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ENG 2005-001: Creative Writing: Drama

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This is an introductory course in the art and craft of playwriting. In this course, students will:

1. Read and analyze plays
2. Write two short plays
3. Participate in workshop, which includes reading aloud and responding to students’ plays
4. Respond in writing to course material
5. Attend and respond to two live performances: An Evening of Student-Directed One Acts and the EIU 10th Annual New Play Reading Series
6. Attend and respond to Kevin McFillen’s Playwriting/Screenwriting Workshop

Required Texts:

Supplemental Texts:

Grades:
Weekly Responses 300
Performance Response I 100
Performance Response II 100
Kevin McFillen Response 100
Short Play I 100
Short Play II 100
Final Portfolio and Reflection 200
Total 1000 points

Be Prepared for Class
To prepare for each class, please do the following:
1. Bring your textbook(s) and journal with you to class
2. Read the assigned material before class and respond to the assigned reading in your journal or notebook before class
3. Type your assignments and bring the appropriate number of copies to class on the day they are due
4. Arrive ready to participate in games or activities or in-class writing: each class is designed to immerse you in the creative process of becoming a playwright
Weekly Responses  
Please bring your journal to class each day. In addition to preparatory writing for your plays, you will write responses to the readings, which are to be shared with the class. Each response is worth around **20 points** and should be comprised of a List of Ten, which means ten of anything about the reading, such as words you needed to look up, items you found interesting or confusing, phrases you had questions about. ANYTHING GOES. Write page and paragraph numbers (or act/scene/line numbers) so the class can follow along with you during discussion.

Live Performances (and Responses)  
You will write responses to two live performances this semester. The first performance is the reading of the winning entry to the *EIU 10th Annual New Play Reading Series*, which is **Wednesday, March 21st at 7pm** in the Doudna Fine Arts Center (room TBA). The second performance is *An Evening of Student-Directed One Acts* at the Doudna Fine Arts Center Black Box. *An Evening of Student-Directed One Acts* runs **Friday, March 30th – Sunday, April 1st**. You need a ticket or a program from ONE performance, which you will turn in with your response. Your response to each performance should be 4-6 pages or 1,000-1,500 words, and should include your observations of the play, your comments, and any connections you see to the course and the process of playwriting. Performance responses will be graded for clarity, detail, and insight into the plays/performances and the playwriting process.

Guest Playwright: Kevin McFillen  
Playwright Kevin McFillen will be visiting class on **Thursday, April 12th**, and will give a workshop from **4-5:30pm** that day in the Doudna Fine Arts Center Movement Studio Room 2040. The workshop is titled "Writing Outside the Frame: Adapting Screenwriting Techniques for the Stage." This workshop explores the use of screenwriting techniques for addressing the common pitfalls of writing for the stage, including problems with character development, creating effective action and behavior, and dramatic structure. You may want to read *Save the Cat* prior to his visit. Your response should be 4–6 pages or 1,000–1,500 words and include your observations of the lecture and workshop as well as what you have learned about playwriting/screenwriting and how this connects to your own writing. Your response will be graded for clarity, detail, and insight into his presentations and your writing process. You must attend both his guest lecture during class and his workshop in Doudna to receive full credit for your response.

Short Plays  
For each workshop, you will write a 10-minute play, which is roughly 8–10 pages of dialogue. Please follow standard playwriting format (see *Playwright's Guidebook* 298–300). You are free to write about any topic, but limit your play to no more than three characters. Plays will be graded for believability, originality, and risk. Does your play say something interesting? Does it utilize theatrical elements? Does it pull the audience in? **Bring one (1) copy for each character and an extra for stage directions.**

Final Portfolio and Reflection  
Your Final Portfolio consists of a significant revision of one of your short plays. Significant means that it must undergo some major change, such as adding or deleting a character, changing a character’s gender, motivation, or action. You may also revise your play into a screenplay. (please include the originals with my comments) Again, your writing will be graded for believability, originality, and risk, as well as depth and thoughtfulness in your revision. Your Reflection consists of a 7–10 page response to the course, course materials, to your own writing process, your choices
in revising your work for the portfolio, and any other material relevant to your development as a playwright and your experience in this class.

