

Bergen Community College
Division of Arts, Humanities & Wellness &
Division of Business, Arts & Social Sciences

Course Syllabus

The Elements of Playwriting - THR 208*

(*This course is cross listed with WRT 208)

Date of Most Recent Syllabus Revision: _____
Course Typically Offered: Fall ___ Spring X_ Every Semester ___ Other ____
Syllabus last reviewed by: BCC General Education Committee _____
Curriculum Committee _____

Basic Information About Course and Instructor

Semester and Year:
Course and Section Number:
Meeting Times and Locations:
Instructor:
Office Location:
Phone:
Departmental Secretary:
Office Hours:
Email Address:

Course Description

The Elements of Playwriting (WRT/THR-208) is a workshop-style course that allows students to experience and practice the creative process involved in writing. This course provides students with an understanding of dramatic text, their ability to create character, relationship, dialogue, and dramatic action. In addition the course introduces students to the process of stage performance and managing their scripts for this medium. (Prerequisite: WRT 101)

Student Learning Objectives

As a result of meeting the requirements in this course, you will be able to:

1. To recognize the special genre demands of the art and craft of playwriting by reading and analyzing the creative work of professional writers.
2. To utilize the elements of craft in the drama genre.
3. To develop a greater appreciation for the creative process.
4. To practice critical approaches and develop aesthetic sensibilities through immersion in the creative process.

5. To review the conventions and apply standards of professional manuscript preparation.
6. To understand the unique conventions and requirements intrinsic in scripts made for theatre performance.

Course Requirements

1. Write at least four (4) scenes (4-10 pages each).
2. Revise/Rewrite at least three (3) of four scenes.
3. Edit and prepare for performance at least one (1) complete Act. (40 pages and up).
4. Submit weekly writing for workshop and provide weekly constructive criticism on fellow students writing in the workshop.
5. Read and discuss weekly assigned readings of published authors.
6. Establish a writing pattern and schedule by keeping a journal of weekly writing. (This should be 4-6 times a week of at least 10 minutes).

Course Texts and Other Required Materials

Beckett, Samuel. *Waiting For Godot*. Grove Press. ISBN:9780802130348.

Ibsen, Henrik. *A Doll's House*. Dover Thrift Editions. ISBN:0486270629

Chekov, Anton. *The Cherry Orchard*. Dover Thrift Editions. ISBN: 9780486266824.

Osborne, John. *Look Back in Anger*. Penguin Plays. ISBN: 9780140481754.

Grading

Workshops Discussion	20%
Work in Progress Scenes	30
Final One Act Play	30
Class Participation (Assigned Readings)	20

Attendance Policy

BCC Attendance Policy: "All students are expected to attend punctually every scheduled meeting of each course in which they are registered. Attendance and lateness policies and sanctions are to be determined by the instructor for each section of each course. These will be established in writing on the individual course outline. Attendance will be kept by the instructor for administrative and counseling purposes."

Class Attendance Policy: This is a workshop based course and everyone's attendance is vital. Thus, poor attendance will affect your grade. If your EXCUSED absences (All absences must be excused in advance) exceed twice the number of weekly meetings (4), your grade will be lowered by five (5) % and for each subsequent absence, a further 5%. If you miss more than four weeks of class (8), you will fail this course. In addition, Tardiness will not be accepted; therefore, three late arrivals will equal one absence.

Learning Assistance Centers

ENGLISH LANGUAGE RESOURCE CENTER (ELRC)

ENDER HALL Rm. 126 Ph. (201) 612-5292

The English Language Resource Center, located in Ender Hall Room 126 provides help to students whose native Language is not English. The center assists students to become proficient in English through multimedia computer programs, cassettes, video tapes, and books as well as individual tutoring. The English Language Resource Center also offers ESL conversation groups and specialized language skill workshops.

TUTORING CENTER

Room: L125 Ph. (201) 447-7489

[http://www.bergen.edu/Tutoring Center/](http://www.bergen.edu/Tutoring%20Center/)

The Tutoring Center, staffed with peer and professional tutors, offers free individual and group tutoring, supplemental instruction, and online tutoring for subjects offered at BCC. The Tutoring Center provides an alternative approach to problem solving and organization skills.

WRITING CENTER

Room: L125 Ph. (201) 447-7136

<http://www.bergen.edu/pages/1795.asp>

The Writing Center is designed to serve the writing needs of the BCC community. Peer tutors, professional tutors, and English Department faculty serve as writing consultants who work with visitors to the center in individualized sessions. Each session is organized to address the specific needs of the writer. Areas of support include help with research papers, written assignments, college application essays, and grammar review.

