**Modern Drama (THEA 210A)**

Tu/Th 9:45am-11:35am AC B309

Instructor: Dr. Kristi Good Email: [good@lycoming.edu](mailto:good@lycoming.edu)

Office Hours: MW 10:15am-1:15pm AC C108 (or by appointment)

MOODLE KEY: “Analysis”

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

In addition to an exploration of Modern Drama from 1875 to the early 21st century, this course also engages in the study of play analysis, the art of carefully reading dramatic texts with the aim of gaining a comprehensive understanding of the parts that make up the whole of the text. Unlike literature, which can afford very detailed information regarding internal states, objectives, and surroundings, dramatic texts are sometimes more subtle and provide only indications, since the ultimate goal of a dramatic text is to take full shape on the stage based on the creative vision of a director and his/her production team.

Tennessee Williams wrote: “A play in a book is only the shadow of a play and not even a clear shadow of it…The printed script is hardly more than an architect’s blueprint of a house not yet built…The color, the grace and levitation, the structural pattern in motion, the quick interplay of live beings, suspended like fitful lightening in a cloud, these things are the play, not the words on paper.” It is paramount, then, that the script, the blueprint, be read and understood to the utmost degree to ensure a stable final product.

The purpose of script analysis is to identify the separate elements that make up the whole text and how they work together, as well as individually. There is no single correct way to interpret any given text, but the validity of an interpretation hangs upon a balancing of the play’s elements and discovering how they work together.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES**

Students who successfully complete the course will be able:

* To articulate the basic analytical and critical techniques of script analysis.
* To apply those techniques to the study of a dramatic text through class discussion and written assignments.
* To analyze a dramatic text and its components in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the parts and the whole.

**MATERIALS (Available in the Bookstore)**

*Norton Anthology of Drama, Vol. 2, 2nd Edition* (2014)

*Backwards & Forwards* (1983) by David Ball

*Script Analysis for Actors, Directors, and Designers, 5th Edition* (2013) by James Thomas

*Arcadia* by Tom Stoppard

*Mother Courage and Her Children* by Bertolt Brecht, trans. John Willet

*Ubu and the Truth Commission* by Jane Taylor

**COURSE POLICIES**

**Professional Conduct**

Students are expected to arrive at class on time and prepared for the day’s activities. Students should show respect to fellow students and the instructor by refraining from sleeping, chatting, attending class under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs, engaging with electronic devices for non-class purposes, or any other disruptive behavior.

**Participation**

Exemplary participation begins with appropriate preparation. Students should prepare for class by reading and completing assignments as per the day-to-day schedule while also preparing questions and comments on the material. Bring your books and plays to class with you so you can reference them. Full participation marks each day will be given according to attendance, alertness, and active participation in discussion. Yes, I will know if you are late or absent. Yes, I can see when you nod off in class or are getting Snapchats from your friends. Yes, I will deduct points if I can’t recognize the sound of your voice by the end of the semester.

**Attendance Policy**

Theatre is an active art. You cannot participate if you are not present.

* According to the Theatre Department policy, class attendance is mandatory; there are no make-up assignments. Much of the information discussed in class is intended to complement your textbook; therefore, you can only learn about it by being present in class.
* Theatre Department policy allows you to accumulate two absences. Your final course grade will be lowered one increment for every absence thereafter (e.g., an A will lower to an A- if you accumulate a total of four absences during the semester, etc.).
* You are expected to arrive to class on time and ready to work. If the door is closed, the instructor has finished taking attendance, and you are late! Because tardiness is disrespectful and disruptive to everyone in the room, every three tardies (or leaving early) equals one absence.

\*Special accommodations can be made for religious observations and official college obligations if advance notice is given to me in writing via email. In extreme cases, such as ER visits or bereavement, please get in touch with me as soon as possible so I am aware of the situation.

**Due Dates**

Your training here is for the professional world, and there are consequences in the professional world when you do not meet your deadlines (you can lose money for your project, you can be demoted, you can even be FIRED). Whether the assignment is due via Moodle or hard copy in class, no late submissions will be accepted. Quizzes, classwork, and assignments missed due to lateness or absence may only be made up in cases of extreme emergency or if alternate arrangements have been made with the instructor prior to the assigned due date.

**Academic Honesty**

Students are expected to follow the College’s Honor Code and do their own work. While some assignments require collaboration, the majority of the work required in this course—exams, quizzes, and writing assignments—must be completed by each student independently, without unauthorized assistance of any kind. See the student handbook for the college’s policies regarding plagiarism.

