

# Play Analysis

## THEA 1440.001 Spring 2024

Instructor: **Lisa Devine, MFA**

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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: Fiddler on the Roof

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

Play Critique: The Donner Party or The Pretty Trap

Character Analysis

Class Attendance

30%

### Discussion & Reading

Breathe, Read, Reflect

Reading Quizzes

Class Participation

Learning Activities

30%

100%

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### **Assignment Information**

For every assignment you will be asked to complete, you will receive **an assignment sheet and a rubric** as to my expectations. I am always happy to answer questions about an assignment but if I am not available, please refer to these sheets. *Use these sheets when creating your final draft of an assignment to be sure that all expectations have been completed.* All assignment sheets and rubrics will be housed on Canvas. ***The most egregious mistake I see student's make is not completing all portions of an assignment.***

### **Quizzes and Exams – On Canvas only**

A quiz will be given about once a week over the play reading and/or play background. All quizzes will be taken on Canvas. A quiz will be uploaded directly after Thursday's class (at 11:00 a.m.) and be open for students to take until Saturday at midnight (11:59p.m.). Once Canvas has closed the quiz, ***I will not re-open it.*** Plan your quiz taking schedule with this in mind. *The lowest reading quiz grade will be dropped.*

Two exams will also be administered through Canvas. The date and hours of exam availability will be stated on review sheets. The exams will be composed of limited choice questions, short essay, and essay. Exams must be taken during the scheduled opportunity. Once the date and time has passed, **no make-up exams will be given.**

### **Considerations**

Throughout the semester, questions about the play, its structure or subject matter will be posed to you to investigate and form an opinion. There are no "right" answers to these questions. They are designed like essay questions, in which there are a range of possible responses. Your grade does not rest on what your opinions are. You will be graded on the amount of effort and thought that you put into your consideration, as well as how you well you support your opinions given the limitation of two pages. All written assignments will be uploaded into Canvas for grading.

### **Analysis of Plays**

Throughout the semester, you will analyze the different plays from different perspectives to help you investigate a story thoroughly. This will give you tools for you to use throughout your academic career as you study theatre. An assignment sheet and template will be posted on Canvas. This form will change as your knowledge in script analysis deepens. Be sure to use the forms that correlate with the specific play that we are analyzing. You will be given the specific questions when the assignment is introduced to the class. I advise you to prepare each section of the analysis before opening the template. This will allow you all the time you need to revise your ideas, grammar, and construction of your answers **before** opening the template. Then, cut/paste your answers into the template on Canvas. Constructing answers in the Canvas template could lead to problems with technology that could lead to your work getting lost and unneeded stress for you.

### **Late Assignments**

***No late assignments will be accepted.*** This is to guarantee equitable treatment of all students. Please acquaint yourself with the calendar attached. ***In theatre, the curtain rises on opening night regardless.*** Consider the "due date" the last moment I will take the assignment. Any written assignment may be turned in early. I will open the portal to turn in an assignment when I introduce it. This allows you to structure your study schedule to allow you time for other course assignments. *Time Management is a life skill. Recognize that if you are battling the clock on Canvas, you have procrastinated.* **Bottom line: Any assignment can be early. Nothing can be late. Show initiative.**

### **UNT DTA Season Productions**

You will receive vouchers for free tickets to the productions. The Spring 2024 season of plays includes:

**The Donner Party** by The Kraken Company

Dates: February 29 – March 3

**The Pretty Trap** by Tennessee Williams

Dates: March 28 - 30

**Fiddler on the Roof** Book by Joseph Stein, Music by Jerry Bock, Lyrics by Sheldon Harnick

Dates: April 18 - 21

## 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](http://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 April 5, 2024.***

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

**Play Analysis**  
**THEA 1440.001 Spring 2024**  
Tentative Calendar

***Unit 1: Constructing a Play***

**Week 1:**

- January 16      **Welcome to Play Analysis!** Receive *Syllabus and Calendar*. Introduction to course and instructor. Lecture & Debate: Are stage directions important?
- January 18      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:**

- January 23      Read I and You by Lauren Gunderson. (pdf on Canvas) **Assignment: Breathe, Read, and Reflect. Due Monday, January 22 by 11:59 p.m.** Lecture & Discussion: Where do you begin analyzing a play?
- January 25      Lecture & Discussion: Your emotions and reading plays. (*Be sure to take the I and You Reading Quiz before Saturday, January 27 at 11:59 p.m.*)

**Week 3: Linear Play Structure**

- January 30      Read Oedipus by Sophocles. Lecture & Discussion: Defining the Chain Reaction. Receive *Analysis 1: Storyboarding an Event*.
- February 1      Lecture & Discussion: Is Oedipus the “perfect play”? Lecture: Ancient Greek Theatre. Receive *Play Critique Assignment*.

