

Point Loma Nazarene University
Department of Communication Studies
TRE 1001-2: Introduction to Theatre
Fall Semester, 2020

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Liberal Arts General Education Purpose Statement

It is the goal of the university to provide an education in the liberal arts tradition and in professional areas, balancing a broadening experience in its general education program with the depth necessary to concentrate in one of the major programs. Students who complete the general education curriculum should be in possession of well-rounded knowledge, skills, and wisdom to understand the world around them, to continue learning throughout their lives, to contextualize disciplinary study, and to live meaningful, productive lives for Jesus Christ.

PLNU GE Mission Statement

PLNU provides a foundational course of study in the liberal arts informed by the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In keeping with the Wesleyan tradition, the curriculum equips students with a broad range of knowledge and skills within and across disciplines to enrich major study, lifelong learning, and vocational service as Christ-like participants in the world's diverse societies and culture.

Course Overview

This one-semester course explores the art of theatre that has powerfully affected and reflected societies from the beginning of recorded history. Though the structure and format are primarily oriented toward lecture, you will take part in participatory activities related to the theatrical art.

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) Chapter Quizzes: There will be a short answer quiz following each chapter in the Marsh Cassady book. They are open-book quizzes so it is appropriate to search your text for answers; however, you need to construct your answers using your own words or the Canvas program will flag you for plagiarism. The quizzes are worth 45 points each. There are fifteen (15) of them, totaling 67.5% of your final grade.
- 2) Critiques: You will write a short analysis/critique on *Waiting for Godot*, by Samuel Becket, *Much Ado about Nothing* by William Shakespeare, and *Hamlet* by William Shakespeare. I will provide 'prompts' for each analysis. These critiques are 75 points each will account in total for 22.5% of your final grade. I will discuss this more fully in class.
- 3) Review: You will submit a written review in a newspaper style of the Broadway musical *Into The Woods*. I will provide the link to the production in the prompt. The review will critically evaluate all the pertinent artistic and craft-elements of the production (as discussed in Cassady) and will assess their effectiveness within the overall endeavor. The review will account for 10% of your final grade. See attached review for example.

PLEASE NOTE: I offer NO extra credit in this course (or any other), nor any additional work that can augment your grade. Your grade will be based on the course assignments only. There will be no "bumping up" of grades at the end of the semester; so please **DO NOT** email me asking for this kind of accommodation.

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

GRADE BREAKDOWN

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

Quizzes	15 @ 4.5%
Play Critique	3 @ 7.5 %
Performance Review	<u>10 %</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.), you, the student, not me, the professor, has the responsibility to follow through (provided the drop date meets the stated calendar deadline established by the university). Simply ceasing to turn material in 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>	
8/18	Course orientation and overview	Syllabus	ZOOM
8/20	Chapter 1	Quiz 1	
8/27	Chapter 2	Quiz 2	
9/3	Chapter 3	Quiz 3	
9/10	Chapter 4	Quiz 4	
9/15	<i>Much Ado About Nothing</i>	Critique	
9/17	Chapter 5	Quiz 5	ZOOM
9/24	Chapter 6	Quiz 6	
10/1	Chapter 7	Quiz 7	
10/8	Chapter 8	Quiz 8	
10/13	<i>Hamlet</i>	Critique	
10/15	Chapter 9	Quiz 9	ZOOM
10/22	Chapter 10	Quiz 10	
10/29	Chapter 11	Quiz 11	
11/3	<i>Waiting for Godot</i>	Critique	
11/5	Chapter 12	Quiz 12	
11/12	Chapter 13	Quiz 13	ZOOM
11/19	Chapter 14	Quiz 14	
11/24	<i>Into the Woods</i>	Review	
12/1	Chapter 15	Quiz 15	

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, and 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.