

Art of the Theatre

ENGL 232

Spring, 2015

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

INSTRUCTOR:

Christopher Shorr

Email: shorrc@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

TEXTBOOKS:

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

ISBN-10: 0809311100

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

SCRIPTS:

Miller, Arthur. "Death of a Salesman."

Shakespeare, William. "The Life of King Henry the Fifth."

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 performed 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 scene!)
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 encourage 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: engl232

**Students who wish to request accommodations in this class for a disability should contact Ms. Elaine Mara, Assistant Director of Academic & Disability Support, located on the first floor of Monocacy Hall (extension 1401). Accommodations cannot be provided until authorization is received from the Academic & Disability Support office.*

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 Script Analyses (combined)
- 15% Creative Project
- 15% Acting Assignment (Scene)
- 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

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 performance response paper.
4. Participate in a theatre production, reading or workshop and describe your experience to the class.

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.

SCRIPT ANALYSES:

For each of the three scripts 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 3/19**, however students are encouraged to seek approval for project ideas earlier than this, as revisions may be required.

ACTING ASSIGNMENT:

Working in partners, pick a two-three minute scene. It may be from one of the assigned plays, or from another play of your choosing. (If you select a scene 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. **EACH STUDENT** will turn in: a two-page character analysis; a textual analysis which breaks the scene into "beats" and identifies the character's overall objective and moment-to-moment motivations ("wants"); and perform the scene in class, incorporating instructor feedback/coaching. **NOTE:** Your scene 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**. You are encouraged to seek scene 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 "Death of a Salesman" (January 30), "Henry V" (February 27), and "Journey from the East" (April 18, 19, 25, 26) and write a 2-3 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 with specific examples. Only papers that demonstrate critical thinking will be successful.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Prologue

1 Tuesday, January 20
Course overview: Theatre & Art

Act One: Script Analysis

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: "Death of a Salesman"
Ball Part 2

4 Thursday, January 29
Reading and understanding a script
Reading Due: Ball Part 3
ASSIGNMENT DUE: Script Analysis for "Death of a Salesman"

5 Tuesday, February 3
Theatre Literacy
Reading Due: Downs 1,2,3&4
ASSIGNMENT DUE: Performance Response for "Death of a Salesman"

Act Two: Theatre Styles

6 Thursday, February 5
Roots in History
Reading Due: TBA

7 Tuesday, February 10
Types of Theatre
Reading Due: Downs 11, "Fences"
ASSIGNMENT DUE: Script Analysis for "Fences"

8 Thursday, February 12
Playwriting
Reading Due: Downs 6

9 Tuesday, February 17
Character Motivation

CLASS SCHEDULE (cont'd)

10 Thursday, February 19
A Day in the Life
Reading Due: Downs 5,

Act Three: Envisioning Theatre

11 Tuesday, February 24
Shakespeare
Reading Due: "Henry V"
ASSIGNMENT DUE: Play Analysis for "Henry V"

12 Thursday, February 26
Acting
Reading Due: Downs 7
TURN IN: 3 proposed scenes for acting assignment

13 Tuesday, March 3
Directing
ASSIGNMENT DUE: Performance Response "Henry V"
Reading Due: Downs 8

14 Thursday, March 5
Approval of scenes for acting assignment
Discussion of final exam
Reading Due: Downs 10

Intermission

SPRING RECESS—NO CLASS Tuesday, March 10 or Thursday, March 12
(Pssst! TIP: Work ahead—memorize your scenes!)

Act four: Making Theatre

15 Tuesday, March 17
Acting
Reading Due: TBA

16 Thursday, March 19
Acting
Reading Due: TBA
Creative Project Proposals Due

17 Tuesday, March 24
Acting Exercises
Reading Due: Downs 12

CLASS SCHEDULE (cont'd)

18 Thursday, March 26

Initial Scene presentations and workshop

19 Tuesday, March 31

Acting Assignments Due

20 Thursday, April 2

Remaining Acting Assignments

Design

Reading Due: Downs 9

21 Tuesday, April 7

Design

22 Thursday, April 9

Production Concept Group work

23 Tuesday, April 14

Production Concept presentations Due

24 Thursday, April 16

Production Concept presentations Due

25 Tuesday, April 21

Creative Project Presentations Due

26 Thursday, April 23

Creative Project Presentations Due

27 Tuesday, April 28

Remaining presentations

Epilogue

28 Thursday, April 30

Course Review

Exam Prep

Final Curtain

TBA