive more individualized attention to your writing than s/he is able to provide, given the constraints of the class. It will only improve your grade. If possible, call ahead for an appointment (401-874-2367). Drop-in tutorials are often available. You may make repeat appointments, requesting the same tutor each time if you wish. See their Web Page: [web.uri.edu/aec/writing/](http://web.uri.edu/aec/writing/) for tips on how to make the best of your Writing Center visit.

If you have questions about your enrollment, financial aid, etc. please consult the Enrollment Services page:

<https://web.uri.edu/enrollment/>

Information about the URI library can be found here:

<https://web.uri.edu/library/>

Students requiring disability accommodations should be in touch with me immediately (preferably within 48 hours of the course beginning). Information about disability services can be found here:

<https://web.uri.edu/disability/>

Sakai Help: (401) 874-HELP

**Online Student Orientation:** The Online Learning Orientation is designed for students who are enrolled in an online class (whether it is their first time taking an online course or not). It teaches students about what online learning entails: introduces them to some important tools that may be useful in an online course, covers best practices for online communication with professor and peers, and offers resources for overall course success. The orientation is self-paced and should take students no longer than 30 minutes to complete. We encourage you to assign this orientation to your online students either prior to the start of classes or during the first week. It can be assigned for strictly informational purposes, or you can make it worth a grade/points/participation and request evidence of completion, through an optional quiz at the end of the course. Students can find explicit instruction on how to access the orientation here: <http://web.uri.edu/online/online-learning-orientation/>.

### Course Timetable

<b>Week</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Assignments</b>	<b>Assessments</b>
<b>Unit One:</b>	<b>Course introduction  Is Technology Dangerous?</b>	<b><u>Read:</u> The Nether, The Case Against Perfection  <u>Watch:</u> Video on Sandel  <u>Post:</u> Discussion Forum (3 posts total)</b>	<b>Forum/Discussion posts  Quiz 1 on Sandel</b>
<b>Week Two:</b>	<b>Who's to Blame for Income Inequality?</b>	<b><u>Read:</u> Good People, A Theory of Justice  <u>Watch:</u> Video on Rawls  <u>Post:</u> Discussion Forum (3 posts total)</b>	<b>Forum 1 /Discussion posts  Quiz 3 on Rawls  Quiz 4 on Good People</b>
<b>Unit Three:</b>	<b>Bertolt Brecht and The Epic Theatre</b>	<b><u>Read:</u> "Emphasis on Sport" and "The Modern Theatre is the Epic Theatre"  <u>Watch:</u> Video on Brecht and Mother Courage (National Theatre); Crash</b>	<b>Forum 2/discussion posts  Quiz 5 on Brecht  Writing Assignment #1 Due</b>

		<b>Course Theatre: Brecht</b>  <b><u>Post:</u> Discussion Forum (3 posts total)</b>	
<b>Unit Four:</b>	<b>Augusto Boal: Theatre of the Oppressed</b>	<b><u>Read:</u> The Poetics of the Oppressed</b>  <b><u>Watch:</u> Crash Course “Poor Unfortunate Theatre”</b>  <b><u>Post:</u> Discussion Forum (3 posts total)</b>	<b>Forum 3/discussion posts</b>  <b>Quiz 6 on Boal</b>  <b>Writing Assignment # 2 Due</b>
<b>Unit Five:</b>	<b>Summation Projects</b>	<b><u>Post:</u> Discussion Forum (3 posts total)</b>	<b>Forum 4/Discussion Posts</b>  <b>Summation Project Due January 17</b>