Schedule

(Please note: This is a **tentative schedule** and is likely to change as the semester progresses. If I see a need to make changes to the schedule, I will do so and inform you well in advance.)

Week	Assignments for next Class
<p>1 Introductions and analyses of Syllabus. Establishing a writer’s pattern and commitment. Understanding the workshop process. Understanding theatre rather than cinema: Sossaman: 6-11 How to be a Playwright: 12-13. Exercise: Where plays come from? <u>P.17-19</u></p>	<p>No readings assignment.</p>
<p>2 What is Dramatic Writing? Understanding the difference between narrative and dramatic writing. Showing rather than telling: creating scenes where story is told mostly through action. Exercises: Relationships: How do characters dramatically express fear, love, hate, anger etc. Establish Workshop schedule according to groups of students: Student groups will be established on Moodle, for submissions.</p>	<p>Read the following: Act 1 of <i>A Doll’s House</i> Continue the exercise from class. Submit for Workshop: Group 1 (Students who are presenting their scenes for each week must (MUST) have their work in progress uploaded to Moodle by day/time TBA) Any student who fails to do so will get a zero for the assignment and will not be able to submit late – No Exceptions! Also, students must bring copies of work in progress to their scheduled workshop.</p>
<p>3 Basic Plot Structure: (exposition, inciting incident, rising action (Dramatic Questions), climax, falling action) <u>p. 37-40</u> Exercise: Finding and generating Stories (Group Exercise)</p>	<p>Read the following: Act II <i>A Doll’s House</i> Submit for Workshop: Group 2 Exercise: Use what you learned in the class exercise and generate 2 storylines for next class. (Stories must have exposition, rising action etc)</p>
<p>4 Creating Characters: Exercise: Creating a backstory for protagonists; motivation of characters; objectives of characters. <u>P. 26-28.</u> Exercise: <u>30-31.</u></p>	<p>Read the following: Act III <i>A Doll’s House</i> Submit for Workshop: Group 3 Finish today’s exercise at home.</p>
<p>5 Dialogue: Major functions of dialogue. Creating distinguishing characters through dialogue. <u>P.57 - 65</u> Exercise: Eavesdropping. Movie: “Sunset Limited” followed by discussion.</p>	<p>Read the following: <i>Waiting for Godet</i>, Act I & II Submit for Workshop: Group 1</p>

<p>6 Stage management: Understanding that a play is continuous, and has limitations. <u>p. 41-44</u> Exercise: Writing Stage Directions for <i>Sunset Limited</i>.</p>	<p>Read the following: Finish <i>Godet</i> Exercise: Finish the exercise at home.</p>
<p>7 Movement, stage directions: Putting your characters to work: Characters rarely sit and talk, give them movement. <u>P. 55-57</u> Exercise: Characters can perform a task while on stage.</p>	<p>Read the following: Nothing Submit for Workshop: Group 2</p>
<p>8 Setting: understanding the era, Minor Characters: Their roles!</p>	<p>Read the following: <i>The Cherry Orchard</i> Act I Submit for Workshop: Group 3</p>
<p>9 Building Conflict, tension, rising and Falling action. <u>P.47-53</u> Exercise: Scenes with power/pleasure/duty/identity conflicts</p>	<p>Read the following: <i>The Cherry Orchard</i> Act II Submit for Workshop: Group 1</p>
<p>10 Dramatic Questions: Keys to holding the audience's attention. Exercise: Developing Suspense plot AND Emotional Plot.</p>	<p>Read the following: <i>The Cherry Orchard</i> Act III Submit for Workshop: Group 2</p>
<p>11 Themes: Developing themes naturally. <u>P.70-74</u> Exercise: Respecting the audience and putting subtext behind the dialogue, and not in the dialogue.</p>	<p>Read the following: <i>Look Back in Anger</i>, Act I Submit for Workshop: Group 3</p>
<p>12 Revising: What do you want to say? Are you saying it? How do you say it? Exercise: <u>p.80-84</u> Editing your Script: Checklist <u>p. 93-96</u> Performance We will try to see a play on Broadway.</p>	<p>Read the following: <i>Look Back in Anger</i>, Act II SUBMIT FOR PERFORMANCE. Students can cast their characters and provide a script for performance next week.</p>
<p>13 Performance</p>	<p>Read the following: <i>Look Back in Anger</i>, Act III SUBMIT FOR PERFORMANCE.</p>

14 Performance	SUBMIT FOR PERFORMANCE.
15 Performance Classes End	Submit: All writing must be submitted in final portfolio.