**Dramaturgy 5: In Company**

DRA 54-247 Fall 2021

Fridays 10:10am-12pm, Porter Hall A21A

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Office Hours: PCA 344 By Appointment

# COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course explores the potential of theatre in a post-COVID world, supported by engagement and practice of hands-on skills that are typically required of artistic leaders of theatre companies. A dramaturg working in a resident position with a company is typically required to contribute heavily to the functions on which this course focuses.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES**

**At the end of the course, students will be able to:**

* Articulate artistic sensibilities and goals through developing a theatre company’s mission and vision, planning a theatre season, grant writing, public speaking, and crafting educational materials.
* Incorporate technical skills and a variety of styles into their practice of public speaking.
* Evaluate and justify texts or projects that fall in line with their artistic sensibilities and goals.
* Collaborate with fellow artists on the aforementioned activities.

**REQUIRED TEXTS**

Paper or e-book formats are equally acceptable. Additional required readings will be available on Canvas.

*An Ideal Theater: Founding Visions for a New American Art* by Todd London, ISBN 9781559364096, also available as an e-book through CMU Libraries

*The Routledge Companion to Dramaturgy* edited by Magda Romanska ISBN 9781138946330

**COURSE EXPECTATIONS**

**COLLEGE OF FINE ARTS DIVERSITY STATEMENT**

Every person deserves to be treated with respect. The College of Fine Arts is committed to providing an atmosphere of learning that is inclusive of diverse identities, knowledge and experience. We are diverse in many ways, and this diversity is fundamental to building and maintaining an equitable and inclusive campus community.

**NAMES AND PRONOUNS**

All people have the right to be addressed and referred to in accordance with their personal identity. CMU provides a tool called NameCoach that is integrated into both S3 and Canvas. NameCoach allows you to record and share the proper pronunciation of your name. When using NameCoach in Canvas, navigate to [www.cmu.edu/canvas](https://www.cmu.edu/canvas)and log in. You can also change pronouns on NameCoach. Please feel encouraged to share your pronouns so that you may be addressed accordingly.

**DIVERSE INCLUSIVITY**

The diverse backgrounds and perspectives of the students will be served by this course. We view the diversity that students bring to class as a resource, strength and benefit. The instructor’s selection of materials and activities for this course aims to be respectful of diversity: gender, sexuality, disability, age, socioeconomic status, religion, nationality, ethnicity, race and culture, etc. With acknowledgment that implicit bias may still be present, know that we encourage and appreciate your suggestions and feedback.

**ACCESSIBILITY ACCOMMODATIONS**

If you have an accommodations letter from the Disability Resources office, we encourage you to discuss your accommodations and needs with us as early in the semester as possible. We will work with you to ensure that accommodations are provided as appropriate. If you suspect that you may have a disability and would benefit from accommodations but are not yet registered with the Office of Disability Resources, I encourage you to contact Pat McCue at [pmccue@andrew.cmu.edu](mailto:pmccue@andrew.cmu.edu).

**WELLNESS**

Wellness and mental health can interfere with life balance, including academic performance. The source of symptoms might be strictly related to your course work; if so, please speak with your professor. However, problems with relationships, family worries, loss, or a personal struggle or crisis can also contribute to decreased academic performance. Counseling and Psychological Services (CaPS) offers free, confidential services to help students manage personal challenges.

