

## Play Analysis for Production

Spring Semester 2023

M, Th 2:30pm-3:45pm

Classroom: Baker 230

Prof. Stephen Foglia

Instructor Office: Baker Theater Building, 1st Floor

Office hours by appointment either in person or remote

[playanalysis23@gmail.com](mailto:playanalysis23@gmail.com)

### Syllabus

#### **Course Description:**

How does a director read a play? What about a designer? Or an actor? How do you get from text on the page to life on the stage? What does any of this have to do with a directorial "concept"? In this course, we will study plays both classical and modern and employ a variety of lenses to discover the reality these writers have created. The goal is to answer the questions we would face as artists en route to production.

#### **Methods:**

Class will be discussion-based and involve close readings of plays and additional texts by thinkers whose ideas we may find useful in approaching those plays. Each week will involve new reading and short assignments designed to test those tools we have acquired. The course requires continuous engagement from students.

#### **Expected Learning Outcomes:**

Students will develop interpretive skills appropriate to the unique challenges of reading theatrical texts. They will evaluate evidence and arguments analytically as they are asked in their writing assignments and oral presentations to imaginatively engage with the assigned plays. Throughout the semester, students must demonstrate their ability to analyze different kinds of plays using a variety of lenses, identifying elements such as given circumstances, plot structure, actions, and images. By the end of the semester, students will be prepared to approach a script as an artist facing a first creative team meeting.

#### **Attendance:**

Attendance is expected **at every** class session. **Absence directly affects students' grades.** If a student must miss a class, they will notify the Professor in advance. Students who are sick may participate in class via Zoom, but that **does not** count as full attendance. It will be treated the same as being late (ie. counting as half an absence).

No cell phone use during class. Laptops by permission.

Attendance, Tardiness

- If you are 10 minutes late to class; you are marked LATE. Two tardies equal one absence.
- Three (3) unexcused absences and students fail the course.
- Late papers and assignments will lose a half-grade per day late.

**Grading:**

ALL GRADES WILL BE POSTED ON COURSE BLACKBOARD SITE

- All Assignments 75%
- Participation 25%

**Assignments Overview:**

All assignments are due *at the beginning of class* on dates listed in Course Schedule. Generally, the week's reading is due in advance of our first session discussing a particular play, while short writing assignments are due for our second meeting about the same play. For the purposes of this semester, that means reading will usually be due on Monday, writing on Thursday.

Please email all assignments in an open text format (.doc, .docx, a shared google doc, etc., **NOT PDF**) to [playanalysis23@gmail.com](mailto:playanalysis23@gmail.com). I will make notes and suggestions on each of your papers. You will have two weeks after receiving those notes to revise and resubmit your work for an improved grade if you wish.

**Written Reports:**

You will write short reports and analyses based on the reading every other week. Cumulatively, these reports amount to 80% of your Assignments grade.

**Final Presentation:**

You will give a final oral presentation on a play of your choosing. This presentation is worth 20% of your Assignments grade. A progress report is due by Spring Break.

**Extra Credit Opportunities:**

You may choose to attend plays or readings throughout the semester and write a 500-750 word paper analyzing the work using any lens we have discussed in class. There are also a number of extra credit assignments listed on the assignments page (accessible via Blackboard). Any of these must be turned in by the last day of class.

**Readings: (will be updated throughout semester, most reading distributed by prof)**

- Aristotle. *The Poetics*.
- Ball, David. *Backwards and Forwards*.
- Boal, Augusto. "Aristotle's Coercive System of Tragedy"
- Brecht, Bertolt. "A Short Organum for Theatre."
- Brook, Peter. *The Empty Space*
- Campbell, Joseph. *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*.
- Chekhov, Anton. *The Cherry Orchard*. Trans. by Pevear, Nelson, Volokhonsky
- Churchill, Caryl. *Far Away*.
- Fuchs, Elinor. "Visit to a Small Planet: Some Questions to Ask a Play."
- George, Kathleen. *Rhythm in Drama*.
- Ibsen, Henrik. *An Enemy of the People*. Trans. Arthur Miller
- Jarry, Alfred. *Ubu Roi*.
- Miller, Arthur. "Tragedy and the Common Man"
- Parks, Suzan-Lori. *Fucking A*
- Shaw, GB. "How to Write a Popular Play"
- Synge, JM. *Riders to the Sea*.
- Yee, Lauren. *Cambodian Rock Band*.

