

# Courses in Playwriting

2020-21

## **THEA 501: PLAYWRIGHT'S LAB (4)**

**Ristau**

All students, faculty, staff, and guests meet regularly for readings of student work, guest presentations, exercises, and discussion. Students submit an example of their best work for available public reading slots. Students whose work is selected for readings are responsible for arranging, rehearsing, and presenting them. A moderated discussion follows each reading. Grades are primarily based on attendance and energetic participation with clear, perceptive, and informed analysis in discussion. The course must be repeated three consecutive summers.

## **CRITICAL ANALYSIS COURSES (4 courses for 16 credits)**

Class size in these courses is limited to 15 students per section.

## **THEA 505: THE COLLABORATIVE ART OF THEATRE (4)**

**Department**

Introduction to theatre as a collaborative art and profession. Required for those without prior theatre training or undergraduate theatre degree. For students with prior theatre training or an undergraduate theatre degree, this course may be replaced with THEA 501: Playwright's Lab, and then taking an elective critical analysis course their third summer.

## **THEA 510: PLAYSRIPT ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM (4)**

**Department**

Intensive critical analysis of the playscript as a blueprint for production covering representative texts from a range of theatre styles, genres, and periods. Plays are considered in both their original historical/cultural circumstances and implications for contemporary audiences. The course covers major approaches to dramatic criticism and the tools used in theatre research. Required course for first-year students.

## **THEA 511: DRAMATURGY (4)**

**Department**

Intensive study in theoretical and practical approaches to the realization of a text on the stage. Historical research, criticism, play analysis, conceptualization for production, cutting, adaptation, literary management, evaluation of text, advocacy of new writers, development of new plays, audience development, public relations, publicity, and arts education are all touched upon in this comprehensive survey of the role of the dramaturge. Not currently required but strongly encouraged as part of your plan of study.

## **THEA 512: STUDIES IN STYLE AND GENRE (4)**

**Department**

A focused study of specific areas within the expertise of the instructor pertaining to theatre styles and genres. This course is offered with subtitles descriptive of the particular content, which is dependent on the interests and expertise of the individual instructor. Relevant examples are:

**THEA 512: STUDIES IN STYLE AND GENRE – ABSURDISM AND SURREALISM (4)**

**THEA 512: STUDIES IN STYLE AND GENRE – EPIC THEATRE (4)**

**THEA 512: STUDIES IN STYLE AND GENRE – EXPRESSIONISM (4)**

**THEA 512: STUDIES IN STYLE AND GENRE – FARCE (4)**

**THEA 512: STUDIES IN STYLE AND GENRE – MELODRAMA (4)**

**THEA 512: STUDIES IN STYLE AND GENRE – NATURALISM/REALISM (4)**

**THEA 512: STUDIES IN STYLE AND GENRE – POST MODERN PERFORMANCE ART (4)**

## **THEA 513: TOPICS IN THEATRE HISTORY (4)**

**Department**

A focused study of specific areas in the subject of theatre history. This course is offered with subtitles descriptive of the particular content, which is dependent on the interests and expertise of the individual instructor. Relevant examples are:

**THEA 513: TOPICS IN THEATRE HISTORY – MEDIEVAL AND LITURGICAL DRAMA (4)**

**THEA 513: TOPICS IN THEATRE HISTORY – MUSICAL THEATRE (4)**

**THEA 513: TOPICS IN THEATRE HISTORY – ORIGINS OF THEATRE (4)**

**THEA 513: TOPICS IN THEATRE HISTORY – RESTORATION DRAMA (4)**

**THEA 513: TOPICS IN THEATRE HISTORY – THE LITTLE THEATRE MOVEMENT (4)**

**THEA 514: THEATRE AND SOCIETY (4)****Department**

Focused study of specific areas pertaining to the cultural impact of theatre and theatre as a force for either societal stasis or change. This course is offered with subtitles descriptive of the particular content, which is dependent on the interests and expertise of the individual instructor. Relevant examples follow.

**THEA 514: THEATRE AND SOCIETY – AFRICAN AMERICAN THEATRE (4)****THEA 514: THEATRE AND SOCIETY – AMERICAN WOMEN PLAYWRIGHTS (4)****THEA 514: THEATRE AND SOCIETY – BANNED PLAYS (4)****THEA 514: THEATRE AND SOCIETY – CHRISTIAN DRAMA (4)****THEA 514: THEATRE AND SOCIETY – POLITICAL THEATRE (4)****THEA 514: THEATRE AND SOCIETY – QUEER DRAMA (4)****THEA 514: THEATRE AND SOCIETY – THEATRE FOR SOCIAL CHANGE (4)****THEA 515: SELECTED DRAMATISTS (4)****Department**

Detailed analysis of a single author, their biographical background, and body of work. Some authors who may be examined are: William Shakespeare, Henrik Ibsen, Federico Garcia Lorca, Bertolt Brecht, Samuel Beckett, Arthur Miller, Neil Simon, Sam Shepard, Maria Irene Fornes, and Suzan Lori Parks. The particular content will be dependent on the interests and expertise of the individual instructor.

