

Art of the Theatre

ENGL 232

Spring, 2013

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

INSTRUCTOR:

Christopher Shorr

Email: cshorr@moravian.edu

Office: Arena Theatre

Office Hours: Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays 1-2:15PM and by appointment

(Although you are always welcome to drop by, I encourage you to call ahead to insure a spot if you know you want to see me during office hours. Office hours are subject to change. Check posting on office door for updates)

Phone: (610) 861-1489

TEXTS:

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

ISBN-10: 0809311100

Bruder, Melissa, Lee Michael Cohn, Madeleine Olnek, Nathaniel Pollack, Robert Previtio and Scott Zigler. A Practical Handbook for the Actor. New York: Vintage, 1986.

ISBN-10: 0394744128

Downs, William Missouri, Lou Anne Wright, and Erik Ramsey. Experiencing the Art of Theatre A Concise Introduction (3rd edition). Belmont, CA: Thomson/Wadsworth, 2013.

ISBN-10: 1-111-34831-6

Havel, Vaclav. "The Memorandum." Translated by Paul Wilson. Samuel French.

ISBN: MS0000000335

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

Additional texts to be assigned

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

The purpose of this course is to introduce students to the art of theatre. Since the focus is on theatre as an art form, 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. Playwriting;
3. Acting;
4. Design;
5. 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 separate from the 10% of the grade designated for Active Participation/Improvement/Commitment.
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. 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.
4. All work turned in must be typed or printed from a printer.
5. 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 Acting Presentations to buy yourself an extra day to work on your monologue!)
6. 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 encouraged to contact the Learning Services Office as soon as possible to enhance the likelihood that such accommodations are implemented in a timely fashion.
7. There is a zero tolerance policy on plagiarism—see "Academic Honesty," below.
8. Read ahead on the syllabus to see what's coming up in order to avoid getting caught by surprise when a lot of reading, or other assigned work is due.

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.

If you lift a single sentence from a website for a play analysis, you will fail the assignment, and may fail the course. Students should not expect any leniency on this policy.

NOTE: Paraphrasing without citation is still plagiarism, as is stolen thought structure.

When in doubt, cite it!

GRADING**FINAL GRADES WILL BE DETERMINED AS FOLLOWS:**

- 15% 3 Play Analyses (combined)
- 15% Creative Project
- 15% Acting Assignment
- 15% "Production Concept" Assignment
- 10% Performance Responses
- 10% Active Participation/Improvement/Commitment
- 10% Quizzes
- 10% Final Exam

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, or one that fails to adequately fulfill the requirements of the assignment will count as an "F."

The criteria for grades include originality of thought, clarity of purpose, organization, creativity, evidence of critical thinking, 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.

Please note: Letter grades are based on percentages and do NOT get rounded up or down. There is a range of percentage points that corresponds to a particular letter grade. In blackboard, the instructor can choose to display grades as percentages or as letters. If I choose to display grades as percentages, it is so that students can see exactly how close they are to the next grade bracket.

This may provide incentive to do better in order to push your grade up into a higher bracket, or to keep it from slipping down into a lower bracket. Do not mistake this as an invitation to argue for a high grade. A 79.99 is NOT a B-.

- 90.00%+ = A range (A- through A+)
- 80.00%-89.99% = B range (B- through B+)
- 70.00%-79.99% = C range (C- through C+)
- 60.00%-69.99% = D range (D- through D+)
- 59.99% or lower = Failure to pass the course

OPPORTUNITIES FOR EXTRA CREDIT—*to be counted against poor quiz grades*

1. 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. To get credit: deliver the monologue; take it seriously; and maintain poise)
2. Attend one of the multi-cultural poetry or spoken word events on campus and write a 1-2 page paper on the question: Is publicly "performed" poetry theatre?
3. Attend a theatre performance that has not been assigned, and write a play response paper.

DESCRIPTION OF ASSIGNMENTS

QUIZZES:

There will be a very brief quiz at the beginning of several classes. Quizzes will cover material from previous class sessions and/or assigned readings. Be sure to have read the assigned chapters, and gotten notes from a fellow student if you missed class.

PLAY ANALYSES:

For each of the three plays assigned, students will write an analysis using the tools for reading plays provided in David Ball's Backwards & Forwards and answering a series of approximately 35 questions. Although information about these plays is readily available in the library and on the Internet, **DO NOT USE RESEARCH** for these assignments, and do not work in groups. You **MAY** use a dictionary and your Art of Theatre textbooks for clarification of terms. **NOTE:** A single sentence lifted from a website will be considered plagiarism (see "Academic Honesty"). 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:

A student may propose any creative project that deals with one of the plays assigned. 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; or the presentation of a design. If you choose to design the set or costumes for one of the plays, for example, you would turn in: a two-page description of your design approach including **research** and **rationale**; and a model/rendering (detailed, color) of the set or collage (swatches, photos, clippings)/rendering (detailed, color) of the (principal) costumes. You would then present the design to the class and answer questions. Proposals for creative projects are due **NO LATER THAN 3/26/13**, however students are encouraged to seek approval for project ideas earlier than this, as revisions may be required.

