

PART II: DESCRIPTION OF CURRICULAR CHANGE: Addition of THTR 111

I. Catalog Description

THTR 111 Foundations of Theater

3c-01-3sh

PREREQUISITES: None

A primary course for those engaged in theater and any other performance-related area so as to define the nature of theater art, develop one's own individual system of analysis and to finally acquire an understanding of process, dramatic structure, composition, genre, theatrical styles and a theory of performance.

II. Course Objectives

Students will:

1. Understand the basic theory of the theatrical experience, including the importance of the audience-performer relationship.
2. Comprehend a basic concept of performance.
3. Learn the process of how a production is developed and the roles of the individuals involved.
4. Understand and differentiate basic theatrical styles.
5. Develop an understanding of dramatic structure.
6. Recognize alternative dramatic structures.
7. Identify the rhythmic or compositional nature of a play on paper and in production, both visual and aural.
8. Critically perceive theatrical and/or dramatic genres.
9. Develop an introductory system of script analysis.

III. Detailed Course OutlineWeek One: THE THEATRICAL EXPERIENCE

Introductory Session: An exploration of common terms

The Empty Space: The audience and the performer

The Imagination of the audience and the performer

The audience and the performer as self-critics

Week Two: PROCESS: PLANNING (Who does what: From "Option to Opening")

The Playwright to the Producer

The Producer to the Director

The Director to the Designers and Actors

Week Three: PROCESS: REALIZATION

The Technical Director and the crews
 Preparing the show -- Technical and Dress Rehearsals
 Opening Night
 Reading the reviews.
 [First Exam]

Week Four: STRUCTURE (You start with the script!)

The Nature of Drama and Dramatic Action (conflict)
 Drama vs. narrative; plot vs. story
 Freytag's Pyramid: Plot in any kind of script
 Non-traditional structures (contemporary theatrical uses of
 structure.)

Week Five: DRAMATIC CHARACTERS AND THOUGHT

First Playscript

Week Six: PERFORMANCE THEORY (Turning "concept" into a
"reality")

Ritual, ceremony, mask and the shaman

Week Seven: THE STANISLAVSKY SYSTEM

Units of action and the use of given circumstances
 Second Playscript

Week Eight: DRAMATIC RHYTHM (Theater in time)

Visual and scenic Rhythms (Spectacle)

Week Nine: AUDIAL RHYTHMS (Language and Music)

Third Playscript
 [Second Exam]

Week Ten: GENRE

The Playwright's Dramatic Point of View
 Serious Genres: Tragedy

Week Eleven: OTHER SERIOUS FORMS

Fourth Playscript

Week Twelve: THE COMIC PREMISE

The Comic spectrum: from farce to comedy of ideas

Week Thirteen: MIXED GENRES

Tragicomedy, Performance Art

Fifth Playscript

Week Fourteen: STYLES

Historical: Classical, Medieval, Elizabethan, Baroque,
Restoration

Aesthetic: Realism, Naturalism, Expressionism, Surrealism,
Absurdist, Post-Modern

Sixth Playscript

IV. Evaluation Methods:

Evaluation for this course may be based on the following:

1. There can be six quizzes based on essential knowledge of each playscript used in class that, collectively, determines 25% of the final grade.
2. Two hourly exams and a final exam each worth 25%.

V. Required Textbooks, Supplemental Books and Readings:

If a textbook is felt useful, the following is recommended:
Edwin Wilson: The Theatrical Experience (8th ed) 2001.

The rest of the readings are actual playscripts as might be used in a production environment. The bibliography makes a rather extensive suggestion of titles for anyone teaching the class which includes many familiar titles. It also includes some ancillary titles (not plays) an instructor might wish to include in the course.

VI. Special Resource Requirements:

No special resources needed beyond the A/V equipment that is already available in CFA classrooms.

VII. Bibliography (in two parts)

PLAYS (not limited to or required of the following, only suggestions.)

CLASSICAL:

Aeschylus: Agamemnon

Sophocles: Oedipus Tyrannus, Antigone
 Euripedes: Medea, Electra
 Aristophenes: Lysistrata

ELIZABETHAN:

Shakespeare: Any

BAROQUE:

Moliere: Tartuffe, The Misanthrope

RESTORATION AND/OR EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

Congreve: The Country Wife

Goldsmith: She Stoops to Conquer

THE MODERN ERA

Ibsen: A Doll's House, Hedda Gabler, Ghosts, The Wild Duck

Chekhov: The Seagull, Uncle Vanya, The Cherry Orchard

Strindberg: The Father

Shaw: Arms and the Man

Beckett: Waiting for Godot

Ionesco: The Bald Soprano

Osborne: Look Back in Anger

Hammerstein and Kern: Show Boat

Firth and Sondheim: Company

Larson: Rent

AMERICAN THEATER

O'Neill: Desire under the Elms

Miller: Death of a Salesman, The Crucible

Williams: A Streetcar Named Desire, Cat on a Hot Tin Roof

RECENT BRITISH AND AMERICAN

Shaffer: Equus, Amadeus

Wilson: The Piano Lesson, Fences

Kopit: Indians

Auburn: Proof

Deveare Smith: Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992

TEXTS (suggested additional sources.)

