INSTRUCTOR: Liz Carlin Metz, Knox College: emetz@knox.edu
CREDITS: 4 credits

COURSE DESCRIPTION
This course is intended to compliment and intersect with the London as Visual Text course taught on the program and contextualize the overall London cultural and arts experience. The course seeks to position theatre performance and dramatic literature as art within the tenets of its own medium, but also as an accessible historical, anthropological, and sociological lens through which to understand Self and Other. Based on the assumption that theatre is the perfect liberal art in that all human experience and thought is the subject of the drama, the course will seek to engage the novice in the art of theatre as a new perspective and critical vantage point from which to consider basic questions about existence, experience, and action. Simultaneously, the course will seek to deepen the veteran’s relationship to the drama as evidence of the human condition to be recreated and embodied on stage.

COURSE OBJECTIVE
Course Goals: To identify and describe the structural and creative elements of drama as particular to a given play text and to relate the play to a cultural framework so as recognize, distinguish between, and articulate the diverse ethnic, cultural, and social footprints that historically have traversed the city of London, forming its current identity and creating its present social and cultural landscape as translated into art.

Teaching Goals: The commercial theatre is a very different entity from the non-profit or academic theatre cultures, as dependency on profit drives theatre to making safe and reliably profitable choices as to material and production. This is a deadly recipe for stagnation and repetition. London (like Chicago) is one of the last remaining sites where innovation, risk, and the cutting edge are still in evidence in the professional theatre (though both sites are struggling). Those three qualities are central to the role of theatre as social commentary and critique. The primary function of the theatre is to embody empathetically and make manifest the experience of what it means to be human. This is uniquely different from all other pedagogical endeavors. Performance is the experiential goal of all pathways of theatre study.

Performance at it most transcendent cannot happen without the audience. The goal of performance then is community. In that moment of time a group of people is brought together to consider an aspect of the human condition in intellectual and experiential terms. At its best, this is a felt experience, even when the experience is funny. My teaching goal is to transform the prior experience of the theatre major from consideration of the self in the art to that of consideration of the art in the self, and to transform the non-major from the position of a passive audience member seeking escape to an active role in which the theatre is intended to instigate reflection, dialogue, and action as a citizen. Tall order, I know. Theatre is a particular lens by which to view the world with compassion and empathy. For those who choose to make theatre, it is then also a particular
voice by which to communicate that view and to engage that view in dialogue with others. For those who witness theatre, it is a means to engage ideas feelingly in conscious debate and to entertain the ramifications of action or inaction. Entertainment does not have to be escapist to be rewarding or just plain fun. The theatre culture of London is the living embodiment of that belief, which is why I teach there and why as an artist I continually return there.

REQUIRED TEXTS
*Backwards and Forwards by David Ball. Purchase this before leaving the states and bring it with you. Please have it read by the first day of class—it is a very slender volume in paperback and you can readily tuck it in a corner of your suitcase.

*Plays as they are determined—these will be available in London.

*Handouts and websites as assigned.

COURSE CONTENT
Course Methodology:
The course will engage assigned play texts and viewed productions (as applicable and available from the London season*) to contextualize the cultural and historical perspectives that comprise the social identity of London and its people. Each play will be chosen with regard to a particular aspect of London's social and cultural identity as extruded through the art of the theatre, and will be paired with site visits to regions of the city that are represented by those plays and which those plays illuminate culturally. Creative, critical, and textual analysis projects, readings, discussion, site visits, and attendance at arts events will allow students to examine the cultural diversity of the city in broad and narrow terms.

*Note: The actual plays to be read and viewed cannot be determined until the spring season is announced (late fall 2014). Some of the course content will be predetermined the previous fall, but most of the course will be determined shortly before students come on board and even while the course is underway.

Plays and Communities (sample suggestions only):
1. Look Back in Anger, John Osborn. This play is one of the first new plays of the post WWII British theatre that heralded the theatre's abandonment of the staid, bourgeois theatre of the upper class, and embraced a searing examination of the alienation, rising rage, and economic deprivations of the citizens of the working class, a new theatrical form that became known as "social realism".
Site Visit: East End walking tour
Focus of Visit: Shifting populations of poverty, shifting avenues of employment, council estate housing (subsidized housing), gentrification.

2. Scenes From an Execution by Howard Barker. This play examines the crisis faced by the artist at the mercy of the need to make a living and the necessity of patronage.
Site Visit: Tate Britain and Tate Modern Art Museums.
Focus of Visit: Consideration of art movements, how art is funded, who views art, and how the artist pursues artistic impulses and drives in that context.

