**Foundations of Drama I**

DRAMA 54-177 (Fall 2021)

M/W 11:50am-1:10pm (Section A), PCA 307 (Design II)

Instructor: Dr. Kristi Good (she/they) Email: [kagood@andrew.cmu](mailto:kagood@andrew.cmu)

Office Hours: See Canvas

**\*EMERGENCIES\***

In the event that external circumstances (weather emergencies, health advisories, etc.) disrupt our ability to gather in person as a group for scheduled class sessions, please consult the course Canvas page for information and instructions about whether and how we will proceed with our work for this course.

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

The Foundations of Drama sequence develops the ability to read, understand, and write critically about plays and performances from a variety of critical perspectives as an essential step in preparation of an artistic product. In Foundations I and II, the student will learn various techniques for “close reading” and in-depth critical analysis of plays from a wide variety of historical and cultural contexts, and within different theoretical models of interpretation.

The focus of Foundations I is on helping students develop skills in two critical areas: script analysis and dramaturgical research. The first half of the course teaches close reading skills for the theatre practitioner, while the second half of the course involves hands-on work doing the kind of dramaturgical research that leads to a more critically engaged and engaging theatrical production.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES**

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to

* Identify the structural elements that make up a dramatic text.
* Apply script analysis techniques to both realistic and nonrealistic plays.
* Interpret dramatic texts both on the page and with an eye toward the stage.
* Create a dramaturgical file that is suitable for use on a theatrical production.

**REQUIRED MATERIALS**

**Technology**

Zoom

Canvas

Google Docs/Google Slides

**Order Online**

*Backwards & Forwards* by David Ball (new, used, borrowed, print, or electronic)

**Available on Canvas**

*Script Analysis for Actors, Directors, and Designers* by James Thomas

*The Piano Lesson* by August Wilson

“Trifles” by Susan Glaspell

*Sweat* by Lynn Nottage

*Marcus, or the Secret of Sweet* by Tarell Alvin McCraney

**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)

**RELIGIOUS OBSERVATIONS**

If any class meetings or deadlines conflict with religious events or observations, please inform your professor within the first two weeks of the semester so they can discuss possible alternatives.

**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.

**CHALLENGING CONTENT**

One of the central goals of theatre education is to produce socially conscious artists—artists who are aware of and capable of participating in challenging dialogues about social injustice and inequality. This means that our courses, public events, and productions often grapple with difficult subject matter, including sex, violence, terror, and illness (among other topics). While these presentations will no doubt provoke strong emotions and cause discomfort, we feel that the diverse experiences they bring about are also essential to the development of our students’ critical faculties, empathy, and understanding of the world. Your instructor will strive to provide legitimate trigger warnings, but also encourages you to meet potentially uncomfortable topics head on in the classroom, in rehearsals, and performances, and to engage in civil and compassionate debate about the possibilities and effects of staging difficult knowledge.

**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. Four times during the semester you will be asked to complete a brief participation assessment that allows you to self-evaluate how active you have been in the course and make any necessary changes in your participation, or ask for accommodation going forward. Each assessment is worth 5 points just for completing it.

**ATTENDANCE—ABSENCES AND TARDIES**

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 two “free” unexcused absences during the semester. Each additional unexcused absence will reduce your final grade by 5%. Because arriving late is disruptive and disrespectful to me and to your peers, each tardy equals half of an absence NO MATTER HOW LATE YOU ARE.

YOU MUST BE ACCOUNTABLE FOR YOUR TARDIES AND ABSENCES. If you arrive after the official start time of class (ie. once the classroom door is closed), your attendance record will show an absence unless you see me after class to change it to a tardy. If you are absent, you are responsible for finding out what you missed and what your assignments are.

I 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.

**ASSIGNMENTS**

**FIRST IMPRESSIONS DISCUSSION BOARD**

The first time you read a play can be a momentous experience: you might be confused, passionate, angry, intellectually stimulated! For each of our three plays, you will make a contribution to the designated Canvas Discussion Board and share your first impressions. These impressions can be shared in the form of statements or questions. These can be as long or short as you want, but please do not be vague. “These characters were so 3-dimensional!” or “This play really made me think!” are good places to start, but give concrete examples to back them up. **We will engage with everyone’s comments during the class when we first discuss the play, so no late submissions are accepted.**

**PLAYWRIGHT CONTRIBUTIONS**

For each of our three playwrights, you will find one piece of biographical information and contribute that information in the designated Canvas Discussion Board with a link to where you found it. You will not be able to see what anyone else has contributed until you personally contribute to the board. You get full points for whatever you contribute, **BUT: bonus points are awarded if you dig deeper to supply information that no one before you in the thread has mentioned. The first person to post always gets a bonus point.**

**GIVEN CIRCUMSTANCES ASSIGNMENTS**

For our first two plays, you will contribute to a shared Google Doc by finding evidence in the text that fills out the Given Circumstances categories. You must find one piece of evidence for each of the 7 major Given Circumstance categories, and do your best not to repeat what someone else has contributed. Make sure to include your name and page number citation for the quote from the text.

