

Using Information Effectively: Script Analysis and Interpretation

THEA 125.001

Time: T/TH 11:00 – 12:15

And

THEA 125.002

Time: T/TH 12:30 – 1:45

Location: Room 3039

Professor: Dr. David White (dmwhite@towson.edu)

Office: Room 3028

Office Phone: 410-704-3141

Office Hours: Wed. 12:00 – 3:00 or by appointment

**Course Description:**

Interpretation and analysis of playscripts as the basis for public performance, from the viewpoints of audience members and practitioners. Introduction to research methods for contemporary performance, including reviews, critical interpretation, and research for production.

**Course Objectives**

1. To introduce students to the dramatic script as the primary source of information for theatrical performance.
2. To help students develop techniques for analyzing and evaluating a variety of scripts in terms of their theatrical requirements and their aesthetic qualities.
3. To explore the role of secondary research as a tool for the analysis and interpretation of scripts.
4. To introduce students to the interdisciplinary nature of the production process, which includes research, analysis, and interpretation.
5. To introduce students to contemporary information resources and to the principles of evaluating and using that information effectively.
6. To introduce the student to methods of critical research, and to help develop the abilities to write and speak clearly about dramatic literature, the requirements of production, and the experience of performance.
7. To introduce students to the process of sharing their research and analysis in collaboration with others.

**Format:** Lecture and discussion.

**Required Texts:** (Unless indicated otherwise, texts are available in bookstore)

David Ball. *Backwards and Forwards*. ISBN: 0809311100

Samuel Beckett, *Waiting for Godot*, ISBN: 0802130348

Davis, Rick and Christopher Thaiss. *Writing About Theatre*. ISBN: 0205280005

Diana Hacker. *A Writer's Reference*.

K. Frithjof Peterson, *Gun Metal Blue Bar* (electronic; distributed by professor)

William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ISBN: 074347712X

Sophocles, *Oedipus the King*, ISBN: 0882950940

Sophie Treadwell, *Machinal*, ISBN: 9781854592118

Paula Vogel, *How I Learned to Drive*, ISBN: 9780822216230

Oscar Wilde, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, ISBN: 158049580X

August Wilson, *Gem of the Ocean*, ISBN: 9780452276925

**Required attendance at 3 performances:**

***How I Learned to Drive* by Paula Vogel**

Center for the Arts Ruth Marder Studio Theatre

Student Studio Project

Wednesday, October 9, 7:30 p.m.

Thursday, October 10, 7:30 p.m.

Friday, October 11, 7:30 p.m.

Saturday, October 12, 7:30 p.m.

Tickets: \$5

All performances benefit Towson University Foundation

***Twelfth Night* by William Shakespeare**

Center for the Arts Mainstage Theatre

Mainstage Production

Thursday, October 24, 7:30 p.m. Benefits Towson University Foundation

Friday, October 25, 8 p.m.

Saturday, October 26, 8 p.m.

Sunday, October 27, 2 p.m.

Thursday, October 31, 7:30 p.m.

Friday, November 1, 8 p.m.

Saturday, November 2, 8 p.m.

Tickets: \$20 adults, \$10 seniors/students

***Machinal* by Sophie Treadwell**

Center for the Arts Studio Theatre

Mainstage Production

Thursday, November 14, 7:30 p.m. Benefits Towson University Foundation

Friday, November 15, 8 p.m.

Saturday, November 16, 8 p.m.

Sunday, November 17, 2 p.m.

Wednesday, November 20, 7:30 p.m.

Thursday, November 21, 7:30 p.m.

Friday, November 22, 8:00 p.m.

Saturday, November 23, 8 p.m.

Tickets: \$20 adults; \$10 seniors/students

**Course Requirements and Grading\*:**

Class participation 10%

Quiz/homework assignments: 10%

Play attendance and responses: 10%

Research & writing assignments: Image Project, Treasure Hunt, Article Analysis,

Paper Proposal 20% (5% each)

Mid-term: 15%

Paper: 10%

Presentation: 10%

Final exam: 15%

\*Requirements for individual projects are below.