3. One Flea Spare, by Naomi Wallace. This play examines class and gender issues in the context of the great plague epidemics of the Middle Ages.
Site visit: The Museum of London and The Imperial War Museum.
Focus of visit: How catastrophic incidents constitute major turning points in the evolution of cultural identity. The Plague, the Great Fire that brought an end to the plague, and the Blitz are significant urban events that transformed cultural practices and changed the civic and physical direction of London.

4. Murmuring Judges, by David Hare. This play examines the British legal system from three perspectives: the police, the courts, and the prison.
Site Visit: The Inns of Court and the Courts of Justice.
Focus of Visit: How the legal system of a government wields justice equally or not equally throughout its citizenship and how class, gender, race, ethnicity, and income determine access to justice and legal representation.

5. Vita and Virginia by Eileen Atkins. This play examines the relationship between two of the iconic members of the Bloomsbury Group (Vita Sackville West and Virginia Woolf). The play illuminates the values, actions, and ethos of the two women, as well as the attenuated members of the famous Bloomsbury Group, who were responsible for ushering in British modernism and breaking with Victorian social values.
Site Visit: Bloomsbury and The Foundling Hospital
Focus of Visit: The role of social and personal values in art as lived aesthetics.

6. East is East, by Ayub Kahn-Din. This play examines the collision of cultures between a Pakistani and British working class couple and their children.
Site Visit: Brick Lane
Focus of Visit: Brick Lane was at one time the Jewish district and always was one of the major first stops on the immigrant path to assimilation for many ethnic groups. Currently, it is known as “Little Bangladeshi”. Sunday is Market Day and the street is a chaotic whirl of color, smells, and people shopping, eating, visiting, and living. One can obtain the best salt beef on a bagel this side of the Carnegie Deli in Manhattan at a shop next door to the best schwarma outside of Dhaka.

7. Talking In Tongues, by Winsome Pinnock. This play examines the loss of cultural identity and the racial and cultural implications of being black in London.
Site Visit: Brixton and Nottinghill.
Focus of Visit: Being Black in London is both like and yet very different from the American experience of African American culture. Prejudice, lack of access, police brutality, and generational poverty are common to both experiences, but the sense of history as former slaves is not the same, despite the Jamaican immigrant culture, and assimilation goals have been very different. Exportation of American “Gangsta” culture and rap has blurred those boundaries in the last 10 years creating a cultural gap between the current youth generation and the parent generation.

8. Meet the Mukherjees by Tanika Gupta. This play examines the persistent tension in traditional immigrant cultures when the first generation adopts the cultural values of the adopted culture and seeks to live and marry outside of the cultural norms of the culture of origin. Bengali and Jamaican culture clash.
Site Visit: Kilburn
Focus Of Visit: Kilburn was originally an Irish district with small pockets of Russian and other Eastern European immigrants, but today is very much a South Asian, Muslim, and Middle Eastern neighborhood. The questions of assimilation, cultural identity, religious practice, and traditional
culture in collision with dominant culture continue to create tension within families and between neighbors.

9. Orphans, by Dennis Kelly. This play examines the middle class nestled in its comfort zone as confronted by the violence of race ignorance, which at its worst engenders hatred, fear, and violence.
Site Visit: Islington and Angel
Focus of the Visit: The 30-something, educated professional class (one or no kids) living in insular, trendy neighborhoods where their assumptions about tolerance, inclusion, civil rights, and social responsibility are challenged by the random violence of fear that manifests as acts of violence. Primitive survival responses overcome reason when fear of the unknown dominates and unravels the comfortable lives created by education and access to wealth.

10. As You Like It, by William Shakespeare. This play examines the tensions between urban and rural cultures and the ramifications of anarchy (romantic and civil).
Site Visit: Stratford-Upon-Avon and the Shakespeare Properties (Anne Hathaway’s Cottage and Mary Arden’s Farm especially)
Focus of the Visit: The world in which Shakespeare grew up and was educated as the foundation of his plays and as revealing of class, culture, and society.

11. Love and Information, by Caryl Churchill. This play examines the disassociation experienced by people in an urban, technology driven culture that, despite the name “social network”, produces a network of people who don’t actually know one another and are so accustomed to information overload that they are not sure of what—or who--they actually know.
Site Visit: The Saatchi Gallery (contemporary art)
Focus of Visit: Consideration of conceptual and contemporary art as a reaction to and commentary on the experience of modern culture.

