

Play Analysis

THEA 1440.001 Fall 2023

Instructor: **Lisa Devine, MFA**

Office Phone Number: In Emergencies Leave a Message at: (940) 565-2211

Email Address: lisa.devine@unt.edu

Office Hours:

In-person: Tuesday/Thursday: 11:00a.m.-1:00 p.m. or by appointment.

Virtual: Monday/Wednesday: Appointments via Zoom.

Communication Preference: Message via Canvas, email, or Zoom session.

Class Time: T/TH: 9:30-10:50

Office: RTFP 215

Course Description

In this class, we will ask such questions as: What is theatre? How do we analyze a play? What is the purpose of the plot structure, characterization, language, and stage directions and how do these elements vary from play to play? We will consider genre classifications and discuss the nature of tragedy and comedy. We begin with the premise that the script is a score for live performance. The purpose of our analysis as theatre professionals – actors, directors, designers, playwrights, producers, and scholars – is to be able to read scripts so that we are able to present them to audiences. We seek to discover what the playwright has dramatized and how we can best realize his or her work on stage clearly, powerfully, and imaginatively.

****Because you (and only you) know what you'd like to gain from this class, I encourage you to set a few goals to accomplish over the course of the semester. Please let me know what I can do to assist you as you achieve these goals.*

Required Course Textbooks

Gainor, J. Ellen, Stanton B. Garner, and Martin Puchner. The Norton Anthology of Drama: Shorter Edition. New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company. 2010.

Additional Plays: (pdfs on Canvas)

Alfaro, Luis. Oedipus El Rey. London: Methuen. 2021.

Bennett, Michael, James Kirkwood, and Nicholas Dante. A Chorus Line. New York: Applause. 1995.

Gunderson, Lauren. I and You. London: Methuen Drama. 2018.

Subject Matter Disclaimer

Theatre is an art, which imitates human living: since sexuality and violence are a part of human living, some materials in this class may deal with sexual and violent images, behaviors, situations and language. The instructor nor the university plays the role of "censor." Please consider this matter carefully. ***People who may be offended by such materials may want to reconsider taking this course.***

Assignments and Grading

*** Students entering the Theatre program under the current catalogue and any following catalog are **required to earn a grade of "B"** or better for department credit. If the student does not receive at least a "B" in this class, they will be required to retake the course the next semester it is offered. ***

Projects & Major Grades

Play Structure Exam

Full Play Analysis

Poetics & Play Analysis Exam

Response Paper: Antigone or Eurydice

40%

A= excellent (100-90)

B= good (89-80)

C=average (79-70)

D=(69-60)

F= (59 or below)

Assignments & Writings

Creative Considerations

Creating an Event: Storyboard

Action Analysis: Mapping a Play

Play Critique: Elephant's Graveyard or Peter & the Starcatcher

Character Analysis

Class Attendance

30%

Discussion & Reading

Breathe, Read, Reflect
Reading Quizzes
Class Participation
Learning Activities

30%

100%

UNT DTA Season Productions

You will receive vouchers for free tickets to the productions. The Fall 2023 season of plays includes:

Elephant's Graveyard by George Brant

Dates: September 20-22

Peter & the Starcatcher by Rick Elise & Wayne Barker

Dates: October 5-8

Antigone by Sophocles; Translated by Nicholas Rudall

Dates: November 1-5

Eurydice by Sarah Ruhl

Dates: November 2-4

Attendance

Active Participation is an extremely important part of maintaining a good grade in this class. You must attend all scheduled class sessions. Each has been designed for the needs and goals of this group. If you are absent, you have missed experiences that cannot be made up or even explained. Information is imparted during lecture, discussion, activities, and exercises that discussing with me or other students will not fill the gap of your absence.

You should attend class on time, complete readings prior to class and participate in class activities. **Attendance will be taken every class meeting.** Although I am here to help you in any way and sympathize with problems you will encounter this semester, only documented illnesses, death in the family, and extreme circumstances are considered excused absences.

Acceptable Student Behavior

- Student behavior that interferes with an instructor's ability to conduct a class or other students' opportunity to learn is unacceptable and disruptive and will not be tolerated in any instructional forum at UNT.
- Students engaging in unacceptable behavior will be directed to leave the classroom and the instructor may refer the student to the Center for Student Rights and Responsibilities. The Code of Student Conduct can be found at www.unt.edu/csrr.

Bottom Line:

- Attendance is mandatory. You may receive two (2) excused absences for family emergencies, serious illness, or official UNT business. Students must show written proof. Doctors' appointments are not excused.
- The professor's roll book is the official record of absences and tardiness. This should be followed by students on Canvas. Leaving class early, sleeping, and non-participation will all be counted as an absence.
- Suggested Dance and Theatre attendance policy expects the number of allowable absences should not exceed 10% of the total class meetings for the semester. For example, *if a class meets twice a week for 15 weeks*, then the **number of allowable absences** before the student's grade is affected is **three (3)**.

