

**322.11 Introduction to the Theatre** (3 hrs.)

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**Providence College**

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Mondays 9:50 & Thursdays 12:40

Lecture Theatre

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## SYLLABUS

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### A. Course Description

A general introduction to and overview of the study of the theatre, including the varieties of theatre experience, both past and present; text and performance analysis; the work of actor and director; and consideration of how theatre functions in society.

### B. Course Objectives

Upon completion of this course, each student should be able to:

1. demonstrate an informed and intelligent understanding of both the discipline and creativity involved in the various art forms of theatre
2. understand the relevance of the history of theatre to their present involvement with theatre, and how theatre functions in society, both past and present
3. articulate thoughtful and informed analysis of theatrical texts and performances
4. implement basic acting techniques and character development
5. be prepared for further study in the theatre arts.

### C. Course Texts

Benedetti, Robert. *The Actor in You; third edition*. Pearson Education, 2006.

Edson, Margaret. *Wit*. Faber and Faber, 1999.

Fugard, Athol. *"Master Harold" ...and the boys*. New York: Penguin, 1982.

Goodrich, Frances and Albert Hackett. (1986). *The Diary of Anne Frank*. New York: Dramatists Play Service Inc.

Ibsen, Henrik. *A Doll's House*. New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1992.

All assigned collateral readings are available as PDF documents in your Blackbaud student portal under "Shared Documents" for this course.

## D. Course Requirements

1. Test 10%  
**Date: Sept. 28<sup>th</sup>**
2. Script Analysis/Review 15%  
**Due Date: Oct 29<sup>th</sup>**

Write a 4 – 5 page review of *Trifles* by Canadian playwright Susan Glaspell. Your analysis/review should address the following:

- i) The questions from Exercise 10.2  
(Part III, Step 10, p. 65, *The Actor in You*)
- ii) The main ideas/themes/implications of the play
- iii) The significance of the title of the play

Note: Be sure to refer to the text itself to demonstrate your observations.

3. Textbook Interaction 15%  
**Due Date: Nov. 9<sup>th</sup>** (6 pages total)

Based on your reading of *The Actor in You*, by Robert Benedetti, Part I – Steps 1 – 5 (p. 1 – 25), complete the following:

- i) Throughout Part I Benedetti draws parallels between acting and everyday life. According to Benedetti, in what ways are we actors in our everyday life, and how can this be used in stage acting? Do not quote the text to answer this question – instead translate Benedetti's ideas into your own words. (2 pages)
- ii) Exercise 4:1 Role Playing in Life (p.22)  
Exercise 4:2 Character in Life (p. 23)  
(4 pages)

4. Final Scene Presentation 25% (15% + 10%)

Part 1: (15%)  
**Due Date: Nov. 26<sup>th</sup>**

Prepare an Actor's notebook for the character you will be playing for your final scene presentation. This should include:

- i) Read Steps 12 – 15 of *The Actor in You* (p. 81 – 106)

- ii) Complete Exercise 12:1 Needs (p. 83)  
Exercise 15:2 Self-Image (p. 105)  
Exercise 15:3 The Superobjective (p. 105)

Part 2: (10%)

**Due Date: Dec. 3<sup>rd</sup>/Dec. 7<sup>th</sup>/Dec. 10<sup>th</sup>**

Perform a 10 minute scene in class, in casts of two or three. The scenes will be selected from the plays studied in class, and specific groups and scenes will be assigned by the instructor.

5. Final Exam 20%

The final exam will include Unit II – IV, and all the plays assigned for reading during the course. Questions related to the plays will include class discussions of the play.

6. Course Participation 15%

Class Participation

This will include observation role call, improvisation exercises, and discussion of assigned readings. Due to the interactional nature of the course, class attendance is important. Absence from more than four classes will result in 0% for the participation portion of the grade, and possible failure of the course. Late arrival for class will also become part of the final class evaluation.

Reading Checks

During that section of the course where theatre texts will be read and discussed in class, there will be a reading check question at the beginning of each class. The question is designed merely to test if you have read the play i.e. the question will be testing factual knowledge, not interpretive knowledge.

Live Theatre Attendance

On Nov. 24<sup>th</sup> the class will be attending the Prairie Theatre Exchange production of *Bordertown Cafe* by Canadian playwright Kelly Rebar. There is also a ‘talk-back’ session after the show, during which time audience members can ask the company (actors and director) questions. The cost per student of \$10.00 must be submitted to the instructor no later than Monday, Sept. 21<sup>st</sup>. Transportation will be provided. (Yes, it’s a field trip!) Failure to attend *Borderland Cafe* and the subsequent class discussion, will result in 0% for the participation portion of the grade.