**Trigger Warning:**

As part of this course, we will be experiencing works of art representing viewpoints and situations that will be uncomfortable. Feeling secure in your ultimate safety as you explore challenging subjects is important, and I encourage you, in cases where you are concerned, to reach out in advance and to prepare yourself however necessary.

Relatedly, we will have to *talk* about the works of art that challenge and discomfort us, at times engaging with new topics as thorny as those represented in the art itself. Participation in these discussions is part of the class. We will conduct these conversations with sensitivity and care for ourselves and others.

**ADA Statement:**

In compliance with the ADA and with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, Hunter College is committed to ensuring educational access and accommodations for all its registered students. Hunter College's students with disabilities and medical conditions are encouraged to register with the Office of AccessABILITY for assistance and accommodation. For information and appointment contact the Office of AccessABILITY located in Room E1214 or call (212) 772-4857 /or VRS (646) 755-3129.

**Hunter College Policy on Academic Integrity:**

Hunter College regards acts of academic dishonesty (e.g., plagiarism, cheating on examinations, obtaining unfair advantage, and falsification of records and official documents) as serious offenses against the values of intellectual honesty. Hunter College is committed to enforcing the CUNY Policy on Academic Integrity and will pursue cases of academic dishonesty according to the Hunter College Academic Integrity Procedures.

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In compliance with the CUNY Policy on Sexual Misconduct, Hunter College reaffirms the prohibition of any sexual misconduct, which includes sexual violence, sexual harassment, and gender-based harassment retaliation against students, employees, or visitors, as well as certain intimate relationships. Students who have experienced any form of sexual violence on or off campus (including CUNY-sponsored trips and events) are entitled to the rights outlined in the Bill of Rights for Hunter College.

a. Sexual Violence: Students are strongly encouraged to immediately report the incident by calling 911, contacting NYPD Special Victims Division Hotline (646-610-7272) or their local police precinct, or contacting the College's Public Safety Office (212-772-4444).

b. All Other Forms of Sexual Misconduct: Students are also encouraged to contact the College's Title IX Campus Coordinator, Dean John Rose (jtrose@hunter.cuny.edu or 212-650-3262) or Colleen Barry (colleen.barry@hunter.cuny.edu or 212-772-4534) and seek complimentary services through the Counseling and Wellness Services Office, Hunter East 1123.

CUNY Policy on Sexual Misconduct Link:

<http://www.cuny.edu/about/administration/offices/la/Policy-on-Sexual-Misconduct-12-1-14-with-links.pdf>

**Play Analysis**  
**Spring 2022**  
**M, Th 2:30pm-3:45pm**

**January 26 (Th) - First Class**

Introductions. Syllabus distribution.

What are we doing here? What is play analysis for production?

Some questions to ask a room

**January 30 (M) - Second Class**

What is the world of the play? What are the given circumstances? How do we find them?

Introduction to Suzan-Lori Parks and *Fucking A*. How do we understand the world of *Fucking A*?

READING DUE: "A Visit to a Small Planet", *Fucking A*

**February 2 (Th) - Third Class**

Continue discussing world of the play.

ASSIGNMENT DUE: World of play report

**February 6 (M) - Fourth Class**

How does Aristotle understand tragedy? What are the central elements?

Plot/character in *Fucking A*

READING DUE: Aristotle's Poetics (sections VI-XI, XIII-XVII; about 11 pages in total)

**February 9 (Th) - Fifth Class**

More Aristotle. Inciting incident. What happens? The dreaded logline.

READING DUE: Boal

**February 13 (M) - NO CLASS (COLLEGE CLOSED)**

READING DUE: *Backwards and Forwards* (first 22 pages of document)

**February 16 (Th) - Sixth Class**

Stasis and intrusion. Beat breakdown. Causes and effects. How does this dovetail with Aristotle?

