

Dramaturgy

Spring 2018
THEA 3364.01 (#22962)
MWF 1:00-1:50 p.m.
PAC 240

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Catalogue Description

This course is a study of production dramaturgy: an exploration and application of the processes, research, and resources used by academic and professional theatres, combining knowledge with creativity in order to make informed production choices. Credit 3. Prerequisite: Junior standing or consent of instructor. ENGL 1301 and 1302.

Course Description

This is a hands-on, project-based workshop in production dramaturgy. Most Mondays will be lecture-discussions focusing on Mark Haddon's play, *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, which will serve as our class case study. I will approach this script as if I were the production dramaturg and share with you my process and resulting "products." On Wednesdays, the focus will shift to a script that you have chosen to work on throughout the semester; basically, you will apply what I am doing with *Curious Incident* to your script. All Fridays (as well as some Wednesdays) will be spent in the computer lab or library.

Because the course is writing enhanced, at least 50% of more of your final course grade will result from your own, original writing.

Learning Outcomes

The goal of this course is to begin to think like a dramaturg, which is difficult to define and assess, and to produce essential and meaningful materials, which are tangible and, therefore, more readily defined and assessed. By the end of the semester, you will have gone through the process that I typically go through, and you will have acquired the "tools" needed to produce many of the "artifacts" most often required of production dramaturgs in academic and professional theatres which include, but are not restricted to, the following:

- a website with essential pre-production materials (website instead of the traditional hard copy casebook)
- a hard copy "actors' packet" available at first read-through
- a hard copy study guide (with learning standards) for high school teachers
- a press release, preview, or feature
- program notes
- a lobby display
- an adaptation and/or abridgement of the text

Graded Components

- 300 points 30% website (many components; will be due incrementally)
- 150 points 15% actors' packet (20 pages maximum)
- 150 points 15% study guide (with learning standards)
- 100 points 10% press release, preview, or feature (500-800 words feature)
- 100 points 10% program notes (500 words)
- 200 points 20% final project (lobby display or adaptation or abridgement)

Please note that much of what you produce gets re-packaged, e.g., the glossary on your website will be included in part or whole in the actors' packet and the study guide. You don't have to reinvent the proverbial wheels for each new project. Also note that this process requires lots of reading and writing as well as computer skills.

Bonus Points

The following receive bonus points (70 points maximum), which will be added to your final course grade:

- 1 point for each on-time arrival for class (“tasty treat”) = 40 points (appr.)
- 5 points for attending each UTC (or approved) production = 30 points max

Recommended Texts

Recommended but not required: *The Process of Dramaturgy: A Handbook* (Irelan, Fletcher, and Dubiner) and *Dramaturgy in the Making: A User’s Guide for Theatre Practitioners* (Trencsenyi).

Grading

In dramaturgy, there are two great mistakes: one, the loss of real credibility due to plagiarism or inaccuracy; and, two, the lack of perceived professionalism due to sloppy or inconsistent appearance of materials.

For each project/product, 75% of your grade will be for content and 25% for format/appearance. While many great theatre artists are downright sloppy, dramaturgs cannot be: presentation is too much part of the total package.

Attending UTC Productions

You are encouraged to attend our UTC productions this fall. Your theatre course fee provides you one comp ticket to each UTC production this semester. For each production you attend, you will receive +5 bonus points. The plays and their opening nights are on the Tentative Itinerary. Please note that the Showcase Theatre often sells out; you will need to secure your ticket(s) well in advance. It also may be possible to attend a preview (final dress).

Final Exam Week

There is no final exam during finals week; however, your final project is due at the end of the final exam period, which, for your class is Wednesday, May 9, at 4:30 p.m. (You are welcome to submit earlier than this date and time, if you choose.)

Late & Makeup Work

You may submit an assignment or makeup an exam after the deadline without penalty only if you have legitimate and documented reason approved by the Dean of Students, e.g., university obligation, hospitalization, court appearance, jury duty, funeral. The Office of the Dean of Students is located in the Lohman Student Center; just take your document(s) to that office, which, in turn, will notify all of your professors by e-mail. Please note that the Dean’s Office allows you only one week after the event to contact them and submit your documentation.

Theatre Chair Kris Hanssen will provide notification for all theatre-related and approved absences, e.g., USITT and KCACTF.

Any assignment submitted after the deadline *without* approved reason will receive a one-letter grade penalty (minus 10%) for each week late. (Note: this “each week” penalty is a change from last semester’s policy.)

Attendance

By university policy for classes that meet three times each week (MWF classes), you may not be penalized for up to three (3) absences, nor may you be penalized for any absence due to pre-approved religious observance; anything beyond that depends on the instructor’s discretion.

After three (3) absences, you will be penalized -30 points from your final course grade for each additional skip, unless there is written intervention (with specific dates, times, and reason) from the Dean of Students.

