

# Play and Screen Writing

## THEA 4460.001 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: Friday: 9:00-11:50

Office: RTFP 215

### Course Description

In this class, we will explore writing for the stage and screen through practice and discussion. We will study major components of playwrighting, including action, dialogue, character development. We will deepen our understanding of these components by completing and workshoping writing assignments, providing and receiving feedback, and reading works of contemporary playwrights. We will look into submitting new plays to publishers and producers. We will study the process of developing a new play from readings, workshops, and into production. This is a writing intensive course.

*\*\*\*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

Garrison, Gary. A More Perfect 10: Writing and Producing the Ten-Minute Play. Newburyport, MA. Focus Publishing, 2009.

### Additional Plays (pdfs on Canvas)

Hall, Katori. The Mountaintop. NYC: Dramatists Play Service. 2009.

Levin, Ira. Veronica's Room. NYC: Samuel French, Inc. 1981.

Mann, Emily. Having Our Say. NYC: Samuel French, Inc. 1996.

### 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

#### Projects & Major Grades

|                           |                       |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| Final Drafts (4)          | A= excellent (100-90) |
| Ten-Minute Play Festival  | B= good (89-80)       |
| Self-Evaluation           | C=average (79-70)     |
| Master Playwright Project | D= (69-60)            |
|                           | F= (59 or below)      |

50%

#### Assignments & Writings

|                     |     |
|---------------------|-----|
| Attendance          |     |
| Reading Quizzes (3) |     |
| First Drafts (9)    | 30% |

#### Discussion & Reading

|                     |     |
|---------------------|-----|
| Discussion Posts    |     |
| Class Participation |     |
| Learning Activities | 20% |

100%

## **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. **Each class period will begin with a writing exercise. If you miss the introductory writing exercise, you will be counted late.** 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 **one and a half (1.5)**.

## **Writing Prompts**

The only way to learn how to write a play is to write . . . and write daily. Each week a prompt will be given in class to work on for the next week. The new play that you create is due the **Thursday night at 11:59 p.m.** (Only Prompt #6 will be due on Wednesday night.)

There are **two steps** to turning in your play each week.

**Step 1:** Upload your play with a cover page and a list of character descriptions with your play in the **Canvas assignment found in the correct module.**

**Step 2:** Upload your play to the **discussion board** for your classmates to read while in class. Participation in discussion board posts will be graded. Please leave off your cover page for the class perusal of your play, as this has your personal contact information included.

Be sure to bring some way to access the plays your classmates have written each week during class time. You may print the plays or bring laptop, tablet, phone etc. to read the plays. This will help us to not need to bring 15 copies of your play each week so your play can be read by the class.

## **Class Structure & Discussions**

Each class session will begin promptly at 9:00 a.m. with 15-minutes of a writing session. Even if you arrive early, the room should remain quiet, so everyone has a calm environment to start their creating. It is fine to talk with others outside of the room before class but once you enter the room, maintain the silence. Feel free to bring a journal for these opening minutes. ***If you miss this writing time, you will be counted late.***

Class sessions will be mainly hearing the new play you created read by others and receiving feedback. It is important for the process of learning to write plays that others direct and act in your project. You will be an audience member; a well-informed audience member, who takes notes. We will spend time learning how to give and receive feedback.

A note on casting: For the preliminary readings of your plays, classmates will be participating. The perfect actor for a role you have created may not be in the class. This is okay as your story may be activated with an empathic or sympathetic person reading your play. This may change as the class progresses and we wish to ask for volunteers from outside our class.

## **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!***