## E. Grading Summary

Excellent	4.0	96 – 100	A+	Satisfactory	2.5	67 – 69	C+
		90 – 95	A				
		85 – 89	A-	Adequate	2.0	63 – 66	C
						60 – 62	C-
Very Good	3.5	78 – 84	B+	Marginal	1.0	57 – 59	D+
						53 – 56	D
Good	3.0	73 – 77	B			50 – 52	D-
		70 – 72	B-	Failure	0.0	<50	F

## F. Course Policies

### 1. Late Assignments

Late assignments will not be accepted after their due date, and will receive a grade of zero for that component of the course. The instructor will *not* receive requests for extensions. If you feel an extension is warranted, attach a cover letter to your assignment when you hand it in, explaining why it is late, and a decision will be made by the instructor when your paper is graded. A waiving of the zero grade will be granted only in the cases of personal or medical emergencies as detailed in the cover letter. Computer problems, conflicts with co-curricular activities, competition for library resources, and/or long weekends before or after due dates do not constitute such emergencies. Failure to plan ahead, or to maintain a margin of time for unforeseen events prior to the due date, does not warrant an extension either.

### 2. Academic Integrity

Plagiarism is defined as stealing from the ideas or writings of another person and passing them off as one's own. This occurs when someone copies or closely paraphrases the intellectual work of someone else without giving proper recognition of the source of the material copied or paraphrased (e.g. in an endnote or text reference). Any assignment in which plagiarism can be identified beyond a reasonable doubt will receive a grade of zero. See the policy on Academic Conduct in the Student Handbook.

### 3. Missed Exams/Tests

Students who miss exams/tests other than a final exam are responsible to contact the professor within one week of the exam date if they still wish to

write the exam/test. Permission to do so will be given to only those students who present evidence or reasonable grounds acceptable to the professor for having missed the exam/test. The format of the exam/test will be at the discretion of the professor. Students who do not write an exam by at most two weeks after the exam/test date will receive a grade of zero for that component of the course. Student athletes who are traveling during a scheduled exam period are required to write their exams 'on the road', invigilated by a coach or supervisor, and are responsible to notify the course instructor one week prior to the exam date.

#### 4. ICTs in Class

Student use of information and communication technologies for purposes other than class note-taking is not allowed in the classroom, as students are expected to give their total attention to class activities. Use of cell-phones or ipods is never appropriate in the classroom, and use of laptop computers to play games, chat with others, browse the internet, or engage material not related to the class is always distracting to classmates and disrespectful to the instructor. Unlike some other post-secondary institutions, Providence has not yet found it necessary to ban laptops from the classroom, or prevent wireless internet access in classrooms. Only judicious use of them will keep it that way.

## G. Bibliography

- Beck, Julian. (1986). *The Life of the Theatre: the relation of the artist to the struggle of the people*. New York: Limelight Editions.
- Brockett, Oscar G. (1996). *The Essential Theatre*. Fort Worth: Harcourt: Brace College Publishers.
- Brockett, Oscar G. (2003). *History of the Theatre, ninth edition*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Cameron, Kenneth M. and Patti P. Gillespie. (2004). *The Enjoyment of Theatre, sixth edition*. Boston: Pearson Education Inc.
- Clurman, Harold. (1997). *On Directing*. New York: Fireside, Simon & Schuster.
- Davies, Robertson. (1997). *Happy Alchemy; Writings on the Theatre and other Lively Arts*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart.
- Fuegi, John. (1987). *Bertolt Brecht: chaos, according to plan*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