CaPS: <http://www.cmu.edu/counseling/> or 412-268-2922

David Chickering (SoD/CaPS liason): call or text 412-513-6974

Resolve Crisis Network 24/7 (non-CMU affiliated): 888-796-8226

**FOOD INSECURITY**

If you are worried about affording food or feeling insecure about food, there are resources on campus who can help. Email the CMU Food Pantry Coordinator to schedule an appointment:

Pantry Coordinator: [cmu-pantry@andrew.cmu.edu](mailto:cmu-pantry@andrew.cmu.edu) or 412-268-8704 (SLICE office)

**BIAS-RELATED INCIDENTS**

Each of us is responsible for creating a safer, more inclusive environment. Unfortunately, incidents of bias or discrimination do occur, whether intentional or unintentional. They contribute to creating an unwelcoming environment for individuals and groups at the university. Therefore, the university encourages anyone who experiences or observes unfair or hostile treatment on the basis of identity to speak out for justice and support, within the moment of the incident or as soon as possible after the incident has passed. To report bias-related incidents, please use any of the following:

**Center for Student Diversity and Inclusion**: [csdi@andrew.cmu.edu](mailto:csdi@andrew.cmu.edu), (412) 268-2150

[**Report-It**](http://www.reportit.net/)**online anonymous reporting platform:**[reportit.net](http://www.reportit.net/), Username**:** *tartans* Password**:** *plaid*

All reports will be documented and deliberated to determine if there should be any follow-up actions. Regardless of incident type, the university will use all shared experiences to transform our campus climate to be more equitable and just.

We highly encourage students’ feedback, and we recommend providing direct feedback to instructors. However, if there are areas of concern or students wish to provide feedback at the college level, please contact **Valeria J. Martinez, M.S.E., Assistant Dean for Diversity Equity and Inclusion for College of Fine Arts** [vjmartinez@cmu.edu](mailto:vjmartinez@cmu.edu).

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

As exemplified by the Carnegie Mellon Code, the university holds its students to the highest possible academic standards. Violations of these standards and accompanying consequences are outlined in the university policies of cheating, plagiarism, inappropriate collaboration, and research misconduct here: <http://www.cmu.edu/academic-integrity/defining/index.html>. If you find yourself in a situation where you are tempted to cheat, plagiarize, or engage in other types of misconduct, please remember that your instructor is much happier to help you through your difficulties than to fail you or be responsible for your expulsion from the university.

# UNGRADING AND ELEMENTS OF SELF-EVALUATION

This course engages the practice of “ungrading”as articulated by Susan D. Blum, Ph.D. and Jesse Stommel, Ph.D., and supported by a very well-documented body of educational research.

Students will receive significant feedback from the instructor as well as using periodic self- assessment tools on work completed, and will use self-evaluation tools to assign their own grades in conference with the instructor at midterm and the end of the semester.

Each student will receive feedback from the instructor to support their learning. To develop grades, we will use periodic, guided self-assessments of progress towards learning goals, and guided self-evaluations to develop grades in conference with the instructor at midterm and the end of the semester. I strongly recommend that each student begin each self-evaluation with the default setting of an A grade.

**SELF-EVALUATION ELEMENTS**

**Practical Assignments**

For each of the assignments listed below, each student will be asked to evaluate their work in terms of both process (effort, attention, creativity, preparation, etc.) and product (quality, creativity, completeness, etc.). These self-evaluations will contribute to the student’s development of their midterm and final grades, along with midterm and final self-assessments covering the following three elements of overall coursework.

**Engagement with Content and Course Materials**

By putting time and attention into deep contact with the content of this course, students maximize their opportunity to learn (from) that content. This points to the individual student’s one-on-one contact with the required reading/video watching/listening, while other items in this list focus on the course’s collaborative practices.

**Participation**

Theatre’s special nature as a collaborative art means that everyone has a chance for their voice to be heard. As such, your active participation is a requirement for this course; read the assigned materials, prepare questions and insights for class, and engage meaningfully during exercises and discussion. You are not required to excel at these skills, but you are required to practice them diligently. Be aware that participation does not always have to be verbal. Contributing ideas to the group assignments, creating materials, or simply giving thoughtful feedback are all signs of participation that will be taken into consideration.

**Attendance**

We understand that the climate of the pandemic might call for some changes in the class format. If that does occur, the expectations around attendance will be relayed to you. If the University cancels classes because of extreme weather or natural disaster, we will not have class. If the University switches to remote classes, there is an emergency Zoom link on Canvas. In case of a COVID-related incident, Health Services will be in communication with us about a positive case and we can accomodate for virtual attendance that way.

