



COURSE MANUAL

Name of the Elective Course:

Navigating an Indifferent World: An Introduction to the Theatre of the Absurd

Course Code:

L -EA-0512

Name of the Faculty Member:

Vinod Kottayil Kalidasan

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This document is prepared by the course instructor and contains basic information relevant to the execution of the course. It is the official record for all intents and purposes as far the elective course, **Navigating an Indifferent World: An Introduction to the Theatre of the Absurd** (Course Code: L -EA-0512) is concerned.

This course manual can be used as a general guide to the subject. However, the instructor can modify, extend or supplement the course (without tampering its basic framework and objectives) for the effective and efficient delivery of the course. The instructor will provide students with reasons for such changes.

Part I

Course Title: **Navigating an Indifferent World: An Introduction to the Theatre of the Absurd**

Course Code: **L -EA-0512**

Course Duration: **One Semester (15 Weeks)**

No. of Credit Units: **4 Credits**

Level: **Undergraduate and postgraduate**

Medium of Instruction: **English**

Pre-requisites: **NA**

Equivalent Courses: **NA**

Part II

Course Description

The Greek mythical character Sisyphus spent his life rolling a huge boulder up a hill, only to watch it roll down helplessly, repeating the cycle endlessly.

The French philosopher Albert Camus concluded his famous article on the Sisyphus legend with these words: "One must imagine Sisyphus happy". Samuel Beckett's iconic play Waiting for Godot portrays two characters, Vladimir and Estragon, in an eternal wait in the middle of nowhere for someone called Godot to turn up. However, neither of the two knows whether Godot will ever arrive or whether someone called Godot even exists in the first place! The Theatre of the Absurd movement, which originated in post-World War II Europe, deeply examined the inherent absurdity of human life. Closely related to nihilism and existentialism, this movement delved into every individual's quest for meaning, purpose, and self in a world that is inherently chaotic, uncertain and unpredictable.

This resonates even more today as the world grapples with environmental destruction, development of destructive technologies, and rapid industrial expansion. The purpose of the course is to engage students with this profound but very real part of human existence and to help them comprehend, prepare for, and navigate an uncertain and unpredictable world ahead. Reading the foundational texts of the Theatre of the Absurd movement and discussing the implications of their ideas in dealing with our contemporary realities are important aims of the course.

The course intends to closely examine the texts to explore the narrative strategies, tropes, ploys, literary and linguistic devices, and the juxtaposition of notions often opposed to the concept of the absurd, such as happiness and logic. Ultimately, the course allows students to think deeply about human attempts to find meaning, purpose, and a sense of self in a world that is indifferent and meaningless. These are efforts humanity should continue to pursue resiliently despite the indifference of the world. This can only be done once we are able to

comprehend the reality that exists ‘out there’, which is the aim of the course.

The course employs interdisciplinary methods to study the problem from a variety of perspectives, including social, cultural, literary, and philosophical. It also examines the role of large-scale crises, such as World War II and the Partition of India, in shaping absurdity as a powerful literary ploy. This allows the course to explore non-Western perspectives on the absurd, including those from India, Latin America, and Africa.

The readings are selected carefully for their representative quality as well as their ability to make a profound theme, such as the absurd, accessible and enjoyable to the students. The assessment-related aspects are governed by the policies of the JGLS for elective courses. One of the two internal assessment components is a creative one, such as directing a small play or acting/scriptwriting for one such play (25 marks). The second internal assessment component is an essay (25 marks). There will also be an external examination (50 marks).

2. Course Aims

To equip students to critically reflect upon the deep sense of meaninglessness and crisis humanity is often confronted with and study how literature and writing capture the spirit of this profound theme. The course also aims to help students navigate real life situations involving similar challenges.

3. Teaching Methodology

The teaching methodology is a combination of lectures and collective engagement with the texts involving students. It emphasizes on both the performative and theoretical aspects of the profound theme of the absurd.

4. Intended Learning Outcomes

The students must be able to understand the revolutionary literary movement, Theatre of the Absurd, thoroughly and its implications across the globe. They should also be able to critically and creatively look at the human attempts to unlock the secrets deeply hidden in the realm of the absurd.

Course Intended Learning Outcomes	Weightage in %	Teaching and Learning Activities	Assessment Activities	Tasks/Activities
Involve ment and performance	25%	Script writing, acting/solo performance/enacting/creative interpretation	Script writing, acting/solo performance/enacting/creative interpretation.	
A critical essay	25%	Reflection/analysis of the activities and the creative and theoretical texts involved	Reflection/analysis of the activities and the creative and theoretical texts involved.	
An external examination	50%	Analysis of specific themes academically.	Answering questions academically.	

