Documentary Theatre

Documentary Theatre is created based on real life stories such as personal experiences, social issues or historical events. Primary documentary materials including recorded interviews, newspaper articles, video footages or photographs will be interpreted and composed to create a theatrical representation of the events. Unlike written texts or edited films, Documentary Theatre offers a multi-perspective and three-dimensional way into understanding real life experiences in depth through live performances by performers making use of different dramatic expressive means.

In this course, students will explore different models of documentary theatre, focusing on the relationship amongst the Form, the Purpose and the Content. Students will also have the opportunity to choose a local issue or community of their own interest, conduct face-to-face interviews, interpret and edit the collected data, create a dramatic structure from the research materials, devise an original piece of documentary theatre, and give a performance at the end of the course.

Intended Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, students are expected to be able to:
1. Acquire and apply the various models and forms of Documentary Theatre.
2. Apply the understanding of the social and artistic significance of Documentary Theatre in forming and analyzing theatrical works, and to make connection with one’s personal experience and knowledge.
3. Work collaboratively to collect materials, interpret and compose a piece of Documentary Theatre with appropriate styles.
4. Rehearse and perform with appropriate content, skills and good collaboration in the final performance.
5. Make critical, specific reflection and comments on the performances by themselves and peers.

Course Schedule & Outline

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<th>Session</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>ILO</th>
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| 1       | 13 Feb (2 hrs) | Introduction of Documentary Theatre  
- Overview and expectations of the course will be explained.  
- Basic theories, models and significance of Documentary Theatre will be introduced.  
- Paired and small group exercises on listening to real stories and re-telling stories through narration, repetitive words, sound and movements. | ILO 1 |
| 2       | 20 Feb (3 hrs) | The essence of stories: Listening and re-telling artistically  
- Students will do warm up exercises to practice how to listen to people through means of verbal and non-verbal communication. | ILO 1, 3 |
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| 3          | 27 Feb (3 hrs) | Examples of Documentary Theatre in Different Styles                           | - Students will see how songs and documents of a historical event could be composed to form a documentary musical.  
- Students will explore how a solo performance of documentary theatre can contain opinions and thoughts of different people.  
- Highlight will be given to the distinctive feature of having writers, interviewers and performers’ all expressing their thoughts in the play.  
- Students practice the two skills learned in the first two lessons. Students will explore how to structure and perform real stories in 3 to 5 sentences. | ILO 1, 2, 3 |
| 4          | 5 Mar (3 hrs)  | Theatre making skills, the notion of truthfulness, the significance of artistic transformation | - Students continue to acquire drama-making and performing skills on how to transform and express stories.  
- The use of music, songs, sound-collage, sound-scape will be explored. The idea of juxtaposition and collage drama will be introduced.  
- Students will be given simple documentary materials to create short pieces, and discuss the notion of “truthfulness” and the significance of “artistic transformation”. | ILO 1, 2, 3 |
| 5          | 12 Mar (3 hrs) | Mini-Documentary Theatre: Focus question, Purpose and Goal                    | - With a given major social event, students will carry out an experiment on creating a mini version of documentary theatre in class.  
- Students work in small groups, and apply all the skills and artistic elements in performing real stories. Students will practice giving each other feedbacks.  
- The instructor explains the significance of Focus Question, Purpose / Goals, and Target Audience. Students will reflect on their classwork, try to identify their possible focus questions, purpose and goals, and how such decisions may change the content and structure of the piece. | ILO 1, 4, 5 |
| 6          | 19 Mar (3 hrs) | Interview techniques, questioning skills, conducting interviews, interpreting the data | - Students form small groups and identify their focus questions / topic for the project.  
- Students explore the techniques and criteria required in effective interviews to collect different kinds of data.  
- Students formulate their interview questions, interview their own classmates, and collect stories for the creative process.  
- Instructor guides students to analyse / decode the stories collected in the interview to extract significant materials for the creative process. | ILO 1, 2, 3 |
### Experimenting with dramatic forms and structure
- Students experiment with different dramatic forms and choose the appropriate dramatic forms for presenting the analysed materials.
- Students compose a dramatic structure for the presentation of the materials, making close connection to their focus question.
- A list of simple props, costumes, projections, sound or video clips and other equipment should be prepared
- Students record the generated artistic materials, e.g. taking notes, pictures, video, making drawings, etc.

### Polishing, Final Rehearsal and Feedbacks
- Students polish the content and structure of their pieces, receive feedbacks and help from the instructor.
- Students rehearse with all props, costumes, sound cues, video cues, musical instruments and other materials required for the performance.
- Each group will take turn to try out all the technical materials e.g. sound clips, video clips, set up the space for desired audience configuration.

### Final Performance. Comments from instructor; Course evaluation
- Students get ready for the final performance. Each group takes turn to show their pieces (15-min long) to a small invited private audience.
- Instructor give comments and facilitate a peer-feedback session after the performances.
- Requirements for the critical commentary (as a written demonstration of the understanding of theories and artistic experience) will be explained to the students.

### Assessment Tasks

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<th>ILOs</th>
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<td>Attendance (10%)</td>
<td>Students will need to attend all the classes. It is important for the students to attend most of the classes to ensure that they can acquire practical skills with the instructor’s supervision. Attendance will be taken in the beginning of each session after the add-drop period. Students arrived 10 minutes after the beginning of each session will be counted as late. Being late or leaving early twice will be counted as one absence. For each absence, students will have 1% deducted from their 10% attendance grade.</td>
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<td>Class Participation (35%)</td>
<td>Students will participate in both individual and group work in each lesson. Their learning attitude, contributions made to the class, and the quality of work produced will be assessed.</td>
<td>ILO 1, 2, 3, 4</td>
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ILO 1, 3, 4
Critical Commentary (25%)

Students will produce a written critical commentary to reflect on their learning by giving a detailed analysis of the creative process and final performance, reflecting on their understanding about documentary theatre, personal strengths and weaknesses in the research and creative process, contributions and discoveries in the process, as well as the difficulties encountered and achievements attained as a group.

Students will also give a critical analysis on the strengths and weaknesses of the performances given by themselves and another group assigned by the instructor. A list of guidelines will be given to the students for the critical commentary. The minimum word requirement is 1000 words.

The Critical Commentary should be submitted on (19 Apr 2020). 10% of the reflective journal grade will be deducted per day after the due date. Submissions will not be accepted after (24 Apr 2020).

Final Performance (30%)

Each group of students will give a 20-min long performance of an original piece of documentary theatre.

The performance should be basically in English, if the students have interviewed non-English speaking communities in HK, multi-lingual scenarios are allowed. But the basic criterion is all students would be able to understand the final performance produced by each group.

Required Reading Materials

Supplementary Reading Materials

Academic Honor Code
- You must observe and uphold the highest standards of academic integrity and honesty in all the work you do throughout your program of study.
- As members of the University community, you have the responsibility to help maintain the academic reputation of HKUST in its academic endeavors.
- Sanctions will be imposed if you are found to have violated the regulations governing academic integrity and honesty.