



COURSE OUTLINE

Course Number THR107	Course Title Playwriting I: Developing the Idea	Credits 3
Hours: 2 Lecture / 2 Lab	Pre-requisite ENG101 or Divisional Permission	Implementation Spring 2008

Catalog description (2006-2009 Catalog): Introduces several dramatic strategies used to develop an idea into a story structured for the stage. Students are exposed to a variety of exercises and “sense memory” prompts to facilitate writing and to learn from the works of master playwrights through reading assignments and discussions.

Required texts/other materials:

The Playwright's Workbook by Jean-Claude van Itallie, Applause Books

Any number or combination of the following plays:

American Buffalo by David Mamet, Samuel French, Inc. (Acting Edition)

Antigone by Jean Anouilh, Metheun Publishing

“Blasted” by Sarah Kane (in *Sarah Kane: Complete Plays*), Metheun Publishing

Hedda Gabler by Hendrick Ibsen, Dover Thrift Edition

In The Blood by Suzan-Lori Parks, Dramatists Play Services (Acting Edition)

“The Maids” by Jean Genet (in *The Maids & Deathwatch: Two Plays by Jean Genet*), Grove Press

Phaedra by Racine/Ted Hughes trans., out of print (Xerox)

Six Degrees of Separation” by John Guare, Vintage

Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? by Edward Albee, Samuel French, Inc. (Acting Edition)

Revision date: 01/2008

Course coordinator: Jody P. Person

Information resources: *The Playwright's Workbook* is considered by many to be the best (if only) practical guide to dramatic writing. The vocabulary of the book will serve as a foundation for how students discuss scenes and plays (their own and other people's) in the course, and it will also be a resource for continuous learning after the course is over. The plays will give students examples for how to discuss the mechanics of playwriting and possible models to follow as they experiment with their own voice.

Other learning resources: The library should contain at least one copy of each of the listed plays. Students would also benefit if it carried a subscription of *New Dramatists*, the official magazine of The Dramatists Guild.

Course Competencies/Goals:

The student will be able to:

1. Describe and discuss the work of important playwrights in key creative areas such as structure, dramatic arc, central metaphors and symbols, physicality, and dialogue – particularly as it reflects central “needs” in characters.
2. Apply these discussions to his/her own writing.
3. Create dialogue, characters, and relationships intended not for the page but for the bodies and mouths of actors.
4. Recognize moments of self-censorship and fear in his/her own writing.
5. Use remembered physical sensations as an impetus to create dialogue and scenes.
6. Use physical-mental exercises to inspire and sustain dramatic writing.

Course-specific General Education Knowledge Goals and Core Skills.

General Education Knowledge Goals

Goal 1. Communication. Students will communicate effectively in both speech and writing.

Goal 6. Humanities. Students will analyze works in the fields of art, music, or theater; literature; philosophy and/or religious studies; and/or will gain competence in the use of a foreign language.

MCCC Core Skills

Goal A. Written and Oral Communication in English. Students will communicate effectively in speech and writing, and demonstrate proficiency in reading.

Goal B. Critical Thinking and Problem-solving. Students will use critical thinking and problem solving skills in analyzing information.

Goal F. Collaboration and Cooperation. Students will develop the interpersonal skills required for effective performance in group situations.

Units of study in detail.

Unit I: In-Class Writing

The student will be able to

- Use remembered physical sensations as an impetus to create dialogue and scenes. **(Course Competency 5; Gen Ed Goal 1 & 6; Core Skill A)**
- Use physical-mental exercises to inspire and sustain dramatic writing. **(Course Competency 6; Gen Ed Goal 1; Core Skill A)**
- Write continuously without pauses for censorship and self-doubt. **(Course Competency 4; Gen Ed Goal 1; Core Skill A)**
- Listen to and transcribe what their characters are saying without censorship or self-doubt. **(Course Competency 4; Gen Ed Goal 1; Core Skill A)**
- Sustain their writing over a period of 60 minutes or more. **(Course Competency 6; Gen Ed Goal 1; Core Skill A)**

Unit II: Reading Aloud Student Work

The student will be able to

- Recognize moments of self-censorship and fear in their own writing. **(Course Competency 4; Gen Ed Goal 1; Core Skills A & B)**
- Create dialogue, characters, and relationships intended not for the page but for the bodies and mouths of actors. **(Course Competency 3)**
- Describe and discuss both his/her own and their classmates’ work – its “aliveness” and its honesty. **(Course Competency 2; Gen Ed Goal 1; Core Skill A, B & F)**

Unit III: Reading and Discussing Important Playwrights

The student will be able to

- Describe and discuss the work of important playwrights in key creative areas such as structure, dramatic arc, central metaphors and symbols, physicality, and dialogue – particularly as it reflects central “needs” in characters. **(Course Competency 1; Gen Ed Goal 1 & 6; Core Skill A & B)**
- Apply these discussion to their own writing. **(Course Competency 2; Gen Ed Goal 1 & 6)**

Evaluation of student learning:

1. Students will write a play (minimum one act, 45 pages).
2. One in-class writing exercise per class.
3. A journal in which the student reflects on their progress as a writer and his/her individual play.
4. Periodic quizzes on reading assignments.

Academic Integrity Statement: Students are expected to comply with the college-wide requirements for academic integrity. Mercer County Community College is committed to Academic Integrity—the honest, fair, and continuing pursuit of knowledge, free from fraud or deception. This implies that students are expected to be responsible for their own work. Presenting another individual's work as one's own and receiving excessive help from another individual will qualify as a violation of Academic Integrity. The entire policy on Academic Integrity is located in the Student handbook and is found on the college website (http://www.mccc.edu/admissions_policies_integrity.shtml).