5. Grading of Student Achievement

To pass this course, students must obtain a minimum of 40% in the cumulative aspects of coursework, i.e., internal assessment (including moot, mid-term exam, internal assignment) and end term examination. **End of semester exam will carry 50 or 30 marks, as the case may be, out of which students have to obtain a minimum of 30% to fulfil the requirement of passing the course.**

The details of the grades as well as the criteria for awarding such grades are provided below:

PERCENTAGE OF MARKS	GRADE	GRADE VALUE	GRADE DESCRIPTION
80 and above	O	8	Outstanding – Exceptional knowledge of the subject matter, thorough understanding of issues; ability to synthesize ideas, rules and principles and extraordinary critical and analytical ability
75 – 79	A+	7.5	Excellent - Sound knowledge of the subject matter, thorough understanding of issues; ability to synthesize ideas, rules

PERCENTAGE OF MARKS	GRADE	GRADE VALUE	GRADE DESCRIPTION
			and principles and critical and analytical ability
70 – 74	A	7	Very Good - Sound knowledge of the subject matter, excellent organizational capacity, ability to synthesize ideas, rules and principles, critically analyze existing materials and originality in thinking and presentation
65 – 69	A-	6	Good - Good understanding of the subject matter, ability to identify issues and provide balanced solutions to problems and good critical and analytical skills
60 – 64	B+	5	Fair – Average understanding of the subject matter, limited ability to identify issues and provide solutions to problems and reasonable critical and analytical skills
55 – 59	B	4	Acceptable - Adequate knowledge of the subject matter to go to the next level of study and reasonable critical and analytical skills.
50 – 54	B-	3	Marginal - Limited knowledge of the subject matter and irrelevant use of materials and, poor critical and analytical skills
45 – 49	P1	2	Pass 1 – Pass with basic understanding of the subject matter
40 – 44	P2	1	Pass 2 – Pass with rudimentary understanding of the subject matter
Below 40	F	0	Fail - Poor comprehension of the subject matter; poor critical and analytical skills and marginal use of the relevant materials. Will require repeating the course
Absent	Ab	0	Absent - “Extenuating circumstances” preventing the student from taking the end- semester, or re-sit, examination as the case may be; the Vice Dean (Examinations) at their discretion assign

PERCENTAGE OF MARKS	GRADE	GRADE VALUE	GRADE DESCRIPTION
			the "Ab" grade. If an "Ab" grade is assigned, the student would appear for the end-semester, or re-sit examination, as the case may be, as and when the subsequent opportunity is provided by the University.

6. Criteria for Student Assessments

Internal assessment of the participants will be based on the following criteria. In case any of the participants miss the IA tests, alternative internal assessments will be conducted (Please specify the alternative assessment)

Assessment	Weightage	Remarks
It is a creative/performative component. Acting/Scriptwriting and participating in a play/performance	25 Marks	
A critical/reflection paper	25 Marks	
End semester examination	50 marks	There will be an end-semester examination/component for all participants of the course who have successfully completed the course work. This will be an open book (no gadgets) examination.

Part IV

Course/Class Policies

Academic Integrity and Plagiarism

Learning and knowledge production of any kind is a collaborative process. Collaboration demands an ethical responsibility to acknowledge who we have learnt from, what we have learned, and how reading and learning from others have helped us shape our own ideas.

Even our own ideas demand an acknowledgement of the sources and processes through which those ideas have emerged. Thus, all ideas must be supported by citations. All ideas borrowed from articles, books, journals, magazines, case laws, statutes, photographs, films, paintings, etc., in print or online, must be credited with the original source. If the source or inspiration of your idea is a friend, a casual chat, something that you overheard, or heard being discussed at a conference or in class, even they must be duly credited. If you paraphrase or directly quote from a web source in the examination, presentation or essays, the source must be acknowledged. The university has a framework to deal with cases of plagiarism. All form of plagiarism will be taken seriously by the University and prescribed sanctions will be imposed on those who commit plagiarism.

Disability Support and Accommodation Requirements

JGU endeavours to make all its courses inclusive and accessible to students with different abilities. In accordance with the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (2016), the JGU Disability Support Committee (DSC) has identified conditions that could hinder a student's overall well-being. These include physical and mobility related difficulties, visual and hearing impairment, mental health conditions and intellectual/learning difficulties e.g., dyslexia, dyscalculia. Students with any known disability needing academic and other support are required to register with the Disability Support Committee (DSC) by following the procedure specified at <https://jgu.edu.in/disability-support-committee/>

Students who need support may register before the deadline for registration ends, as communicated by the DSC via email each semester. Those students who wish to continue receiving support from the previous semester, must re-register every semester prior to the deadline for re-registration as communicated by the DSC via email. Last minute registrations and support are discouraged and might not be possible as sufficient time is required to make the arrangements for support.

