Theatre 162.2: Play Analysis & Dramatic Literature

MWF 9:00-9:50, GFA 302

Rick Jones

Catalog description: Dramatic structure and literature for the theatre practitioner.

Course overview:
This course is intended as a basic introduction to dramatic structure. We will read a number of plays from a variety of periods, cultures, and genres, with a few basic questions in mind: What makes a play a play? How does a play work as theatre? How can we anticipate theatrical representation simply by reading a dramatic text? What are the common characteristics of all plays?

Contacting me:
Office: 217 Fine Arts, ext. 1290; department office, ext. 4003. I will hold regular office hours TR 9:30-11:30 and F 3-4. Other times are available by appointment.

E-mail: My e-mail address is rjones@sfasu.edu. This is my preferred means of contact. I check e-mail at least three times a day. I do receive literally dozens of e-mail messages each day: please include the prefix “162” (e.g., “162: problems with paper”) in the subject line of all messages so I’ll recognize you immediately as a student in this class. I would also add that I may use D2L to send messages to the entire class from time to time. You can configure this platform to forward e-mail to another account (gmail, hotmail, etc.) if you wish. By university policy, students will be responsible for any information included in e-mails sent through these means. Please do not use D2L to send me messages which may require a response; use my regular e-mail account.

Required texts:


There is some possibility that short readings will be added as the course progresses. These will be either handouts or reserve readings.

Program Learning Outcomes:
This course applies at an introductory level to the following Program Learning Outcomes as identified by the School of Theatre:

- A. The student will be able to analyze a script in ways that are necessary to a theatre practitioner or scholar/critic. (All degree plans.)
• B. The student will demonstrate an understanding of theatre history and a variety of theatrical styles. (All degree plans.)
• C. The student will be able to form and articulate a critical analysis and evaluation of a work of theatre. (BA, BA with Teacher Certification.)
• D. The student will demonstrate an understanding of the component areas of theatrical creation, process, production, performance, and study, and their interrelationships. (All degree plans.)
• E. The student will demonstrate intermediate to advanced competence in one or more theatrical specialization(s). (BA)

Student Learning Outcomes:
Students who successfully complete this course will be able to:
• articulate and describe the defining attributes of various theatrical genres as they were practiced in different historical eras. (PLOs A, B)
• critically analyze, evaluate and describe a dramatic work and its underlying structural elements. (PLOs A, C)
• read and analyze a play with an understanding of its various technical requirements (i.e., setting, costumes, lighting, acting style, etc.). (PLOs A, D, E)
• demonstrate a richer basic knowledge of dramatic literature and be able to place a theatrical work in its historical context. (PLOs A, B)
• Analyze both a dramatic text and a performance text and note the correspondences between them. (PLOs A, C, D)

Class schedule:
Class meets on MWF from 9:00-9:50 a.m. Attendance and promptness are expected.
N.B. A note on reading assignments. Listed below are the dates when a given text is due, not when it is assigned. Please read the entire section: that is, not just the play itself, but the supporting material as well.

M  8/26  NO CLASS: Theatre Auditions.
W  8/28  Course overview.
R  8/29  Last day to change classes except to drop; last day to register.
F  8/30  Theatre, drama, story-telling, etc.
M  9/2   Introduction to dramatic structure.
     Read Aristotle’s Poetics. Pay particular attention to sections VI-XI, XIII, XV, XIX, XXVI. You may use any translation, but there’s a good version for free at:
     http://www.gutenberg.org/files/1974/1974-h/1974-h.htm#link2H_4_0006
Beginning to apply structural analysis and close reading.
Read *Hamlet*.

More on *Hamlet*.
Read *B&F*, chapters 1-7.

More on *Hamlet*.
Read *B&F*, chapters 8-12.

*Hamlet* wrap-up.

Quiz #1.
Introduction to realism and its variations.

Read *Death of a Salesman*.
Group #1 presents.

Discuss *Death of a Salesman*.

Read *Fences*.
Group #2 presents.

Discuss *Fences*.

Read *Miss Julie*.
Group #3 presents.

Discuss *Miss Julie*.

Read *Trifles*.

*The Wolves* production discussion. 
**Production response paper due.**

Quiz #2.
Comedy and tragedy

Read *The Importance of Being Earnest*.
Group #4 presents.

Discuss *The Importance of Being Earnest*.

