

Playwriting I: Fall 2013

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Texts: Three plays must be purchased for class.

Night Mother by Marsha Norman
The Odd Couple (Female Version) by Neil Simon
Arsenic and Old Lace by Joseph Kesselring

Students should always come to class with a notebook and a pen or pencil. The notebook will also be used as your journal. We will be writing most class periods taking notes, performing writing exercises or working on the draft of your play. You will need access to these notes or drafts for each class period. Students may bring their own laptop if they prefer for assigned writing days, but will still need a notebook.

Description:

Playwriting I presents the fundamentals of playwriting: plot, act-structure, character development, conflict, dialogue and format. Through lectures, writing exercises and analyses of several plays, students will work towards the written completion of their own one-act play. The semester exam will consist of staged readings of the student-written plays; furthermore, the two best one-act plays will be chosen as the Arena Theatre production piece(s) for Spring 2014 entitled, *Project Playwright II*. Playwriting I is team-taught by Mr. Michael Stoddard and Dr. Heather Mansfield.

Requirements:

Students must:

- come prepared to write and participate fully in all exercises. This is a hands-on, working, writing, creating class; a student's full participation is vital to her success in the class.
- be willing to receive constructive feedback on their work. The feedback may come from the instructors or class members; respect for feedback and being respectful in giving feedback is an absolute MUST.
- be open-minded, good listeners, helpful collaborators, and critical thinkers.
- ask questions and take responsibility for their learning.
- complete all reading assignments on time and be ready to engage in group analysis and discussion.

Evaluation:

Class participation:	20%
Written exercises/deadlines	30%
Quizzes/reading assessments:	30%
Final draft of one-act play:	20%

Course Schedule:

The schedule below is an approximate calendar of events for Playwriting I. Please note that the course is [roughly] on a 18-week schedule, with the 18th week occurring during the December 16th -20th week of final exams. This course calendar is designed to provide students with an overview and general pacing of the course; it is not written in stone and may be adjusted according to the needs of the class and its students.

Weeks	Topic	Required reading
Weeks 1—4 8/19—9/13	Intro to playwriting and creative writing. Writing exercises; Lectures; Quizzes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • conventions of playwriting/drama • selecting the specific subject of the play • guidelines • determining focus & emphasis; establishing point of view • Objectives, Obstacles, Opposing Forces <p>Analysis of <i>'Night Mother and Arsenic and Old Lace</i></p>	<p><i>'Night Mother</i></p> <p><i>Arsenic & Old Lace</i></p>
Weeks 5—7 9/16—10/4	Issues, Purpose and Dramatic Characters Writing exercises <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • establishing purpose • building characters, exposition • creating dramatic characters • Create protagonist, antagonist <p>Analysis of <i>Odd Couple</i></p> <p>DUE: Draft opening scene (Oct. 2nd)</p>	<p><i>Odd Couple</i></p>
Wks 8—10 10/7— 10/25	Expanding characters & story—continuing the conflict Objectives, obstacles and action Final outcomes—driving toward the end Writing exercises <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refinement of opening scene <p>DUE: Partner edits due October 9th DUE: First draft due October 25th</p>	<p><i>Death of a Salesman</i> (opening)-- possible</p>
Wks 11—13 10/28— 11/15	Location Stage directions Individual voice <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Continue refining opening scene <p>DUE: Second draft due November 11th</p>	
Wks 14—15 11/18— 11/29	In-class work on play: feedback, readings, partner edits DUE: Partner edits due November 25th	
Wks 16—18 12/2-- 12/20	Final working & re-working In-class readings of scripts Further script workshops Final draft due: December 18th	