Fall 2017  
Playwriting I (Theatre 359-001)  
Alvaro Saar Rios  
Classroom: Mitchell 375  
Office hours: Thursday 11-1; or by appointment  
My office: THR 280  
Email: riosa@uwm.edu

OVERVIEW
Learning objectives
By the end of the class, students will be able to:
1) Generate ideas and plans for writing dramatic stories by using poems, personal stories and several other exercises.
2) Edit dramatic dialogue.
3) Provide constructive criticism to fellow students.
4) Compose short plays, scenes and a full-synopsis for a one-act play.

We’ll achieve these by doing the following:
1) Reading and discussing short plays and/or scenes.
2) Identifying and practicing various forms of playwriting.
3) Workshopping peers work.

REQUIRED
There is no required book for this course.

*Some class assignments will require you to bring enough photocopies for the whole class.

RECOMMENDED
Backwards & Forwards by David Ball.
The Playwrights Guidebook by Stuart Spencer
Bird by Bird by Annie Lamott
On Writing by Stephen King
The Dramatic Writer’s Companion by Will Dunne

**You do not need to buy these texts. They are just good resources for aspiring writers.**

POLICIES
1) This is class depends on your participation. Absences can and will dramatically affect your grade. You are allowed one free absence. Every absence thereafter is 5 points off your participation grade. Four absences will result in a failing grade.
2) Work is due when it is due. No late assignments are accepted. No assignments can be made up. Everything must be TYPED. Except for Writing Assignments #1-3, you are responsible for submitting your scenes in Play Format.
3) Read all required plays and D2L handouts before you come to class on the days on which they’re assigned. I’ll expect you to contribute to the day’s discussion, and your contributions count toward your class participation grade.
4) All writing assignments are due in **hardcopy**. If you are **going to be absent on the day a writing assignment is due**, please email it to the instructor by no later than 2pm on the day it is due.

5) Some writing assignments will be presented in class. If you do not present on the assigned workshop day, you will receive an F for that specific writing assignment.

6) Extra Credit assignments can be arranged for 5 points. *A maximum of 10 points of extra credit will be allowed. This must be arranged/approved by me* before the last two weeks of class. PLEASE check with me if you’re unsure of your progress/grade. Possibilities for extra credit include (but are not limited to):
   • read an extra play of **my choice** and write a 1-page response paper.
   • attend a professional play or reading and write a 1-page response paper

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**GRADES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Writing Assignments #1-11</th>
<th>55% (5% each assignment)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Final Portfolio</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>D2L Discussion Post</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>20% (in class writing assignments, discussions, etc..)</td>
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**FINAL PORTFOLIO**

Your final portfolio will consist of:
- Revised short play
- Revised full synopsis of one-act play
- Two or more scene for a one-act play. 10+ pages.

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**CLASS SESSIONS**

**September 7**

**DISCUSSION:** What is this class about? How/why tell stories in theatre? What is a story? Where do ideas come from? Where does one start? elements of bad plays, in-class writing assignment

**HW for next week:** Read *Familial Auctions*. Located in ‘Short Plays’
Read **D2L Handout** “36 Assumptions about Writing Plays” by Jose Rivera. After reading handout, select **three** assumptions you connect with. Be prepared to discuss for next class.

**Writing Assignment #1.** Must be typed.
- Write 1-page scene from your bad play.
- Write a 1-sentence synopsis for *Familial Auctions*

**Sept. 14**

**DUE IN CLASS:** Writing Assignment #1. (1 copy)

**DISCUSSION:** Writing Assignment #1, *Familial Auction*, “36 Assumptions,” *Loyalties, Eukiah, Grown-Ass Louis*, Group work—*What makes this day different* synopsis
HW for next week: Read *Poof*
Based on assigned group, read one of the following:
- *This is Where You Lose Them* (A)
- *The Man Who Couldn’t Dance* (B)
- *Tape* (C)

**Writing Assignment #2.** Must be typed.
- Write a 1-sentence synopsis for each play
- Explain “What makes this day different?” for each play

**Sept. 21**
DUE IN CLASS: Writing Assignment #2 (1 copies)
DISCUSSION: Writing Assignment #2, *Anything for You*, Wants, elements of a short play, group work
HW for next week: Read the assigned plays you didn’t read

**Writing Assignment #3.** Must be typed.
- Write a short 2-character play based on instructor’s guidelines.
- Write a 1-sentence synopsis of your short play

**Sept. 28**
DUE IN CLASS: Writing Assignment #3. (1 copy unless otherwise instructed)
DISCUSSION: Playwriting format, Writing Assignment #3
HW for next week: Read D2L Handout KCACTF Play Format Example