I personally do not excuse any absences, so you do not need to email, call, or contact me about being absent or arriving late. The Dean's Office "excuses" your absence by emailing me as well as your other professors. (Removing myself from this "excused or not" process hopefully prevents any form of real or perceived favoritism from me.)

Tasty Treats

For each day of class that you arrive on time, you will be rewarded a +1 bonus point to add to your total number of accrued points. As many past students have discovered, these "tasty treats" can raise your final course grade. Just sign yourself in each day as you arrive. (Please don't sign in for anyone else, though.)

Classroom Conduct

Food and candy are not permitted in the classroom. Beverages are permitted as long as they are in spill-proof containers. Please turn off cell phones and refrain from texting during class; if you must make or take a phone call, then quietly leave the class. The same applies to bathrooming. Please note that cell phones are not an effective means of taking notes; research shows that handwritten notes prove most effective, but you may use your laptops or notebooks as well. If you have a laptop, please bring it to use for our computer lab days/times. (We may not have enough pcs in the lab.) NOTHING OTHER THAN WATER IS PERMITTED IN THE COMPUTER LAB.

Think of our classroom the way you think of a theatre audience. When you are onstage or watching a play, how do you feel about people in the audience arriving late, coming and going during the show, chatting, texting, unwrapping candy, blowing bubbles, distracting others, etc.? That's how I feel about each class with you.

Blackboard

All of your course materials and grades will be posted on Blackboard. Your cellphone is not an effective means for accessing and using Blackboard. If you do not have a personal computer, then please make use of our many computer labs on campus. (There's a big computer lab in the NGL library.)

We will be using Blackboard and Wordpress: they are wonderful pieces of technology, but they also are fallible. Knowing this, you strongly are advised to back up or retain a copy of all materials intended for upload.

Final Course Grade

Your final course grade is based on a 1000-point scale:

- In percentages: 90-100 = A, 80-89 = B, 70-79 = C, 60-69 = D, 0-59 = F.
- In points: 900-1000 = A, 800-899 = B, 700-799 = C, 600-699 = D, 0-599 = F.

Office

I will have a sign-up sheet on my office door for appointments (for class and/or advising). If you have questions or concerns, please come talk with me; that's what office hours are for. If you want to talk about projects or need advising, just sign-up for an office appointment.

Please note: when I arrive in the classroom, I need that time to set up for class; that is not the time to have discussions with you. A simple, quick question, though, is fine.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

All of these policies as well as links to additional policies and details can be found at:
<http://www.shsu.edu/syllabus/>.

Academic Dishonesty

All students are expected to engage in all academic pursuits in a manner that is above reproach. Students are expected to maintain honesty and integrity in the academic experiences both in and out of the classroom. Any student found guilty of dishonesty in any phase of academic work will be subject to disciplinary action. The University and its official representatives may initiate disciplinary proceedings against a student accused of any form of academic dishonesty including but not limited to, cheating on an examination or other academic work which is to be submitted, plagiarism, collusion and the abuse of resource materials.

Student Absences On Religious Holy Days Policy:

Section 51.911(b) of the Texas Education Code requires that an institution of higher education excuse a student from attending classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day, including travel for that purpose. Section 51.911 (a) (2) defines a religious holy day as: "a holy day observed by a religion whose places of worship are exempt from property taxation under Section 11.20...." A student whose absence is excused under this subsection may not be penalized for that absence and shall be allowed to take an examination or complete an assignment from which the student is excused within a reasonable time after the absence.

University policy 861001 provides the procedures to be followed by the student and instructor. A student desiring to absent himself/herself from a scheduled class in order to observe (a) religious holy day(s) shall present to each instructor involved a written statement concerning the religious holy day(s). The instructor will complete a form notifying the student of a reasonable timeframe in which the missed assignments and/or examinations are to be completed.

Students with Disabilities Policy

It is the policy of Sam Houston State University that individuals otherwise qualified shall not be excluded, solely by reason of their disability, from participation in any academic program of the university. Further, they shall not be denied the benefits of these programs nor shall they be subjected to discrimination. Students with disabilities that might affect their academic performance should register with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities located in the Lee Drain Annex (telephone 936-294-3512, TDD 936-294-3786, and email disability@shsu.edu). They should then make arrangements with their individual instructors so that appropriate strategies can be considered and helpful procedures can be developed to ensure that participation and achievement opportunities are not impaired.

SHSU adheres to all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and guidelines with respect to providing reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. If you have a disability that may affect adversely your work in this class, then I encourage you to register with the SHSU Services for Students with Disabilities and to talk with me about how I can best help you. All disclosures of disabilities will be kept strictly confidential. NOTE: No accommodation can be made until you register with the Services for Students with Disabilities.

Visitors in the Classroom

Only registered students may attend class. Exceptions can be made on a case-by-case basis by the professor. In all cases, visitors must not present a disruption to the class by their attendance. Students wishing to audit a class must apply to do so through the Registrar's Office.