JACK HEIFNER
Office: GFA 215
Office hours: by appointment
Telephone: 468-1343
Email: jheifner@sfasu.edu

INTRODUCTION TO PLAYWRITING
Spring Semester, 2018
MWF 11:00-11:50

Required text: Eric Lane, Ed. TELLING TALES - NEW ONE-ACT PLAYS

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This is an introductory workshop in writing for the stage. The course consists of a series of practical, short writing exercises in characterization, dialogue, plot, etc, culminating in two one-act plays.

GENERAL OUTLINE OF THE COURSE:

This is a beginning workshop concentrating on the fundamentals of writing for the theatre. The student who successfully completes this course will be able to construct and write a one-act dramatic play.

The course will consist of work in three major areas:

The first will involve a series of writing exercises designed to give the student experience in the most important elements of playwriting (dialogue, plot, characterizations, etc.). These exercises will be done both in and out of the classroom, and the results of many of these will be shared with the class. Discussion is encouraged. At least one writing exercise will be done during most class periods. (70% of the total class time for exercises.)

The second area will include class discussion and written assignments concentrating on selected one-act plays from TELLING TALES. The primary goal is to expose the student to a variety of one-act works of different styles and lengths. The student will be asked to write a short analysis of each assigned play before it is discussed in class. Not all plays in the text will be assigned, but approximately half will be covered. The student will be reading, on an average, one play a week. (10% of the total class time for play discussion.)

The third and most important part of the course is the actual writing of two one-act plays. During the semester, students will also be asked to write scenes and a short mid-semester one-act before they actually write their final one-act project. For some students, the result of some of the class exercises may actually become their final project. The short mid-semester play may also be expanded into the final project.

The goal of this class is to get the student “writing” and for that student to understand the fundamentals of how to write a play. At the end of the semester, the student will have at least two completed works. (20% of the total class time for original one-acts.)
The mid-semester project will be a short one-act play (of no less than two and no more than eight typed pages). The final project will be the writing of a dramatic work in one-act (of no less than eight and no more than twelve typed pages). The reading order of the mid-semester and final plays will be determined by a lottery. The first people to read at mid-semester will be the last to read for the final. In other words, the reading order is reversed after the mid-semester plays are read.

There are no written exams in this course. Writing exercises and all written reports on plays should be handed in to the instructor on the date assigned. The final one-act play will serve a final exam and must be completed on the date assigned, which may be at least three weeks before the end of the semester. (The reading time is determined by the size of the class.) This will allow for all of the final plays to be read aloud for the class and the playwright to hear.

**Grading will be based on the following:**

- Classroom participation and attendance: 10%
- Writing Exercises & Play Reports: 40%
- Mid-semester one-act: 20%
- Final One-Act: 30%

**All class assignments must be typed.** The mid-semester and final one-acts must be typed in the form used for professional manuscripts. (This form will be covered in class.) **Hard copies of homework and reports must be given to the instructor. Nothing submitted via email will be accepted.**

Students are advised not to fall behind on exercises and reading assignments. Projects are due on the date assigned. Late assignments will result in a lower grade. Tardiness will result in a lower grade.

**All work (plays and play reports) must be original. Plagiarism or the use of any material that is not written by the enrolled student in the course will result in a failing grade in the entire course and disciplinary action.**

**PLEASE TAKE NOTE THAT ATTENDANCE IS CRUCIAL TO THIS COURSE AND EXCESSIVE ABSENCES WILL RESULT IN A LOWERING OF YOUR GRADE.** A total of 10 excused and unexcused absences on a MWF class will result in the student receiving a failing grade. In addition, excessive unexcused absences (over two) will result in a lowering of your final grade. (See The Department Attendance Policy.)

This class engages material covering a diverse range of race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, sex, age, marital status, familial status, sexual orientation, and disability. While I encourage you to formulate and express your thoughts and opinions throughout
the semester, discriminatory remarks will not be tolerated and may constitute disruptive behavior under the student code of conduct.

**Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) supported in this course:**
1. The student will be able to form and articulate a critical analysis and evaluation of a work of theatre.
2. The student will demonstrate an understanding of the component areas of theatrical creation, process, production, performance, and study, and their interrelationships.
3. The student will demonstrate intermediate to advanced competence in one or more theatre specialization(s).

**Student Learning Outcomes for this course (with supported PLOs):**

Students will be able to:
1. analyze the structure of a play (1),
2. write a play in standard format (1, 2, 3), and
3. understand the process of creating a work for the theatre (1, 3).

**Academic Integrity (A-9.1)**

Academic integrity is a responsibility of all university faculty and students. Faculty members promote academic integrity in multiple ways including instruction on the components of academic honesty, as well as abiding by university policy on penalties for cheating and plagiarism.

**Definition of Academic Dishonesty**

Academic dishonesty includes both cheating and plagiarism. Cheating includes but is not limited to (1) using or attempting to use unauthorized materials to aid in achieving a better grade on a component of a class; (2) the falsification or invention of any information, including citations, on an assigned exercise; and/or (3) helping or attempting to help another in an act of cheating or plagiarism. Plagiarism is presenting the words or ideas of another person as if they were your own. Examples of plagiarism are (1) submitting an assignment as if it were one's own work when, in fact, it is at least partly the work of another; (2) submitting a work that has been purchased or otherwise obtained from an Internet source or another source; and (3) incorporating the words or ideas of an author into one's paper without giving the author due credit.

Please read the complete policy at [http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/academic_integrity.asp](http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/academic_integrity.asp)

**Withheld Grades Semester Grades Policy (A-54)**

Ordinarily, at the discretion of the instructor of record and with the approval of the academic chair/director, a grade of WH will be assigned only if the student cannot complete the course work because of unavoidable circumstances. Students must complete the work within one calendar year from the end of the semester in which they receive a
WH, or the grade automatically becomes an F. If students register for the same course in future terms the WH will automatically become an F and will be counted as a repeated course for the purpose of computing the grade point average.

**Students with Disabilities**

To obtain disability related accommodations, alternate formats and/or auxiliary aids, students with disabilities must contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), Human Services Building, and Room 325, 468-3004 / 468-1004 (TDD) as early as possible in the semester. Once verified, ODS will notify the course instructor and outline the accommodation and/or auxiliary aids to be provided. Failure to request services in a timely manner may delay your accommodations. For additional information, go to [http://www.sfasu.edu/disabilityservices/](http://www.sfasu.edu/disabilityservices/).

Students with documented disabilities who need course adaptations or accommodations please make an appointment with me as soon as possible.
INTRODUCTION TO PLAYWRITING - 2018

You are required to read the following 10 plays from the TELLING TALES text. Read the plays in the following order and write a report. You will be given the dates when the reports are due.

The Actor’s Nightmare
Vivien
The Author’s Voice
Sure Thing
Fun
Andre’s Mother
I Can’t Remember Anything
Slaughter in the Lake
I’m Not Stupid
Women and Wallace

YOU ARE ENCOURAGED TO ATTEND THE STUDIO HOUR PRODUCTIONS IN THE UPSTAGE THEATRE ON SOME WEDNESDAYS. (You may write a report on those shows for extra credit—use the questions below for that purpose.) See the attached schedule.

AFTER READING OR SEEING EACH PLAY, ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS: Each report should be no longer than one or two typed pages. Be brief and to the point. Hand this in to the instructor on the date assigned for the plays you are reading or the first class period following the Upstage Performance for the plays that you are viewing. You may write this in paragraphs if you wish.

1) What is the play about? What is the theme?

2) What does the main character (or characters) want?

3) What is the main conflict? What major obstacle (or obstacles) must be overcome?

4) What is your reaction to the play? What are your favorite lines or passages, if any?

5) Does the play work? Is it successful? If necessary, how would you improve it?