**THEA 529: FUNDAMENTALS OF DRAMA THERAPY (4)****Department**

This course provides an introduction to the fundamental practices and underlying concepts of drama therapy. It is important to understand that this course is NOT in any way formal training in this area for practitioners and is not intended to be a path to licensure. Instead, this class serves as a method to learn the history of Expressive Therapies and how theatre can be used as a powerful tool in addressing the needs of specific populations dealing with trauma, abuse, or other applications – for example, social justice. The course is to be taught by a registered drama therapist, and will feature guest lecturers who are also either registered drama therapists or licensed psychodramatists working with a variety of clients and/or patients. The work will be challenging and students should be prepared to make discoveries not only about this important field, but themselves.

**CREATIVE WORKSHOP COURSES (4 courses for 16 credits)**

Class size in these courses is limited to 10 students per section. (Except for THEA 522, which takes up to ten students from each discipline: playwriting, directing, and performance.)

**THEA 520: NARRATIVE THEORY AND DRAMATIC STRUCTURE (4)****Ristau**

Introduction to the basics of storytelling and the creation of dramatic texts using both organic and formulaic models with an emphasis on the one act play. Students will learn to observe the world for meaning, build characters, place characters in settings, write monologues, create dialogue between characters, and lay the groundwork for longer, more substantive work. This is a required course for first-year students.

**THEA 521: PRACTICAL ELEMENTS OF THEATRE FOR PLAYWRIGHTS (4)****Department**

This course exposes playwrights to the other disciplines within the medium for which they will be writing. Over the session, playwrights will be introduced to the five main production elements (set, lights, sound, costume, and props). They will also be trained in improvisation, movement, scene study, acting styles, and character realization from the actor's perspective. Students will also learn about the role of the director including the play selection, development of concept, working with a living writer, casting, staging, design, blocking, time management, and collaboration with designers. This course is not intended to turn playwrights into actors, directors, or designers but rather allow better understanding of the process used by those collaborators through experiential learning in a low-risk environment.

**THEA 522: VIEWPOINTS AND COMPOSITION (4)****Department**

Taken by playwrights, directors, and performers to build ensemble and open new avenues of collaboration on found, created, devised, and scripted text. Will include techniques for collaboration, building ensemble, group dynamics, psychophysical acting and improvisation, crafting theatre pieces based on found, devised, and scripted text.

**THEA 531: SOLO PERFORMANCE (4)****Department**

An exploration of how to write, produce and perform solo work which may include the writer as the principle performer. The course will look at examples of successful solo performers and performances from the past and guide the students through the creation of an original performance piece designed for a single actor.

**THEA 534: WRITING PLAYS FOR YOUNG AUDIENCES (4)****Department**

Exploration of the creation of dramas designed to be performed both for and by children and young adults. While adaptation of existing children's literature will be addressed, the focus is on the creation of original plays for young audiences.

**THEA 536: WRITING PLAYS WITH MUSIC (4)****Department**

Writers are given guided instruction in creating stage plays which incorporate music. Students will be given some historical background in American Musical Theatre, Revues, and straight plays which incorporate original compositions. Students will have an opportunity to meet with and possibly work with a composer on short pieces which use music to help tell the story.

**THEA 542: ADAPTATION (4)****Department**

Explores the process of transferring the written word from another medium into a play script intended for live performance on the stage.

**THEA 545: DOCUDRAMA (4)****Department**

Intensive instruction in creating a dramatic text from historical documents or real life events. Before creating their own original works, students will study the form by examining existing docudramas and exploring the legal and ethical dilemmas peculiar to this form of writing.

**THEA 550: SPECIAL TOPICS IN PLAYWRITING (4)****Department**

A variety of focused examinations of specific areas of playwriting, as determined by the instructor. Such specific areas might include:

**THEA 550: SPECIAL TOPIC IN PLAYWRITING – RADIO DRAMA (4)****Department**

This course is a detailed examination of the golden age of radio drama as well as contemporary international markets for the audio play. Students will receive intensive instruction in the special demands of writing drama for a non-visual medium, and create a new radio drama or comedy ready for recording.

**THEA 550: SPECIAL TOPIC IN PLAYWRITING – THE ONE PERSON PLAY (4)****Department**

The course examines a sampling of successful plays for one actor, explorations of the concerns unique to such plays, and the creation of an original script to be performed by a single actor.

**THEA 551: GUEST SEMINAR (4)****Department**

This seminar focuses on a specific topic within the expertise of the instructor.