The DSC maintains strict confidentiality about the identity of the student and the nature of their disability and the same is requested from faculty members and staff as well. The DSC takes a strong stance against in-class and out-of-class references made about a student's disability without their consent and disrespectful comments referring to a student's disability. With due respect for confidentiality, faculty and students are encouraged to have honest conversations about the needs of students with disabilities and to discuss how a course may be better tailored to cater to a student with disability.

All general queries are to be addressed to disabilitysupportcommittee@jgu.edu.in

Safe Space Pledge

This course may discuss a range of issues and events that might result in distress for some students. Discussions in the course might also provoke strong emotional responses. To

make sure that all students collectively benefit from the course, and do not feel disturbed due to either the content of the course or the conduct of the discussions. Therefore, it is incumbent upon all within the classroom to pledge to maintain respect towards our peers. This does not mean that you need to feel restrained about what you feel and what you want to say. Conversely, this is about creating a safe space where everyone can speak and learn without inhibitions and fear. This responsibility lies not only with students, but also with the instructor.

P.S. The course instructor, as part of introducing the course manual, will discuss the scope of the Safe Space Pledge with the class.

Cell Phones, Laptops and Similar Gadgets

Gadgets are allowed and responsible and course-related uses are strictly recommended.

Part V

Keywords Syllabus

Theatre of the Absurd, Existentialism, Meaning, Theatre.

Course Design and Overview (Weekly Plan)

Week	Topic and Description	Reading/Course Materials
1.	What is Theatre of Absurd? Martin Esslin	Esslin, Martin. The Theatre of Absurd. Methuen Drama, 2001.
2.	What is Theatre of Absurd? Albert Camus	Camus, Albert. The Myth of Sisyphus. Translated by Justin O'Brien, Vintage Books, 2019.
3.	Reading, involving and expanding the scope	Beckett, Samuel. Waiting for Godot. Faber and Faber, 2017.
4.	Reading, involving and expanding the scope	Albee, Edward. The Zoo Story. Theatre Communications Group, 2019.

5.	Reading, involving and expanding the scope	Dostoyevsky, Fyodor. <i>Notes from Underground</i> . Translated by Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky, Vintage Books, 2023.
6.	Reading, involving and expanding the scope	García Márquez, Gabriel. <i>The Story of a Shipwrecked Sailor</i> . Translated by Gregory Rabassa, Penguin India, 2007.
7.	Reading, involving and expanding the scope	Ionesco, Eugène. <i>Rhinoceros</i> . Translated by Derek Prouse, Grove Press, 2022.
8.	Reading, involving and expanding the scope	Kafka, Franz. <i>Metamorphosis</i> . Translated by David Wyllie, Dover Publications, 2020.
9.	Reading, involving and expanding the scope	Manto, Saadat Hasan. <i>Selected Stories</i> . Translated by Khalid Hasan, Penguin Books, 2023.
10.	Reading, involving and expanding the scope	Soyinka, Wole. <i>Madmen and Specialists</i> . Oxford University Press, 1971.
11.	Reading, involving and expanding the scope	Tendulkar, Vijay. <i>Silence! The Court is in session. Three Modern Indian Plays</i> , Oxford, 1998
12.	Additional engagement	
13.	Additional engagement	
14.	Conclusion	
15.	Conclusion	

Part VI Relevant Readings / Essential Readings

Albee, Edward. *The Zoo Story*. Theatre Communications Group, 2019.

Beckett, Samuel. *Waiting for Godot*. Faber and Faber, 2017.

Camus, Albert. *The Myth of Sisyphus*. Translated by Justin O'Brien, Vintage Books, 2019.

Esslin, Martin. *The Theatre of Absurd*. Methuen Drama, 2001. García Márquez, Gabriel. *The Story of a Shipwrecked Sailor*. Translated by Gregory Rabassa, Penguin India, 2007.

Fricke, Ron (Dir) , Baraka (movie), 1992.

Ionesco, Eugène. *Rhinoceros*. Translated by Derek Prouse, Grove Press, 2022. Kafka, Franz. *Metamorphosis*. Translated by David Wyllie, Dover Publications, 2020.

Manto, Saadat Hasan. *Selected Stories*. Translated by Khalid Hasan, Penguin Books, 2023.

Padmanabhan, Manjula. *Harvest. Kali for Women*, 1997.

Soyinka, Wole. *Madmen and Specialists*. Oxford University Press, 1971. Tendulkar, Vijay. *Silence! The Court is in session. Three Modern Indian Plays*, Oxford, 1998