



LONDON THTR 3312 WRITING A PLAY: THE ART AND CRAFT OF MAKING THEATRE

CAPA LONDON PROGRAM

Course Description

Writing A Play: The Art and Craft of Making Theatre will introduce the student to the variety of skills required to write a stage play. Beginning with a range of stimuli from their experience of London: people, places, events and ideas, students will develop their ideas into fully-fledged one-act plays. Focusing on a toolbox approach, and carefully considering the various elements of dialogue, characterization, structure and themes, the course will culminate in the presentation of a showcase of each writer's work in CAPA's studio performance space before an invited audience!

Course Aims

To familiarize the student with the range of skills required to write and present successful drama; to offer the opportunity to explore, discuss and present new dramatic work in a supportive environment; to enable the student to give and receive feedback on dramatic work in a useful way; to approach a range of texts and assignments with confidence.

Requirements and Prerequisites

An interest in creative writing, and dramatic writing in particular. Students must be prepared to share their work in sessions and to offer and receive supportive feedback.

Learning Outcomes

- a. Students will have learned and applied the tools of Playwriting, including structure, dialogue and characterization, and created a short, original piece of drama inspired by a London-themed stimulus.
- b. Students will have fully engaged with the stimulus, drawing on the social dynamics of the urban environment, diverse characters and interactions.
- c. Students will have given and received constructive and creative feedback on their project and acted upon it where relevant.
- d. Students will have seen their work performed 'from page to stage' and learned how to structure, craft and edit scenes from stimulus and early draft to live performance.

Developmental Outcomes

Students should demonstrate: responsibility & accountability, independence & interdependence, goal orientation, self-confidence, resilience, appreciation of differences, imagination & creativity.

Class Methodology

The class will comprise of a series of discussions, play readings, workshops and feedback sessions, with the aim of developing the student's aptitude for dramatic writing. Students will be expected to produce

work based on various stimuli and to share their thoughts in discussion. Guest practitioners will offer constructive views and advice on students' work, and the group will attend at least one new play in London.

Field Components

CAPA provides the unique opportunity to learn about the city through direct, guided experience. Participation in field activities for this course is required. You will actively explore the Global City in which you are currently living. Furthermore, you will have the chance to collect useful information that will be an invaluable resource for the essays/papers/projects assigned in this course.

The assigned field component(s) are:

A visit to a new play in London

A class visit from a practitioner or other London-based industry professional

A self-guided encounter with a London place, person or event as a creative stimulus

Students are also strongly encouraged to participate in **co-curricular** program activities, among which the following are suggested:

A tour of the National Theatre

Other theatre visits on the My Education calendar

Dress Code

Smart casual clothes are acceptable at the vast majority of London theatres.

Assessment/Grading Policy

Descriptor	Alpha	UK	US	GPA
Excellent	A	75+	93+	4.0
	A-	70-74	90-92	3.7
Good	B+	66-69	86-89	3.3
	B	63-65	83-85	3.0
	B-	60-62	80-82	2.7
Average	C+	56-59	76-79	2.3
	C	53-55	73-75	2.0
Below Average / Poor	C-	50-52	70-72	1.7
	D+	46-49	66-69	1.3
	D	40-45	60-65	0.7
Fail	F	<40	<60	0

Grade Breakdown and Assessment of Learning Outcomes

Assessment Task	Grade %	Learning Outcomes	Due Date
Class participation	10%	a,b,c,d	Weekly
Outline plan and research for short play	25%	b., c.	Week 6
Appreciation of a scene from a classic play (mid-term)	15%	a, c	Week 6
Short Play	50%	a, b, c, d	Week 14

Assignments

Students will be assessed via three assignments:

-Classroom attendance and participation in readings, discussions and activities: 10%

-An outline of research and development for the proposed final play derived from a London-themed stimulus: 25%

- An appreciation of a scene from a classic play, with reference to the application of one of the tools of playwriting ie. Structure in Oedipus Rex, Dialogue in A Streetcar Named Desire etc: 15%
- A short play of 20 minutes duration inspired by a London-themed stimulus. This may be self-contained, or the first act of a proposed larger project. If the latter, then it is expected that the student will submit a page-long outline of the work's suggested development. The play will receive a rehearsed reading in The Street studio theatre: 50%

Recommended Readings

Aristotle (trans M. Heath). Poetics (Penguin)
Ayckbourn, A. The Crafty Art of Playmaking (Palgrave)
Johnstone, K. Impro (Methuen)
Neipris, J. To Be A Playwright (Routledge)

There will be a set text each week, usually a group of scenes from a well-known play. The plays are listed in the course calendar. The relevant scenes will be provided in class, or made available online to students. It is not necessary to purchase the plays.