\*If you find yourself in a situation where you are tempted to cheat, plagiarize, or engage in other types of misconduct, please remember that I am much happier to help you through your difficulties than to fail you or be responsible for your expulsion from the college.

**Writing Skills**

The development of effective writing skills is an essential component of any college education, regardless of the student’s major or the course subject matter. Proper grammar, correct spelling, and careful proofreading are expected on all written assignments. Both the form and content of writing assignments will be considered in grading. Peer editing, rough drafts, consultation with writing tutors and/or re-writes of written assignments may be required at the instructor’s discretion.

**FAQs**

**What if I require special accommodation in the course?**

Lycoming College provides academic support for students who officially disclose diagnosed learning, physical, and psychological disabilities. If you have a diagnosed disability and would like to seek accommodations, please contact Jilliane Bolt-Michewicz, Assistant Dean of Academic Services/Director of the Academic Resource Center. Dean Bolt-Michewicz will help you arrange for appropriate academic accommodations. She can be reached by calling (570) 321-4050, emailing [michewicz@lycoming.edu](mailto:michewicz@lycoming.edu), or visiting her office (Academic Resource Center, 3rd Floor of Snowden Library). Please contact your instructor during the first week of class to discuss accommodations to help you succeed in the course.

\*If you require different assignment deadlines from the ones noted in the syllabus, you are responsible for arranging new dates with the instructor and will be held to the same consequences as other students if those new deadlines are not met.

**When is the best time to talk to you?**

You can chat with me before or after class or during my office hours regarding quick questions or information. If you have any concerns that require a more private setting or more time to discuss, please email me or see me before/after class to set up a time to meet. Also, I am always happy to chat via email if you feel more comfortable using that medium.

**How often do you check your email?**

I check my email fairly often, but do not always have time to respond right away. I promise to respond to your email within 24 hours, but I do my best to respond on the same day I receive it (especially if I perceive it to be an urgent matter).

**What’s my grade?**

You can access your grade at any time on Moodle and should check it frequently. This is the best way to keep from being surprised at the end of the semester. If you check your grade regularly, you will be more likely to catch any potential mistakes that I make when entering point values. If you notice something amiss, tell me! If you wait until the end of the semester, it is very unlikely that either of us still has the original assignment for reference, and I will have to rely on the current entry to be fair to everyone. Points deducted for absences/tardies will not be subtracted until the end of the semester. Check in with me at any time to see how many absences/tardies you have.

**Do you have any formatting requirements for papers?**

Yes. All papers must be double-spaced, use Times New Roman (12 point) font, have 1” margins, and contain your name in the header (the margin header, not the first line of the page). You may use MLA or Chicago styles for citations. They must be stapled and handed in during class on the day they are due, unless it is an online Moodle submission.

**Do you give extra credit?**

There is no guarantee that extra credit opportunities will be offered. They are offered only at the discretion of the instructor and will be offered to the class as a whole. Details regarding any extra credit opportunities will be given in class and posted on Moodle.

**ASSIGNMENT BREAKDOWN**

**Text Assignments**

Specific instructions for each assignment can be found in the day-to-day class schedule. Text assignments are designed as a way of practicing the techniques you read about in your homework. If you don’t quite understand the reading, it’s okay, but you should still try to complete the assignment. We will go over it in class, and you can learn from your mistakes. By this method, you can still get full points on the assignment (even if you didn’t do it correctly!) IF you followed directions and made an effort You should bring your typed assignment with you to class: you can use it to gain participation points during discussion and should hand it in at the conclusion of class.

**Midterm Paper—Play Analysis**

There will be a play analysis paper to assess the students’ proficiency in applying script analysis concepts covered in the first part of the course. Students will choose one of three full-length plays and identify and analyze various elements of the play. Further instructions will be given.

**Final Project**

The final group project will include an examination of *Woyzeck*’s structural characteristics, a reconstruction of the play’s scenes, a rationale paper that defends and supports the new structure, and a group presentation. Further instructions will be given.

**GRADING BREAKDOWN**

Text Assignments 10@20 200 pts.

Midterm Paper 150 pts.

Final Project 250 pts.

Participation (4 quarters@100pts.) 400 pts.

Total: 1000 pts.

