Basic info
Amherst College THDA 45  
Assistant Professor Ron Bashford  
Course in the Arts of Theater and Dance  
Department of Theater & Dance, Webster Hall  
Keywords: artistic practice, writing attentive, speaking attentive  
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Course web page: http://alturl.com/4dfyn  
Office phone: (413) 542-5349  
Course meets MWs from 2 to 4 p.m.  
Office hours: Thursdays 1-3 p.m. or by appt.  
in Webster Studio 3

Course description
This course explores the process of directing plays for the stage. Studio exercises develop skills in key areas: interpretation of form and artistic intent; perception and sensibility in rehearsal; effective communication with actors; and balancing the interplay between action and text. Students stage scenes from distinct categories: plays in verse, realistic plays, and non-realistic or less literal modern and contemporary plays. Special emphasis is placed on the role of dramaturgical understanding in the creation of meaningful stage action.

Materials
Required Texts  
(required for purchase locally at Amherst Books)

King Lear, by Shakespeare (Arden)
The Cherry Orchard, by Anton Chekhov (translation by Tom Stoppard)
The Empty Space, by Peter Brook

Plays for Classwork  
(from Dept. of Theater and Dance; additional copies may be in Frost Library, or you may want to buy select titles)
I do not expect you to read all of these plays. However, I do expect you to read closely and completely any play you choose for scene or other exercise work.

Group I
Thorton Wilder’s Our Town
Tennessee Williams’ A Streetcar Named Desire
Arthur Miller’s Death of A Salesman
Tony Kushner’s Angels in America Part I: Perestroika
Christopher Shinn’s Dying City

Group II
Samuel Beckett’s Not I
Samuel Beckett’s Waiting for Godot
Sarah Kane’s Crave
Caryl Churchill’s A Number
Mark Ravenhill’s Shopping & F***king

Group III
Euripides’ The Bacchae (C.K. Williams translation)
Shakespeare’s Twelfth Night
Shakespeare’s King Lear
Molière’s The Misanthrope (R. Wilbur translation)
Assignments Overview

This is a process-oriented course. We will work through technique exercises, textual analysis and studio directing work at a pace that supports your development. I ask that you to write about your experience on a weekly basis, and to write two longer formal essays. Your work will be in the following areas:

- Exercises in aspects of directing & text analysis
- Individual scene directing (1-3 scenes)
- Weekly writing portfolio
- Formal essays (2)
- Group-directed projects

Grading (and attendance policy)

It is not possible to succeed in this course without excellent attendance. Activities are inter-related, and the largest portion of your course grade will be based on your work in class. Your course grade comprises:

- Written work
  - Weekly writing portfolio 10%
  - Formal essays 20%
  - Individual scene directing results & process learning 30%
  - Group & class work and overall development as a director 40%

Course Schedule

- This is an approximate outline of our work together.
- Your weekly writing is due on Mondays, starting September 20 through December 6.
- Formal essays will be due October 13 and November 17, respectively.
- Exercises, scene work and group projects are ongoing. I will announce additional written exercises or reading assignments in class, particularly in the first few weeks.

Week 1

September 8: Introduction
Read King Lear for work beginning next week.
Begin looking at plays from the list for scene work choices.

Week 2

September 13 & 15: Discussion, text analysis & directing exercises
Read The Cherry Orchard for work beginning next week.
Finalize scene choices & organization; begin rehearsing on your own, outside of class.

Week 3

September 20 & 22: Discussion, text analysis & directing exercises
Read The Empty Space by Peter Brook for discussion next week.
Possible start of scene work presentation

Week 4

September 27, 29: Discussion, text analysis & directing exercises
Discuss The Empty Space

Week 5

October 4 & 6: Scene lab
MID-SEMESTER BREAK
Week 6
October 13: Scene lab
First formal essay due
Week 7
October 18 & 20: Scene lab
Week 8
October 25 & 27: Scene lab
Week 9
November 1 & 3: Scene lab
Week 10
November 8 & 10: Beginning of large group project work
Week 11
November 15 & 17: Group project work
Second formal essay due
Last chance for scene work presentation
THANKSGIVING BREAK
Week 12
November 29 & December 1: Group project work
Week 13
December 6 & 8: Group project work
Collected writings portfolio due
Week 14
December 13 & 15: Group project work
There is no examination for THDA 45 during the Examination Period.
The absolute deadline for any outstanding writing is 5 p.m. on December 20.

Statement of Intellectual Responsibility and Implications

Every person’s education is the product of his or her own intellectual effort and participation in a process of critical exchange. Amherst cannot educate those who are unwilling to submit their own work and ideas to critical assessment. Nor can it tolerate those who interfere with the participation of others in the critical process. Therefore, the College considers it a violation of the requirements of intellectual responsibility to submit work that is not one’s own or otherwise to subvert the conditions under which academic work is performed by oneself or by others.

Some implications of the Statement of Intellectual Responsibility for THDA 45 are listed below.

- Our work is cooperative by design. Indeed, creating theater depends on developing skills in collaboration and good communication. In order to maintain optimal learning conditions, it is your intellectual responsibility to yourself and to your peers to attend all scheduled class meetings, to cooperate in scheduling and attending meetings outside of class necessary to complete collaborative work, and to communicate conflicts, time-management problems and related issues openly and promptly.
- Writing that you submit to me must be your own.