Read *Oedipus the King*.
Group #5 presents.

Discuss *Oedipus the King*.

Discuss *Oedipus the King*. 
W  10/23  Quiz #3.
   Introduction to non-realistm.
   Last day to withdraw without WP or WF.

F  10/25  Read *Machinal*.
   Group #6 presents

M  10/28  Discuss *Machinal*.

W  10/30  Read *The Good Woman of Setzuan*.
   Group #7 presents.

F  11/1   Discuss *Good Woman*.

M  11/4   Discuss *Good Woman*.

W  11/6   Quiz #4.
   Introduction to African and Asian theatre.

F  11/8   No class. Rick out of town.

M  11/11  No class. Rick out of town.

W  11/13  *Titus Andronicus* production discussion.
   Production response paper due.

F  11/15  Read *Kanjinchō*. (Handout or on D2L)

M  11/18  Read “*Master Harold*”... and the boys.
   Group #8 presents.

W  11/20  Discuss “*Master Harold*”... and the boys.

F  11/22  Discuss “*Master Harold*”... and the boys.
   Critical paper due.

Thanksgiving break.

M  12/2   Read *Death and the King’s Horseman*.

W  12/4   Discuss *Death and the King’s Horseman*.

F  12/6   Wrap-up and review for final exam.

M  12/9   8:00-10:00 a.m.  Final examination.

Grading considerations:

**Quizzes:**
There will be four quizzes during the semester. They will be short, lasting approximately 20 minutes each. Quizzes will cover both terminology employed in the class and individual plays. The lowest quiz grade will be dropped; the
remaining three will count 5% each, 15% total. (N.B. whereas the lowest score is dropped, doing well on all four quizzes is a good way to get the benefit of the doubt if your grade is otherwise a toss-up.)

Production commentaries:
Students are required to see the Mainstage productions of The Wolves and Titus Andronicus. A two-page commentary on the production is due at the class period immediately after each production closes. This is not a performance review, but rather a commentary on the means by which structural and critical analyses are revealed in theatrical production. Specific essay prompts will be distributed prior to each production. 5% each, 10% total.

Group presentation:
Students will be assigned to groups at random (you may swap dates, but only with my advance permission, and only at least two weeks prior to the earlier of the presentations). Each group will be responsible for initiating and facilitating the first day’s discussion of one of the plays. (They are welcome to lead the discussion for subsequent days, as well, but need not do so.) I will provide an outline of suggested (not required) topics to cover. Each student will receive two grades for this project: one group grade and one individual grade. 5% each, 10% total.

Critical Paper:
Each student will submit a paper of approximately 1500 words (five pages) at or before class time on Friday, November 22. Extensions may be granted if requested in writing at least 24 hours before the paper is due, but will not extend until after December 6 except in the most extraordinary of circumstances. Extensions must be requested by e-mail, and have not been approved until you receive e-mail confirmation. Late papers will be accepted, but with a substantial grade penalty. Papers will employ the terms and concepts of the class to discuss any one play from the anthology other than those assigned for the class. Details will be forthcoming. 20% of total grade.

Final exam:
The final exam will be at 8:00 a.m. on Monday, Dec. 9. (I assure you that I’m as thrilled about the time as you are, and no, you may not take the exam early or late.) Students will be responsible for all terms and concepts discussed in the course, for all plays assigned, and for the productions of The Wolves and Titus Andronicus, plus all Downstage productions: Dancing at Lughnasa, These Shining Lives, and Pullman, WA. Whereas the exam will be comprehensive, it will be weighted slightly towards material covered after the last quiz. 20% of total grade.
Intangibles:
Class participation, attendance, effort, improvement, etc. “Regular and punctual attendance” is required by university policy. Important: See the School of Theatre policy below. 25% of final grade.

Note:
The above percentages assume passing grades on the paper and the final exam, a “D” average or better on the quizzes, and no more than three unexcused absences. I reserve the right to lower the grade of any student who fails to meet all of these criteria.

School of Theatre Attendance Policy:
It is University policy to excuse students from class attendance for certain reasons related to health, family emergencies, student participation in certain University-sponsored events, theatre tours or working the Performing Arts Series, and other situations of similar importance.

