

Point Loma Nazarene University
Department of Communication & Theatre
TRE 101-1: Introduction to Theatre
Spring Semester, 2019

Professor: Walter O. Williams, Ph.D. wwilliam@pointloma.edu
 Office Hours: T/R 12:30 – 2:30 pm, or by appt.

Office: Cabrillo 207
 Phone: 849-2724

OVERVIEW

This is a one-semester course that explores the art of theatre that has powerfully impacted societies from the beginning of recorded history. Though the structure and format are primarily oriented toward lecture, you will be asked to take part in participatory activities related to the theatrical art. This course is one of the components of the General Education Program at Point Loma Nazarene University, under the category of *Seeking Cultural Perspectives*. By including this course in a common educational experience for undergraduates, the faculty supports the survey of human endeavors from a historical, cultural, linguistic and philosophical perspective, including developing critical appreciation of human expression-- both artistic and literary.

COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this semester you should be able to:

- 1) List and discuss the dramatic elements of theatre (Aristotle's).
- 2) Identify the major genres and periods of theatre.
- 3) Critically examine stage performances by use of the dramatic elements.
- 4) Participate and contribute to the creation of a dramatic piece for the stage.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Cassady, Marsh. *An Introduction to: The Art of Theatre*.
 Shakespeare, William. *Much Ado About Nothing & Hamlet*
 Beckett, Samuel. *Waiting for Godot*.

Academic Accommodations:

While all students are expected to meet the minimum academic standards for completion of this course as established by the instructor, students with disabilities may require academic accommodations. At Point Loma Nazarene University, students requesting academic accommodations must file documentation with the Disability Resource Center (DRC), located in the Bond Academic Center. Once the student files documentation, the Disability Resource Center will contact the student's instructors and provide written recommendations for reasonable and appropriate accommodations to meet the individual learning needs of the student. This policy assists the University in its commitment to full compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities (ADA) Act of 1990, and ADA Amendments Act of 2008, all of which prohibit discrimination against students with disabilities and guarantees all qualified students equal access to and benefits of PLNU programs and activities.

COURSE PROCEDURES & REQUIREMENTS

- 1) Try to be timely. We have very little time in this course and must be very conscientious in our use of it. Though the class structure is primarily oriented toward lecture, I strongly encourage questions, ideas, and discussions. Take an active role in the process and you will get far more from the experience. Most of the material is presented with the aid of spiffy PowerPoint technology, and I move fairly quickly. If you are not adept at note-taking (which is a form of shortening through paraphrasing), I have no problem with small recording devices. **I do not post the lectures (i.e., PowerPoints) online, or make them available anywhere outside class.**
- 2) Exams: There will be four examinations, each weighted at 12.5% of the course grade. The exams consist primarily of multiple choice and essay questions. Missed exams cannot be made up without an email from the provost's office excusing a student for an official university activity.
- 3) Quizzes: There will be occasional, unannounced quizzes. The purpose of the quizzes is to help you keep up on the readings and to provide you with sample test questions. Each quiz accounts for 1% of your final grade. The quizzes are graded on a modified curve. **There are NO make-up quizzes.**
- 4) Reviews: Each student will be responsible for a written review of the PLNU (Salomon Theatre) Spring semester production, *The Women of Lockerbie* (April 4 – 6; 11 - 13) The format of the review will be according to the *MLA Style Manual* and will be two typed double-spaced pages (1" margins, font size: #12 Times New Roman). The review will critically and subjectively examine all the pertinent artistic and craft-elements of the production (as discussed in class) and will assess their effectiveness within the overall endeavor. The review will account for 10% of your final grade. See attached review for example.
- 5) Critique: Each student will analyze *Waiting for Godot*, by Samuel Becket, and/or *Much Ado about Nothing* by William Shakespeare, and/or *Hamlet* by William Shakespeare, in a written historical/critical or rhetorical critique. The format of the critique will be according to the *MLA Style Manual* and will consist of three typed double-spaced pages (1" margins, font size: #12 Times New Roman). The critique will develop an argument in which a play is analyzed as to its effect on society, or its underlying meaning, or its philosophical thrust, or its religious implications, or its historical context, etc. The critique will account for 15% of your final grade. The critique will be discussed more fully in class.
- 6) SceneFest: Each student will participate in the staging and presentation of an original scene. Each scene will consist of an ensemble scene related to/based on *Much Ado about Nothing*, or *Hamlet*, or *Waiting for Godot* (or a combination). To the degree that we are able given the obvious restraints, we will incorporate all the components of the process (i.e. students will be directors, playwrights, actors, designers, etc.). These are group projects and will require some time commitment outside of class, therefore, cooperation with the ensemble will be considered in grading. The group project is weighted at 20% of the course grade, but lack of participation in SceneFest will result in failure of the course. SceneFest will be discussed more fully in class.

