

Art of the Theatre

ENGL 232

Spring, 2009

Tuesdays & Thursdays 2:35-3:45pm, Arena Theatre

INSTRUCTOR:

Christopher Shorr

Email: cshorr@moravian.edu

Office: Arena Theatre

Office Hours: Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays 1-2PM and by appointment

(Please call ahead if you plan to see instructor during office hours. Office hours are subject to change—check posting on office door for updates)

Phone: (610) 861-1489

TEXTS:

Downs, William Missouri, Lou Anne Wright, and Erik Ramsey. *Experiencing the Art of Theatre*. Belmont, CA: Thomson/Wadsworth, 2007.

Ball, David. *Backwards & Forwards: A Technical Manual for Reading Plays*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1983.

Hughes, Ted. *Oedipus by Seneca*. London: Faber & Faber, 1969. (Reprinted with permission, 2009)

Webster, John. *The Duchess of Malfi, and other plays*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996.

Beckett, Samuel. *Waiting for Godot*. New York: Grove Press, 1982.

Sondheim, Stephen, and Hugh Wheeler. *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*. New York: Applause, 1979.

Wilson, August. *Fences*. New York: Plume/Penguin, 1986.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

The purpose of this course is to introduce students to the art of theatre (despite the confusing course title). Since the focus is on theatre as an artform, rather than theatre as literature, we will look at various components that go into the production of a script for live performance. By the end of the course, each student should have an (introductory) understanding of:

1. Script analysis;
2. Theatre history;
3. Playwriting;
4. Acting;
5. Design;
6. Directing.

CAUTIONS:

1. It is essential that you attend all classes. Students are expected to participate in class activities and contribute to class discussions of topics. Less than active participation may have a negative effect on your grade. More than one absence may have a negative effect on your grade.
2. All work must be presented or turned in on time. Missed work may only be made up under special circumstances at the discretion of the instructor.
3. Lest there be confusion... Excellent work will count as an "A." Above Average work will count as a "B." Average work will count as a "C." Less than average work will count as a "D." A poorly done assignment will count as an "F".
4. Students are expected to work hard and think creatively. The more time and opportunity you have to work on a skill and/or assignment, the greater the expectation for excellence.
5. All work turned in must be typed or printed from a printer.
6. All students must be prepared to present work and in attendance the first day of the classes designated for an assignment—additional days are just for spill-over. (In other words, don't plan on skipping the first day of Design Presentations to buy yourself an extra day to work on your model!)
7. Students should expect to spend six to eight hours per week outside of class preparing for this class. Students with disabilities who believe that they may need accommodations in this class are encourage to contact the Learning Services Office as soon as possible to enhance the likelihood that such accommodations are implemented in a timely fashion.

BLACKBOARD: <http://blackboard.moravian.edu>

You MUST enroll in this class on Blackboard. The access code is: eng232

ACADEMIC HONESTY:

Refer to the statement on academic honesty at Moravian College in the current Student Handbook (online at: www.moravian.edu/studentLife/handbook/academic2.htm)

Copies are available in the Academic Dean's file (acdean) on the Public (P:) Drive of the Moravian Intranet. Keep copies of all written work submitted to the instructor, as well as notes, drafts and materials used in preparing assignments. If in doubt about appropriate collaboration, proper documentation and other honesty issues, ask the instructor.

FINAL GRADES WILL BE DETERMINED AS FOLLOWS:

25%	5 Play Analyses/Creative Projects (combined)
20%	Acting Assignment
20%	Design Assignment
5%	Performance Responses
10%	Active Participation/Improvement/Commitment
10%	Quizzes
10%	Final Exam

The criteria for grades include clarity of purpose, organization, quality of material, expression and mechanics. Grades may be monitored on Blackboard, but keep in mind that those grades are ONLY a running total of graded assignments and that your final grade includes absences, participation, and other components not included in the Blackboard running total.

QUIZZES:

There will be a very brief quiz at the beginning of many classes. Quizzes will cover material from previous class sessions and/or assigned readings. Be sure to have read the assigned chapters.

MONOLOGUES:

One of the big challenges of theatre performance is to overcome your nervousness about standing up and speaking in front of an audience. From time to time, students will be called upon to deliver a short (between thirty seconds and one minute long) monologue. (This is not the graded “acting assignment.” Doing this is **OPTIONAL**, and a student may always decline the opportunity. Delivering a monologue successfully (taking it seriously and maintaining poise) counts as extra credit against poor quiz grades.

