

Eastern Illinois University

The Keep

Spring 2021

2021

Spring 1-15-2021

ENG 3064-600: Intermediate Dramatic Writing

Christopher Wixson

Eastern Illinois University

Follow this and additional works at: https://thekeep.eiu.edu/english_syllabi_spring2021



Part of the [English Language and Literature Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

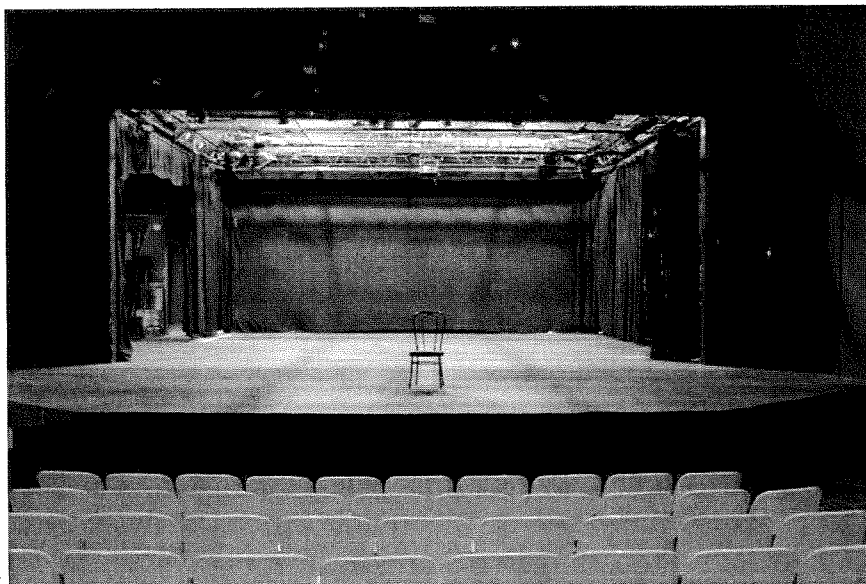
Wixson, Christopher, "ENG 3064-600: Intermediate Dramatic Writing" (2021). *Spring 2021*. 57.
https://thekeep.eiu.edu/english_syllabi_spring2021/57

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the 2021 at The Keep. It has been accepted for inclusion in Spring 2021 by an authorized administrator of The Keep. For more information, please contact tabruns@eiu.edu.

ENG 3064: Intermediate Dramatic Writing

spring 2021 / Section 600

Dr. Chris Wixson



“The creation of character is more about the adverbs than the adjectives.”
--Peter Mendelsund, *What We See When We Read*

“Keep a cool head and a warm heart.” --William Esper, acting teacher

“Forget inspiration. Habit is more dependable.” --Octavia E. Butler, “Furor Scribendi”

syllabus

course philosophy

ENG 3064 offers the opportunity to develop, diversify, sharpen, and deepen the *craft* of the playwright — the primary creative force in theatre. Exercises, applied techniques, and reading/discussion of contemporary American scripts will work to unlock the possibilities of stage storytelling. Exercise-based rather than workshop-based, ENG 3064 is (like, I would argue, theatre itself) *process-oriented* much more than *product-oriented*. Growth occurs only through the vigorous workout of craft muscles, which is precisely what this course provides.

ENG 3064 is a **reading-intensive course** with a schedule that requires time and attention devoted to our scripts. The most talented and consistently interesting theatre practitioners are avid readers; careful, critical, and meaningful reading is as *vital and necessary* a skill as any in the theatre. Reading contemporary playwrights will inform and inspire your craft as well as deepen your understanding of theatre as an art form.

ENG 3064 is also a **writing-intensive course**, designed to cultivate your craft, sharpen your creative expression, and enhance your analytical thinking.

course texts

The Playwright's Guidebook, Stuart Spencer; *Actioning - And How to Do It*, Nick Moseley; *Backwards and Forwards*, David Ball; Plays by Samuel Beckett, Caryl Churchill, Jackie Sibblies Drury, Susan Glaspell, Josh Harmon, Samuel D. Hunter, Suzan-Lori Parks, Harold Pinter, Theresa Rebeck, Sam Shepard, Jen Silverman, and August Strindberg.

contact information

Dr. Chris Wixson

cmwixson@eiu.edu

****I check email very frequently so please don't hesitate to contact me with questions. However, I tend to go to sleep around 9:00 PM CST. As such, if you have a question that needs answering that night, get it to me by 8:30; otherwise, your answer will be in your mailbox around 6:30 AM CST the following morning.**

office hours

DFAC 1351

TR 8:00-10:30 AM, W 12-1 PM, and by appointment

****If you are on campus, the above are my face-to-face office hours. Please let me know you are coming *in advance*; in accordance with IBHE and public health directives, *masking is REQUIRED*, and the office space will be *properly socially-distanced*.**

If you are not on campus or would prefer to meet virtually via Zoom for whatever reason, let me know, and we can make arrangements to do so at a mutually convenient time. Email too can be a good and safe way to get questions answered, feedback on your writing, and guidance during the process of assignments.