100 POINT GRADING SCALE:

| <u>GRADE</u> | <u>POINT VALUE</u> |
|--------------|--------------------|
| A | 93-100 |
| A- | 90-92 |
| B+ | 87-89 |
| B | 83-86 |
| B- | 80-82 |
| C+ | 77-79 |
| C | 73-76 |
| C- | 70-72 |
| D+ | 67-69 |
| D | 63-66 |
| D- | 60-62 |
| F | 0-59 |

A: Indicates excellent work that reflects thinking, creativity, individuality, and a very high level of intellectual attainment.

B: Indicates good work that reflects a thorough understanding of theory but is lacking in individual thinking and creativity.

C: Indicates work that reflects a satisfactory completion of the assignment as directed, but is lacking in thoroughness, individual thinking, and creativity.

D: Indicates work that reflects a lack of understanding of theory and/or fails to fulfill the assigned tasks.

F: Indicates work that reflects an inability or unwillingness to do the assigned task.

GRADE BREAKDOWN

Grading for this course will be determined in the following manner:

| | |
|-------------------------|-------------|
| Exams | 4 @ 12.5% |
| Quizzes | 5 @ 1 % |
| Live Performance Review | 10 % |
| Play Critique | 15 % |
| SceneFest | <u>20 %</u> |
| TOTAL | 100 % |

Student Responsibility:

It is the student's responsibility to maintain his/her class schedule. Should the need arise to drop this course (personal emergencies, poor performance, etc.), the student, not the instructor, has the responsibility to follow through (provided the drop date meets the stated calendar deadline established by the university). Simply ceasing to attend this course or failing to follow through to arrange for a change of registration (drop/add) will result in a grade of F on the official transcript.

COURSE SCHEDULE

| <u>Date</u> | <u>Topic</u> | <u>Assignment</u> |
|-------------|-----------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1/8 | Course orientation and overview | Syllabus |
| 1/9 | What are Theatre and Drama? | Chapter 1 |
| 1/14 | Structure, Style & Genre | Chapters 2 & 3 |
| 1/16 | Structure, Style & Genre | Chapters 2 & 3 |
| 1/23 | The Beginnings | Chapter 11 |
| 1/28 | The Beginnings | Chapter 11 |
| 1/30 | EXAM #1 | |
| 2/4 | The Actor | Chapter 6 |
| 2/6 | Medieval Theatre | Chapter 12 |
| 2/11 | Renaissance Theatre | Chapter 13 |
| 2/13 | The Playwright | Chapter 5 |
| 2/18 | <i>Hamlet</i> | <i>Read Hamlet</i> |
| 2/20 | EXAM #2 | |
| 2/25 | <i>Much Ado</i> | <i>Read Much Ado</i> |
| 2/27 | Discussion of Genre | Ref. Chapter 3 |
| 3/11 | Criticism (&Asian Theatre) | Chapter 10 |
| 3/13 | 17 th & 18 th Century Theatre | Chapter 14 |
| 3/18 | Designers & Supporting Artists | Chapter 8 |
| 3/20 | Modern Theatre: Realism | Chapter 15 |
| 3/25 | EXAM #3 | |
| 3/27 | Modern Theatre: Antirealism | <i>Read WFG</i> |
| 4/1 | The Director/Producer | Ref. Chapter 15 |
| 4/3 | Musical Theatre | Chapters 7 & 9 |
| 4/8 | Musical Theatre | Ref. Chapter 15 |
| 4/10 | Theatre Today | Ref. Chapter 15 |
| 4/15 | Theatre Today | Ref. Chapter 15 |
| 4/17 | SceneFest Tech | |
| 4/24 | EXAM #4 | |
| 4/29 | SceneFest (10:30 – 1:00) | |

