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Fall 8-15-2019

### THA 2258-001: Script Analysis

Christopher Wixson

*Eastern Illinois University*

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#### Recommended Citation

Wixson, Christopher, "THA 2258-001: Script Analysis" (2019). *Fall 2019*. 93.

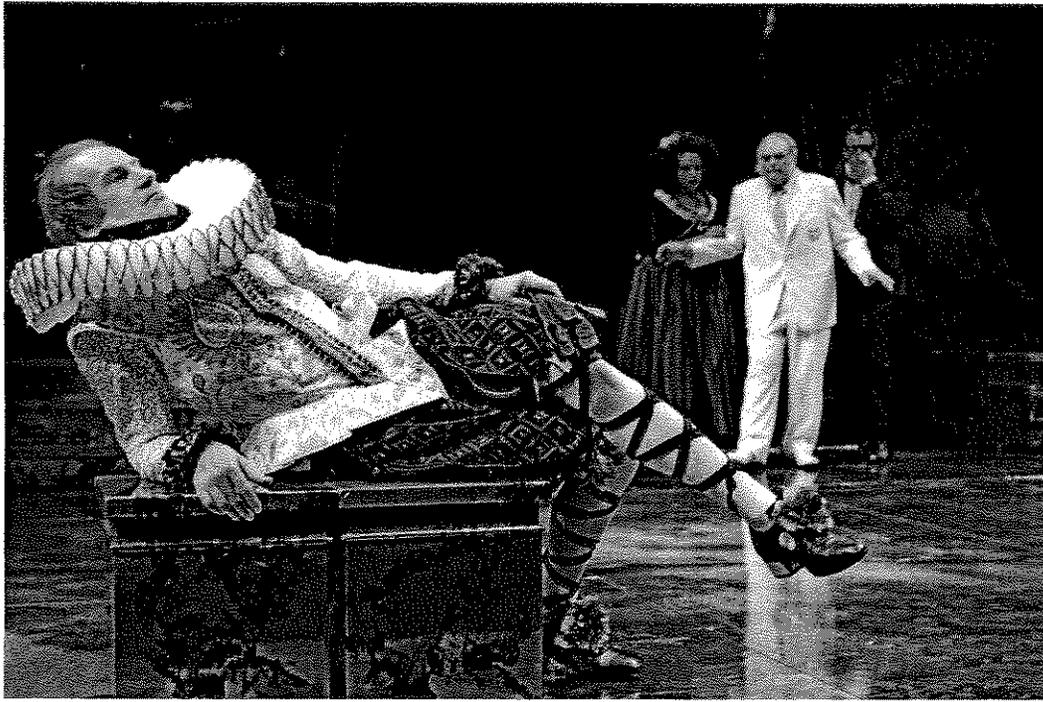
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# Theatre Arts 2258: Script Analysis

fall 2019 / Section 001 / 3.00 Credits

Dr. Chris Wixson



## syllabus

### course philosophy

The purpose of this course is twofold. One, we are going to read some plays together because part of being a theatre professional as well as a cultured individual is having a familiarity with the work of important playwrights. Two, according to the Eastern Illinois University course catalogue, Theatre Arts 2258 will also provide opportunities “to analyze playscripts in terms of and in preparation for performance and production, regardless of theatrical specialization.” Together, we will study “basic concepts and terminology associated with dramatic literature, examine several genres and their traits, and discover means of presenting the playwrights’ ideas on the stage.” THA 2258 dovetails with other Theatre Arts courses in helping you to develop your *craft* as well as cultivate your understanding of theatre as an art form.

**THA 2258 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. Hence, THA2258 is a required core course in the major.

**THA 2258 is also writing-intensive course**, designed to improve skills in critical thinking and analytical expression in order to enable you to meet the challenges of future academic tasks and enhance your proficiency in communication.

Since theatre is a collaborative process, this course will involve collaborative work (including group projects and presentations) as we ingest and digest a number of scripts together while at the same time pursuing individual projects.

## Learning Goals

This course will provide opportunities

1. To analyze plays in terms of and in preparation for production and performance;
2. For understanding basic concepts and terminology associated with dramatic literature;
3. To broaden knowledge of dramatic literature through reading, writing, and class discussion of plays from different periods and genres;
4. To enhance skills of critical thinking and interpretive analysis.