Excused absences from theatre classes will be granted only upon presentation of written documentation upon the first day of the student’s return from the teacher, sponsor, or physician involved. In the case of absences caused by University-sponsored events, inclusion in the University’s public listing of such absences will constitute an official excuse. It is the student’s responsibility to inform the instructor that he/she has scheduled the planned official absence.

A total of . . . 10 excused and unexcused absences in Monday/Wednesday/Friday classes will [automatically] result in the student receiving a failing grade. Excessive unexcused and excused absences will affect your grade.

The student will be allowed a maximum of . . . three unexcused absences in Monday/Wednesday/Friday classes. In the case of missed classes, the student will be held responsible for the successful completion of assigned work and/or projects.

Miscellaneous but important notes:
Expectations:
This is university course, taken mostly by prospective majors. It involves a good deal of reading. Expect to spend two to three hours of work outside class for every hour in class. Part of the expectation of this course is that your writing level be appropriate to a university-level course in the humanities. If you are not confident of your writing ability, make arrangements now to take advantage of the university’s various
writing assistance programs. Start with the Academic Assistance and Resource Center (AARC) on the first floor of Steen Library.

Academic honesty:

SFA policy:
Definition of Academic Dishonesty:
Academic dishonesty includes both cheating and plagiarism. Cheating includes, but is not limited to:
- Using or attempting to use unauthorized materials on any class assignment or exam;
- Falsifying or inventing of any information, including citations, on an assignment;
- Helping or attempting to help other student(s) in an act of cheating or plagiarism. Plagiarism is presenting the words or ideas of another person as if they were one’s own. Examples of plagiarism include, but are not limited to:
  - submitting an assignment as one’s own work when it is at least partly the work of another person;
  - submitting a work that has been purchased or otherwise obtained from the Internet or another source;
  - incorporating the words or ideas of an author into one’s paper or presentation without giving the author credit.

Penalties for Academic Dishonesty:
Penalties may include, but are not limited to, reprimand, no credit for the assignment or exam, resubmission of the work, make-up exam, failure of the course, or expulsion from the university.


School of Theatre policy:
The School of Theatre expects students to maintain the highest standards of academic conduct. Misrepresenting someone else’s work as your own or knowingly allowing someone else to represent your work as his/hers constitutes academic dishonesty. Such behavior is antithetical to our work as scholars, as artists, and as members of a community founded on trust and mutual respect. It is an insult to faculty and an affront to honest students. Penalties for academic dishonesty may range from failure of a specific project to failure of the course, suspension from the production season for up to one year, and referral to university authorities for further action, which may include suspension or expulsion from the university.
My policy:
I am going to trust you not to cheat. That means I won’t be hovering over your shoulder during tests, etc., but it doesn’t mean I won’t be vigilant. It also means that if you do get caught cheating or plagiarizing, I will treat it as a violation of personal trust. You won’t like the result. It is fine to have your friend the English major proofread your paper; it is not fine to provide “most of the ideas” for a paper your friend the English major writes. That excuse didn’t work as a defense against a charge of academic dishonesty in the past, and it won’t work now, either. I also call particular attention to the “sharing” of your paper with a friend in the class. If I get two papers that are essentially identical, you both fail the course. I don’t care if you’re the one who really wrote it; you allowed your friend to cheat. Giving a copy of your paper to a classmate is either stupid or dishonest. Neither of those kinds of behavior is recommended if you intend to pass this course.

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.

Acceptable Student Behavior:
Classroom behavior should not interfere with the instructor’s ability to conduct the class or the ability of other students to learn from the instructional program (see the Student Conduct Code, policy D-34.1). Unacceptable or disruptive behavior will not be tolerated. Students who disrupt the learning environment may be asked to leave class and may be subject to judicial, academic or other penalties. This prohibition applies to all instructional forums, including electronic, classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. The instructor shall have full discretion over what behavior is appropriate/inappropriate in the classroom. Students who do not attend class regularly or who perform poorly on class projects/exams may be referred to the Early Alert Program. This program provides students with recommendations for resources or other assistance that is available to help SFA students succeed.

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/.

**Religious observance:**
If your observance of a religious holiday will prevent you from attending class, please contact me immediately so we can make appropriate arrangements.

**About the schedule:**
The topics to be covered on a given date are subject to change as the semester proceeds.

**Absences, Special Circumstances, and Make-up Work:**
There will be no make-up exams given, nor deadlines extended after the fact, unless a medical excuse or some other official documentation is presented to the instructor.