**IMAGERY CONTRIBUTIONS**

For each of our three plays, you will make a contribution to the designated shared Google Doc. Record your name and the following three types of imagery.

* + 1 historical image from the time period
  + 1 song or sound that “feels like” the play (doesn’t matter what time period)
  + 1 image that communicates a theme of the play

**\*Please exercise caution: imagery relating to the oppression of BIPOC people can be highly distressing or traumatic. Take care in selecting imagery and decide if it warrants a Content Warning or Trigger Warning before publicly sharing (Dr. Good can help you make that decision, if you are unsure).**

***SWEAT* DRAMATIC STRUCTURE**

Make a visual representation of the structure of *Sweat* that mimics the simplicity of the Freytag Pyramid and communicates similar elements like stasis, conflict, rising action, climax, while keeping in mind that the play does not move in a linear fashion. Be prepared to share your work with others in a small group for discussion purposes.

**FINAL PROJECT**

The final project is a dramaturgical website that would be suitable for use on theatrical production. The students and instructor will work together in class to construct the website. Students will need to complete additional work outside of class time, and the instructor will give feedback during the process. The grading breakdown is as follows:

* Research Contributions: there will be two research contributions on 11/3 and 11/8, 10 points each
* Website: Points awarded for aesthetics, user-friendliness, proofreading/formatting, content quality, 10 points each.
* Group Dynamic Evaluation: Each group member will anonymously evaluate themselves and their peers on the group process, 10 points possible.

**GRADING BREAKDOWN** **CMU Grading Scale**

Playwright Contribution 3@10 A = 93-100% C+ = 77-79%

First Impressions 3@20 A- = 90-92% C = 73-76%

Given Circumstances 2@15 B+ = 87-89% C- = 70-72%

Imagery Contribution 6@5 B = 83-86% D = 60-69%

Sweat Dramatic Structure 20 B- = 80-82% R = Below 60%

Research Contribution 2@10

Participation 4@10

Final Project 50

Total: 280

**DAY-TO-DAY SCHEDULE**

**WEEK 1**

M 8/31 Review Syllabus; Introductions

**For Next Class:**

Read: Ball “Intro,” “Part Three: Tricks of the Trade”;

Watch: “Hamlet—In 4 Minutes” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EmjWIMMtjDc> (optional)

W 9/1 Discuss Reading/In-Class Activity

**For Next Class:**

Assignment: Make a “Playwright Contribution” to the August Wilson Discussion Board on Canvas.

Read: *The Piano Lesson* (1984) by August Wilson (Canvas)

Assignment: Contribute to the “Piano Lesson First Impressions” Discussion Board on Canvas.

**WEEK 2**

M 9/6 LABOR DAY—NO CLASS

W 9/8 Discuss August Wilson and *The Piano Lesson*

**For Next Class:**

Read: Thomas “Given Circumstances”

**WEEK 3**

M 9/13 Discuss Given Circumstances

**For Next Class:**

Re-Read: *The Piano Lesson*

Assignment: Canvas Google Doc: While you are re-reading *The Piano Lesson*, try to find one piece of evidence from the text for each Given Circumstances category. On the shared Google Doc, record your name, the quote, and the page number under the appropriate Given Circumstance category. Try not to repeat someone else’s contribution.

W 9/15 Review Given Circumstances Google Doc; Discussion

**For Next Class:**

Read: “Trifles” by Susan Glaspell (Canvas)

**WEEK 4**

M 9/20 “Trifles” GC Analysis in Real Time!

**For Next Class:**

Read: Ball Chapter 8

Re-Read: *The Piano Lesson*

Class Prep: While you are re-reading *The Piano Lesson*, try to find clues about things that happened before the play started (what we would call “exposition” or “background story”). Use a quote with the page number from the text to illustrate the clue and put it in a list. When you are done reading, try to put the list in chronological order, leading up to the very start of the play (you can make educated guesses, if necessary). You do not have to submit this list, but you will need it for our in-class activity.

