

Apogee Program Session 1

Course Title

Playwriting & Drama

Course Description:

Playwriting and Drama encompass a wide range of disciplines and activities. This class will create a series of scenes, monologues and very short plays in our three weeks together. We will also read (cold-read and reader's theater) scripts, scenes and monologues. The class will be mindful of the all-important *collaborative* nature of theater as they write plays. While **scripts** are sometimes created in isolation, **plays** are created through collaboration.

Goals are to teach students the principles of playwriting and dramatic construction; to enhance their understanding of the rehearsal and production process; and to improve their perceptual abilities, writing abilities, critical thinking skills, and problem-solving abilities. The course aims to help students gain a greater understanding of **themselves and the world through theatre** and to encourage their desire to attend live theatre. Students will read selections from classical and modern plays and short stories, as well as employ research to authenticate their own writing. Students will present their own material, as well as act in the plays of others.

Essential Questions

1. Why do we need to “act out” our important human stories?
2. Why is an audience necessary to the telling of our stories?
3. What is the power of the spoken word (as opposed to the written word) in dramatizing the human story?

Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, students will:

- Learn the craft of dramatic writing
- Participate in improvisational games and activities
- Write and/or adapt original monologues, scenes and plays
- Work collaboratively and cooperatively to create and produce performances of the class writing
- Create a portfolio of their work
- Assemble a thematically base and unified presentation of a variety of scenes and genres.

Instructional strategies

The classroom for this course will maintain an emotionally and physically safe atmosphere for everyone at all times. The nature of our work is a definite process, and students will progress at different rates. All students have unique talents. These talents will be recognized and nurtured for each individual during our work at Northwestern. By “making the *other actor* look good” onstage, we make everyone's work shine.

Students who are new to the nature of writing for performance (and to the company work that supports the writing) may hesitate to commit fully to the process at first. These students are given a flexible timetable to master the collaborative techniques. Students who are more experienced will refine what they know as well as acquire new techniques. Specific roles and strategies which play to a student's strength and "comfort zone" will be recognized and encouraged early on. As confidence is gained, students will transition into the full range of games and exercises comfortably. No student will be forced to do exercises which make them feel consistently uncomfortable for whatever reason.

Students will form into pairs and groups in a regular basis after the initial "whole company" work. Groups will be formed with an eye to a variety of experiences and qualities brought to the group by each individual. The best "working partnerships" will be encouraged.

Students who may be overly strong in some of our work will be side-coached and directed by the instructor to explore underdeveloped talents they have. If a student is dominating an exercise or a scene, the instructor will direct them away from their dominating trait and towards a performance that challenges them in new ways.

Resources and Materials

- Selections from Greek, Elizabethan and Modern Plays (Packet Handouts)
- Selected writing prompt handouts each Monday.
- Students will be expected to bring a 4 section spiral notebook and writing instruments (pens, pencils) to every class.

Evaluation Process

Pre-Assessment:

Students will be pre-assessed on the first day of classes. We will talk about students' experiences with the theater. What live theater have they seen? What do they remember about it? Have they written or performed in a play? Can they act out a version of a favorite character for the class? We will work through a series of improvisational games, where students can display their skills in and comfort with spontaneous performance. Important games for pre-assessment are "One Word Story", Yes, and..." and "One Minute Biography".

Documentation of Learning:

Participation in daily activities

- Working together is of paramount importance
- Full participation in daily warm ups and theater games is expected
- Performing major and minor roles is expected
- Students must work on observing, listening, recording and synthesizing information.
- Writing times, in and out of class, must be fully utilized
- "We are born with our talent, whatever it may be; however, our commitment to *explore* that talent is how we can be judged."

Completion of Homework

- Assigned reading and writing must be completed thoroughly and on time
- Brief reading and review quizzes will be given
- Drama logs/reflections/explorations will be completed daily
- Scenes, monologues and plays will be completed in a formatted final draft
- Design projects/ Settings will be completed

- Students will perform one individual, duet and group performance of a text they have created
- A full-company writing/performance collaboration with a central image will be performed.
- Journals will be handed in every Friday.

Post-Learning Assessment: Expo day participation

Course Schedule June 27 – July 16

Date(s) Week 3	Topic(s)	Activities	Assignments and/or Assessment	Instructional Strategies
July 12	Creating a Play!	<p>Monday Morning Warm-ups Journal / reflection/ sharing Brainstorming Writing scenes for Mystery Comedy</p> <p>Afternoon Staging and Setting your work</p>	Homework: write down films and books (and specific scenes from them) that <i>you</i> find really funny.	Guided writing and sharing
July 13	Creating a Play!	<p>Tuesday Morning Warm-ups Refresh Improv skills for specific scripts Select, write and rehearse scripts/monologues for Mystery Comedy</p> <p>Afternoon Film: <i>Casablanca</i> Revision and design work Rehearsal as needed</p>	Homework Prepare portfolio materials for publication	
July 14	Creating a Play!	<p>Wednesday Morning Warm-ups Choral reading and “found poem” exercise</p> <p>Afternoon Continue rehearsal of Mystery Comedy</p>	Homework Finish/revi se/rehearse/comple te portfolios	Group collaboration, rehearsal, presentation
July 15	Creating a Play!	<p>Thursday Morning Finish musicals’ performances</p> <p>Prepare portfolios Finish set designs</p>	Homework Get comfortable with/prepare for Friday’s work.	Workshop

		<p>Afternoon Design and stage Expo presentation Finish portfolios and designs</p> <p>Hand in journals!</p>		
July 16	Creating a Play!	<p>Friday Morning Reflective writing/discussion/self-assessment Theater games Final preparations to leave</p> <p>Afternoon Expo</p>	Be sure to bring your portfolio and all your materials home with you!	Workshop/performance

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