Sample Review

Spit flew freely, vocal chords strained, and veins stood out on the actors' necks as they skillfully delivered the demanding text, but the inner life seemed lacking at Wednesday night's performance of Edward Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*, at the San Diego Repertory's Lyceum Stage.

Albee's first great success, *Woolf*, debuted in 1962, changing the face of American theatre. A psychologically compelling tale of alcohol-saturated disillusionment and dysfunction in the middle-American family, the play has often elicited adjectives such as "gut-wrenching," "excoriating," "shattering," and "stunning;" however, the adjective that perhaps best describes the Rep's current production of *Woolf* is . . . competent.

Ellen Crawford, Mike Genovese, Peter Friedrich, and Carla Harting who play (respectively) Martha, George, Nick, and Honey, are competent, capable, skillful, even proficient in their presentation of the material. Their diction is excellent, volume is never a problem in the cramped-feeling Lyceum black-box space; the pace seems to be what the play demands, but in the end one is left oddly cold by the sum total—not shattered, not drained, not really even thoughtful, but . . . what is a fitting description . . . entertained? Perhaps it is that a generation has passed and what was once shocking is now passé; or perhaps we as an audience are desensitized by the radical familial dysfunction that defines our current culture. But what is more likely is that Todd Salovey's by-the-numbers direction created a mild disconnect, a barrier between the actors' skilled recitation of the text and the inner life that must be present to give it the power that lies dormant in Albee's written word.

Three of the four performers (Crawford, Genovese, and Friedrich) suffer most from this malaise of competence. Their mouths, faces, and bodies go through the proper motions; they portray anger at the necessary moments, they yell when the scene calls for it; they are "hitting the marks" demanded by the script, but it feels like just that—hitting predictable marks determined by pedestrian directorial choices. The rising action rises because the script says it must, not because the actors have tapped into the truths beneath these character's tormented lives. The only antidote for this malaise is found in Carla Harting's

portrayal of Honey. Harting is compelling in her shocked but manipulative simplicity. She has discovered the essence of Honey—perhaps the true beneficiary of the play’s exorcism, and the hope for the next generation—and she plays her with a subtle nuance.

The other elements of the production actually exacerbate rather than relieve the general malaise. Giulio Cesare Perrone’s set, a neoclassical façade (replete with massive columns, ceiling-to-floor bookshelf, fireplace, bar, and sparse furnishings) is completely whitewashed—all, that is, except the rich, caramel-colored liquors populating the bar. Before the first word is uttered, this set tells us exactly what to expect—the lives of these people are a whitewashed sham, a self-delusion, a colorless façade—except for the life-giving, truth-revealing, exorcism-inducing alcohol. The feeling of the settings is a cramped one, which could be used effectively to give a sense of the imprisonment of the characters, but again, the direction seems to subvert this with a good deal of impulse-laden, or craft-laden wandering in and about the furnishings in a much too predictable cat-and-mouse visual metaphor.

Jerry Sonnenberg’s lights, too, tend to draw the viewer out of the action by their too blatant focus-shifting, telling us what we should see and how we should feel—all these being necessary components of the theatrical adventure, but they would benefit from a bit more “art” and a bit less “craft.”

Generally speaking, the audience members seemed to be entertained by the San Diego Repertory Theatre’s production of *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf*, but the talk on the stairwells after the production centered more on the pedestrian than the profound—whether or not to get a decaf tall mocha at Starbuck’s? This cannot have been Albee’s intent.