An enthusiasm for attending and thinking critically about live performance, starting, inevitably given the instructor’s own critical employment, with the theater and moving on to classical music/opera and dance. Also, where possible, the visual arts as well as film and television as the common cultural parlance of our time.

The course aims to provide the student with a full awareness of critical discourse across the spectrum as it is practiced in the British press. Students will become acquainted with a wide array of arts journalism – reviews, interviews, features, blogs – and will get to do similar writing exercises themselves. The point is to couple an awareness of UK journalistic practice across the various art forms with a sense of the cultural practitioners without whom the arts would not exist.

Various Thursday night performances have been booked for the entire class, encompassing a broad range of theater as well as dance, opera and classical music. There are also several in-class visits detailed in the syllabus at the relevant weeks, and we may add in a further gallery visit or two as the semester continues. Attendance at all outings is mandatory.

Scheduled outings:

- **Amadeus**, National Theatre/Olivier, 7:30 pm  
  [https://www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/shows/amadeus](https://www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/shows/amadeus)

- **The Flying Lovers of Vitebsk**, Wilton’s Music Hall, 7:30 pm  

- **Assassins**, RADA, 7:30 pm  
  [https://www.rada.ac.uk/whats-on/rada-productions/assassins](https://www.rada.ac.uk/whats-on/rada-productions/assassins)

- **Girls and Boys**, Royal Court Jerwood Theatre Downstairs, 8 pm (note start time)  

- **Gundog**, Royal Court Jerwood Theatre Upstairs, 7:45 pm (note start time)  
  [https://royalcourttheatre.com/whats-on/gundog/](https://royalcourttheatre.com/whats-on/gundog/)

- **Pippin**, Southwark Playhouse, 7:30 pm  
  [http://southwarkplayhouse.co.uk/show/pippin/](http://southwarkplayhouse.co.uk/show/pippin/)
Royal Ballet triple bill, Royal Opera House, 7 30 pm (opening night)

La Traviata, ENO, London Coliseum, 7 30 pm
https://www.eno.org/whats-on/la-traviata/

free week: you pick your own outing

Philharmonia concert, Royal Festival Hall, 7 30 pm
https://www.southbankcentre.co.uk/whats-on/104103-philharmonia-orchestra-esapekka-salonen-mahler-1-2018

English National Ballet mixed bill, Sadler’s Wells, 7 30 pm

The Phlebotomist, Hampstead Downstairs, 7 45 pm

Desired Outcomes

1. To broaden students’ exposure to live performance and the people connected with it, as well as the major cultural citadels that help define London as an artistic hub.

2. To broaden students’ exposure to writing on live performance.

3. To help develop a critical sensibility and voice.

4. To learn about writing on cultural issues and reportage, as well as reviews, interviews, and think pieces.

Assessment Components

Written work exclusive of final paper 50%, exam(s) 25%, class participation 15%, final paper/project 10%

There will be weekly writing assignments and both a midterm and a final. Each student will be responsible for an in-class presentation to last about 15 minutes or so.

Failure to submit or fulfill any required course component results in failure of the class.

Assessment Expectations

Grade A: All assignments handed in on time and to a near-publishable standard. Outstanding work.

Grade B: Solid, reasonable work.

Grade C: Perfunctory work.

Grade D: Slovenly work.

Grade F: Non-compliance with the requirements of the course.

Required Text(s)

The British press in all its manifestations plus all hand-outs / supporting materials from class presentations

Amadeus, Peter Shaffer, ISBN number varies according to the edition – the NT will have its own edition on sale in the bookshop
Supplemental
Texts(s) (not required to purchase as copies are in NYU-L Library)

Assassins, Stephen Sondheim and John Weidman, ISBN: 9781559360388

FYI, the Royal Court playtexts and programmes are one and the same and are worth buying

Internet Research Guidelines

Additional Required Equipment

Session 1

Introduction to London’s cultural and journalistic scene. Overview. Class presentations assigned.