PLAY ANALYSES:

For each of the five plays assigned, students will write a brief (2-3 page, 12pt, 1” margins, double spaced) analysis using the tools for reading plays provided in David Ball’s “Backwards & Forwards,” answering a series questions, and focusing on the aspects listed on the syllabus for that play. Although information about these plays is readily available in the library and on the Internet, do not use research for these assignments. *Do the thinking for yourself.* You need to be able to defend your ideas and choices, and will be asked to do so in class

CREATIVE PROJECT OPTION:

Although each student must complete the first two play analyses, once a student receives grades of “B” or above on two analyses, the student may propose a creative project to complete in lieu of each remaining analysis. Students may work in groups on creative projects. Examples of creative projects include: musical composition; performance of a scene; writing a scene in the style of the playwright; the presentation of a “production concept.”

ACTING ASSIGNMENT:

Pick a one-minute monologue from one of the five assigned plays. Turn in: a brief character analysis; a textual analysis which breaks the monologue into “beats” and identifies the character’s overall objective and moment-to-moment motivations (“wants”); and perform the monologue in class incorporating instructor feedback/coaching.

DESIGN ASSIGNMENT:

Design set or costumes for one of the five assigned plays. Turn in: a two-page description of your “design concept” with research and rationale; and a model/rendering(detailed, color) of the set or collage(swatches, photos, clippings)/rendering(detailed, color) of the (principal) costumes; present the design to the class and answer questions.

PERFORMANCE RESPONSES:

Attend performances of “Growing Up Naked” (2/19/09-2/22/09), Oedipus (4/02/09-4/05/09), and the Student-Direct One-Acts (4/23/09-4/26/09) and write a brief (1-2 page) reaction paper to each play that describes your emotional response to the performance and describes what you would have done differently if you had been the director.

CLASS SCHEDULE

- 1 Tuesday, January 20
Course overview: Theatre & Art

 - 2 Thursday, January 22
What's in a play?
Reading Due: Ball Part 1

 - 3 Tuesday, January 27
Reading and understanding a script
Reading Due: Ball Part 2

 - 4 Thursday, January 29
Reading and understanding a script
Reading Due: Ball Part 3

 - 5 Tuesday, February 3
Theatre Literacy
Reading Due: Downs 1,2,3&4

 - 6 Thursday, February 5
History—Theatre's Beginnings
Reading: Due Downs 10

 - 7 Tuesday, February 10
Guest Lecture

 - 8 Thursday, February 12
Reading Due: Oedipus
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| Play Analysis Due: Oedipus |
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- 9 Tuesday, February 17
Reading Due: Downs 5

 - 10 Thursday, February 19
History—Revival in Europe
Reading Due: Downs 11

 - 11 Tuesday, February 24
Reading Due: Duchess of Malfi
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| Play Analysis Due: Duchess of Malfi |
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- 12 Thursday, February 26
Playwriting
Reading Due: Downs 6
- NO CLASS Tuesday, March 3 or Thursday March 5 (SPRING RECESS)**
Enjoy the break!
- 13 Tuesday, March 10
Acting
Reading Due: Downs 12

CLASS SCHEDULE (cont'd)

14 Thursday, March 12

Acting

15 Tuesday, March 17

History—Modern Theatre

Reading Due: Downs 12

16 Thursday, March 19

Reading Due: Waiting for Godot

Play Analysis Due: Waiting for Godot—Political Context

17 Tuesday, March 24

Acting Assignments Due

18 Thursday, March 26

Acting Assignments Due

19 Tuesday, March 31

Acting Assignments Due

20 Thursday, April 2

Design

Reading Due: Downs 9

21 Tuesday, April 7

Design

22 Thursday, April 9

Reading Due: Fences

Play Analysis Due: Fences—Historical Context

23 Tuesday, April 14

Directing

Reading Due: Downs 8

24 Thursday, April 16

The Musical

Reading Due: Downs 13

25 Tuesday, April 21

Reading Due: Sweeney Todd

Play Analysis Due: Sweeney Todd—Changing Artform

26 Thursday, April 23

Design Project Presentations Due

27 Tuesday, April 28

Design Project Presentations Due

28 Thursday, April 30

Design Project Presentations Due