ACTING ASSIGNMENT:

Pick a one-minute monologue. It may be from one of the assigned plays, or from another play of your choosing. (If you select a monologue from a play **NOT** assigned in class, you must have a thorough understanding of the whole play and include a synopsis.) The text should not be so stylized that you cannot commit to it in a realistic way. Turn in: a two-page 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. **NOTE:** Your monologue selection must be approved by the instructor. You must turn in **THREE** possible selections, marked 1st, 2nd, and 3rd choice, **NO LATER THAN 2/26/13**. You are encouraged to seek monologue approval earlier than this.

"PRODUCTION CONCEPT" ASSIGNMENT:

Imagine yourself to be a theatre director. You are going to work in pairs to develop and then "pitch" your vision of one of the assigned plays. Turn in: a two-page description of your "production concept" with research and rationale; create a "concept board" with swatches, photos, clippings, sketches... anything to help convey your concept; use the board to help pitch the concept to the class and answer questions.

PERFORMANCE RESPONSES:

Attend performances of "The Memorandum" (2/21/13-2/24/13), the Student Cabaret (3/21/13-3/24/13), and "The Importance of Being Earnest" (4/12/13) and write a brief (1-2 page) reaction paper to each play that describes your emotional response to the performance, identifies what worked or didn't work about the production, and describes what you would have done differently if you had been the director. Respond to **CHOICES** made by the members of the production team. **DO NOT** simply state that you liked or disliked elements of the production—you must support your ideas. Only papers that demonstrate critical thinking will be successful.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Prologue

1 Tuesday, January 15
Course overview: Theatre & Art

Act One: Script Analysis

2 Thursday, January 17
What's in a play?
Reading Due: Ball Part 1

3 Tuesday, January 22
Reading and understanding a script
Reading Due: Ball Part 2

4 Thursday, January 24
Reading and understanding a script
Reading Due: Ball Part 3

5 Tuesday, January 29
Theatre Literacy
Reading Due: Downs 1,2,3&4

Act Two: Theatre Styles

6 Thursday, January 31
Roots in History
Reading Due: TBA

7 Tuesday, February 5
Types of Theatre
Reading Due: Downs 11

8 Thursday, February 7
Playwriting
Reading Due: Downs 6

9 Tuesday, February 12
Reading Due: "Fences"
Play Analysis Due: "Fences"

10 Thursday, February 14
"Fences"

CLASS SCHEDULE (cont'd)

Act Three: Envisioning Theatre

11 Tuesday, February 19

A Day in the Life

Reading Due: Downs 5, "The Memorandum"

Play Analysis Due: "The Memorandum"

12 Thursday, February 21

Acting

Reading Due: Downs 7

13 Tuesday, February 26

Directing

Performance Response Due: "The Memorandum"

Reading Due: Downs 8

TURN IN: 3 proposed monologues for acting assignment

14 Thursday, February 28

Approval of monologues for acting assignment

Discussion of final exam

Reading Due: Downs 10

Intermission

SPRING RECESS—NO CLASS Tuesday, March 5 or Thursday, March 7

(Pssst! TIP: Work ahead—Read A Practical Handbook for the Actor and memorize your monologue)

Act four: Making Theatre

15 Tuesday, March 12

Acting

Reading Due: A Practical Handbook for the Actor part 1

16 Thursday, March 14

Acting

Reading Due: A Practical Handbook for the Actor part 2

17 Tuesday, March 19

Acting Exercises

Reading Due: Downs 12

18 Thursday, March 24

Acting Assignments Due

CLASS SCHEDULE (cont'd)

19 Tuesday, March 26

Acting Assignments Due

Creative Project Proposals Due

Performance Response Due: Student Cabaret

20 Thursday, March 28

Remaining Acting Assignments

Design

Reading Due: Downs 9

21 Tuesday, April 2

Design

22 Thursday, April 4

Production Concept Group work

23 Tuesday, April 9

Production Concept presentations Due

24 Thursday, April 11

Production Concept presentations Due

25 Tuesday, April 16

Creative Project Presentations Due

26 Thursday, April 18

Creative Project Presentations Due

27 Tuesday, April 23

Remaining presentations

Epilogue

28 Thursday, April 25

Course Review

Exam Prep

Final Curtain

TBA