

DRAM 3020-Basic Dramatic Writing
Spring 2008
11:15-12:05, Room 53 Fine Arts Building

Instructor: Shannon Rood
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Course Objectives: This course is an introductory workshop in dramatic writing. It is designed to teach you the basic principles of dramatic writing for the stage, to help you apply these principles towards the creation of original dramatic works, and to hone your critical skills in the analysis of other original dramatic work. It is also intended to help you identify your personal aesthetic through experimentation with dramatic material and exposure to the work of others, as well as to help you establish the daily discipline of writing. Since this is an introductory class, we will be exploring and practicing traditional storytelling structure as it applies to drama as well as learning how to “bend the rules”, once we have honed our craft.

Course Format: This is a workshop class-NOT a lecture class. It is an exercise in experiential education, which means you will learn by doing. The vast majority of the class will be in workshop format where principles, ideas, and techniques are processed through the reading and discussion of student work.

Required Texts*:

McLaughlin, Buzz, The Playwright's Process. Backstage Books, 1997.

Downs, William/Wright, Lou Anne, Playwriting from Formula to Form. Harcourt Brace, 1998.

*Available at Off-Campus Bookstore (Baxter St.) or East Campus Bookstore (College Station shopping center) only. You will not find them at the university bookstore.

Workshop requirements: We will spend a good deal of time reading each other's work in class. This involves both a willingness to have your work read aloud AND to participate on a regular basis by reading other students' work. Students will sign up voluntarily for slots to workshop their pieces at least one class period in advance. On the day of your workshop, you need to bring enough copies of your piece for each actor and for someone to read stage directions.

Course Requirements:

1. **Six scenes/writing exercises:** These will be 3-5 page scenes usually due about one week from when they are assigned. Each of these exercises will have specific goals and deal with a particular facet of what makes a good play.
2. **2 Play Reports:** (2-3 pages) These are brief reviews of the play in connection to what you are learning about good dramatic writing. The first report will be on a play you have read, the other on a play you have seen. The viewing report will be due one week after you have seen the play.
3. **2 Play Idea Worksheets:** (1 page) These are a brief explanation of the idea you have for your two plays which will be your major projects. The format is a specific set of questions I will give you about each project.
4. **2 Ten-minute plays** (8-12 pages) You may choose to do two ten-minute plays OR one ten-minute play and a screenplay. In some cases, you may also choose to do a screenplay adaptation of your first piece.
5. **Final Exam:** This will be a creative in-class exercise where you will have the opportunity to use the skills you have learned during the semester. More detail will be available as we get closer to the end of the semester.
6. **Class Participation:** Due to the workshop format, regular participation in class discussions, exercises, readings, and feedback sessions is **essential**. This is a very **active** class-I expect you to engage fully in the workshop process, which includes active listening, sharing of observations, asking questions, and the capacity to accept and learn from feedback given in class. Any in-class writing exercises in which there is a written component will reflect on your participation grade.

Grade Breakdown:

- 6 playwriting scenes/exercises @ 5% each: 30%
- 2 play reports @ 5% each: 10%
- 2 play idea worksheets: 5%
- 1st project (10 minute play, two drafts): 10%
- 2nd project (10 minute play or screenplay): 15%
- Final Exam: 10%
- Participation: 20%

Evaluation

The nature of grading art is extremely complicated by its subjectivity. The key to receiving a good grade in this class is to be dedicated fully to your work and present and engaged with others' work. Your sincere effort and improvement over the course are more important than your natural gift as a storyteller (though this cannot help but put you in a better position). Assignments will be graded on effort, creativity, and the achievement of any specific goal I have given you for that assignment. I have also developed a rubric, which will highlight the key areas I will be investigating in the final drafts of your 10 minute plays. In addition I will be scheduling one-on-one meetings with each student during two specific times in the semester. It is required that you attend at least **one** of these meetings. These will be a chance for you to ask questions and get specific guidance for your work and for me to further elucidate comments/questions I have for you. Failure to make at least one of these appointments will result in greatly lowering your participation grade.

Attendance Policy: One unexcused absence is allowed during the semester. After that, any absences must have proper documentation (doctor's notice, etc.). More than three absences of ANY kind will result in lowering your overall grade. More than five and you will be dropped from the class. Arriving to class late more than once can also have an effect on your overall grade.

Academic Integrity: The Department of Drama and Film Studies requires that all work assigned as an individual project be done entirely by the individual to whom the assignment is made. Please refer to the University of Georgia's Student Handbook regarding its policy on academic dishonesty. If the instructor finds that a student has violated this policy, he or she will be reported to the Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs.

Class Schedule (subject to change)M=McLaughlin, D/W=Downs/Wright. **Bold print** indicates a writing assignment is due that day. **Please bring your book(s) with you to class when there are reading assignments due.**

JANUARY

7- Syllabus discussion

9- Get to know your class

11- **Questionnaire** due Storytelling & Format (R: M-Ch.8)

14- **Assignment #1** "Found Scene" due, Finding Ideas & How to workshop (R: M-Ch.1, D/W-Ch.1)

16-**Assignment #2** "Found Scene part 2" due. Workshop of Assignments 1 & 2

18-cont. workshop, further discussion on finding ideas (R: M-Ch.3)

21-MLK**NO CLASS**

23-Plot & Formula writing, in-class group exercise,(R: D/W-Ch.2)

25-**play report #1** due-brief oral presentations/discussions

28-**Assignment #3** "Really Short Story" due, share and discuss

30-Character,(R: D/W-Ch.3)

FEBRUARY

1-**Play Idea Worksheet Due**, pitch ideas, in-class character exercise
4-**Assignment #4** “Character Intros.” due, workshop
6-cont. workshop of #4
8-Dialogue & Exposition, in-class exercise, (R: D/W-Ch. 5)
11-**Assignment#5** “Astonishing Scene” due-workshop
13- cont. workshop
15-cont. workshop
18-Monologues and character backstory (R:M-Ch.6), first one-on-one consultations now through 2/27
20- Script Evaluation Rubric
22-**Assignment #6** ("Monologue") due, workshop
25 cont. monologue workshop
27 In-class exercise “Writing fast”
29 “Writing Day” **no class**

MARCH

3-**1st Project:10 minute play due**, workshops begin
5-workshop cont.
7-workshop cont.
10-15: **SPRING BREAK**
17-workshop cont.
19-workshop cont.
21-workshop cont.
24- Film vs. theatre, how to adapt to film, group exercise (R- D/W-Ch. 12)
26-workshop cont.
28-workshop cont.
31-**2nd draft of first 10 minute** due, Submitting and other practicalities

APRIL

2 workshop cont., discuss final
4 workshop cont.
7-**Play Idea Worksheet #2** or **Film explanation** due for second project, share and discuss
9 -Fun discussion day (topics TBA)
11- workshop cont.
14-workshop cont.
16-workshop cont.
18-**2nd Project: 10 minute play or film adaptation** due, workshop
21-workshop cont.
23-workshop cont.
25-workshop cont.
28-workshop cont., class summary, closure

Friday, MAY 2

Noon-3 p.m. Final Exam: creative in-class exercise