## course texts

*Backwards and Forwards*, David Ball *Woyzeck*, Georg Büchner (handout)

*The Piano Lesson*, August Wilson *The Little Foxes*, Lillian Hellman

*Closer*, Patrick Marber *Ashes to Ashes*, Harold Pinter *The Wolves*, Sarah DeLappe

Shorts by Samuel Beckett, Susan Glaspell, and Eugene Ionesco (D2L)

*Script Analysis for Actors, Directors, and Designers*, James Thomas

## contact information

Dr. Chris Wixson cmwixson@eiu.edu

Coleman Hall 3771 /DFAC 1351 Office Hours: TR 8:30-10:30 AM, W 12-1, and by appointment

## assignments

- \*Short Analysis Papers — three opportunities to demonstrate what you have learned in 3-4 page papers (Action Analysis, Given Circumstances, Character Analysis) for which revision is allowed
- \*Two Group Projects/Presentations
- \*Active, Engaged Class Participation -- defined as WRITING and TALKING productively.
- \*Formalist Analysis -- a complete formal analysis covering all elements of your selected play, at least 10 pages in length

## final grades

Your final grade in the course will be determined by your performance on the following assignments:

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Analysis Papers (each 3-4 pages in length) | 30% |
| <i>Woyzeck</i> Project                     | 10% |
| <i>Ashes to Ashes</i> Project (Final)      | 20% |
| Formalist Analysis (10-12 pages in length) | 30% |
| In-class Writings/ Active Participation    | 10% |

\*\*You must complete all written assignments to complete the course. Failure to complete any one of the components represents incomplete work for the semester and anyone with incomplete work will not receive a passing grade for the course.

## attendance

Mandatory.

I expect you to be in class awake and prepared every Tuesday and Thursday morning. In other words, arrive on time with your reading/writing assignment completed, prepared to participate in discussion. Because so much in this course relies upon in-class work, absences and habitual lateness will adversely affect your course performance. Attendance will be taken at each class session – you are allowed **two** unexcused absences before your grade is negatively affected. After that, each unexcused absence will lower your participation grade by half a letter. **Six unexcused absences will result in a “0” for participation. More than seven unexcused absences will result in a grade of no credit for the course. Habitual lateness (beyond once) will also affect your grade negatively since it is disruptive and disrespectful.** Please notify me by email if there is unexpected illness or an emergency that causes you to miss class. Do **not** get in touch asking “for the assignment” or a “rundown of what you missed.” My responsibilities as an instructor lie with the students who do come to class. Excused absences are accompanied by appropriate legal or medical documentation. Being in rehearsal, in shop, in tech, or in performance does not excuse or exempt anyone from their responsibilities to this course. *Any* unexcused absence will seriously undermine your success in this course.

## class participation

Think of our meetings as potluck conversations and activities punctuated by short in-class writing and informal lectures and discussions of the material. You should come to class *prepared to talk* about the reading for that day and work on individual/group projects in progress. Participation in a college-level course means careful, full preparation of the reading, frequent contributions to discussions, risk-taking in writing and thinking. You should come to each session armed with observations, opinions, questions, and insights, ready to take an active part in the ongoing dialogue about the course materials. Reading quizzes and in-class writings may happen relatively frequently to ensure the quality of our discussions.

Coming to class and saying you are “frustrated” with the reading and thus have nothing to contribute is intellectually lazy and irresponsible. These plays and methods of script analysis are demanding but rewarding; while there will be frustration with their complexity at times, this course understands that complexity as part of the challenge to which we aspire to rise during the semester.

You may not *like* this class or all of the readings we discuss — which is fine. You won’t like everything you have to do in life to move forward. College is a time to develop the skills to learn what is required in a professional context and demonstrate to your professors that you grasp the course content. Don’t come to class and sleep, check your phone, or otherwise distract others and disrupt the process. In short, you are expected to work actively to contribute to the class’s overall movement and to strive to make the course a success. **I TAKE THIS SUBJECT VERY SERIOUSLY.**

## late papers

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

## cell phone and computer use

You may bring your computer to class with you, assuming that you use it in a scholarly and responsible fashion. This means that you will only have applications and windows related to the current discussion open. **You may not check** social media, surf the web, play games, or otherwise distract yourself and those around you from the class conversation with technological devices.

You are likewise expected to use cell phones in a responsible, respectful, and professional manner: **turn them off when you come in to class.** If you have an emergency for which you must be available, you must discuss it with me beforehand and keep your phone on vibrate. **Under no conditions are you allowed to** text message, take pictures or video (illegal in class), play games, or use the cell phone in any other manner during class. The nature of our academic endeavor together necessitates mutual respect and dedicated attention during the too short time we have

to discuss these texts. Violating any of these policies will result in your participation grade being lowered by a full letter grade for each violation.

### **academic integrity**

Any paper 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.

### **student success center**

Students who are having difficulty achieving their academic goals are encouraged to contact the Student Success Center ([www.eiu.edu/~success](http://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 9<sup>th</sup> Street Hall, Room 1302.

### **special needs and situations**

If you have a *documented* disability and are in need of academic accommodations, please contact the Office of Disability Services (581-6583) as soon as possible in order to receive approval.

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### **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.

# THA 2258: Script Analysis

## course calendar

Dr. Chris Wixson

\*\* Reading and writing assignments appear below on the day they are due. Please bring the appropriate texts to class.

\*\* Because this schedule can and probably will change, it is imperative that you bring it to each class meeting so as to make the appropriate revisions.