**Writing Assignment #4.** Must be typed.
- Write a short play. Utilize at least 3 short play elements. 10 pages maximum. Playwriting format. **Wilson Group** will bring in # of copies equal to # of characters. Ex. 3 characters = 3 copies.
- Write a one-sentence synopsis of your short play.
- Bring food to share. (optional)

**October 5**
DUE IN CLASS: Writing Assignment #4 (1 copy unless you are in Wilson Group)
DISCUSSION: Writing Assignment #4
HW for next week: Read D2L Handout “Stage Directions”

**October 12**
DUE IN CLASS: n/a
DISCUSSION: Stage directions, In Class Assignment—“Stage Directions Scene,” Creating Characters
HW for next week: **Writing Assignment #5.**
- Rewrite Writing Assignment #4. One character should represent a worst trait. **Nottage Group** will bring in # of copies equal to # of characters. Ex. 3 characters = 3 copies.
- Bring food to share. (optional)

**Extra Credit**
• Attend staged reading of Remember Abuelita Tues. Oct. 17 @ Milwaukee Youth Arts Center

**October 19**

**DUE IN CLASS:** Writing Assignment #5 (1 copy unless you are in Nottage Group)
**DISCUSSION:** Writing Assignment #5
**HW for next week:** Read D2L Handout Ballad of Mulan

Writing Assignment #6. Must be typed.
• After reading “Ballad of Mulan,” what moments could you see visually? List three specific moments.
• Write a 2-3 sentence synopsis of “Ballad of Mulan”

**October 26**

**DUE IN CLASS:** Writing Assignment #6 (1 copy)
**DISCUSSION:** Adaptation, “Ballad of Mulan,” facts of the world, Group work—Turning a Fact of the World into a Scene”
**HW for next week:** Read one of the following:
• “The Swan-Maiden” (A)
• “Peasant and the Devil” (B)
• “Orpheus and Eurydice” (C)

Writing Assignment #7. Must be typed.
• Write a 2-3 page scene based on a “Ballad of Mulan” fact of the world. Play format.

Extra Credit.
• Submit your short play to KCACTF. Check D2L for deadline.

**November 2**

**DUE IN CLASS:** Writing Assignment #7. (1 copy unless otherwise instructed)
**DISCUSSION:** Writing Assignment #7, Group Work—“Ideas for Modern Adaptation,” Luchadora! full synopsis
**HW for next week:** Writing Assignment #8
• Write a full synopsis of your modern adaptation idea

**November 9**

**DUE IN CLASS:** Writing Assignment #8 (1 copy)
**DISCUSSION:** Writing Assignment #8, Play ideas, Group Work
**HW for next week:** Writing Assignment #9
• Write three to five ideas for a one-act play. Each idea should be no more than a paragraph. You will bring in enough copies for your assigned group

**November 16**

**DUE IN CLASS:** Writing Assignment #9
**DISCUSSION:** Writing Assignment #9, Group Work—“Play Ideas”
**HW for next week:** D2L Discussion Assignment
• Revise your selected play idea and post it. Due at 12pm, Friday, November 24.

Writing Assignment #10
• Write a scene from your play idea. 5-7 pages. Copies for the whole class. Due in class on November 30.

Bring food to share. (optional)

November 23
No Class. Happy Day Off!

November 30
DUE IN CLASS: Writing Assignment #10 (Everyone must turn in 1 copy but only Group A needs to bring in copies for the whole class)
DISCUSSION: Workshop Guidelines; Workshop Writing Assignment #10 for Group A
HW for next week: Writing Assignment #11
• Write a full-synopsis of your play idea
Bring food to share. (optional)

December 7
DUE IN CLASS: Writing Assignment #10 (Group B). Copies for whole class.
Writing Assignment #11 (1 copy)
DISCUSSION: Workshop Writing Assignment #10 for Group B
HW for next week: Read D2L Handout “Final Portfolio Guidelines”
Bring food to share. (optional)

December 14
DUE IN CLASS: Writing Assignment #10 (Group C). Copies for whole class.
DISCUSSION: Workshop Writing Assignment #10 for Group C
HW: Prepare Final Portfolio

Dec. 19 (Tuesday)
Final Portfolio Due in D2L Dropbox by no later than 5pm. No exceptions.

RUBRIC

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS #1-11 (5 points)
5 = assignment is complete, excellent format, and shows significant thought
4 = assignment is complete; minor formatting errors; shows a good deal of thought
3 = assignment is complete; at least 3 formatting errors; or it shows adequate thought.
2 = assignment is complete; major formatting errors; and it shows less than adequate thought.
1 = missing copies; incomplete; not in playwriting format; not typed; and it shows little thought.
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<th>Score Range</th>
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<td>A</td>
<td>73 – 76.99</td>
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<td>C+</td>
<td>59.99 and below</td>
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