DAY-BY-DAY CLASS SCHEDULE

\*FOR FIRST DAY OF CLASS READ: Ball “Intro” and “Part Three: Tricks of the Trade”

Week 1

1.12 Syllabus; Introductions; What is Play Analysis?

For Next Class:

* Thomas “Given Circumstances”

1.14 Given Circumstances

For Next Class:

* *Trifles* (1916) by Glaspell
* Text Assignment: Give 3 specific examples from *Trifles* (include quotes from the text with page numbers) that relate to 3 separate topics from the “Given Circumstances” reading in Thomas.

Week 2 Why Here and Now? Shattering the Status Quo

1.19 *Trifles* Given Circumstances

For Next Class:

* Ball Chs. 4, 5, 8
* Thomas “Background Story”
* Text Assignment: Create a chronological timeline using ALL of the background information that you learn throughout *Trifles*. Include any quotes from the play that apply to events BEFORE the curtain rises on the action of the play.

1.21 Stasis & Intrusion; Obstacle/Conflict; Exposition/Background Story

For Next Class:

* *Hedda Gabler* (1891) by Ibsen, trans. Fjelde

Week 3 What Happens in the Play? Triggers, Heaps, and Forwards

1.26 *Hedda Gabler* Given Circumstances

For Next Class:

* Ball Ch. 1, 2, 3, 6, 9
* Text Assignment: Provide two different examples from *Hedda Gabler* (with quotes and page numbers: 1) a trigger/heap moment and 2) a forward.

1.28 Triggers & Heaps, Backwards & Forwards

For Next Class:

* *Fences* (1985) by Wilson

Week 4 Who are these People? Understanding Character

2.2 *Fences* Given Circumstances

For Next Class:

* Ball Ch. 10
* Thomas “Character”
* Text Assignment: You will be assigned a character from *Fences*. Identify the following 3 attributes of that character using Thomas’ “Character”: Will Power, Values, Personality Traits. Use quotes from the text to support your claims.

2.4 Understanding Character

For Next Class:

* *Riders to the Sea* (1904) by Synge
* Choose a play for your midterm. The three available plays are:
  + *The Cherry Orchard* (1904) by Anton Chekhov, trans. Schmidt
  + *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947) by Tennessee Williams
  + *Death and the King’s Horseman* (1975) by Wole Soyinka

Week 5 What is the Play About? Imagery, Themes, and Ideas

2.9 *Riders to the Sea* Given Circumstances

Midterm Analysis Prompt/Rubric

For Next Class:

* Ball Chs. 11, 12
* Thomas “Idea”
* Text Assignment: Identify three repeating images in *Riders to the Sea* and what you think they signify.

2.11 Imagery, Themes, and Ideas

For Next Class:

* Review of Concepts: Bring to class your questions about any concepts covered in the first half of the semester.

Week 6 Midterm

2.16 Students’ Choice: Review of Concepts

For Next Class:

* Midterm Analysis Due!

2.18 **Midterm Analysis Due via Moodle by 5pm!**

Manifesto Day

For Next Class:

* “The Modern Theatre is the Epic Theatre” by Brecht (Moodle PDF)
* “The Theatre of Cruelty” by Artaud (Moodle PDF)
* Thomas “Non-Realistic Plays” Sections
* Text Assignment: Bring to class 3 questions that you have about the reading. (This can be any combination you want: 1 question about each reading, 3 questions about a single reading, etc.)

Week 7 PART IIA: NON-REALISTIC THEATRE

Manifestos! A Break from Aristotelian Drama

2.23 Brecht & Artaud Discussion

For Next Class:

* *Mother Courage and Her Children* (1939) by Brecht, trans. Willett
* Text Assignment: Identify 3 elements from *Mother Courage* that reflect Brecht’s ideas on Epic Theatre. Use examples and quotes (with page numbers) from the text where applicable.

2.25 *Mother Courage* Discussion

For Next Class:

* *Arcadia* (1993) by Stoppard

Week 8 How Does the Play Move? Landscapes and Concept Mapping

3.1 *Arcadia* Discussion

For Next Class:

* Thomas “Progressions & Structure”
* Thomas “Tempo, Rhythm, and Mood”

3.3 Landscape & Concept Mapping Class Activity

For Next Class:

* “Theatre of the Absurd” by Esslin (Moodle PDF)
* *The Maids* (1947) by Genet (Moodle PDF)