**CREATIVE WORKSHOPS (4 courses for 16 credits)**

Class size in these courses is limited to eight students per section.

**THEA 562: NON-LINEAR PLAYWRITING (4)****Department**

Students will be guided in the creation of nonlinear and nontraditional approaches to the drama, as well as study the work of recent avant-garde playwrights both in this country and abroad. (Previously taught as "Experimental Playwriting.")

**THEA 567: SHORT FORMS (4)****Department**

This course is designed to introduce the student to short works as a viable form by exploring venues, publication opportunities, contests, festivals for scripts whose lengths run from one minute to ten.

**MASTER CLASSES (2 courses for 8 credits)**

Class size in these courses limited to four to six students per section.

**THEA 540: WRITING FOR OTHER MEDIA (4)****Department**

Introduction to writing for television, film and other alternative media, which will include the creation and posting of a weekly web series written by the students as a writing team. Students in the course will be introduced to differences in style, format and role of the writer outside of the theatre. They will also participate in the production of the web series and rotate through various support roles.

**THEA 570: FIRST DRAFTS (4)****Department**

In this intensive workshop students come to each class with a completely new play resulting in six new first drafts over the six-week course, each in a different style or genre and incorporating a set list of prompts. While it is possible that these first drafts might eventually be developed and revised into final drafts, the emphasis is on mastering the discipline necessary to produce substantive work on a deadline as well as reinforcing the student's understanding of the fundamentals of play structure.

**THEA 571: ADVANCED WORKSHOP (4)****Department**

A workshop course in which students further develop skills in the writing and analysis of stage plays. Designed for students with prior experience in playwriting. Students will bring to the class a project they would like to further develop through the workshop format – involving analysis by other students and careful, intentional questioning by the instructor. Work for this class must not have been previously submitted for credit in any other course without the written consent of both the current instructor and the instructor for whom the work was originally submitted, along with prior approval of the program director, as this course is intended for the development of new materials. The final for this course is a submission ready draft of the play, properly formatted and ready for production. Ideally, this course is taken in the final summer of study, in place of THEA 501.

**THEA 574: ADVANCED SCENE STUDY (4)****Department**

This course provides guided instruction in selecting, preparing and performing two-person scenes from contemporary texts. Through this advanced training in scene study, performers will be better prepared to apply these specific performance strategies to interpreting the evolving characters and contexts found in new plays still under development in rehearsal. This course builds on the foundational courses Playscript Analysis and Ensembles in Collaboration, taken during the first year of the program.

**THEA 575: ADVANCED PLAYWRITING TUTORIAL (4)****Department**

Writers are given guided instruction in creating a full-length play, which is polished, complete, ready for production, and suitable for submission. This course is similar in structure to THEA 571, but where that course functions as an advanced version of Lab, this course functions as an advanced version of Narrative Theory and Structure with an emphasis on targeted exercises and exploratory writing rather than workshopping the actual text. As with Advanced Workshop, the play must not have been submitted in any previous course for credit without the prior approval of the program director as well as the current instructor as well as the instructor of the course for which it was originally submitted.

**EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING/INDEPENDENT STUDY**

Not required, but are included as options, which will allow for academic credit to be received for professional opportunities within the degree area that may arise while the student is pursuing the M.F.A. Independent study options are available for approved projects that may arise through the student's own invention and initiative, which are not covered under other course descriptions but are clearly relevant to the student's plan of study. NOTE: Students who have been approved for transfer credit for course work from another regionally accredited college or university, may not be eligible for independent study/experiential credits. A maximum number of eight credits out of residency may be considered toward this degree.

**THEA 580: EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING PRACTICUM (1-4)****Department**

When students have an off-campus reading, internship, or production opportunity in a legitimate theatre, they may register for this course and receive academic credit for the experience. They will be required to maintain a journal and document every aspect of the production and, if possible, provide a DVD of the event. The quality of the production is not the focus of the grade, but rather the objective analysis of the process, which must be detailed and chronicled in a scholarly portfolio with a written dramaturgical analysis of the experience. May be repeated. Prior approval required.

**THEA 590: INDEPENDENT STUDY IN PLAYWRITING (4)**

**Department**

This guided-distance instruction in an approved course area may be either creative or analytical.

**THEA 599: THESIS (4, 4)**

**Department**

The thesis must be a properly formatted, production-ready final draft of a full-length play script (at least two acts of 45-60 pages each), which includes a preface or afterward placing the work in the context of the student's arc of progress within the program. It will be developed in consultation with the student's thesis advisor and must have been begun, revised, completed in the student's final year of study in the program. Substantial revisions of earlier works may be considered, but rarely approved, as thesis plays. After the thesis committee has reviewed the work, the student will be called upon for an oral defense. This course is required.