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# ENG 2005-001: Beginning Playwriting

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## English 2005: Beginning Playwriting

Instructor: Dr. David Radavich  
Office: 3785 Coleman Hall  
Telephone: 581-6971 (Office) or 345-9280 (Home)  
Office Hours: 10:00-11:00 WF; 14:00-15:00 MW; and by appointment

### Required Texts:

Catron, *The Elements of Playwriting*  
Cerf, *Thirty One-Act Plays*  
McNamara, *Plays from the Contemporary American Theatre*  
Thomas, *Best American Screenplays*

**PURPOSE.** This course will introduce you to the basic building blocks of drama (e.g., plot, character, setting, climax). We will develop your sense of performance and audience response, increasing your understanding of the relationship between the written word and the demands of staging or filming. To this end, you will be expected to complete one performance-worthy script of one act or equivalent during the semester. Along the way, we will examine various genres and technical demands to aid you in mastering your own approach. You may focus on writing for the stage, TV, screen, or radio.

**COURSE ORGANIZATION.** The course will be divided roughly in half. During the first half, we will be reading and analyzing scripts and writing scenes to help you develop your skills before launching into the main script. The second half will focus on writing, revising, and perfecting your one-act script through class readings, improvisations, and performances.

**ASSIGNMENTS.** The major assignments in this class will require writing scenes to develop your skills in constructing action, character, and dialogue within a convincing and engaging dramatic setting. The final script will represent the culmination of your learning experience. A midterm exam will cover readings and discussion. During the second half of the course, you will be expected to assume performance rôles in scripts by others in the class. There will be no final exam; instead, you will turn in your revised script for final evaluation. Two short reviews of non-musical dramatic performances (ca. 2-3 pages double-spaced) during the semester will be required.

**GRADING.** Evaluation of your work in this course will be demanding and fair and will include an assessment of your class preparedness and participation. Grading will be divided into thirds. ONE THIRD of your grade will be determined by your participation in class discussion and performance, as well as by your progress and improvement; quizzes and reviews will also be counted in this portion. The SECOND THIRD of your grade will be made up of your writing assignments during term. The midterm exam will be worth **two** playwriting assignments, and the

rough draft of your script will be worth **three**. The FINAL THIRD of your grade will consist of the revised version of your script at semester's end; this final portfolio will also include a 3-4-page discussion of the script and your writing process.

**LATE WORK.** Assignments turned in late will be penalized one-third grade PER CALENDAR DAY late. Missed in-class assignments cannot be made up; that is the reward for coming to class regularly.

**ATTENDANCE POLICY.** You are assumed to be professionals-in-training and are expected to attend class regularly as you would show up for work on the job. The attendance policy for the course will operate as follows: you may miss up to one week of class without penalty; this allows you flexibility in case of illness or unexpected emergency. Thereafter, the course grade will be lowered proportionately for each week missed. If you are absent more than four weeks of class, you will automatically receive an F in the course.

**PLAGIARISM.** According to University policy,

Any teacher who discovers an act of plagiarism - "The appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas, and/or thoughts of another author, and representation of them as one's original work" (*Random House Dictionary of the English Language*) - has the right and the responsibility to impose upon the guilty student an appropriate penalty, up to and including immediate assignment of a grade of **F** for the course.

**CONFERENCES.** Please feel free to consult me regarding ideas, planning, problems, revision, etc. I would be happy to meet with you at any mutually convenient time.

**INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES.** If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the Coordinator of the Office of Disability Services (581-6583) as soon as possible.

## English 2005 Assignments

- Jan. 7 - Introduction  
9 - Catron, ch. 6  
11 - Anatole France, *The Man Who Married a Dumb Wife*
- Jan. 14 - William Saroyan, *Hello Out There*  
16 - Catron, ch. 5  
18 - **Scene #1 Due**
- Jan. 21 - King's Birthday; No Class  
23 - Scene work  
25 - Christopher Durang, *Saint Mary Ignatius . . .*
- Jan. 28 - Catron, ch. 2  
Jan. 30 - **Scene #2 Due**  
Feb. 1 - Discussion
- Feb. 4 - Elements of screenwriting  
6 - Screenplay (to be selected; in Thomas)  
8 - Comparison of media
- Feb. 11 - Catron, chs. 3-4; strategic planning  
13 - **SCENARIO DUE**  
15 - Lincoln's Birthday; No Class
- Feb. 18 - Odets, *Waiting for Lefty*  
20 - Catron, ch. 7  
22 - Discussion; trouble-shooting
- Feb. 25 - **Excerpt #1 Due**  
Feb. 27 - Scene Readings  
29 - Shaw, *Bury the Dead*
- Mar. 3 - **MIDTERM EXAM**  
5 - Catron, ch. 8  
7 - **Excerpt #2 Due**

Mar. 10-14 - No Class; Spring Break

Mar. 17 - Building to the climax  
19 - Trouble-shooting  
21 - **ROUGH DRAFT DUE**

Mar. 24 - Sound and spectacle; Performance  
26 - Performance  
28 - “

Mar. 31 - Performance  
April 2 - "  
4 - "

April 7 - Performance  
9 - "  
11 - "

April 14 - Performance  
16 - "  
18 - "

April 21 - Performance  
23 - Fine-Tuning  
25 - Review

NO FINAL EXAM

**FINAL PORTFOLIO DUE BY 5 P.M. ON FINAL EXAM DAY**