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Graduate Programs—NEW COURSE PROPOSAL

DEPARTMENT NAME: THEATRE AND DANCE

COLLEGE OF: SCHMIDT COLLEGE OF ARTS AND LETTERS

RECOMMENDED COURSE IDENTIFICATION:

PREFIX THE COURSE NUMBER 5000 LEVEL LAB CODE (L or C) _____

(TO OBTAIN A COURSE NUMBER, CONTACT ERUDOLPH@FAU.EDU)

COMPLETE COURSE TITLE DRAMATIC WRITING FOR STAGE AND SCREEN 2

EFFECTIVE DATE

(first term course will be offered)

_____ SPRING 2011 _____

CREDITS: 3

TEXTBOOK INFORMATION: "STORY" BY ROBERT MCKEE, SELECTED PLAYS AND FILMSTRIPS.

GRADING (SELECT ONLY ONE GRADING OPTION): REGULAR PASS/FAIL _____ SATISFACTORY/UNSATISFACTORY _____

COURSE DESCRIPTION, NO MORE THAN 3 LINES: ADVANCED PRACTICAL WORKSHOP IN WRITING PLAYS AND SCREENPLAYS WITH EMPHASIS ON DEVELOPING PROFESSIONAL SKILLS IN DRAMATIC CONSTRUCTION, REVISION, CHARACTERIZATION AND DIALOGUE. IN-CLASS READING OF WORKS AND END-OF-TERM PUBLIC READINGS.

PREREQUISITES W/MINIMUM GRADE:*

PERMISSION OF INSTRUCTOR

COREQUISITES:

NONE

OTHER REGISTRATION CONTROLS (MAJOR, COLLEGE, LEVEL):

NONE

PREREQUISITES, COREQUISITES & REGISTRATION CONTROLS SHOWN ABOVE WILL BE ENFORCED FOR ALL COURSE SECTIONS.

*DEFAULT MINIMUM GRADE IS D-.

MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS NEEDED TO TEACH THIS COURSE:

MFA IN THEATRE

Other departments, colleges that might be affected by the new course must be consulted. List entities that have been consulted and attach written comments from each.

English Department

Tom Atkins, tatkins@fau.edu, 561-297-3814
 Faculty Contact, Email, Complete Phone Number

SIGNATURES

SUPPORTING MATERIALS

<p>Approved by:</p> <p>Department Chair: _____</p> <p>College Curriculum Chair: _____</p> <p>College Dean: _____</p> <p>UGPC Chair: _____</p> <p>Dean of the Graduate College: _____</p>	<p>Date:</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>Syllabus—must include all details as shown in the UGPC Guidelines.</p> <p>Written Consent—required from all departments affected.</p> <p>Go to: http://graduate.fau.edu/gpc/ to download this form and guidelines to fill out the form.</p>
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Email this form and syllabus to sfulks@fau.edu and eqirjo@fau.edu one week **before** the University Graduate Programs Committee meeting so that materials may be viewed on the UGPC website by committee members prior to the meeting.

DRAMATIC WRITING FOR STAGE & SCREEN 2

THE 5000 level

Pre-requisites: None

Writing experience recommended.

Co-requisites: None

Instructor: Tom Atkins

Office: AH 185

Telephone: 297-3810

E-mail: takins@fau.edu

Required texts:

Eugene O'Neill's *AH WILDERNESS!* (Samuel French, 1993)

Tennessee Williams' *A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE* (Penguin, 1986)
and *SUMMER AND SMOKE* (New Directions, 1972))

John Guare's *LANDSCAPE OF THE BODY* (in *THREE EXPOSURES*,
Harcourt Brace, 1982)

Paula Vogel's *HOW I LEARNED TO DRIVE* (Dramatists Play Service, 1999)

Supplementary texts (additional plays and screenplays):

Horton Foote's *DIVIDING THE ESTATE*, *THE TRIP TO BOUNTIFUL* and
THE YOUNG MAN FROM ATLANTA (Northwestern University Press, 2008)