Clark, Kenneth: Civilization (1969)

Bernstein, Leonard: The Unanswered Question (1976)

Brockett, Oscar: History of the Theater (8th ed.)

Bronowski, J.: The Ascent of Man (1973)

Chekhov, Michael: To the Actor (1950)

Stanislavsky, Konstantin: An Actor Prepares (1941)

Jones, Robert Edmond: The Theater Imagination (1941)

Brook, Peter: The Empty Space (1982)

Esslin, Martin: The Anatomy of Drama (1974)

Wilson, Edwin: The Theater Experience (8th ed.) (2001)
 Schechner, Richard: Performance Art (2002)
 Henderson, Brian: Performance: Texts and Theory (1999)
 Candor, Tadeusz, A Journey Through Outer Spaces (1993)

COURSE ANALYSIS QUESTIONNAIRE

Section A: Details of the Course

- A1. This course, together with THTR 116, Fundamentals of Theater Design, provide a basic, one-year introduction to theater as an art form. Students in other majors may also benefit from either or both of these courses within their major.
- A2. This is a new course which replaces THTR 110 (Script Analysis) It was found that the "script analysis" class did not cover as much basic material as we would like. To put it bluntly, non-major students in THTR 101 were getting more basic material not being covered in any of the major courses. Rather than revise THTR 110, we have opted to create a new course, broader than "script analysis" but more targeted at the theater major or minor than Introduction to Theater (THTR 101) was ever intended to be.
- A3. The old course (THTR 110) has evolved so much that we felt that a new course was needed. THTR 110 has been taught yearly since 1985. A newer course, THTR 116, emphasizes the design aspects of theater production and what we are trying to do is make THTR 111 a companion with THTR 116, especially for beginning students.
- A4. It is not a dual-level course.
- A5. There is no variable credit associated with this course.
- A6. Carnegie-Mellon offers "Introduction to Drama," a course the department has taught since its inception in the 1920's. (c.f.: CMU has very isolated concentrations within its program.) Penn State actually has a two-semester course that, oddly enough, is rather like what we are trying to devise here although our courses are more compatible in the sense that a student can take them in either sequence. Besides, these two courses force a major to deal with basic issues of performance and design regardless of their interest.

- A. The National Association of Schools of Theater (NAST), our accrediting unit, requires some kind introductory course outside of the Liberal Studies (General Education) requirement. This change gives our majors two of this kind. If one were to combine these two courses there is/are: (1) too much material at one time; (2) rarely are you going to find one faculty member able to do both and teach all the other courses in their discipline, let alone anybody else's.

Section B: Interdisciplinary Implications

- B1. One instructor will teach the course.
- B2. There is nothing in this course that would affect any other department.
- B3. Seats for this course can be made available to CE students if the issue arises.

Section C: Implementation

- C1. Because most of the faculty are or have been teaching THTR 101 (Introduction to Theater), it takes only re-thinking to prepare to teach this course. At least seven of the nine full-time faculty, and a one part-time permanent instructor, could teach this course. The two that do not teach this class are secularly in the dance program.

- C2. Resources:

Space: This course is best taught with a class-size of 20-30 students, given the critical feedback encouraged in the course presentation.

Equipment: A facility with the following is probably needed, depending on the instructor:

- a. Video (including VAS and DAD)
- b. Audio (at least, a cassette player (and a DAD which can also play Compact Disks.)
- c. Computer "Power Point," or similar program.

Spaces with these facilities are readily available within the College of Fine Arts, including the

Department of Theater and Dance itself.

Laboratory Supplies: None

Library Materials: None

Travel Funds: None

- C3. No grant has funded this course.
- C4. This course would be routinely offered in the Fall Semester to make it available for incoming majors. There is no seasonal reason why it cannot be taught in either semester.
- C5. There is planned one section of this course taught in the fall of each academic year.
- C6. The Department did, on one occasion, offer two sections of the current THTR 110 in a semester, leaving critical major courses uncovered. THTR 111 could be bigger but that choice must be left to the Dean of the college, the current chair and the instructor of the course in that particular semester. It is not a good choice, primarily because there is nothing in terms of space and facilities that suggest the class being bigger. Simply, the nature of the class is determined by student demand and predicated on the availability of proper resources.
- C7. NAST puts enrollment limits on many courses but not on one like an introductory course such as this. Still, NAST recognizes that, while a potential course like THTR 111 is aimed at the major, so the issue of size, especially in our situation relative to student enrollment, can still be a problem -- one which the department alone should define from semester to semester.

Section D: Miscellaneous

None