

MEDAILLE COLLEGE  
AGASSIZ CIRCLE  
BUFFALO, NEW YORK

COURSE OUTLINE

Program: Humanities  
Course Number: ENG 320  
Course Title: Drama Workshop  
Number of Credits: 3  
Prerequisites: ENG 200

A. Catalog Description of Course:

This course will provide a practical introduction to writing for the stage. It will include a study of dramatic structure, character, themes, and theatrical devices. Through experiential activities, students will gain an appreciation for issues such as the effective use of space, movement, light, dialogue, and sound. Students will write exercises or short scenes every week, and that writing will become the basis of a one-act play, which will be the final project.

B. Goals:

- To gain an in-depth awareness of dramatic form through the study of existing texts and the production of original texts.
- To broaden the student writer's perception of creative writing by exploring one art form – theater – wherein the text works in conjunction with other arts in order to produce a complete effect, and where producing an original creative text requires incorporating some of those other forms.

C. Objectives:

Upon completion of the course, the student will be able to:

- Articulate the elements of Aristotelian dramatic form, and recognize some of the later modifications of that form.
- Analyze existing theatrical texts in Aristotelian terms.
- Recognize the relationships between the theatrical text and the other arts that cooperate in producing the theatrical experience, including sound, space and movement, costume design, set design, and lights.
- Participate confidently in acting games and exercises that have been chosen with the intent

of teaching a physical awareness of theatrical elements.

- Demonstrate a competence in the conventions of the written dramatic text.
- Develop original characters through monologue, dialogue, and movement.
- Experience, evaluate and aid in the development of each class member's original theatrical work through staged readings and workshops.
- Know the outlets for the dramatic writer's work, and submit their own theatrical texts to contests and theater groups for consideration.

D. Outline of Course Content:

- I. Close reading of Aristotle's *Poetics*
- II. Application of the terminology of the *Poetics* to existing dramatic texts
- III. Overview of the elements of theatrical experience through:
  - a. Existing theatrical texts
  - b. Videos and/or live performances
  - c. Theatre games
- IV. Writing exercises that focus on plot, character, theme and movement
- V. Writing the Mime; writing the monologue; writing dialogue
- VI. Workshop in student writing
- VII. Writing the scene
- VIII. Revising the scene
- IX. Staged reading of student scenes, with discussion
- X. Exploration of venues for play text submission, strategies for submission.

E. Suggested Texts:

Lee Jacobus, *The Bedford Compact Introduction to Drama*. NY: Bedford  
(Or another suitable collection of plays and critical writings)  
Jeffrey Hatcher, *The Art and Craft of Playwriting*. Cincinnati: Story Press, 1996.

F. Suggested Modes, Media, and Techniques of Instruction:

Lecture/Discussion	Videos/films
Small Groups	Slides, Recordings
Collaborative Learning Projects	Staged readings
Class Presentations	Live performances
Guest Lectures	Theatre Games
Inductive, Deductive, and Reflective Thinking	

G. Instructor References:

Aristotle. *The Poetics*.

- Aykourn, Alan. *The Crafty Art of Playmaking*. NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002.
- Baldwin, Chris. *Stage Directing: A Practical Guide*. Ramsbury, Marlborough, UK, 2003.
- Boal, Augusto. *Theatre Games for Actors and Non-Actors*. Translated by Adria Jackson. NY: Routledge, 2002.
- Carlson, Marvin. *Theories of the Theatre: A Historical and Critical Survey, from the Greeks To the Present*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993.
- Cole, Toby & Chinoy, Helen Krich. *Directors on Directing: A Sourcebook of the Modern Theatre*. New York: Allyn & Bacon, 1963.
- \_\_\_\_\_ *Actors on Acting: The Theories, Techniques and Practices of the World's Greatest Actors, Told in Their Own Words*. Three River's Press, 1995.
- Dukore, Bernard. *Dramatic Theory & Criticism: Greeks to Grotowski*. Harcourt, 1974.
- Egri, Lajos. *Art of Dramatic Writing: Its Basis in the Creative Interpretation of Human Motives*. Touchstone, 1972.
- Elam, Keir. *The Semiotics of theatre and Drama*. London & New York: Methuen, 1980.
- Esslin, Martin. *An Anatomy of Drama*. NY: Hill & Wang, 1977.
- Felner, Mira & Orenstein, Claudia. *The World of Theatre: Tradition and Innovation*. Boston & New York: Pearson, 2006.
- Linklater, Kristin. *Freeing the Natural Voice*. New York: Drama Publishers, 1976.
- McKee, Robert. *Story: Substance, Structure, Style and the Principles of Screenwriting*. Regan Books, 1997.
- Schechner, Richard. *Performance Theory*. New York & London: Routledge, 1988.
- Spolin, Viola. *Improvisation for the Theater*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition. Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1999.