In this course, students explore representations of science and scientists on the stage through critical and theatrical examination of play texts. The focus of the course is twofold, exploring the message—scientific theory and its impact—and the medium—theatre—and how these work together to transmit meaning. Classes alternate between discussion based seminars and practical studio work. This dual approach provides opportunities for students to pursue topics of interest covered in the plays, while learning more about theatre practice and performance techniques, including acting, directing, stagecraft and dramaturgy. Students work in teams to produce three scene performances over the semester. The first of these scene performances features an original script produced by the group, allowing participants to learn about storytelling and play development as well as performance. The second and third scene performances are based on one of the plays we have studied, giving students an opportunity to closely examine one of the course texts, while also learning about the iterative scene development process.

Through discussion and performance we explore plays about science including:

- Analysis of the ‘performing engineer’: transfer between disciplines
- Critical analysis of a live performance event
- Scene performance of original work
- Scene performance from one of the plays studied
- Scene performance of S2 with further development
- Rehearsal diary kept on progress, choices for all three scenes

Students are evaluated on both written assignments and performance.

Feedback:

“I gained experience in asking the question ‘why’ in this course, and to try to find the reasons behind every decision because there is importance there.”

“Since the class was made up of just engineers, I felt that this was a tying factor that brought the whole class together; that no matter how different everyone was there was some way to relate to each other. It also made it feel as if everyone started at an equal level, and progressed throughout the course. I actually felt that it promoted a sense of community.”

“It was nice to be able to discuss the non-technical aspects of science and engineering, as we don’t get much opportunity in our core curriculum. I think the landscape that science and engineering exist in—social, political, cultural, etc—are all things engineers should be thinking about. The plays we read allowed us to at least start to think about these things in the classroom.”