ASSIGNMENT DUE: *Backwards and Forwards* in *Fucking A*

**February 20 (M) - NO CLASS (COLLEGE CLOSED)**

**February 21 (T) - Seventh Class**

Intro Lauren Yee and *CBR*. Discuss *Cambodian Rock Band*.

Intro Joseph Campbell and Campbellian analysis.

READING DUE: Campbell (excerpts), *Cambodian Rock Band*

**February 23 (Th) - Eighth Class**

Continue discussion of Campbell, mythic structure, *CBR*. Connect Campbell to Fuchs, Aristotle.

**February 27 (M) - Ninth Class**

*Cambodian Rock Band* research week. Uses and methods of research.

READING DUE: bring your own research, at least one written document and one image

**March 2 (Th) - Tenth Class**

Share research. In-class, informal presentations.

ASSIGNMENT DUE: *Cambodian Rock Band* research report

**March 6 (M) - Eleventh Class**

Putting it all together: *An Enemy of the People*.

Introduction of beat analysis. Professor demonstrates.

READING DUE: *An Enemy of the People*, Miller

**March 9 (Th) - Twelfth Class**

Continue *An Enemy of the People*. Class collaborates for beat analysis.

**March 13 (M) - Thirteenth Class**

Discuss staging. Whole class collaborates for beat analysis.

**March 16 (Th) - Fourteenth Class**

Students lead beat analysis.

ASSIGNMENT DUE: break down one beat of *Enemy of the People*, propose basic staging

Choose Play for Final Project

**March 20 (M) - Fifteenth Class**

What is a concept and where does it come from?

Analysis of *Ubu Roi*

READING DUE: *Ubu Roi*, Brook (selections in document)

**March 23 (Th) - Sixteenth Class**

Continue discussion of *Ubu Roi*, mise en scene

**March 27 (M) - Seventeenth Class**

Discuss rhythmic features of *Ubu Roi*

READING DUE: Excerpts from *Rhythm in Drama*

**March 30 (Th) - Eighteenth Class**

Presentation day.

ASSIGNMENT DUE: mise-en-scene presentations

**April 3 (M) - Nineteenth Class**

Wrap up Ubu design presentations

Discuss Final projects

**April 6 (Th) - NO CLASS (SPRING BREAK)**

**April 10 (M) - NO CLASS (SPRING BREAK)**

**April 13 (Th) - NO CLASS (SPRING BREAK)**

**April 17 (M) - Twentieth Class**

*Far Away*

READING DUE: "A Short Organum for Theatre" sections 1-11, 13-14, 17-19, 21-22, 25-26, 30-37, 45-46, 63-67 (IT'S NOT AS LONG AS IT LOOKS; THE SECTIONS ARE SUPER SHORT)

**April 20 (Th) - Twenty-First Class**

*Far Away*, continued.

ASSIGNMENT DUE: estrangement in *Far Away*

**April 24 (M) - Twenty-Second Class**

Chekhov lecture. Discuss *The Cherry Orchard*

READING DUE: *The Cherry Orchard*, 1903 script

**April 27 (Th) - Twenty-Third Class**

Characters in *The Cherry Orchard*

ASSIGNMENT DUE: Report GCs for all characters, detailed cause-effect (triggers & heaps) for one principal character

**May 1 (M) - Twenty-Fourth Class**

Continue discussing *The Cherry Orchard*. Comedy/drama. Naturalism or something else.

READING DUE: Richard Nelson's Preface to the 1903 script, choose one of Chekhov's stories

**May 4 (Th) - Twenty-Fifth Class**

Continue discussing *The Cherry Orchard*. Scene analysis.

**May 8 (M) - Twenty-Sixth Class**

Final Presentations, Day One

ASSIGNMENT DUE: Final Presentation

**May 11 (Th) - Twenty-Seventh Class**

Final Presentations, Day Two

ASSIGNMENT DUE: Final Presentation

**May 15 (M) - FINAL CLASS**

Wrap-up. Revisiting the semester. Looking forward.

ASSIGNMENT DUE: Any extra credit work