Class Discussions

You are required to read all the plays, including the introductions to the plays in the Norton Drama text, come to class with the text, ready to participate in all class activities. Read the scripts not only as literature, but also from the perspective of directors, designers, actors, and teachers/students of literature. **Discussions of the assigned readings will constitute a major portion of the class.** Please feel free to ask questions during lectures or discussions. Even in Zoom sessions, students are expected to become involved in the class discussion.

Class Participation

The grade for class participation is evaluated in the following areas: *Attitude, Willingness to Learn, Citizenship, adding to the conversation, work ethic, improvement over the semester, acceptance of grades earned and how absences are handled.*

Grades

There is a grading rubric that has been designed for each assignment. This tool is used to stay as objective and fair as possible when grading each student's work. **You are responsible for knowledge of your grade at all times.** Consult Canvas frequently (if not daily) to know where your grade is at throughout the semester. For large classes, I will grade the papers in the order they are received. This means those students who turn their assignments in at or close to 11:59 p.m. the day they are due will receive their graded work back last. If you have any questions about your grades,

please contact me and I will be happy to help you. *Grades will not be discussed over the phone but rather in private Zoom sessions or in person during office hours.*

Incompletes

Only under extraordinary circumstances will an Incomplete be given.

Withdrawal

Should you choose to drop this course, you must initiate the drop and acquire all the proper signatures and paperwork. If that process is not completed, you will be subject to a WF or F at the close of the semester.

Cheating/Plagiarism

The Student Code of Conduct prohibits all forms of academic dishonesty including the use of Artificial Intelligence or AI. This includes plagiarism, cheating on exams, using papers that have been written by someone other than yourself, or providing work to other students. *“Use of AI to produce or help content without proper attribution or authorization, when an assignment does not explicitly call or allow for it, is plagiarism.”*

To plagiarize means to take and submit as one's own ideas and/or the expression of ideas of another person. Plagiarism is using words or ideas which are not your own, but which you have culled from another source (including the internet) and have not given credit. Plagiarism is intellectual thievery and will not be tolerated.

If a student is caught cheating or plagiarizing the student will receive an F for that assignment. If the student is caught a second time, the student will receive an F for the course. With plagiarism, it will also be incumbent upon the student to demonstrate that the student has not plagiarized (rough drafts of papers, notes, outlines, annotated source materials, etc.) so please retain all evidence of your having done writing projects yourself.

Americans with Disabilities Act Notice

The University of North Texas makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking reasonable accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide you with a reasonable accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course. You may request reasonable accommodations at any time; however, ODA notices of reasonable accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of reasonable accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. Students are strongly encouraged to deliver letters of reasonable accommodation during faculty office hours or by appointment. Faculty members have the authority to ask students to discuss such letters during their designated office hours to protect the privacy of the student. For additional information see the Office of Disability Accommodation website at <http://www.unt.edu/oda>. You may also contact them by phone at 940-565-4323.

Accommodation

Please let me know if you need accommodation for religious holidays or other issues.

SPOT

The Student Perception of Teaching Effectiveness (SPOT) is a requirement for all organized class at UNT. This short survey will be conducted in class on your laptop or cellphone at the end of the semester, providing you a chance to comment on how this class is taught. I am very interested in your feedback I get from students, as I work to continually improve my teaching. I consider your “Personal Growth Assessment Assignment” and the SPOT to be an important part of your participation in this class.

Last day to drop a course is November 10, 2023.

I am looking forward to getting to know each of you!

Play Analysis
THEA 1440.001 Fall 2023
Tentative Calendar

Unit 1: Constructing a Play

Week 1:

- August 22 ***Welcome to Play Analysis!*** Receive Syllabus and Calendar. Introduction to course and instructor. Lecture & Debate: Are stage directions important?
- August 24 Lecture & Activities: Building a Sense of Humanity – Preparing to read plays. Preview of Week 2: Who is Lauren Gunderson? Receive *Breathe, Read, and Reflect Assignment*.

Week 2:

- August 29 Read I and You by Lauren Gunderson. (pdf on Canvas) **Assignment: Breathe, Read, and Reflect. Due Monday, August 28 by 11:59 p.m.** Lecture & Discussion: Where do you begin analyzing a play?
- August 31 Lecture & Discussion: Your emotions and reading plays. (*Be sure to take the I and You Reading Quiz before Saturday, September 2 at 11:59 p.m.*)

Week 3: Linear Play Structure

- September 5 Read Oedipus by Sophocles. Lecture & Discussion: Defining the Chain Reaction. Receive *Analysis 1: Storyboarding an Event*.
- September 7 Lecture & Discussion: Is Oedipus the “perfect play”? Lecture: Ancient Greek Theatre. Receive *Play Critique Assignment*.