an online course in practice

The online course experience is a change from traditional face-to-face learning but especially enhances creativity, self-direction, and articulate expression in writing, all **essential skills** in the professional world and in healthy artistic craft. This course may well involve slightly less reading than you expect but certainly more writing than you may be used to. The time and labor investment is the same, but their expressions will “look” different and feel more independent, as will our course schedule. All course materials (except for the TRS textbooks) will be located on D2L. We may seek opportunities *if possible* for synchronous interaction, though **never** if it will disadvantage students who do not have reliable devices/access to strong Wifi signals or who do have difficult schedules related to jobs or child/elder care. As we all navigate the challenging contours of the new normal, let's work together to make the course a meaningful experience.

class participation

ENG 3064 is a **reading-, writing-, and thinking-intensive** course with a schedule that requires time and attention devoted solely to our work together; meaningful **PRESENCE** is essential to the success of our collaborative endeavor and your individual growth. This is an “own and hone” course (OWNING and HONING your craft as writers) and **only works if you work it**.

Each week, we will discuss plays/sketches and *complete* writing exercises (usually due on Fridays). Weekends are for reading assigned plays, pre-writing for the following week's exercise, and eventually working on your Culmination Piece. **Success in this course hinges upon your commitment to self-directed work.**

Learning Outcomes

Students completing this course will:

1. Understand and deploy the conventions and languages of stage storytelling.
2. Demonstrate a working knowledge with various techniques in dramaturgical craft.
3. Read and analyze several contemporary plays.
4. Determine best practices for their own writing.
5. Cultivate growth in craft, work ethic, and self-assessment.

written assignments / course grade breakdown

*Weekly Sketches (varying lengths, from 2-3 pages to 4-5 pages) / Sketch Reflections	35%
*A Culmination Piece (10 pages)	20%
*Meaningful, Respectful Discussion Forum Posts	30%
*Production Response	5%
*Two Substantive Self-Reflective Inventory Assessments (3-4 pages / (4-5 pages)	10%



a word about evaluation

The course operates on the basis of skill-based grading. Each assignment will have concrete craft objectives; evaluation will focus on the technical achievement of objectives and the efficaciousness of the writer's choices.

academic integrity

Any paper/posting with your name on it signifies that you are the author—that the wording and major ideas are yours, with exceptions indicated by either quotation marks and/or citations. Plagiarism is the unacknowledged use (appropriation and/or imitation) of others' materials (words and ideas). Evidence of plagiarism will result in one or more of the following: a failing grade for the assignment, an F in the course, and a report filed with the Student Standards Office.

late assignments

These are no fun for me to keep track of and only put you further behind. For each day beyond the scheduled due date, the assignment will be penalized a third of a letter grade. **After a week, I will no longer accept the assignment, and it becomes a "0."** If you become ill or the victim of emergency circumstances, please email me as soon as possible and stay in touch.

student success center

Students who are having difficulty achieving their academic goals are encouraged to contact the Student Success Center (www.eiu.edu/~success) for assistance with time management, test taking, note taking, avoiding procrastination, setting goals, and other skills to support academic achievement. The Student Success Center provides individualized consultations. To make an appointment, call 217-581-6696, or go to 9th Street Hall, Room 1302.

By maintaining your enrollment in this course, you agree to adhere to the above policies.

special needs and situations

If you have a *documented* disability and are in need of academic accommodations, please contact me as soon as possible in order to discuss arrangements.

tech support

If you need assistance with D2L, call D2L Support toll free at 1-877-325-7778. Support is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Email and Chat options are also available on the "My Home" page after logging in to D2L. Other D2L resources including a D2L Orientation course for students are available on the same page. For technical questions regarding other software, hardware, network issues, EIU NetID/password, or Panthermail, contact the ITS Helpdesk at 217-581-4357 during regular business hours or submit a help ticket at <https://techsupport.eiu.edu/>. If you have a question regarding course content, contact your instructor.

ENG 3064: Intermediate Dramatic Writing

Dr. Chris Wixson

course calendar

** Because this schedule can and probably will change, it is imperative that you access it frequently on D2L so as to note any revisions. Please get into the habit of *regularly* checking email and the D2L calendar.

** There will be *no* coursework due on any of the five “wellness” days the University has scheduled throughout the semester. This online course will also observe a *full week free of new assignments and due dates* in March.

** Prompts for sketches, self-inventories, and Discussion Forum posts/responses can all be found on D2L.

Week One (January 11) – The Mechanics and Physics of Dramatic Narrative

- A. Read: *Playwright’s Guidebook* pp. 3-18; 204-206
Samuel Beckett’s “Breath” (D2L)
Francesco Cangiullo’s “Detonation Synthesis of All Modern Theater” (D2L)
Notes on “Breath,” “Detonation Synthesis...,” and ENG 3064 (D2L)

****Writer Self-Inventory Due to D2L Dropbox by Wednesday 1/13 at 11:59 PM**

- B. Read: *Backwards and Forwards* Part One
Notes on Ball’s Narrative Theory (D2L)
Susan Glaspell’s “Trifles” (D2L)