Week 9

SPRING BREAK

Week 10 Theatre of the Absurd

3.15 Theatre of the Absurd & *The Maids* Discussion

3.17 In-Class Viewing: *Rhinoceros* (1974) starring Zero Mostel & Gene Wilder, based on *Rhinoceros* (1959) by Ionesco

For Next Class:

* Text Assignment: Describe 3 elements from the movie *Rhinoceros* that make it a piece of Absurdist art.
* “Language, Character and History in Postmodern Drama: Towards Formulating a Poetics” by Mudasir (Moodle PDF)

Week 11 Postmodernism

3.22 Postmodernism Discussion; PoMo Art Activity

For Next Class:

* *Hamletmachine* (1977) by Müller
* Text Assignment: Make a list of every allusion (see Thomas “Idea”) you can find in *Hamletmachine*. No need to do further research, just make a list (it will be long).

3.24 *Hamletmachine* Discussion

For Next Class:

* “American Drama, Feminist Discourse, and Dramatic Form: In Defense of Critical Pluralism” by Schroeder (Moodle PDF)

Week 12 PART IIB: OTHER STRUCTURES & MODES OF COLLABORATION

“Feminism & Collaboration”

3.29 Feminism Discussion; Collaboration in Theatre Activity

For Next Class:

* *Cloud 9* (1979) by Churchill

3.31 *Cloud 9* Discussion

For Next Class:

* “Adapting Material for the Stage” ed. by Jackson (Moodle PDF)

Week 13 “Adaptation & the Memory Play”

4.5 Adaptation Discussion; Adaptation Activity

For Next Class:

* *M. Butterfly* (1988) by Hwang
* Optional: “France Jails Two” & “Shi Pei Pu Obituary” (Moodle PDFs)

4.7 *M. Butterfly* Discussion

For Next Class:

* Theatre of the Oppressed pp. 102-135 (Moodle PDF)

Week 14 “Politics & Multimedia”

4.12 Theatre of the Oppressed; Political Theatre Activity

For Next Class:

* *Ubu and the Truth Commission* (1997) by Taylor
* Text Assignment: Give 3 examples of things that came to your mind while you were reading (a song, a painting, a feeling, a smell, a memory from your life, etc.) and why you think you associated this with the play.

4.14 *Ubu and the Truth Commission* Discussion

For Next Class:

*Woyzeck* (1836) by Büchner (Moodle PDF)

Week 15 The Final Project. Finally.

4.19 The Woyzeck Project; In-Class Project Work

4.21 In-Class Project Work

Week 16

FINALS Group Presentations: Wednesday, April 27th, 8:30am-11:30am

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

**COURSE GOALS**

**This course partially fulfills the following Approved Institutional Expected Student Learning Outcomes:**

Upon graduation, a Lycoming College graduate will:

* have achieved depth of learning in at least one field of study
* have demonstrated intellectual breadth through the study of the arts, humanities, mathematics, natural and social sciences, and modern or ancient languages
* have enriched his/her education through the completion of one or more enhanced academic experiences
* understand cultural diversity
* be able to communicate effectively in both written and oral forms
* be able to think critically
* have demonstrated information literacy skills and technological competence appropriate for his/her discipline

**This course partially fulfills the following Departmental Learning Goals for Theatre:**

* Understanding of the distinctive roles performed by each of the artists who contribute to the creation of a theatrical production: playwright, actor, director, scene designer, lighting designer, costume designer, makeup designer, and sound designer.
* Ability to analyze and evaluate dramatic texts, both as literature and as blueprints for production, from a variety of perspectives: performance, directorial, design, and technical.
* Ability to analyze and evaluate theatrical productions from a variety of perspectives: performance, directorial, design, and technical.
* Ability to create and deliver a formal presentation about some aspect of theatre theory and/or practice.
* Understanding of the historical development of Western theatre and drama from Ancient Greece to the present and their relationship to the distinctive social, political, and cultural aspects of each era.
* Understanding the diversity of global cultures through the focus of theatre and drama.
* Fundamental understanding of the actor’s creative process and the ability to apply those skills in performance.
* Ability to create and deliver a formal presentation about some aspect of theatre theory and/or practice.
* Comprehension of specific techniques required by various acting styles and the ability to apply those skills to create different acting styles, including realism, classical, and Shakespearean.
* Understanding of the director’s creative process and the ability to apply those skills in the creation of a theatrical production.
* Understanding of the historical development of Western scene, lighting, and costume design and the ability to apply design aesthetics to particular theatrical productions.
* Refinement of effective speaking, writing, and critical thinking skills.