Logistics:
Weekly Play Attendance (Mandatory):
We will attend productions at theatres in many of the boroughs represented (and where ticket prices afford more options) in the course such as Wilton’s Music Hall in the East End, The Tricycle in Kilburn, the Southwark Playhouse, The Gate in Nottinghill, the Arcola in the East End, the Almeida or The King’s Head Pub and Theatre in Islington, The Bush in the Northwest of London, among others and inclusive of The National Theatre and at least one or two West End experiences. The course also will seek to include other performance media such as dance and music as applicable culturally and ethnically. For instance, should the Bangladeshi/British choreographer and dancer Akram Khan have a piece up when the program is in session, his work would be ideal.

Based on the availability of appropriate plays relative to the course with specific reference to cultural and ethnic diversity, we will attend one to three productions each week as they reflect our course goal, and then venture out into the neighborhoods where the culture depicted in the play is alive. The city will render itself up intimately and unforgottably to the astute observer and the willing participant. We might:
- Go on a guided walk of the district represented in a given play.
- Visit neighborhood cafes and workman’s caffs with the express purpose of engaging people in conversations.
- Find neighborhood pubs instead of city central pubs (that only function more like impersonal urban bars) to meet people and chat.
• Go to quiz nights at local pubs (where you may find you are ringers).
• Stop into a local church or sit in a local square.
• Visit a local school.
• Visit a local community center.
• Undertake a community service project.

Class Days:
This is yet to be finally determined, but I anticipate one session per week for class time to discuss plays and experiences, and one afternoon or morning session per week for excursions (these days may vary from week to week depending on weather, opening times at particular places, and the availability of various contacts and guests). I would anticipate each class session to be a minimum of three hours.

Note: Winter and spring in London can be very wet and very cold. The icy wind off of the Thames River and howling from west to east can be biting. As we will be out in the weather, sometimes for hours at a time, it is imperative that you have good, comfortable, and weatherproof shoes. You will need a weatherproof coat, a head covering, gloves, and an umbrella. Cute flats or mere athletic shoes and that adorable shortie cotton jacket will not cut it. If you do not have appropriate London winter gear, we will make an excursion to a thrift store so you can buy cheaply what you need and can leave behind if you so choose. Dress in layers.

Assignments:
1. Critical Notebook:
Students will maintain a “Critical Reflections” notebook and will be asked to view pertinent websites pertaining to the playwrights, plays, and districts. The notebook will record impressions, sketches, poems, thoughts, questions, and responses to prompts that will be utilized to inform ancillary research, group and personal site visits responses, and discussion in class. The notebook will be handed in and evaluated for penetration, depth, insight, and consideration of the course topics and goals. If initial field notebooks are kept by hand, the hand-in notebook must be transcribed and typed. Artwork must have framing abstracts articulating their relevance and meaning to the artist in terms of the course. Critical questions must be followed by discursive postulations seeking to answer the questions.

2. Site Visits:
The class will be divided into site visit teams, each team responsible for enlarging the understanding and experience of the each site for the class and for devising class activities for engaging the topic (all guided by me and under my supervision). I will lead the engagement with the play that will initiate each cultural excursion. We will travel to districts of the city relative to the plays we read and/or see. We also will seek to meet with members of those communities where possible.

3. Readings:
Students will read each play assigned (I encourage you to gather in a study group and to read the play aloud), and will be taught how to read and dissect plays as literary and cultural artifacts, but primarily as windows into the human condition and as vehicles for performance. Students also will be assigned ancillary readings to enlarge upon the experience of reading the play and visiting the relevant site. There will be a Quick Write assignment in class for each play—it will not be possible to address the Quick Write question without reading the play.
4. Tests and Papers:
   A. Students will submit a five page mid-term paper on a topic of choice (in conference with me) that interrogates an aspect of the course to date. This paper will be written to college standards and may be thesis based, an argument, or a critical analysis. It is to be supported with research and cited appropriately.
   B. The notebook hand-in. The notebook will be evaluated as a comprehensive synthesis of the class experience. It will be concluded with a five page critical evaluation that articulates your synthesis and analysis of the course goals in context of the class experience.

5. Final Project:
The course will culminate in a project that may be undertaken individually or in teams that may undertake traditional thesis based scholarship, creative response and interpretation (poetry collections, flash fiction collections, song compositions, monologue compositions and performance etc.), self designed walking tours, or presentation(s). Suggest something! Note: All creative projects will be accompanied by a critical abstract that discusses at length the intellectual issue being examined by the artwork or the creative interpretation of a primary inspiration.

