FALL 2018

Playwriting I (Theatre 359)
Alice Austen (Lawton)
Classroom: Mitchell 375
Office hours: Thursday 11-1; or by appointment
My office: TBA
Email: alice_austen@mac.com

OVERVIEW

Expected Workload (hours):
Lecture 38.5
Required Reading 28.0
Thirteen homework assignments @ 6 hours each 78.0
Preparing Final Portfolio 5.0

TOTAL 149.5

Learning objectives:
By the end of the class, students will be able to:
1) Generate ideas and plans for writing dramatic stories.
2) Write and edit dramatic dialogue.
3) Provide constructive criticism to fellow students.
4) Structure and write a one or two act play and a synopsis.

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

REQUIRED TEXTS

Blood Wedding by Federico Garcia Lorca *
View from the Bridge (Two Act) by Arthur Miller*
Far Away by Caryl Churchill **
Pornography – excerpts - by Simon Stephens**
Letters from Cuba – excerpts - by Maria Irena Fornes**
The Poetics Aristotle ** - excerpts
View from the Bridge (One Act) by Arthur Miller **
Animal Farm, adaptation of George Orwell’s Classic by Alice Austen and Steve Pickering **

*Reserve or purchase
** Digital Copies will be available
RESOURCES (NOT REQUIRED)

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

POLICIES

1) Your class participation is essential. Absences can and will 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. Assignments must be TYPED. Except for Writing Assignments One and Two, 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 me no later than 2pm on the day it is due.

5) 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

CLASS SESSIONS

NOTE: Scene Assignments for the class may be additive – in other words, students may and will be encouraged to build course assignments into a full-length play during the semester. Students may write more pages than assigned.

Date          September 6, 2018
DISCUSSION:  Introduction to Class Members – Names; Introduction to Class Members – Experience; Exercise 1 - The Story – D. Lan; Why do we tell stories? 2 examples; Elements of a play – Discussion; Exercise 2 – Ideas for plays – theatre and literature/ theatre as literature
HW for next week: Read Caryl Churchill’s *Far Away*
Writing Assignment One - Typed and in hard copy please
  • Generate five ideas for plays and write a three line blurb for each idea
  • Write a no more than three sentence blurb for *FAR AWAY*

**Week 2:**
**September 13, 2018**
DUE IN CLASS: Writing Assignment One (copies)
DISCUSSION: *Far Away;* Character Descriptions; Exercise 3 – Character Monologues; Heroes and Archetypes; Characters and struggle; who wants what;
HW for next week: Read Excerpts from Simon Stephen’s *Pornography*
Writing Assignment Two -
  • Write Detailed Descriptions of Three Characters-at least one page each
  • Write three short Monologues for each of your three Characters
  • Write a one to three sentence blurb for *Pornography*

**Week 3:**
**September 20, 2018**
DUE IN CLASS: Writing Assignment Two (copies)
DISCUSSION: *Pornography;* Read Descriptions and Monologues; What constitutes a scene?
HW for next week: Read Lorca’s *Blood Wedding*
Writing Assignment Three -
  • Write a one to three page Scene for at least two of your three Characters, paying attention to how they speak and what they want
  • Write a synopsis of what happens in the Scene

**Week 4:**
**September 27, 2018**
DUE IN CLASS: Writing Assignment Three (four copies)
DISCUSSION: *Blood Wedding;* Read Scenes; Stage and Scaffolding - the Scene and Unscene worlds;
HW for next week: Read Maria Irena Fornes’ *Letters from Cuba*
Writing Assignment Four -
  • Write a scene and show central action on stage*
  • Write same scene with central action off-stage – pay close attention to how we learn about it.
• Write an outline of action on-stage in *Blood Wedding*
• Write an outline of action off-stage in *Blood Wedding*

**Week 5:**  
**October 4, 2018**  
**DUE IN CLASS:**  Writing Assignment Four (copies)

**DISCUSSION:** Scene Building – what happens next? Structure and Narrative; Building Narrative with Scenes; Maria Irena’s Exercise; thwarting expectations

**HW for next week:** Read Excerpts from *Poetics* (Aristotle)
**Writing Assignment Five** -
• Write a one to three page scene in which one of your Characters acts in a way that is completely unexpected and which forces the other Characters to act
• Rewrite the scene with a different action
• Write a one to three sentence blurb for your play

