

THEA 322 Special Topic: Playwriting

Trimester 1 2015

2 March to 1 July 2015

20 Points



Tennessee Williams at his desk in 1948. Photograph: W Eugene Smith/Time Life Pictures/Getty Images

IMPORTANT DATES

Teaching dates: 2 March to 5 June 2015

Easter/Mid-Trimester break: 3 to 19 April 2015

Last assessment item due: 29 May 2015

Withdrawal dates:

Refer to www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/withdrawals-refunds. If you cannot complete an assignment or sit a test or examination, refer to www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/exams/aegrotats.

CLASS TIMES AND LOCATIONS

Mondays and Tuesdays

2.00pm – 4.00pm

FT77 305

NAMES AND CONTACT DETAILS

Course Coordinator:

Lori Leigh

lori.leigh@vuw.ac.nz

463 6712

FT77 304

Office Hours: By appointment

COMMUNICATION OF ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Additional communication about the course will be available on the course notice board at 77 Fairlie Terrace, as well as by Blackboard. If you are not going to use the Victoria email address set up for you, **you must** set a forward from the Victoria email system to the email address you do use.

PRESCRIPTION

This course provides grounding in dramaturgical principles and approaches to the reading and writing of scripts for theatre. Students will gain an understanding of dramatic structure and explore strategies for development of action, idea, stage directions, and scenographic potential. This practical study of the craft of playwriting leads to the creation of a play.

COURSE CONTENT

This course provides a practical and theoretical approach to writing scripts for performance. It will proceed from writing exercises, including scenework, to developing two short plays, with the option to develop a longer script as a final project.

COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES (CLOS)

Students who pass this course should be able to:

1. understand and apply some of the basic principles of dramaturgy in the making of a script for performance
2. understand the fundamentals of playwriting such as structure, dramatic action, motivation, subtext, and conflict to develop scripts
3. develop the habit of writing frequently and consistently
4. work with collaborators to apply dramaturgical principles to performance processes
5. develop the skills and vocabulary for giving and receiving constructive critical feedback in a creative workshop environment
6. understand and utilise the process of rewriting, revision, and drafts.

TEACHING FORMAT

The two classes each week will alternate lecture/workshop material with a collaborative interactive learning laboratory, with regular student participation.

MANDATORY COURSE REQUIREMENTS

In addition to achieving an overall pass mark of 50%, students must:

- a) complete all the written assignments proposed

b) attend 19 of the 22 classes (no more than 3 absences). Lecturer to be given prior notice of intended absence. Medical certificate or comparable documentation required for absence from two or more consecutive classes.

WORKLOAD

The expected workload for a 20-point course is 200 hours over the trimester or 13 hours per teaching week. The classes are participatory throughout, and four hours attendance per week is expected. Therefore, roughly 30% of the hours is class attendance. The remaining time (9 hours per teaching week) will be spent reading class materials including scripts of peers (2-3 hours), and developing and completing the assignments that are spread evenly through the length of the course (6-7 hours). This time includes preparing your working (printing, etc.) for workshopping. It should be noted here that a principle in the learning will be the idea of *drafting*, i.e., completing second/third versions of a creative assignment.

ASSESSMENT

Assessment items and workload per item	%	CLO(s)	Due date
1 Feedback and Workshop: You will be assigned a writing partner(s). This assessment includes reading of peers' scripts and constructive criticism of work presented. You will be marked on the quality of your critique of your peers' writing (your skills and vocabulary to talk about new writing). You will be assigned short in-class writing tasks during workshop.	15%	1, 3, 4, 5	Written critiques assigned in class, Awarded at the end of the trimester
2 Writing Portfolio: In this assignment, students will complete short writing exercises focussing on the various tools of playwriting such as action, conflict, characterisation, dialogue, impulse.	25%	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	As per schedule in Course Programme
3 Ten-minute Play: Students will complete a ten-minute play (10 pages maximum). Drafts will be workshopped in class. You must bring appropriate copies (one per character) to class when due.	20%	1, 2, 3, 4	Monday, 20 April, 12pm noon, via Blackboard
4 Play: Students will complete a second ten-minute play or a one-act play (10 pages minimum). A final draft will be submitted, but drafts (due as assigned) will be workshopped in class and rewritten which contribute to the final mark.	30%	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6	Friday, 29 May, 12pm noon, via Blackboard