Week 5: Mosaic Play Structure

- September 12 Read and Listen to A Chorus Line by Michael Bennett. (pdf on Canvas) Lecture & Discussion: Why mosaic play structure was chosen to tell this story?
Assignment Due: Analysis 1: Storyboarding an Event.
- September 14 Lecture & Discussion: Scenes, Variations & Angles. Connecting A Chorus Line to Hamilton. Receive *Consideration 1: What I did for love?*

UNT Production: Elephant’s Graveyard by George Brant
Dates: September 20-22

Week 6: Episodic Play Structure

- September 19 Lecture & Discussion: Tips on Reading and Staging Shakespeare. Analysis: What is in a name?
Assignment Due: Consideration 1: What I did for love?
- September 21 Read Acts 1-2 of Twelfth Night by William Shakespeare. Lecture & Discussion: Defining Introduction & Rising Action. Receive *Analysis: Action Analysis: Mapping a Play*.

Week 7:

- September 26 Read Acts 3-5 of Twelfth Night by William Shakespeare. Lecture & Discussion: Defining Climax, Fall Action, Denouement.
- September 28 Lecture & Discussion: Introduction to Nonlinear Plays.
Assignment Due: Action Analysis 2: Mapping a Play.

UNT Production: Peter & the Starcatcher
Play by Rick Elise. Music by Wayne Barker.
Dates: October 5-8

Week 8: Nonlinear Play Structure

- October 3 Read Waiting for Godot by Samuel Beckett. Lecture & Discussion: How to analyze nonlinear plays.
- October 5 Finish analyzing Waiting for Godot. *Review for Exam I.*

Exam I: Play Construction
Canvas portal will open at noon Sunday October 8.
Canvas portal will close at 11:59 p.m. Tuesday October 10.

Unit 2: Aristotle's Influence on Contemporary Plays

Week 9: Introduction to The Poetics

- October 10 **Exam I: Play Construction Due.**
- October 12 Read The Poetics by Aristotle (pages 135-150). Lecture & Discussion: Aristotle: The Man & His Influence on Theatre. **Play Critique Assignment Due.**

Week 10: Plot

- October 17 Read A Doll's House by Henrik Ibsen. Lecture & Discussion: Why Aristotle ranks Plot first.
- October 19 Lecture & Activity: Details within Given Circumstances.

Week 11: Character

- October 24 Read Death of a Salesman by Arthur Miller. Lecture & Discussion: Types of Characters. *Receive Character Analysis Assignment.*
- October 26 Discussion and Activity: Defending Character Choices & Perspective

UNT Productions:

Antigone by Sophocles; Translated by Nicholas Rudall
Dates: November 1-5

Eurydice by Sarah Ruhl
Dates: November 2-4

Week 12: Theme

October 31 Read The Cherry Orchard by Anton Chekhov. Lecture & Discussion: Comedy, Drama, or Tragedy?!

November 2 Lecture & Discussion: Discovering Theme in Chekhov's plays. Analyzing Theme: Confronting and Defining Home.
Assignment Due: Character Analysis Assignment.

Week 13: Language

November 7 Read Oedipus el Rey by Luis Alfaro. (pdf on Canvas) Lecture and Discussion: Comparing and Contrasting Sophocles and Alfaro. *Receive Consideration: Defining Home.*

November 9 Lecture & Discussion: Clues Hidden in the Language of a Play. ***Response Paper Due.***

November 10 Last Day to Withdraw

Week 14: Song

November 14 Read Act I of The America Play: The Lincoln Act by Suzan-Lori Parks (p.1652-1663). Lecture & Discussion: Rhythm and Tempo in Storytelling.
Assignment Due: Consideration: Defining Home.

November 16 Read Act II of The America Play: The Hall of Wonders by Suzan-Lori Parks (p.1663-1681).
Consideration: Sound Design in Storytelling.

November 20 – 24 Thanksgiving Break

Week 15: Spectacle

November 28 Read M. Butterfly by David Henry Hwang. Lecture & Activity: Multiple location plays – How?!

November 30 Lecture: Professional Importance of Reading Plays.
Review for Exam II: The Poetics & Play Analysis.

Exam II: The Poetics & Play Analysis
Canvas portal opens at 9:30 a.m. on Tuesday, December 5
Canvas portal closes at midnight on Thursday, December 7

Week 16:

December 5 *Receive Full Play Analysis Assignment. Exam II: The Poetics & Play Analysis.*

December 7 **Exam II: The Poetics & Play Analysis.**

December 8 Reading Day – No Classes

Final Exam Week

Thursday, December 14 8:00-10:00a.m. Full Play Analysis Due