**Week 6:**  
**October 11, 2018**  
**DUE IN CLASS:**  Writing Assignment Five (four copies)

**DISCUSSION:** *Poetics*; Read Scenes; Discuss Classical Unities - Setting, Time, Themes and Why they Matter; Comparison to *Letters from Cuba*

**HW for next week:** Read excerpts from *Poetics*  
**Writing Assignment Six** -
• Write a short play using the scenes you've written or new ones, and keeping at least one of the Unities

**Week 7:**  
**October 18, 2018**  
**DUE IN CLASS:**  Writing Assignment Seven (four copies)

**DISCUSSION:** *Poetics*; Read Short Plays; Genre and Genre Breaking

**HW for next week:** Read *A View From the Bridge – One Act*
**Writing Assignment Seven** -
• Write Short Play as a Tragedy
• Write Short Play as a Comedy

**Week 8:**  
**October 25, 2018**
DUE IN CLASS: Writing Assignment Eight (four copies)

DISCUSSION: Discuss and analyse *A View From the Bridge*; Short and Long Plays; Dramaturgy – what is it and why it matters

HW for next week: Writing Assignment Eight -
* Write a scene outline for a one act or full-length play – you can use the short play you've been working with and develop the narrative.

**Week 9:** November 1, 2018
DUE IN CLASS: Writing Assignment Eight (copies)

DISCUSSION: Whose story are you telling? Is it the Central Character’s story? What happens when you’re stuck? Moving the frame.

HW for next week: Read *A View From the Bridge* – full-length version
Writing Assignment Nine - Write at least ten new pages of Play

**Week 10:** November 8, 2018
DUE IN CLASS: Writing Assignment Nine (copies)

DISCUSSION: Discuss and analyse *A View From the Bridge*; Short and Long Plays;

HW for next week: Writing Assignment Ten - Continue work on Play – write at least ten new pages

**Week 11:** November 15, 2018
DUE IN CLASS: Writing Assignment Ten (copies)

DISCUSSION: Art of the rewrite - *A View From the Bridge*;

HW for next week: Writing Assignment Eleven - Complete One-Act Play or one act of full-length play

**Week 12:** November 22, 2018
No Class – Thanksgiving Holiday!

**Week 13:** November 29, 2018
DUE IN CLASS: Writing Assignment Eleven (copies)

DISCUSSION: Adaptations – versus original plays
HW for next week:  *Animal Farm*

Writing Assignment Twelve - Choose One
- Rewrite One-Act Play; or
- Begin work on additional Act

**Week 14:**  
**December 6, 2018**

DUE IN CLASS:  Writing Assignment Twelve (copies)

DISCUSSION:  Read Scenes; Heads and Tails; the polish

HW for next week:  Writing Assignment Thirteen - polish play

**Week 15:**  
**December 13, 2018**

DUE IN CLASS:  Writing Assignment Thirteen (copies)

DISCUSSION:  Read Scenes

HW for next week:  Prepare final portfolio

**Dec. 20, 2018 (Tuesday)**

Final Portfolio Due in D2L dropbox by no later than 5pm. No exceptions.

**RUBRIC**

**WRITING ASSIGNMENTS #1-13 (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.

**EVALUATION**

93 – 100 A  
90 – 92.99 A-  
87 – 89.99 B+  
83 – 86.99 B  
80 – 82.99 B-  
77 – 79.99 C+  
73 – 76.99 C  
70 – 72.22 C  
67 – 69.99 D+  
63 – 66.99 D  
60 – 62.99 D-  
59.99 and below F
Academic Misconduct: Student academic misconduct procedures are specified in Chapter UWS 14 and the UWM implementation provisions (Faculty Document 1686).

Accommodation for Religious Beliefs: It is the policy of the University that students’ sincerely held religious beliefs shall be reasonably accommodated with respect to all examinations and other academic requirements. Please let me know if you need accommodations!

Students with Disabilities: Students needing accommodations should contact me so that arrangements can be made! The Accessibility Resource Center at the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee is dedicated to providing equal access for students with disabilities to the University. https://uwm.edu/arc/

Active Military Duty: The University makes accommodations for students called into military duty https://uwm.edu/active-duty-military/