Arthur Miller's *THE CRUCIBLE* (Penguin, 2003)

Peter Shaffer's *EQUUS* (Simon & Schuster, 2005)

Harold Pinter's *HOME COMING* (Grove, 1994) and *BETRAYAL* (Dramatists
Play Service, 1980)

Caryl Churchill's *MAD FOREST* (TCG, 1996)

Sam Shepard's *FOOL FOR LOVE* (Dramatists Play Service, 1997)

Michael Frayn's *COPENHAGEN* (Anchor Books, 2000)

Course description (for catalogue) and instructional objectives:

Advanced practical workshop in writing plays and screenplays with emphasis on developing professional skills in dramatic construction, revision, characterization and dialogue. In-class reading of works and end-of-term public readings.

Method of instruction:

Students in this course may work in playwriting or screenwriting, or both, depending on their interests and background. The class is conducted in a hands-on workshop style: students read their work aloud and receive comments and suggestions regarding character action, plot, dialogue and dramatic structure, among other elements, from the instructor and the rest of the class. Rewriting and revisions are required. Several techniques and methods are taught through a series of writing exercises designed to stimulate the writer's observation, imagination, and personal expression. The practical goals of the course are ultimately realized through the experience of writing and revising two short plays or screenplays or, with the instructor's permission, a single longer script.

Schedule of weekly topics covered:

- Week 1: Taking your writing to the next level
- Week 2: Developing longer projects for stage or screen
- Week 3: Professional manuscript formats for stage and screen
- Week 4: Is your dialogue too literal?
- Week 5: Are you writing for actors?
- Week 5: Are your characters complex and well-motivated?
- Week 6: Structuring three-act plays and full-length screenplays
- Week 7: Beginnings: the opening gambit
- Week 8: Thematic matters: social and cultural implications
- Week 9: Treatment of time: differences between stage and screen time
- Week 10: Climax and resolution: meaningful endings
- Week 11: Refining your editing skills
- Week 12: Regional theatres in Florida and elsewhere in the country
- Week 13: Collaborating with directors
- Week 14: Copyrighting your work
- Week 15: Submission techniques
- Week 16: Public reading with audience discussion

Assessment procedures:

Grades based on participation (10%), exercises and revisions (30%), and final drafts of plays and/or filmscripts (60%).

Grading criteria:

Participation: Students are expected to participate fully in their fellow students' work by offering analysis and reaction throughout the course.

Evaluation of exercises and short scripts is based on understanding and execution of purpose of individual exercises; evidence of careful script revisions based on instructor's notes and on classroom discussions; authenticity of dialogue and believability of character; expression of characters' inner lives through subtext and behavior; clarity of dramatic conflict and action; and stage or screen worthiness of script. In addition, students are expected to research and demonstrate a familiarity with the social and cultural issues relevant to their scripts.

A=90-100: Evidence of excellence and professionalism

B=80-89: Evidence of above average knowledge of craft

C=70-79: Average evidence of craft

D=60-69: Below average

F=below 60: Failure

Bibliography:

Aristotle. *Poetics*. New York: Penguin, 1997.

Bentley, Eric. *The Playwright as Thinker*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987.

_____. *The Life of the Drama*. New York: Applause Theatre Books, 1991.

Jones, Robert Edmond. *The Dramatic Imagination*. Kentucky: Taylor & Francis, 2004.

Mabley, Edward. *Dramatic Construction*. Philadelphia: Chilton Book Co., 1972.

Madden, David. *Revising Fiction*. New York: Penguin, 1988.

Mamet, David. *Writing in Restaurants*. New York: Penguin, 1987.

Prose, Francine. *Reading like a Writer*. New York: Harper Perennial, 2007.

Stanislavsky, Constantine. *Building a Character*. New York: Routledge, 1989.

