DERE,
FALL 2026

TR

IGDIR UNIVERSITY

DEPARTMENT OF WESTERN LANGUAGES AND LITERATURES

SYLLABUS

Course Title: Contemporary British Drama
Lecturer: Assist. Prof. Özden DERE
Course Schedule: Tuesday / 14:00 –16:45 – 405
E-mail: ozdendere@gmail.com
Office Hours: By appointment

1. **Course Description, Aim and Contents**

This course explores the major developments, playwrights, and movements in British theatre from 1950 to the present. Students will engage with key primary texts (plays), theoretical frameworks (Theatre of the Absurd, Political Theatre, Theatre of Cruelty, Postmodernism), and secondary readings that contextualize the plays within social, political, and aesthetic debates.

2. **Weekly Outline**

Week 1-2: Introduction — Contemporary Theatre and Society

- **Themes**: Modernism to postmodernism, representation, audience
- **Reading**:
    - Excerpt from the course pack (pp. 541–548) on *Theatre and Culture Since 1950*
    - Marvin Carlson, *Theories of the Theatre* (Intro)
- **Discussion**: What is the function of theatre in modern society?

Week 3-4: Theatre of Cruelty — Antonin Artaud's Legacy

- **Primary Text**: Selected parts from *The Theatre and Its Double* by Antonin Artaud
- *Saved* by Edward Bond (1965)
- **Secondary**: Course pack excerpt on Artaud's influence (p. 543)
- **Discussion**: The body, ritual, and the "plague" of theatre

Week 5-6: The Theatre of the Absurd

- **Primary Text**: Samuel Beckett, *Waiting for Godot* (1953)
- **Secondary**: Martin Esslin, *Theatre of the Absurd* (Chapter 1)
- **Themes**: Alienation, absurdity, dislocation

Week 7-8: Harold Pinter and the Violence of Language

- **Primary Text**: Harold Pinter, *The Homecoming* (1965)

- **Secondary**: Esslin on Pinter; course pack excerpts
- **Themes**: Power dynamics, ambiguity, menace

Week 8: Midterm Exam

Week 9-10: Feminist Theatre and Gender

- **Primary Text**: Caryl Churchill, *Top Girls* (1982)
- **Secondary**: Elin Diamond, "Churchill's Feminist Theatre"
- **Themes**: Patriarchy, success, female identity

Week 11-12: Political Theatre in the Brechtian Tradition

- **Primary Text**: David Hare, *Stuff Happens* (2004)
- **Secondary**: Brecht, "Short Organum for the Theatre"
- **Discussion**: Realism vs. Epic Theatre

Week 12-13: Irish Identity on the British Stage

- **Primary Text**: Brian Friel, *Translations* (1980)
- **Secondary**: Declan Kiberd on Irish drama and colonial language
- **Themes**: Language, land, loss

Week 14: Overview of the course

Week 15: Final Exam

3. **Assessment**

- **Participation** – 10%
- **Midterm Exam** – 40%
- **Final Exam** – 50%

Method of Instruction: There will be an introductory lecture each week followed by a close reading of and a class discussion of the plays.

Requirements: Attendance is obligatory. More than 12 hours of absence will result in failure. Each student is obliged to read in advance every text listed here, and those that the lecturer will name during the class. Internet is useful, but do not solely depend on it.

Suggested Secondary Reading List

- Esslin, Martin. "The Theatre of the Absurd." *The Tulane Drama Review*, vol. 4, no. 4, 1960, pp. 3–15. *JSTOR*, https://doi.org/10.2307/1124873. Accessed 17 Sept. 2026.
- Elin Diamond – *Unmaking Mimesis: Essays on Feminism and Theatre*
- Marvin A. Carlson – *Theories of the Theatre*

- Fredric Jameson – *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*
- Dan Rebellato – *1956 and All That: The Making of Modern British Drama*
- Angelaki V. (ed.) – *Contemporary British Theatre: Breaking New Ground*