****Backwards Trigger/Heap Sequence of “Trifles” Due to D2L by Friday 1/15 at 11:59 PM**

Week Two (January 18) – Stage Dialogue, Stage Movement, and the Stage Character

- Read: Wayth’s *A Field Guide to Actor Training* (2014) pp. 34-41 (D2L)
Harold Pinter’s “Last to Go” (D2L)
August Strindberg’s “The Stronger” (D2L)
Notes (D2L)

“Open Dialogue” Sketch Prompt and “Sketch Reflection Prompt” (D2L)

****“Open Dialogue” Sketch and Sketch Reflection Due to D2L by Friday 1/22 at 11:59 PM**

Week Three (January 25)

Screen: Writing Tips from Canadian Actor and Director Damien Atkins (6 minutes):
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qNAIRzbfyxE&feature=youtu.be>

Read: Octavia E. Butler's "The Rules" (D2L)
Suzan-Lori Parks' "3 Constants" (D2L)
"Discussion Forum Prompt" (D2L)

Write: Discussion Forum Post #1 Due Tuesday 1/26 at 11:59 PM

****Stage Directions Sketch and Sketch Reflection Due to D2L by Friday 1/29 at 11:59 PM**

Week Four (February 1)

Read: Jen Silverman's *The Moors* (D2L)
Notes (D2L)

Write: Discussion Forum Post #2 Due Wednesday 2/3 at 11:59 PM

****Place Sketch and Sketch Reflection Due to D2L Dropbox by Friday 2/5 at 11:59 PM**

Week Five (February 8)

Read: Josh Harmon's *Bad Jews* (D2L)

Write: Discussion Forum Post #3 Due Tuesday 2/9 at 11:59 PM

****Tension Sketch and Sketch Reflection Due to D2L Dropbox by Friday 1/12 at 11:59 PM**

Week Six (February 15)

Read: Theresa Rebeck's *Seminar* (D2L)

Write: Discussion Forum Post #4 Due Tuesday 2/16 at 11:59 PM

****Hidden Agenda Sketch and Sketch Reflection Due to D2L by Friday 2/19 at 11:59 PM**

Week Seven (February 22)

Read: Samuel Beckett's *Play* (D2L)

Screen: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s2QJ0FYE3pw>

Write: Discussion Forum Post #5 Due Tuesday 2/23 at 11:59 PM

****Image Sketch and Sketch Reflection Due to D2L Dropbox Friday 2/26 at 11:59 PM**

Week Eight (March 1)

Read: Harold Pinter's *Ashes to Ashes* / Notes (D2L)

Write: Discussion Forum Post #6 Due Tuesday 3/2 at 11:59 PM

****"The Inexplicable" Sketch and Sketch Reflection Due to D2L by Friday 3/5 at 11:59 PM**

Week Nine (March 8)

Read: Caryl Churchill's *Far Away* (D2L)

Select: Sketch for Culmination Piece Project

Write: Discussion Forum Post #7 Due Tuesday 3/9 at 11:59 PM

***Vision Statement for Culmination Piece Due to D2L Dropbox by Friday 3/12 at 11:59 PM**

WEEK OF MARCH 15 — "WELLNESS" WEEK / NO NEW ASSIGNMENTS OR DUE DATES

Week Ten (March 22)

Read: Jackie Sibblies Drury's *Fairview* (D2L)

Write: Discussion Forum Post #8 Due Tuesday 3/23 at 11:59 PM

***Develop full draft of Culmination Piece Project**

Week Eleven (March 29) Culmination Piece Character Development

Read: Sam Shepard's *Fool for Love* (D2L)

Write: Discussion Forum Post #9 Due Tuesday 3/30 at 11:59 PM

***Stanislavski Questionnaire Worksheet for Culmination Piece's Main Character Due to D2L Dropbox Friday 4/2 by 11:59 PM**

Week Twelve (April 5) Culmination Piece Main Character Arc and Beat Sequence

Read: Samuel Hunter's *A Bright New Boise* / Notes / "Actioning" (D2L)

Write: Discussion Forum Post #10 Due Tuesday 4/6 at 11:59 PM

***Main Character Arc and Beat Sequence Due D2L Dropbox Friday 4/9 by 11:59 PM**

Week Thirteen (April 12) – Culmination Piece First Draft Due to D2L by Friday 4/16 at 11:59 PM

Week Fourteen (April 19) – Small Group Workshop

Read: Selections from David Ives' *All in the Timing* (D2L):

"The Sure Thing"; "Words, Words, Words"; "The Universal Language"; "Variations on the Death of Trotsky"; "The Philadelphia"; "Philip Glass Buys a Loaf of Bread."

Production Response Prompt (D2L)

Screen: EIU Student-Directed Production of *All in the Timing* (YouTube)

Write: Production Response due to D2L by Monday 4/26 at 11:59 PM

***Small Group Workshop Feedback due to D2L by Friday 4/23 at 11:59 PM**

Week Fifteen (April 26) – "Elevator Pitch" due to D2L Discussion Forum by Friday 4/30 11:59 PM

***Revised Final Version of Culmination Piece and Self-Reflective Assessment due on D2L by Wednesday, May 5th 11:59 PM**