

Raritan Valley Community College
Academic Course Outline

INTRODUCTION TO PLAYWRITING

I. Basic Course Information

- A. Course Number and Title: THEA-207 INTRODUCTION TO PLAYWRITING
- B. Date of Proposal or Revision: January 2006
- C. Sponsoring Department: VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS
- D. Semester Credit Hours: 3
- E. Weekly Contact Hours: Lecture: 3
Laboratory
- F. Prerequisites: Introduction to Theatre (THEA 103) or permission from the instructor
- G. Laboratory Fees: NONE

II. Catalog Description

Prerequisite: THEA103 Introduction to Theatre or permission from the instructor
This course focuses on the process of writing a one-act play, from the conception of a dramatic idea to the completion of a final draft. Exercises in dialogue, character development, conflict and structure will be an essential part of the course. Class meetings will focus on the reading and discussion of student work as well as selected published plays.

III. Statement of Course Need

Introductory playwriting courses are offered as electives in most four year theatre programs. The course offers students majoring in theatre a chance to study a discipline that is not as collaborative as the other aspects of theatre (acting, directing). By studying playwriting from the perspective of the playwright the student will develop a deeper appreciation for the craft. This course is a program elective for the A.A. degree in Liberal Arts (Theatre option) and the A.F.A. degree in Theatre.

IV. Place of Course in College Curriculum

- Free Elective
- Course fulfills degree program elective for the A.A. degree Liberal Arts (Theatre option), A.F.A. degree in Theatre.

- Elective: Satisfies visual and performing arts elective in the A.A. Liberal Arts degree.
- Course transferability: According to the njtransfer.org website this course will transfer to most four year universities as a Theatre elective.

V. Outline of Course Content

- An introduction to the one – act and ten minute play.
 - Students will read and discuss some of the shorter selected works from playwrights such as: Sam Shepard, David Mamet, John Patrick Shanley and Beth Henley.
- Creating credible and intriguing characters
 - Students will participate in exercises to help develop the imaginative skills needed to create unique, original, and credible characters. The exercises will be supplemented by readings of published plays illustrating effective characters.
- Dialogue and physical action
 - Students will participate in exercises creating dialogue from both real life and imagined situations. The importance and danger of exposition in dialogue will also be discussed. The exercises will be supplemented by readings of published plays illustrating successful dialogue.
- Plot and conflict
 - Students will participate in exercises that help develop the use of conflict in a play, both external and internal. The importance of plot will be examined by reading plays from selected published plays.
- Economy
 - Students will understand the need for “economy” in their playwriting. Excessive storylines and unnecessary characters can ruin the progression and immediacy of a play. Published plays will be studied to support this theory.
- Student Writing

VI. Education Goals and Learning Outcomes

Education Goals

Students will:

- Discuss the dramatic works of several playwrights, both contemporary and classical (G.E. 1).
- Work in groups discussing character, plot, conflict, and dialogue in both student and published plays. (G.E.2)
- Present a finished product at the conclusion of the semester that will be performed and critiqued by members of the class. (G.E.2)

Learning Outcomes

The student will be to:

- Recognize the difference between expository and active dialogue.
- Classify the genre of the student written work.
- Identify the area or areas of student written work that need attention and improvement (conflict, character, dialogue, plot, exposition).
- Demonstrate the ability to visualize the written play as a performance.
- Critique student and published work in the areas of character, plot, conflict, and dialogue.
- Create a draft of a one-act play.

VII. Modes of Teaching

- Lecture/Discussion
- Small-group work
- Reading and written assignments
- Participation in discussions

VIII. Papers, Examinations, and other Assessment Instruments

- Written work
- Written critique of live performance
- Participation in critiques and discussions

IX. Grade Determinants

- The grade determinants, including attendance, participation, written examinations, weekly assignments, and presentations will be used to assess the students learning outcomes and general education goals listed above.

X. Texts and Materials

- **Suggested text:** *Playwriting in Process*. Michael Wright. ISBN: 0435070347

XI. Resources

- Library of video and DVD performances