

# DRAM 3020: Beginning Dramatic Writing

Instructor: David Pollack

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M-F 10:30 – 11:30 am, Fine Arts rm. 54

Office Hours: MF 1:30 – 2:30 pm

Office: Fine Arts 308F

## **Grade Breakdown**

In-class writing assignments 20% (4% each)

Journal 15%

Draft #1 10%

Final Draft 10%

Homework 25% (5% each)

Participation 20%

**Purpose:** *This class is being taught for the purpose of introducing the concept of basic dramatic writing. The class will encompass short pieces for the stage and screen, as well as fully-developed ideas for the dramatic stage. The semester will begin with basic dramatic structure and will conclude with the composition of a one-act play for the stage or five ten-minute plays for the stage.*

## **Required Text**

*Squirrels* by David Mamet (published by Samuel French, Ltd. Available in bookstore)

## **Journal**

Your journal is where you keep all of your thoughts, ideas, and experiences that may influence your writing and what you write about. Initial sketches and drafts of writing assignments should be included here, as well as simple observations, dreams, ideas, etc. I will not grade this on content, but rather on effort; that is to say, I expect quite a bit more than “This morning I woke up, did a whole bunch of stuff and then went back to sleep.” What you write in this private journal should be reflected in the work we read in class. If you do your journal correctly, it will reflect your growth as a writer in this class. If you do it all at the last second, *I will be able to tell and you will be graded accordingly.*

## **Writing Assignments**

Every day at the beginning of class I will put a writing assignment up on the board. The first five minutes of class will be devoted to fleshing out an idea for this assignment, to be completed as homework. You are required to do five of these, so pick and choose the ones you want to do carefully.

## **Homework**

These are writing assignments that everyone will be required to do. There will be five assigned early in the semester. After that, no homework! ...except of course your writing assignments and your journal and...

## **The Play**

By the end of the semester you will have written a one-act play for the stage or at least five ten-minute plays for the stage. The first draft of this project will be due towards the beginning of the latter third of the class. Various drafts will be read in class by your classmates throughout the semester. You must have *at least one reading* of your play during the semester in order to get a good participation grade.

### **Participation**

As this is a workshop environment, your attendance of and participation in this class is absolutely necessary. Your comments on your classmates' work, as well as your willingness to have your own work read in class, has a direct bearing on your own productivity and that of your classmates. Your participation will be judged according to your willingness to talk in class, quality of criticism given on other people's work, your own willingness to share your work, your willingness to talk to me outside of class as the necessity arises, and most importantly your willingness to adapt your work based on criticism in class. NO DISCLAIMERS!

### **Attendance Policy**

Don't miss my class. If you have to, bring me a doctor's note or some other proof that the absence should be excused. It's always a good idea to get an official excuse note from the Dean's office. If you tell me that you're going to miss beforehand, make sure that I approve the absence. If I don't, I'll tell you that, and you'll get an absence.

Grade-wise: You receive writing assignments daily. Those assignments are due the next meeting. Therefore attendance is important. You are allowed three unexcused absences. After the third, I begin taking five points off of your final participation grade for every unexcused absence.

### **Office Hours**

Rule #1: Do not come to me to talk about your grade. If you ask me about your grade, I will send you out of my office. If, however, you come to me to discuss a concept, an assignment, or a specific problem, and one of these things *affects* your grade, by all means come and see me. But I don't do grade-grubbing.

Rule #2: If you feel you do not understand a concept, if you feel you are not grasping a concept quickly enough, if you feel I am going too quickly, if you feel I am dragging along at a snail's pace, if you want to discuss the Bulldogs' chances for a national championship, if you don't like the way I dress, *COME TALK TO ME!* Raise your hand in class and ask the question; nine times out of ten, you're asking a question that everyone else in the class wants the answer to as well. Be the one to ask! If nothing else, it helps your participation grade!

Rule #3: If what you want to ask me is you feel too private or personal or embarrassing to ask in class, come to my office hours. We'll talk about it until we have it at least close to being worked out. This also helps your participation grade.

*There you go. Nice syllabus, right? Thank you very much. I did it myself. Above all else, remember that this is a BASIC Dramatic Writing course. I'm not saying that there isn't one of you who's going to win a Pulitzer Prize using what you've written in my class; I'm just saying the chances are very slim. Focus on structure and story: what's important, what can be left out, what can be talked about, what must be shown? That said, here are your due dates:*

**7/7** First draft of final play due

**7/29** Journals due

**8/2** Final draft of play due

In-class writing assignments are always due the class period after they are assigned.

Homework is due the Friday after it is assigned unless otherwise specified.

*This class is subject to the honor code of the University of Georgia.*