_____. *Creating a Role*. Taylor & Francis: 1989.

FAU Policy on Academic Integrity

Students at Florida Atlantic University are expected to maintain the highest ethical standards. Academic dishonesty, including cheating and plagiarism, is considered a serious breach of these ethical standards, because it interferes with the University mission to provide a high quality education in which no student enjoys an unfair advantage over any other. Academic dishonesty is also destructive of the University community, which is grounded in a system of mutual trust and places high value

on personal integrity and individual responsibility. Harsh penalties are associated with academic dishonesty. For more information, see http://www.fau.edu/regulations/chapter4/4.001_Honor_Code.pdf.

FAU Policy on Students with Disabilities

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), students who require special accommodations due to a disability to properly execute coursework must register with the Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD) located in Boca Raton - SU 133 (561-297-3880), in Davie - MOD I (954-236-1222), in Jupiter - SR 117 (561-799-8585), or at the Treasure Coast - CO 128 (772-873-3305), and follow all OSD procedures.

Professor Tom Atkins

EXAMPLE PLAYWRITING EXERCISES

These exercises are used to stimulate the playwright's imagination, to help develop a sense of the writer's inner emotional tools and resources, and to understand what makes effective stage dialogue.

FOUND DIALOGUE

The playwright John Guare carries a small notebook in his pocket to record ideas and snatches of dialogue that he has overheard. His own dialogue, in such plays as *LANDSCAPE OF THE BODY* and *SIX DEGREES OF SEPARATION*, has the texture and feel of actual spoken language. David Mamet's dialogue also has this same quality--it lives as spoken language. Both playwrights create dialogue that begs to be acted, to be heard by an audience.

One of the first things that playwrights learn is the difference between written and spoken language. The language of ordinary life is often fragmented, incomplete, full of starts and stops. Sometimes our words are finished by the listener. Sometimes we pause. Sometimes we are interrupted. Sometimes the listener talks while we are talking. The audience recognizes this language as believable, as having the flow and feeling of ordinary human discourse.

Often in spoken language there are meanings hidden beneath the surface, buried feelings, attitudes that cannot be shown directly. The audience listens for this subtext, just as in real life we listen for what people are really saying as opposed to what they want us to think they are saying. Pinter called dialogue a smokescreen hiding one's real feelings.

Playwrights are eavesdroppers, spies on ordinary life. Their ears become attuned to the reality of spoken language, of heated debate or passionate persuasion.

The exercise is to bring back examples of found or overheard dialogue, and then imagine the rest of the dialogue and write a brief dramatic scene using the dialogue.

SUBTEXT

Tennessee Williams has a short play called "Something Unspoken," referring to the unacknowledged and hidden relationship between two female characters. Yet this unspoken truth dominates the play. Constantine Stanislavsky called this the "subtext." He believed that the audience is actually more interested in listening for the subtext than the actual text.

Chekhov's dialogue is often based on subtext, an inner current of emotion that often spills to the surface, as it does when Uncle Vanya finally explodes and makes a pathetic attempt to shoot Serebryakov.

In Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* we learn the inner thoughts of two characters, the thoughts that they are not bold enough to speak directly, and these thoughts are often the most compelling element of the scene.

In the works of the British writer Henry Green subtext is often a primary ingredient in his dialogue, in such novels as *Doting* and *Loving*.

Write a short scene between two characters in which one of the characters has a hidden secret or subtext.

THREE WORDS

Write a three-page scene using two characters who speak in lines of no more than one to three words.

SENSE MEMORIES

List and briefly describe ten memories based on the five senses from your childhood.

Write a short scene based on one of the memories.

SIXTY SECONDS

Write a scene with two characters, having conflict, a beginning, middle and end, lasting no more than 60 seconds.

DIFFERENT TYPES OF MONOLOGUES:

Write a short monologue using a prop as an important emotional factor.

Write a short monologue of passionate conviction—attempting to change someone's opinion or idea.