**Week 5: Mosaic Play Structure**

- February 6      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.**
- February 8      Lecture & Discussion: Scenes, Variations & Angles. Connecting A Chorus Line to Hamilton. Receive *Consideration 1: What I did for love?*

**Week 6: Episodic Play Structure**

- February 13      Lecture & Discussion: Tips on Reading and Staging Shakespeare. Analysis: What is in a name? **Assignment Due: Consideration 1: What I did for love?**
- February 15      Read Acts 1-2 of Twelfth Night by William Shakespeare. Lecture & Discussion: Defining Introduction & Rising Action.

**Week 7:**

- February 20      Read Acts 3-5 of Twelfth Night by William Shakespeare. Lecture & Discussion: Defining Climax, Fall Action, Denouement.

February 22                      Lecture & Discussion: Introduction to Nonlinear Plays.

**UNT Production: The Donner Party  
by The Kraken Company  
Dates: February 29 – March 3**

**Week 8: Nonlinear Play Structure**

February 27                      Read Waiting for Godot by Samuel Beckett. Lecture & Discussion: How to analyze nonlinear plays.

February 29                      Finish analyzing Waiting for Godot. *Review for Exam I.*

**Exam I: Play Construction  
Canvas portal will open at noon Sunday March 3.  
Canvas portal will close at 11:59 p.m. Tuesday March 5.**

***Unit 2: Aristotle's Influence on Contemporary Plays***

**Week 9: Introduction to The Poetics**

March 5                              **Exam I: Play Construction Due.**

March 7                              Read The Poetics by Aristotle (pages 135-150). Lecture & Discussion: Aristotle: The Man & His Influence on Theatre.

-----**March 11 – 15: SPRING BREAK**-----

**Week 10: Plot**

March 19                              Read A Doll's House by Henrik Ibsen. Lecture & Discussion: Why Aristotle ranks Plot first.

March 21                              Lecture & Activity: Details within Given Circumstances.

**Week 11: Character**

March 26                              Read Death of a Salesman by Arthur Miller. Lecture & Discussion: Types of Characters. *Receive Character Analysis Assignment.*

March 28                              Discussion and Activity: Defending Character Choices & Perspective

**UNT Production:  
The Pretty Trap by Tennessee Williams  
Dates: March 28-30**

**Week 12: Theme**

April 2                                Read The Cherry Orchard by Anton Chekhov. Lecture & Discussion: Comedy, Drama, or Tragedy?! **Play Critique Assignment Due.**

April 4                                Lecture & Discussion: Discovering Theme in Chekhov's plays. Analyzing Theme: Confronting and Defining Home. **Assignment Due: Character Analysis Assignment.**

**April 5**                      **Last Day to Withdraw**

**Week 13: Language**

April 9                      Read Oedipus el Rey by Luis Alfaro. (pdf on Canvas) Lecture and Discussion: Comparing and Contrasting Sophocles and Alfaro. *Receive Consideration: Defining Home.*

April 11                      Lecture & Discussion: Clues Hidden in the Language of a Play.

**Week 14: Song**

April 16                      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.**

April 18                      Read Act II of The America Play: The Hall of Wonders by Suzan-Lori Parks (p.1663-1681).  
Consideration: Sound Design in Storytelling.

**UNT Production: Fiddler on the Roof**  
**Book by Joseph Stein, Music by Jerry Bock, & Lyrics by Sheldon Harnick**  
**Dates: April 18-21**

**Week 15: Spectacle**

April 23                      Read M. Butterfly by David Henry Hwang. Lecture & Activity: Multiple location plays – How?! ***Response Paper Due.***

April 25                      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, April 30.**  
**Canvas portal closes at midnight on Thursday, May 2.**

**Week 16:**

April 30                      *Receive Full Play Analysis Assignment. Exam II: The Poetics & Play Analysis.*

May 2                      **Exam II: The Poetics & Play Analysis.**

May 3                      Reading Day – No Classes

**Final Exam Week**

**Thursday, May 9                      8:00-10:00a.m.                      Full Play Analysis Due**