**Notes:**

1. All written work must meet the standards of basic expository writing and must follow the style outlined in the MLA Handbook. Grammar, clarity, style, and documentation count and will affect your grade.
2. **Attendance:** The Towson University policy regarding excused absences is outlined in the Towson University Catalog. Due to the nature of the course material, regular attendance is mandatory. Students are allowed two excused absences, provided that the instructor is notified ahead of time and that the dates are not in conflict with a deadline. Students will lose 1 letter grade from the total grade for each absence after the second absence. Validation of excused absence by an outside source is required.
  - Any materials due on the date of absence will be handed in at the next class
  - Any absence of which the student fails to notify the instructor will be considered unexcused.
  - Being late three times will result in an unexcused absence. More than 15 minutes late is considered absent.
3. Class begins promptly. In order to fully participate in the class session and receive credit for attending, students must arrive in class by the time that attendance is called. If lateness is unavoidable, the student is welcome to join the class, but is expected not to disrupt the session already in progress. Students should also arrive promptly for exams. Extended time will not be granted to students who arrive late to exams.
4. Assignments must be completed on time. After the deadline, a grade of zero will be entered for work not received.
5. Unless specified otherwise, all written assignments must be submitted on paper. Unless requested, work sent via email will not be accepted.
6. Students may not repeat a course more than once without prior permission from the Academic Standards Committee.
7. Food and drink are not permitted in the classroom.
8. The learning environment in this class is based upon an atmosphere of mutual respect, which will be maintained at all times. Students are expected to adhere to the code of student conduct as outlined in the university catalog.

**Academic Integrity Policy:** This professor follows Towson University's Code of Conduct, which includes policy on Academic Dishonesty, Plagiarism, Fabrication and

Falsification outlined in the Undergraduate Catalog in Appendix F and Student Academic Integrity Policy. Any assignment that is plagiarized, fabricated, or completed under dishonest circumstances will be given 0 points. If the situation occurs a second time, the student will receive a grade of "F" for the course and be referred to appropriate disciplinary channels. Plagiarism includes copying the text of others and using information without proper citation of the source. Fabrication or falsification includes making unauthorized alterations to information, or inventing any information or citation in an academic exercise including reporting false information about your experiences.

Please see <http://cooklibrary.towson.edu/avoidingPlagiarism.cfm>

**Medical Emergencies & Incompletes:** Grades of incomplete will only be permitted for students with verified medical or family emergencies. If permission is granted, it is the student's responsibility to contact the instructor within one week of returning to campus to develop a timeline for completing incomplete work. Students who require an extended absence need to contact the instructor by email to develop a plan for completing work.

**Students with Disabilities:** This course is in compliance with the Towson University policies for students with disabilities. Students with disabilities are encouraged to register with Disability Support Services (DSS) York Road, Suite 232, 410-704-2638 (Voice or TTY). Students who suspect that they have a disability but do not have documentation are encouraged to contact DSS for advice on how to obtain appropriate evaluation. A memo from DSS authorizing your accommodation is needed before any accommodation can be made.

**MultiTasking:** Students' use of electronic devices in class, including, but not limited to, texting, e-mailing, Internet surfing, Facebook, YouTube, iPod, etc., is disruptive to fellow students, disrespectful to the professor, and detrimental to the students' own academic performance. Recent research findings indicate that college students who multitask during class perform at the same level as those who *never* came to the class. Among those who come to class, the students who multitask perform *significantly* worse than do those who don't multitask. For these reasons, the Department of Theatre Arts fully support faculty if they implement a course policy regarding the use of electronic devices in class, whether it be deducting points from the student's course grade, asking the student to leave the classroom with a recorded absence, banning the use of any electronic devices during class, and/or reprimanding the student in other ways as specified in the course syllabus.

Multitasking Notes:

- 1) Texting and cell phone use are not permitted in class. Since the University uses Text to notify faculty and students in case of emergency, checking texts is permitted, but opening non-emergency notification texts in class is not permitted.
- 2) Laptop computers are only to be used in class when instructed. You should not plan to utilize your laptop as a means of taking notes in class or participating in writing exercises.
- 3) Cell phones ringing in class constitutes a disturbance of the learning environment, especially in a class where students will regularly be presenting work aloud. Cell phones ringing or vibrating loudly in a bag will remove 5 points from the student's final grade.

### Assignment Notes:

Class participation – being involved in class discussions, reading scripts in class, maintaining focus and respect toward the class and colleagues, etc.

Quizzes/homework assignments – short assignments that will be given throughout the semester and are worth one point a piece.