School of English, Film, Theatre, & Media Studies
THEATRE PROGRAMME COURSE OUTLINE THEA 322

This course is internally assessed, with assessment comprising written assignments and a feedback and workshop mark. More detailed information on assignments will be given in class and posted on Blackboard. Though there is no group assignment, per se, this class fosters a collaborative environment where students are expected to read and listen to each other's work.

Please note that no assignments will be accepted after 19 June.

Marking Criteria: These assignments will be marked based on (1) the quality, imagination, and originality of the piece presented, and (2) the sense that each assignment conveys of elements of thought and craft that have been presented as components within the teaching. All assignments (unless otherwise noted) must be typed, properly formatted, and free of spelling, grammar, and typographical errors. *The Playwright's Guidebook* includes examples of standard manuscript format. Detailed rubrics for each assignment will be available to students on assignment sheets distributed in class and via Blackboard.

SUBMISSION AND RETURN OF WORK

Work provided for assessment in this course may be checked for academic integrity by Turnitin the online plagiarism prevention tool.

Electronic assignments are submitted as a MS Word file through Blackboard. How to name your file and step-by-step instructions can be found on Blackboard in the "Assignments and Turnitin" section.

Your marked assignment will be found on Blackboard in the same section.

EXTENSIONS AND PENALTIES

Extensions

In exceptional and unforeseen circumstances an extension may be granted. To apply for an extension, email your Course Coordinator before the assignment is due. If granted, your Course Coordinator will inform you of the new due date. Tutors cannot grant extensions. **No assignment with or without an extension will be accepted after Friday 19 June 2015.**

Penalties

Work submitted after the deadline will be penalised by a 2.5 percent deduction from your total mark per work day. Late work also receives only minimal comments from your marker.

MATERIALS AND EQUIPMENT AND/OR ADDITIONAL EXPENSES

Additional expenses for this course include the cost of printing and photocopying the appropriate number of scripts for class.

SET TEXTS

Spencer, Stuart. *The Playwright's Guidebook*. New York: Faber and Faber.

You can order textbooks online at www.vicbooks.co.nz or can email an order or enquiry to enquiries@vicbooks.co.nz.

RECOMMENDED READING

Additional readings will be distributed in class or posted on the course Blackboard site. You are, of course, encouraged to read and see plays throughout the trimester.

CLASS REPRESENTATIVE

The class representative provides a useful way to communicate feedback to the teaching staff during the course. A class representative will be selected at the first lecture of the course. Students may like to write the Class Rep's name and details in this box:

Class Rep name and contact details:

STUDENT FEEDBACK

Enhancements made to this course, based on the feedback of previous students, will be covered during the course.

Student feedback on University courses may be found at

www.cad.vuw.ac.nz/feedback/feedback_display.php.

In week six or seven of the trimester your class representative will be invited to a meeting with the Programme staff. In week five your class representative will ask the class for any feedback on this course to discuss at this meeting.

OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION

The information above is specific to this course. There is other important information that students must familiarise themselves with, including:

- Academic Integrity and Plagiarism: www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/exams/integrity-plagiarism
- Aegrotats: www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/exams/aegrotats
- Academic Progress: www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/progress/academic-progress (including restrictions and non-engagement)
- Dates and deadlines: www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/dates
- FHSS Student and Academic Services Office: www.victoria.ac.nz/fhss/student-admin
- Grades: www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/progress/grades
- Resolving academic issues: www.victoria.ac.nz/about/governance/dvc-academic/publications
- Special passes: www.victoria.ac.nz/about/governance/dvc-academic/publications