- Grant, Neil. (2002). *History of Theatre*. London: Sterling Publishers.
- Guthrie, Tyrone. (1985). *A Life in the Theatre*. New York: Limelight Editions.
- Harrison, Martin. (1998). *The Language of Theatre*. New York: Routledge.
- Hartnoll, Phyllis. (1985). *The Oxford Companion to the Theatre*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Hartnoll, Phyllis. (1968). *A Concise History of the Theatre*. London: Thames & Hudson.
- Homan, Sidney. (2003). *Staging Modern Playwrights; from director's concept to Performance*. Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press.
- L'Engle, Madeleine. (1998). *Walking on Water; Reflections on Faith and the Arts*. Illinois: Harold Shaw Publishers.
- Longfield, Kevin. (2001). *From fire to flood; a history of theatre in Manitoba*. Winnipeg: Signature Editions.
- McCaffery, Michael. (1988). *Directing a Play*. Oxford: Phaidon.
- McCusker, Paul. (1995). *Playwriting; a study in choices and challenges*. Kansas City: Lillenas Publishing Company.
- Meneer, Pauline. (1993). *Stage Management and Theatre Administration*. London: Phaidon.
- Ogden, Dunbar H. (2002). *The Staging of Drama in the Medieval Church*. London: Associated University Presses.
- Schneider, Richard. (1999). *The Theater Management Handbook*. Ohio: Betterway Books.
- Shapiro, Mel. (1997). *An Actor Performs*. Canada: Thomson Wadsworth.
- Smiley, Sam. (1971). *Playwriting: The structure of Action*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall.
- Spolin, Viola Russell. (1985). *Theater Games for Rehearsal: A Director's Handbook*. Illinois: Northwestern University Press.
- Taylor, John. (1976). *A Dictionary of the Theatre*. New York: Penguin Books.

White, Edwin and Marguerite Battye. ((1985). Colorado Springs: Meriwether Publishing Ltd.

Wilcock, Mike. (2002). *Hamlet – the Shakespearean director*. Dublin: Carysfort Press.

Plays – A Thespian’s Selected Reading List:

*A Doll’s House*, Henrik Ibsen  
*A Raisin in the Sun*, Lorraine Hansberry  
*A Street Car Named Desire*, Tennessee Williams  
*Blood Relations*, Sharon Pollock  
*Candida*, George Bernard Shaw  
*Death of a Salesman*, Arthur Miller  
*Hamlet*, William Shakespeare  
*“Master Harold” ...and the boys*, Athol Fugard  
*Oedipus Rex*, Sophocles  
*Quiet in the Land*, Ann Chislett  
*The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, Bertolt Brecht  
*The Hairy Ape*, Eugene O’Neill  
*The Importance of Being Earnest*, Oscar Wilde  
*The Miser* by Moliere  
*The Second Shepherd’s Play*, anonymous (medieval era)  
*The Three Sisters*, Anton Chekhov  
*Trifles*, Susan Glaspell  
*Waiting for Godot*, Samuel Beckett  
*Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf*, Edward Albee  
*Wit*, Margaret Edson

Websites:

<http://canadiantheatre.com>

<http://dramatistplayservices.com>

<http://www.americantheatrewing.org>

## F. Course Outline/Schedule

The readings appearing with a particular class date/topic are to be completed prior to class. All assigned readings are from either the course texts or are posted as PDF documents in your Blackbaud student portal under “Shared Documents” for this course. All assigned readings must be brought to class on the day they are scheduled for discussion. This means you will need to print all PDF documents.

Sept. 10<sup>th</sup>      Orientation to the Course  
                    Class Introductions

### I. History of the Theatre

Sept. 14<sup>th</sup>      Varieties of Theatrical Experience

Sept. 17<sup>th</sup>      Varieties of Theatrical Experience

Sept. 21<sup>st</sup>      Snapshots of the Past – Video(s)

Sept. 24<sup>th</sup>      Theatre as Art: A Theological Exploration & Class Discussion

#### **Readings:**

1) Interview – Dr. James Young, *The Door*

2) L’Engle, Madeleine, “Icons of the True” in *Walking on Water; Reflections on Faith and Art*, p. 25 – 36, 44 – 50, Wheaton: Harold Shaw Publishers, 1998.

3) Pederson, Steve. Dramistry; What Drama Should Avoid, *Worship Leader*, 14:2 March/April, 2005.

Sept. 28<sup>th</sup>      **Test**

### II. Text and Performance Analysis

Oct. 1<sup>st</sup>          Script Analysis – Performance Analysis

Oct. 5<sup>th</sup>          **Reading:** *Oedipus Rex* by Sophocles  
                    *Wit* by Margaret Edson  
                    Class Discussion

Oct. 8<sup>th</sup>          **Reading:** *A Doll’s House* by Henrik Ibsen  
                    Class Discussion

Oct. 12<sup>th</sup>        **Thanksgiving Break (Class cancelled)**

Oct. 15<sup>th</sup>        **Reading:** “*Master Harold*”...and the boys by Athol Fugard  
                    Class Discussion



Dec. 10<sup>th</sup>     **Final Scene Presentations** (theatre classroom)  
Class Debrief

Dec. 17<sup>th</sup>     **Final Exam**    (Thursday, 2:00 – 4:00)