Assignment: choosing your critics + Amadeus at the National and what you saw

n.b.: outings begin Thursday with Amadeus, see above for details

Session 2

(The precise order may change depending on availability of speakers etc but these session headings cover the various disciplines that will be included)

Assessing the event 1: the National-as-colossus
Assignment: crafting a lede, plus questions for Michael Billington

Session 3

Assessing the event 2: theatre, yes, but also music and dance – Vitebsk encompasses it all
Assignment: from this week onwards, there will be critical pieces and/or analyses due every week, details to follow – guests pertaining to and drawn from some of the productions will be announced nearer the time

Guest: Michael Billington, The Guardian
https://www.theguardian.com/profile/michaelbillington

Session 4

Gallery visit 1: V&A Museum, London SW7
https://www.vam.ac.uk/exhibitions/opera
meet at the museum just before 1 pm where we will be met by exhibition curator Kate Bailey

Reconvene at 6 Bedford for the remainder of class

Session 5

The Royal Court as new play hub + critiquing the critics (handouts to be provided the previous week)

Guest: the critic-as-brand: Mark Shenton, Playbill / The Stage
Session 6
Describing the ineffable 1: classical music and opera
Guest: Edward Seckerson
http://www.edwardseckerson.biz/

Session 7
Describing the ineffable 2: dance
Guest: the critic-as-editor, Debra Craine, chief dance critic and reviews editor, The Times (UK)
http://journalisted.com/debra-craine
+ the small-scale musical (Assassins and now Pippin)

Session 8
MIDTERM EXAM

Session 9
Go into your dance: the Royal Ballet
Royal Opera House tour, 2 30 pm

Session 10
Opera-as-theatre: La Traviata

Session 11
Gallery visit 2 tbd (or 16th)

Session 12
Workshops and final project tutorials

Session 13
The editor
Guest: Helen Hawkins, editor, Sunday Times Culture
http://www.thetimes.co.uk/magazine/culture

Session 14
Theatre-as-incubator: Hampstead Downstairs
+ wrap-up/overview

Session 15
Final exam and project essay/submission
Eating is not permitted in any classrooms. Please kindly dispose of rubbish in the bins provided. Please go to the bathroom prior to class or during the break and not during class time. Laptop use should not by any means be an excuse for limiting your engagement in class.

Students will be required to attend at least one live performance every week, and Thursday nights have been set aside for that purpose. Starting with week three, students must bring to class a considered written response to what they have seen. There will also be numerous assignments requiring students to circulate for general discussion review/s and/or feature/s pertinent to that week’s discipline and also asking students to function as editors and redactors of their colleagues’ work. Each student will be responsible for an in-class presentation.

Oyster cards can be used to get you to/from all our outings and you can buy them in weekly or monthly amounts.

London has numerous special platform performances, culture-related talks etc that are worth attending, but they are generally announced much nearer the time. Given the flexible nature of the live arts, students should be prepared for more last-minute suggestions/arrangements than might normally be the case.


Prior to joining the NYT company, Prof Wolf was London theatre critic for Variety and spent more than twenty years as UK arts and theatre writer for the Associated Press. Besides NYU/L, he is on the faculty of Syracuse University / London and leads a summer theatre course for Cal Discoveries Travel out of Berkeley, California. Prof Wolf freelances across the UK press and reports on theatre and culture for Monocle 24 and for BBC Front Row and Free Thinking; in addition, he sits on the panel of the Evening Standard Theatre Awards and the offwestend.com awards (aka the Offies). Educated at Yale, he has lived his entire professional life in London.

NYU GLOBAL ACADEMIC POLICIES

Policies and procedures for Global Academic Centres, including policies on academic integrity and the Study Away Standard, can be found here: https://www.nyu.edu/about/policies-guidelines-compliance/policies-and-guidelines/student-services.html

Absences: Key information on NYU London’s absence policy, how to report absences, and what kinds of absences can be excused can be found here: http://www.nyu.edu/london/academics/attendance-policy.html

NYU London work submission policies can be found here: http://www.nyu.edu/london/academics/academic-policies.html

Classroom conduct: Academic communities exist to facilitate the process of acquiring and exchanging knowledge and understanding, to enhance the personal and intellectual development of its members, and to advance the interests of society. Essential to this mission is that all members of the University Community are safe and free to engage in a civil
process of teaching and learning through their experiences both inside and outside the classroom. Accordingly, no student should engage in any form of behaviour that interferes with the academic or educational process, compromises the personal safety or well-being of another, or disrupts the administration of University programs or services.

Please refer to the NYU London Disruptive Student Behaviour Policy at [https://goo.gl/Nvt5Vu](https://goo.gl/Nvt5Vu) for examples of disruptive behaviour and guidelines for response and enforcement.