W 9/22 In-Class Background Story Activity

**For Next Class:**

Read: Ball Chapter 10; Thomas “Character” (Canvas)

COMPLETE PARTICIPATION ASSESSMENT 1 (CANVAS “QUIZZES”)

**WEEK 5**

M 9/27 Discuss Character

**For Next Class:**

Assignment: Collect these three items and submit them with your name to the shared Google Doc in your class section named “Piano Lesson Imagery” on Canvas.

* + An historical image from the time period
  + A song or sound that “feels like” the play (doesn’t matter what time period)
  + An image that communicates a theme of the play

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W 9/29 Discuss Imagery

**For Next Class:**

Assignment: Make a “Playwright Contribution” to the Lynn Nottage Discussion Board on Canvas.

Read: *Sweat* (2015) by Lynn Nottage (Canvas)

Assignment: Contribute to the “Sweat First Impressions” Discussion Board on Canvas.

**WEEK 6**

M 10/4 Discuss Lynn Nottage and *Sweat*

**For Next Class:**

Re-Read: *Sweat*

Assignment: While you are re-reading *Sweat*, try to find one piece of evidence from the text for each Given Circumstances category. On the shared Google Doc, record your name, the quote, and the page number under the appropriate Given Circumstance category. Try not to repeat someone else’s contribution.

W 10/6 Review Given Circumstances Google Doc; Discussion

**For Next Class:**

Re-Read: *Sweat*

Class Prep: While you are re-reading *Sweat*, try to find clues about things that happened before the play started (what we would call “exposition” or “background story”). Use a quote with the page number from the text to illustrate the clue and put it in a list. When you are done reading, try to put the list in chronological order, leading up to the very start of the play (you can make educated guesses, if necessary). You do not have to submit this list, but you will need it for our in-class activity.

**WEEK 7**

M 10/11 In-Class Background Story Activity

**For Next Class:**

Read: Ball “Part One: Shape” & Chapter 9; Thomas “Structure” (Canvas)

W 10/13 In-Class Dramatic Structure Exercise

**For Next Class:**

Assignment: Make a visual representation of the structure of *Sweat* that mimics the simplicity of the Freytag Pyramid and communicates similar elements like stasis, conflict, rising action, climax, while keeping in mind that the play does not move in a linear fashion. Be prepared to share your work with others in a small group for discussion purposes.

COMPLETE PARTICIPATION ASSESSMENT 2 (CANVAS “QUIZZES”)

**WEEK 8**

M 10/18 Discuss Non-Realistic Dramatic Structure

W 10/20 Discuss Character

**For Next Class:**

Assignment: Collect these three items and submit them with your name to the shared Google Doc in your class section named “Sweat Imagery” on Canvas.

* + An historical image from the time period
  + A song or sound that “feels like” the play (doesn’t matter what time period)
  + An image that communicates a theme of the play

**\*Please exercise caution: imagery relating to the oppression of BIPOC people can be highly distressing or traumatic. Take care in selecting imagery and decide if it warrants a Content Warning or Trigger Warning before publicly sharing (Dr. Good can help you make that decision, if you are unsure).**

**WEEK 9**

M 10/25 Discuss Imagery

**For Next Class:**

Assignment: Make a “Playwright Contribution” to the Tarell McCraney Discussion Board on Canvas.

Read: *Marcus, or the Secret of Sweet* (2009) by Tarell McCraney (Canvas)

Assignment: Contribute to the “Marcus First Impressions” Discussion Board on Canvas.

W 10/27 Discuss Tarell McCraney and *Marcus*

COMPLETE PARTICIPATION ASSESSMENT 3 (CANVAS “QUIZZES”)

**WEEK 10**

M 11/1 Research Discussion; Form Working Groups

**For Next Class:**

Assignment: Research your topic and add *at least 2* quality sources with your name to your

designated Google Doc.

W 11/3 Breakout Sessions; Research Sources Check-In

**For Next Class:**

Assignment: Continue to research your topic and add *at least 2* *more* quality sources with your name to your designated Google Doc.

**WEEK 11**

M 11/8 How to Build a Website

W 11/10 Website Work

**WEEK 12**

M 11/15 Website Work

W 11/17 Website Work

**WEEK 13**

M 11/22 Final Website URL Due

Class Wrap-Up

COMPLETE PARTICIPATION ASSESSMENT 4 (CANVAS “QUIZZES”)

W 11/24 HOLIDAY BREAK—NO CLASS

**WEEK 14** PLAYGROUND—NO SCHOOL OF DRAMA CLASSES

**WEEK 15** FINALS WEEK—NO FINAL! HAVE A GOOD BREAK!