Course Calendar

Week One: WHAT IS A PLAY? In this first class, we'll share our experiences of theatre and creative writing and draw up guidelines for the kinds of play we would like to see – which are the kinds of plays we should set out to write! I'll also introduce the 'toolbox' approach to playwriting.

Assignment: Research based on London stimulus.

Reading: Poetics of Aristotle (excerpt)

Week Two: GETTING CREATIVE Here, we'll look out how we generate workable dramatic ideas. How do we know if the topic we've chosen is viable? To help us, we'll use the work of Aristotle to determine the sustainability of ideas over the long term. We'll also take part in some simple creative exercises.

IN CLASS TEXT: A selection of opening scenes

Assignment: Develop your research into a scene.

Reading: Poetics of Aristotle 2 (excerpt)

Week Three: SHOWING VERSUS TELLING Western Theatre demonstrates a shift from storytelling to the drama of showing. What are the differences, and how do we ensure our work is active and involving for audiences? We'll also generate potential ideas derived from a London-themed list including: people, places, events and encounters.

IN CLASS TEXT: OEDIPUS REX by Sophocles (trans tbc)

Assignment: Write a short monologue generated by a character from the research process.

Reading: Impro by Keith Johnstone (Status)

Week Four: TIMES AND PLACES 1 Plays are combinations of timeframe and location. Here, we'll look at two variations upon this idea and discover the strengths of our choices. This will ensure that, when we write, we maximize the possibilities. Each student should work on a page outline for their play's potential development along with a research plan.

IN CLASS TEXT: KING LEAR by William Shakespeare (excerpts)

Assignment: Edit/develop your monologue.

Reading: Impro (part 2) by Keith Johnstone (Status)

Week Five: TIMES AND PLACES 2 In this class, we'll consider our analysis of timeframe and location, looking at two further variations upon the idea, and considering the strengths of these models for telling our stories. We'll also share our outlines and research plans in this class.

IN CLASS TEXT: WOYZECK by Buchner, trans Gregory Motton

Assignment: Select a scene from a classic play for analysis.

Reading: The Crafty Art of Playmaking (tbc)

Week Six: ACTIONS AND EVENTS 1 How does dramatic structure work in practice? It's actually a balance of actions and events. Here, we'll consider how they work and combine, and look at dramatic actions and their processes. The outline and research documents are due in this class!

IN CLASS TEXT: THE WOMAN IN BLACK by Hill/Mallatratt

Assignment: Write up your scene analysis.

Reading: The Crafty Art of Playmaking (tbc)

You must submit your outline of research and development for your final play in this class, and via TurnItIn.

Week Seven: SEMESTER BREAK

Week Eight: ACTIONS AND EVENTS 2 In this class, we'll look at how spare use of resources can create the most effective types of drama, and analyze how events in a play can best be staged.

IN CLASS TEXT: THE CARETAKER by Harold Pinter

Assignment: Complete and submit your portfolio of works (research, scene analysis, monologue)

Reading: Pinter on Playwriting (tbc)

Week Nine: CHARACTERS How do we create memorable and vivid stage characters? This question will take us back to Aristotle, and then forward to one of the most controversial and brilliant European playwrights.

IN CLASS TEXT: A DOLL'S HOUSE by Henrik Ibsen, trans. K. McLeish,

Assignment: Work on your short play

Reading: To Be a Playwright by Janet Neipris (excerpts)

Week Ten: DIALOGUE Once we've established characters, we must ensure we find and develop their respective voices. We'll undertake some exercises in class to improve our dialogue and ensure voices are sufficiently differentiated and convincing.