\*\* Both of our textbooks (Ball and Thomas) assume a working knowledge of Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* and Shakespeare's *Hamlet* for the purposes of illustration. If you have not read these plays, it is a good idea to do so as soon as possible.

|           |    |   |
|-----------|----|---|
| August    | 20 | Course Introduction / Beckett's "Breath" and Cangiullo's "Detonation Synthesis"   |
|           | 22 | Susan Glaspell's "Trifles" (D2L) / <i>Backwards and Forwards</i> Part One   |
|           | 27 | Reread "Trifles" / <i>Backwards and Forwards</i> Parts Two and Three  |
|           | 29 | Formalist Play Analysis / Read <i>Script Analysis</i> "Introduction" (xviii-xli) and 145-53<br>Review Sophocles' <i>Oedipus the King</i> / Choose your Play<br>Discuss Upcoming Short Writing Assignments / "Preparing your Script" |
|           |    |   |
| September | 3  | Hellman's <i>The Little Foxes</i> / <i>Script Analysis</i> Chapter 1 (pp. 1-27 and 38-40)   |
|           | 5  | <i>Foxes</i> Analysis and Action Analysis   |
|           | 10 | Reread <i>Foxes</i> / <i>Script Analysis</i> Chapter 2 (pp. 41-65) – Given Circumstances<br>Bring Chosen Play to Class  |
|           | 12 | <b>Action Analysis Due</b>  |
|           | 17 | <i>Foxes</i> / <i>Script Analysis</i> Chapter 3 (pp. 73-92) – Background Story<br>Introduction to Büchner's <i>Woyzeck</i> (handout)  |
|           | 19 | <i>Woyzeck</i> / Group Meetings   |
|           | 24 | <i>Woyzeck</i> / Group Meetings   |
|           | 26 | <i>Woyzeck</i> / Group Meetings   |
| October   | 1  | <i>Woyzeck</i> Project <b>Due</b> / Group Presentations   |
|           | 3  | <b>Given Circumstances / Background Story Analysis Due 11:59 PM FRIDAY 10/4</b>   |
|           | 8  | Wilson's <i>The Piano Lesson</i> / <i>Script Analysis</i> (pp.172-87) -- Character  |
|           | 10 | <i>The Piano Lesson</i> / <i>Script Analysis</i> (pp.172-87) - Character  |

|          |    |  |
|----------|----|--|
|          | 15 | <i>The Piano Lesson</i>                                    |
|          | 17 | <i>The Piano Lesson</i> <b>Character Analysis Due</b>      |
|          | 22 | DeLappe's <i>The Wolves</i>                                |
|          | 24 | <i>The Wolves</i>  |
|          | 29 | Marber's <i>Closer</i>                                     |
|          | 31 | <i>Closer</i>  |
| November | 5  | <i>Closer</i>  |
|          | 7  | <i>Closer</i>  |
|          | 12 | <i>Closer</i>  |
|          | 14 | <i>Closer</i>  |
|          | 26 | Pinter's <i>Ashes to Ashes</i> and Final Exam Introduction |
|          | 28 | <b>Formalist Analysis Assignment Due</b>                   |

HAPPY THANKSGIVING BREAK!!!!

|          |   |   |
|----------|---|---|
| December | 3 | Ionesco's <i>The Bald Soprano</i> (D2L)<br><i>Script Analysis</i> (pp. 27-37; 65-72; 92-4; 196-8) |
|          | 5 | Conclusion / Evaluation / Exam Preparation  |

\*\*Final exam due (via D2L dropbox): Tuesday, December 10<sup>th</sup>, 11:59 PM.

For your three short and your formalist analyses, you may select from the following full-length modern and contemporary plays, found at Booth Library:

**\*\*PLEASE DO NOT SELECT A PLAY WITH WHICH YOU HAVE BEEN**

**INVOLVED IN A PAST PRODUCTION OR WORKED ON IN THA 3800\*\***

|  |   |
|--|---|
| Auburn, <i>Proof</i>   | Ruhl, <i>In the Next Room</i>                 |
| Chekhov, <i>The Seagull</i>  | Shaw, <i>Mrs. Warren's Profession</i>         |
| Guirgis, <i>The Motherf**ker with the Hat</i>                              | Shepard, <i>Fool for Love</i>                 |
| Hall, <i>The Mountaintop</i>   | Silverman, <i>The Moors</i>                   |
| Harmon, <i>Bad Jews</i>  | Wilde, <i>The Importance of Being Earnest</i> |
| Hansberry, <i>A Raisin in the Sun</i>                                      | Williams, <i>Cat on a Hot Tin Roof</i>        |
| Ibsen, <i>A Doll's House</i> , <i>Hedda Gabler</i> , or <i>Rosmersholm</i> |   |
| Pinter, <i>The Birthday Party</i>  | Wilson, <i>Joe Turner's Come and Gone</i>     |
| Rebeck, <i>Seminar</i>   |   |