Absences will be excused for university obligation, religious observation, or illness if the student provides documentation (in advance, if possible). Special accommodations can of course be made in extreme cases, such as ER visits or bereavement; be sure to contact the instructor as soon as you are able. Students are permitted one “free” unexcused absence during the semester. Each additional unexcused absence will reduce your final grade by 5%.

**Late Work**

A good portion of this course is built around working as a company on tasks. You will be expected to complete work, as self distributed in your companies, on time and in line with the schedule (unless otherwise notified of a new due date.) We also understand that things happen, people get sick, and that we are still in the middle of a worldwide pandemic. If things come up that will cause you to turn your work in late, please communicate that with us **before** the due date. Also communicate with your company about any work that might affect the group. The key here is to talk to us before an assignment is due. We can work with you on a new timeline based on the circumstances.

**ASSIGNMENTS**

**PUBLIC SPEAKING BLANKET STATEMENT.** Most of our assignments in this course will contain some element of public speaking, in order for you to practice those skills and receive constructive feedback throughout the semester. While each assignment may require a different style of presentation (casual, formal, young audience, etc.), there is an expectation that your presentations will meet or exceed the following criteria:

* Rehearsal and preparation
* Appropriate audio/visual aids
* Backup plan if technology fails
* Adherence to time limit

**LONDON REACTIONS.** In the Todd London book *An Ideal Theater*, all students are responsible for reading the Introduction. Then, students can individually peruse the book and choose one case study to read and report on in the Canvas Discussion page. Give a brief summary of the reading, but spend more energy describing why the case study speaks to you and inspires your vision for a theatre company. Your initial Discussion post is due **Tuesday, September 7, 12 noon**. Each student is then responsible for reading through everyone’s posts and responding/engaging with two of them. Your two responses are due by class on **Friday, September 10**.

**FOUNDING DOCUMENTS PROJECT*.*** Each company will develop their envisioned theatre company's **central mission/vision, reason for being,** and **ideal structure**. All three of those listed elements should be fully expressed and easy to identify within the founding documents, which may take any form you wish *except* a speech, because that is a separate assignment. This is a post-COVID exercise, not a “pie in the sky, perfect universe” exercise. Take into account the realities of our moment in the 21st century, and dream up what should come next. Aim for passion balanced by considerable detail about **why** in each of the three primary topics in bold above, thoroughness and clarity of expression, and comprehensibility of the founding documents on their own – not requiring your presence to translate or explain them (though you will be presenting your documents to the class as a company).

**SEASON DEVELOPMENT PROJECT*.*** Each company will plan a season of three or four pieces of artistic work, depending on the company size, for their envisioned theatre company. This could be as straightforward as selecting existing plays or musicals in keeping with the founding documents, each of which must be represented by the student’s written one-page coverage of the piece. Each student in the company will complete write coverage for one play. Students are welcome to range far afield from that approach, designing projects to include in that season. Each such project, if not an existing play or musical, should be depicted in a page of writing (an alternative to one-page coverage format). Describe what you would create, when and where, with whom, and why. This is a writing assignment. Aim to write clearly, vividly, and concisely, conveying the nature of each project and its connection with your founding documents.

**EDUCATION PACKET*.*** Using one of the shows from your developed season as the text, create an informational packet that can be used in classrooms. Depending on the show you have chosen, your packet can be aimed at either 6th-8th graders or 9th-12th graders. Using graphics, written synopsis of the play, a list of themes, motifs, and creative activities, this packet should be engaging to students within that age-bracket. You will have to share the packets with the class as well as speak to why the production you picked felt like the best fit for school-aged students to experience.