IN CLASS READING: STONING MARY by debbie tucker green

Assignment: Work on your short play

Reading: To Be a Playwright by Janet Neipris (excerpts)

Week Eleven: SUBTEXT According to the Russian director Stanislavsky, it's the reason we go to the theatre. We can read the text at home, we go to the theatre for Subtext. But how do we create it, and how does it relate to the work of both actors and audiences?

IN CLASS TEXT: THE SEAGULL by Anton Chekhov, trans. by N. Mulryne

Assignment: Work on your short play

No reading this week.

Week Twelve: BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER In class, we will work on our plays, reading and sharing them together.

Week Thirteen: FINAL DRAFTS AND CLASS VISITOR. In this session, we'll assess what we learned from having our plays read aloud, and work towards our final drafts which are due next week. We will also meet with COLIN BLUMENAU, Artistic Director of the Production Exchange in London. Colin is a writer and director with three decades of experience in theatre and television. He tell us about how plays get from page to stage and what producers are looking for.

Week Fourteen: PERFORMANCE: THE LOST GOSPEL OF PONTIUS PILATE. For this class, we will meet later in the day at the Tristan Bates theatre in London for a performance of my play and a post-show discussion. Please keep this date free!

You must submit your final draft of your short play today, and by TurnItIn.

Attendance, Participation & Student Responsibilities

Attendance: CAPA has a mandatory attendance policy. Attendance is taken at the beginning of every class. Unauthorized absence from class will result in a reduction of the final grade and potentially a failure for the course.

Missing classes for medical reasons: If you need to miss a class for medical reasons or for a family emergency, **you must send an e-mail** to let the Associate Director of Academic Affairs (ADAA) know at least

one hour in advance of your class or meeting at the following e-mail: excused.absence@capa.org. Note that calling the CAPA Centre (0207 370 7389) is acceptable only if you do not temporarily have access to the internet. An e-mail is still required as quickly as you can get access to the internet again. You will need to provide evidence of the reason for your absence. Unexcused absences will result in a grade reduction. In the event of a missed class or field trip, it is your responsibility to contact your instructor and make up any missed assignments.

Class Participation: Students are expected to participate actively and critically in class discussions, and the participation portion of the class will be graded accordingly. Students must read assignments BEFORE the class, and come in on time.

Participation is a vital part of your grade: students are expected to participate orally in seminars and in online forums and discussions in a critical and evaluative manner; to interact with the faculty and fellow students with respect and tolerance; and to actively engage in discussion. Derogatory or inflammatory comments about the cultures, perspectives or attitudes of others in the class will not be tolerated.

Academic Integrity: A high level of responsibility and academic honesty is expected. Because the value of an academic course depends upon the absolute integrity of the work done by the student, it is imperative that a student demonstrates a high standard of individual honor in his or her scholastic work and class behavior. Plagiarism and cheating will result in dismissal from the program. See the Handbook of CAPA Academic Policies for more information and resources on plagiarism.

Use of electronic equipment in class: All devices such as laptops, i-pods, i-pads, netbooks, notebooks and tablets, smartphones, cell phones, etc. are **NOT** allowed unless you have express permission from the faculty or you have been instructed to do so. If you require an accommodation to use any type of electronic equipment, inform the Associate Director of Academic Affairs at the beginning of Term.

Use of Electronic Translators: In Language courses students are NOT allowed to use electronic translators for writing texts in the target language: those submitting compositions and texts of whatever kind translated in such a fashion will receive a final F grade for the course.

Late Submission: Late submission of papers, projects, journal entries, pieces of homework and portfolios is only permitted with prior approval. A request must be made to the relevant Faculty member no later than two days prior to the due date. Late submission without prior approval will result in a full alpha grade penalty. In either case, work cannot be submitted after feedback has been provided to the rest of the class on the relevant assessment or one week after the due date whichever comes first, after which point a grade of F will be given for the assessment.

Behaviour during Examinations: During examinations, you must do your own work. Unless specifically instructed by the lecturer or instructor, talking during an exam is not permitted, nor may you compare papers, copy from others, or collaborate in any way. Any failure to abide by examination rules will result in failure of the exam, and may lead to failure of the course and disciplinary action.