School of English, Film, Theatre, & Media Studies
THEATRE PROGRAMME COURSE OUTLINE THEA 322

- Statutes and policies including the Student Conduct Statute:
www.victoria.ac.nz/about/governance/strategy
- Student support: www.victoria.ac.nz/students/support
- Students with disabilities: www.victoria.ac.nz/st_services/disability
- Student Charter: www.victoria.ac.nz/learning-teaching/learning-partnerships/student-charter
- Student Contract: www.victoria.ac.nz/study/apply-enrol/terms-conditions/student-contract
- Subject Librarians: <http://library.victoria.ac.nz/library-v2/find-your-subject-librarian>
- Turnitin: www.cad.vuw.ac.nz/wiki/index.php/Turnitin
- University structure: www.victoria.ac.nz/about/governance/structure
- Victoria graduate profile: www.victoria.ac.nz/learning-teaching/learning-partnerships/graduate-profile
- VUWSA: www.vuwsa.org.nz
- School website: www.victoria.ac.nz/seftms

School of English, Film, Theatre, & Media Studies
THEATRE PROGRAMME COURSE OUTLINE THEA 322

THEA 322ST Course Programme		
Week 1	2 March	Course Introduction. What is a playwright? What makes a good play?
	3 March	Being Dramatic. Reading Due: Jose Rivera's "36 Assumptions"; "The Joy of Writing"; PG p.1-20, p.114-125. Writing Entry #1 Due (Writing Portfolio).
Week 2	9 Mar	Structure. Action. Motivation. Subtext. Reading Due: PG p.21-56; <i>Affair Play</i> by Jessica Goldberg; <i>Handsome</i> by Diana Son. Writing Entry #2 Due: 1. PG Exercise #1 or 2. Option.
	10 Mar	Structure. Action. Motivation. Subtext.
Week 3	16 March	Conflict. Stakes. Event. Beats. Reading Due: PG p.75-107. <i>Wedding Duet</i> by Lauren Wilson. Writing Entry #3 Due: 1. <i>The Conflict Scene</i> , p.72 or 2. Option.
	17 March	Feedback. Reading Due: PG p.231-241 (<i>Feedback</i>).
Week 4	23 March	Character. Reading Due: <i>Krapp's Last Tape</i> by Samuel Beckett; PG 170-202. Writing Entry #4 Due: <i>Character Work</i> .
	24 March	Character.
Week 5	30 March	Ideas. Reading Due: <i>Last Tuesday</i> by Donald Margulies; PG p.126-168.
	31 March	Journey of the Play. The Short Play. Reading Due: PG 204-218. Writing Due: <i>Beginnings of Ten-minute Plays</i> .
		Mid Trimester Break: Friday 3 April to Sunday 19 April 2015

School of English, Film, Theatre, & Media Studies
THEATRE PROGRAMME COURSE OUTLINE THEA 322

Week 6	21 April	Playwriting Workshop. <i>Writing Due: Ten-minute Play (Assignment 3) by 12pm noon via Blackboard.</i>
	21 April	Playwriting Workshop.
Week 7	27 April	ANZAC DAY No CLASS
	28 April	Playwriting Workshop.
Week 8	4 May	Playwriting Workshop.
	5 May	Playwriting Workshop.
Week 9	11 May	Playwriting Workshop.
	12 May	Playwriting Workshop.
Week 10	18 May	Playwriting Workshop.
	19 May	Playwriting Workshop.
Week 11	25 May	Playwriting Workshop.
	26 May	Playwriting Workshop. <i>Writing Due: Final Play (Assignment 4) via Blackboard by 12pm noon, Friday 29 May.</i>
Week 12	1 June	NO CLASS (Queen's Birthday)
	2 June	Course Wrap-up. Looking ahead.

*Reading due means the assigned reading is to be completed before and will be discussed in class. PG= *The Playwright's Guidebook*. Additional reading may be assigned in class and via Blackboard.