Attendance
I do not keep attendance, but rather, give points toward Weekly Responses if you attend class and have a written response that you read out loud. If you are not present, if you do not have a response, or if you do not read it out loud, you will not receive points for that day’s Response. For Workshop days, you will lose all credit for your submission if you are absent the day your work is scheduled to be read. If you are absent on other students’ workshop days, you will lose points from your submission. Exceptions will be made only for documented emergencies and documented school team sport activities.

EIU Writer’s Workshop
These all-genre workshops offer time for you to receive feedback on your writing outside of the classroom. These are free and open to the public and will take place in Coleman Hall Room 3691 on Tuesdays from 4-5pm.

Extra Credit
There will be a few opportunities for extra credit in this course. If you attend a play outside of class, you may write a 500-word response to receive 10 points extra credit (limit: 3). If you attend any of the Lions in Winter events (see English Department Website) during the first three weeks of the semester, you may also write a 500-word response (for each separate event you attend) to receive 10 points extra credit. Please send extra credit responses to me as an email with “Extra Credit” in the subject line within one week of attending.

Academic Honesty
Please note the English Department’s statement on plagiarism (that is, the intentional or unintentional use of another writer’s intellectual property without proper acknowledgment):

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 own 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 assignments, of a grade of F for the assigned essay and a grade of F for the course, and to report the incident to the Judicial Affairs Office.

Students with Documented Disabilities
If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodation, you must make arrangements through the Office of Disability Services; you should contact the Coordinator of the Office of Disability Services (581-6583) as soon as possible.

Tentative Schedule

Week One
Tuesday, 1/10: Introduction and overview
Thursday, 1/12: Discuss Backwards & Forwards, vii–6: Foreword and Introduction

Week Two
Tuesday, 1/17: Discuss Hamlet Act I, Scenes I–III
Thursday, 1/19: Discuss Hamlet, Act I, Scenes IV–V
Week Three
Tuesday, 1/24: Discuss Backwards & Forwards 7–36: Part One, Shape
Thursday, 1/26: Discuss Backwards & Forwards 39–78: Part Two, Methods

Week Four
Tuesday, 1/31: Discuss The Playwright's Guidebook ix–34: Foreword, Introduction, Part One
Structure: One
Thursday, 2/2: Discuss The Playwright's Guidebook 35–56, Part One, Structure: Two and Three

Week Five
Tuesday, 2/7: Discuss The Playwright's Guidebook 57–72: Part One, Structure: Four
Thursday, 2/9: Discuss The Playwright's Guidebook 73–95: Part One, Structure: Five and Six

Week Six
Tuesday, 2/14: Discuss The Playwright's Guidebook 96-106: Part One, Structure: Seven
Thursday, 2/16: Discuss The Playwright's Guidebook 231–41: Feedback

Week Seven
Tuesday, 2/21: Workshop
Thursday, 2/23: Workshop

Week Eight
Tuesday, 2/28: Workshop
Thursday, 3/1: No Class (AWP in Chicago)

Week Nine
Tuesday, 3/6: Workshop
Thursday, 3/8: Workshop

Week Ten: SPRING BREAK

Week Eleven
Tuesday, 3/20: Discuss The Playwright's Guidebook 111–24: Part Two, Dramatic Elements: Prologue and Eight
Wednesday, 3/21: Attend the EIU 10th Annual New Play Reading Series at 7pm in Doudna
(omit 138-41)

Week Twelve
Tuesday, 3/27: Discuss The Playwright's Guidebook 170-201: Part Two, Dramatic Elements: Ten;
DUE: Response to EIU 10th Annual New Play Reading Series
Thursday, 3/29: Discuss The Playwright's Guidebook 204-18: Part Two, Dramatic Elements: Eleven
Weekend: Attend one performance from *An Evening of Student-Directed One Acts* in Doudna Fine Arts Center Black Box Theatre (see Doudna website for times)

Week Thirteen
Tuesday, 4/3: Workshop
Thursday, 4/5: Workshop; **DUE:** Response to *An Evening of Student-Directed One Acts*

Week Fourteen
Tuesday, 4/10: Workshop
Thursday, 4/12: Kevin McFillen, guest playwright (in-class)

*4-5:30pm:* Workshop with Kevin McFillen in Doudna Fine Arts Center Room 2040

Week Fifteen
Tuesday, 4/17: Workshop; **DUE:** Response to Kevin McFillen

Week Sixteen
Tuesday, 4/24: Revision Workshop
Thursday, 4/26: Revision Workshop

Final: **DUE:** Monday, April 30th, at noon: Final Portfolio and Reflection