Students with a keen interest in other literary examinations of culture and context may propose projects that examine fiction, short fiction, poetry, or visual art. Contemporary works such as NW, by Zadie Smith, the fiction works of Ian McEwan (i.e. Atonement and Saturday), Neil Gaiman (Neverwhere) and poets David Harsent, Carol Anne Duffy (current the British poet laureate), and Ruth Padel among other literary figures would readily provide nuanced windows into the city. Suggestions as to how to frame visual art as a final project will be welcome.

A Note About Seeing Plays:
While we will focus our attention on plays that compliment the course goals, I am mindful of the fact that you are in London and the array of theatre and other live performance options are stunning. I promise to keep in mind that the historic inclusion of the Comedy Festival in the culture of attending ancient Greek theatre was as honorable as the Tragedy Festival....

ASSESSMENT
Grading criteria in the creative arts can never be completely objective without bogging the experience down in tiresome quizzes, point based tests on useless minutiae, and busy work that cannot possibly assess the actual experience—because the course is just that: an experience, and not an accretion of facts. As a result, grading is largely based on the level of engagement that the student is able to demonstrate. The following continuum will apply:

- A range: denotes work of an outstanding nature that exceeds course standards (for instance the basic requirements of the syllabus) and reveals an original understanding of the subject matter. That understanding may be critical or intuitive, or a combination of both.
- B range: denotes work that is distinctly above average in quality of thought and interpretation and reveals an insightful articulation of the subject matter.
- C range: denotes work of a competent nature in quality of thought and reveals a general understanding of the subject matter. This is work that satisfies the basic demands of the syllabus with no particular distinction.
- D range: denotes work that is substandard in quality, suffers from lack of timeliness, is superficial in its level of engagement, and reveals a limited understanding of the overall course.
- Failing: Well, you really have to blow off the course to do this. And, sadly, it has been done.
This said, I will include in all the grading considerations:
  • Your level of participation,
  • The enthusiasm with which you investigate the texts and the city,
  • Your level of engagement when we are on site,
  • Your suggestions for things we can do or see to augment our experience,
  • The degree to which you engage one another in your investigations.

You are welcome to request to meet with me at any time to discuss your progress in the class.

Grade breakdown:
Attendance and Participation (inclusive of questions asked, discussion participation, focused attention in the field, Quick Writes etc.) 25%
Midterm Paper: 25%
Notebook: 25%
Final Project: 25%

ACM POLICY ON ACADEMICS
A complete listing of ACM policies can be found in your student handbook.

Class attendance and participation: You are expected to attend and participate fully in all classroom sessions, site visits, and field trips.

Academic honesty: Actions of dishonesty are destructive to the well-being of the academic community, and ACM staff respond to them vigorously. Cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of academic theft will result in a failing grade for that assignment and may result in failure for the course.

ACM POLICY ON NON-DISCRIMINATION
The Associated Colleges of the Midwest does not discriminate in the operation of its educational programs, activities, or employment on the basis of sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, race, color, religion, national origin, age, veteran status, marital status, or disability.

CLASSROOM CONDUCT
*Technology: I am willing to entertain the idea of laptops or pads in class, but I will rescind the option the minute that I perceive it is being abused. Cell phones are to be turned off. (Note: as the director of the program charged with your safety and well-being, mine will only be turned off when we are in the theatre). A word to the wise—if I ever see a student text or even check a text (or open your phone to check the time) during a performance or while we are on site in the field, I will fail that student for that assignment on the spot (after I scrape myself off of the ceiling—this really is the most rudely arrogant and inconsiderate thing that a person can do to a live performer or a person trying to lead you around a site). I wear a watch.

*Attendance is Mandatory: You only are going to have this opportunity once in your lifetime. You can come back and party or be a tourist any time you want to.

*Lateness or Leaving Early disadvantages you. 2 Lates or early departures equal an absence. 3 absences devalue the final grade by a full letter grade.

*Late hand-ins are devalued a full letter grade per day.
*Citation: MLA format is to be employed for all written work. All instances in which you directly quote, paraphrase, rephrase, or otherwise reference the thoughts or ideas of the intellectual property of another person be it in writing, from the web, visual, or audio must be cited. Any instance of plagiarism will be dealt with according to the standards of the ACM and the student in question’s home campus. If you are at all uncertain about citation, please talk to me. Ultimately, if you are not sure if you should cite something, you probably should.