**WRITTEN GRANT NARRATIVE*.*** Students will prepare the narrative section of a National Endowment for the Arts “Art Works” program grant proposal in the Theater discipline to support one of the projects in their envisioned theatre season. Success in this assignment depends on a powerfully constructed argument for why this project is vital for your theatre’s community at this time, cogent points of support for your argument, thoroughly answering all the questions in the narrative section of the grant application, and writing in an appropriately formal professional tone to persuade the intended funder. This is a writing assignment; technically excellent writing is expected as a baseline.

DAY-TO-DAY SCHEDULE

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| **Week/Day/Date** | **In Class** | **For Next Class** |
| Week 1  Friday 9/3 | Welcome, Introductions, Syllabus  Envisioning a New Theatre: A Manifesto! | Watch: “Emerging from the Cave” video (Canvas)  Read London’s Introduction to *An Ideal Theater*. Choose a case study and report on it in the Discussion board by **9/7**. Then respond to two other posts by **9/10.** |
| Week 2  Friday 9/10 | Planting Your Vision  Form Theatre Companies | Draft a founding document for your theatre. This could be a revision of your manifesto, a set of principles, or any other way to express what your theatre will be and will do. Must be at least one page long.  Read Novick *The Importance of Beginning: The changing relationships of artists, organizations and communities* (Canvas) |
| Week 3  Friday 9/17 | Developing Your Vision  Share founding documents, discuss place, community, and demographics | Revise/expand your founding document based on discussion. Upload the revised version to Canvas.  Read Sobel *Season Planning: Challenges and opportunities* (Routledge) and *American Theatre* interview with Katori Hall and Erika Dickerson- Despenza (Canvas) |
| Week 4  Friday 9/24 | **DUE: Founding Documents Project uploaded to Canvas**  Season Planning for Your Vision  Programming for the audience you have, and programming for the audience you want | Complete self-assessment of your Founding Documents  Read HowlRound essay by Teresa  Coleman Wash (Canvas), and  Dubiner *The dramaturg’s role in*  *diversity and audience*  *development* (Routledge) |
| Week 5  Friday 10/1 | In-Class Season Development work/feedback | Complete your Season Development Project and upload it to Canvas.  Individual midterm conferences will take place next week. Sign up and complete self-assessment! |
| Week 6  Friday 10/8 | **DUE: Season Development Project uploaded to Canvas**  Education Packet Introduction | Complete self-assessment of your Season Development Project  Finish work on Education Packet (examples on Canvas) |
| Week 7  Friday 10/15 | **DUE: Education Packets uploaded to Canvas**  Education Packet Presentations | Complete self-assessment of your Education Packet.  For 10/29: Read Geever Developing the Proposal: The project description and Tips on writing the proposal (Canvas)  Read NEA grant application  guidelines (Canvas). Your  written assignment will  consist of specific parts of the  application form. |
| Week 8  Friday 10/22 | Special Guest: Lindsay Jenkins  “Afrocentric Dramaturgy and August Wilson” |  |
| Week 9  Friday 10/29 | Introduction to Grant Applications: What  Funders Want to Know  Special Guest: Jackie Baker | Draft your grant narrative  Read Ragsdale “Surviving the Culture Change” and Lester *Dramaturgs as artistic leaders* (Routledge) |
| Week 10  Friday 11/5 | **COMMUNITY DAY OF ENGAGEMENT**  **NO CLASS** |  |
| Week 11  Friday 11/12 | Peer editing of grant narratives | Revise your grant narrative based on feedback. Upload your completed Grant Narrative Project to Canvas. |
| Week 12  Friday 11/19 | **DUE: Grant Narrative Project uploaded to Canvas.**  Wrap-Up/Peer Evaluations | Complete self-assessment of your Grant Narrative Project  Complete final self-evaluation for conference; schedule conference |
| Week 13  Friday 11/26 | **HOLIDAY BREAK**  **NO CLASS** |  |
| Week 14  Friday 12/3 | **PLAYGROUND**  **NO SCHOOL OF DRAMA CLASSES**  **Final Conferences will take place during Week 14** |  |