- Quizzes may cover information in the plays or information about the playwright/context about the significance of the play.
- Quizzes will involve both individual and group work.
- 8 of these quizzes are indicated on the syllabus. 2 quizzes will be given at the professor's discretion.
- Quizzes may not be made up if missed due to absence.

Treasure Hunt – Using clues to locate specific materials in the Library and online databases (handout) using only Library (or assigned) databases

Article Analysis – An analysis of an assigned article (handout).

Image Assignment – Collaborating with a team to design a poster for *Waiting for Godot*.

Midterm – exam over all material covered in the first half of the semester.

Paper proposal – A brief proposal outlining your selected topic (handout).

Paper – A five or six page paper on a selected topic approved by the professor. This paper must utilize 5 outside sources accessed via the Library databases. Outside sources do NOT include any text assigned for this course.

Presentation – A collaborative presentation presenting a theoretical production design of one of the plays discussed in class.

Final Exam – Exam covering all material covered in the second half of the semester

Play responses – Brief 2 page responses addressing how particular elements of the show communicated concepts discussed in class. Staple your ticket stub to your response or receive a zero on the assignment.

Note: Unless specified all assignments must be in MLA format

Please consult me if you have questions about any of these requirements.

### Grading Scale:

A 92 points or higher

A- 90 - 91 points

B+ 87 - 89 points

B 82 - 86 points

B- 80 - 81 points

C+ 77 - 79 points

C 70 - 76 points [lowest grade to pass course in student's major]

D+ 67 - 69 points

D 62 - 66 points [lowest grade to pass a course outside student's major]

F 61 points or lower

## Schedule of Classes and Assignments (schedule is subject to change):

Plays and texts must be read before the class period in which they will be discussed.

August 29	Introduction to course Introduction to MLA: Headings Assignment: Read <i>Backwards and Forwards</i>
September 3	Dramaturgy exercise (take home quiz due) Discuss: <b><i>Backwards and Forwards</i></b>
September 5	In Class Analysis Read and Discuss <i>Gun Metal Blue Bar</i>
September 10	<i>Hamlet: Act I</i> (quiz)
September 12	<i>Hamlet: Acts II and III</i>
September 17	<i>Hamlet : Acts IV and V</i>
September 19	<i>Oedipus the King</i> (quiz)
September 24	<i>Oedipus the King</i> Research to support your writing and ideas.
September 26	Library session #1 with Lisa Woznicki Meet in Cook Library Room 526 (at rear of 5 <sup>th</sup> floor of library) Treasure Hunt assigned
October 1	<i>The Importance of Being Earnest</i> (quiz) <b>Treasure Hunt due</b>
October 3	<i>The Importance of Being Earnest</i>
October 8	<i>How I Learned to Drive</i> (quiz)
October 10	<i>How I Learned to Drive</i>
October 15	<i>How I Learned to Drive</i> Production discussion Brief Review for Midterm
October 17	Mid-term
October 22	<i>Waiting for Godot</i>
October 24	Library session #2 Meet in Cook Library Room 317 Article analysis assigned
October 29	<i>Waiting for Godot</i> (quiz) <b>Article Analysis due</b>
October 31	<i>Waiting for Godot</i> Image Assignment Presentations <b>Image Assignment Due</b> MLA Writing Techniques/Writing research papers Read Chapter Five: <i>Writing About Theatre</i>

November 5	Discussion of <i>Twelfth Night</i> <b><i>Twelfth Night</i> Response Due</b>
November 7	Writing About Theatre: Writing your Paper <i>Gem of the Ocean</i> (Quiz)
November 12	<i>Gem of the Ocean</i>
November 14	<i>Machinal</i> (Quiz) <b>Paper Proposal Due</b>
November 19	<i>Machinal</i>
November 21	<i>Machinal</i> (Class discussion) <b><i>Machinal</i> Response Due – Make sure to reserve your tickets for an evening prior to the 21<sup>st</sup>, this show will sell out.</b> Discuss Presentations
November 26	The Role of the Dramaturg Brief In Class Workday on Presentations <b>Paper Due</b>
November 28	THANKGIVING
December 3	Presentations <b>PRODUCTION ASSIGNMENT DUE</b>
December 5	Presentations
December 10	Finish Presentations Wrap-up Brief Review for Final
<b>Final exam:</b>	<b>Section 1 (11:00 – 12:15):</b> December 18 – 10:15 – 12:15 <b>Section 2 (12:30 – 1:45):</b> December 12 – 12:30 – 2:30