

# Theatre History I/ Script Analysis

Instructor: Eric Ruffin

Class Meeting: T/TH 3:30PM-4:55PM

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## I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

**Theatre History I/ Script Analysis** traces the origins of theatre from its ritualistic storytelling origins through the 15<sup>th</sup> Century (Middle Ages). This course will survey world theatre forms, styles, techniques, and traditions, with scholarly research and application in the classroom. Research and lab work will be conducted by the students. Students will also be required to read and analyze plays from different eras and cultures to examine the role of performance in various civilizations.

This examination will place the theatre contributions from these periods in historical context. Art and artists do not exist in a vacuum. How socio/political and cultural movements inform theatre will be the ongoing discussion. Critical analysis of assigned material will be required by all in daily discussions. Lectures and readings will address the aesthetics of theatre; its art and craft, including its artists and practitioners while acknowledging its relationship to the society that produces it.

**This course supports the following national and dcps standards for arts education:**

Content Standard 8: Understanding context by analyzing the role of theatre, film, television, and electronic media in the past and present.

Content Standard 6: Comparing and integrating art forms by analyzing traditional theatre, dance, music, and visual arts, and new forms.

## II. COURSE OBJECTIVES

**Students will be able to:**

1. Demonstrate knowledge of important ideas, people, places and methods
2. Identify various theatrical styles and the cultures that produced them
3. Articulate similarities and differences between different periods and cultures
4. Delineate a rough timeline for the development of western and world theatre
5. Engage in oral and written discussion of plays
6. Identify concepts and practices that continue in modern theatre
7. Synthesize and apply theatrical conventions and practices to the production of a theatrical performance.
8. Utilize tools given to dissect and understand a script.

### **Required Texts:**

David Ball, Backwards and Forwards

William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*

*Topdog/ Underdog* Suzan Lori- Parks

*Who's Afraid of Virginia Wolfe* Edward Albee

*A Doll's House*, Henrik Ibsen

*Fences*, August Wilson  
*A Raisin in the Sun*, Lorraine Hannesbery  
*A Streetcar Named Desire*, Tennessee Williams  
*The Rover*, Aphra Behn  
*The Dutchman* Amiri Baraka  
*The Colored Museum* George Wolfe  
*Ruined* Lynn Nottage  
*Marisol* Jose Rivera  
*Stop Kiss* Diana Son  
*Angels in America*, Tony Kushner

**Topics to be covered include:**

- Script analysis
- The Historical and cultural influence on playwriting
- Artistic Movements
- Various existing Play Structures
- Conceptualization
- Origins of storytelling and its conventions

**Student Responsibilities:**

- Assigned readings and plays must be read, digested, and pondered before the class for which they are assigned. Informed thoughtful participation in the discussion groups is a fundamental part of the course.

**Student Evaluation:**

The student will be graded on work accomplished in:

Weekly Quiz Assignments	60%
Critiques/Play Reviews	10%
Class Participation	<b>10%</b>
Final Exam	20%

Spot quizzes and extra credit assignments will be considered when calculating the final grade.

**Attendance:**

Students who are excessively late and/or absent compromise their ability to succeed in this course. Role will be taken each class. Lateness will be tallied in the same manner as absence.

Date	Lecture/ Discussion	Class Report
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Week I	Introduction/	
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	W. Shakespeare, <i>Hamlet</i>	
Week 2	W. Shakespeare <i>Hamlet</i> <u>Backwards and Forwards</u> , David Ball	
Week 3	Aristotle's Poetics <i>A Raisin in the Sun</i> Lorraine Hannesberry	
Week 4	<i>The Colored Museum</i> , George Wolfe	
Week 5	<b><i>Who's Afraid of Virginia Wolfe</i></b> , Edward Albee	
Week 6	<i>Ruined</i> , Lynn Nottage	
Week 7	<i>Medea</i> , Euripides	
Week 8	<i>Marisol</i> , Jose Rivera	
Week 9	<i>A Doll's House</i> , Henrik Ibsen	
Week 10	<i>Angels in America</i> , Tony Kushner	
Week 11	<b><i>Fences</i>, August Wilson</b> <i>Topdog/ Underdog</i> , Suzan Lori- Parks	
Week 12	<i>The Cherry Orchard</i> , Anton Chekov	
Week 13	<i>The Rover</i> , Aphra Behn	
Week 14	Stop Kiss, Diana Son	
	<b><i>Thanksgiving Recess 11/24 through 11/27</i></b>	
Week 15	The Dutchman, Amiri Baraka	Week
16	Final Projects	

*While not conclusive, the following is a list of verbiage used in the classroom. All of the students should be familiar with the terms, their definition and how to apply them when approaching the craft of play Analysis*

Historical context:	Stasis:
Significant info regarding the playwright's life and body of work:	Intrusion/Catalyst:
Style:	Dramatic question:
Title:	Climax:
Subject:	Denouement:.
Thought/Spine:	First and Last Scene Events:
Theme:	Characters Overall Objectives:
Protagonist:	Images:
Protagonist's Overall Objective:	Adherence Aristotles Poetics:
The Antagonist:	Character scene objectives:
Point of Attack:	Purpose for Character:
Genre:	Events/ Overall event:
Mood:	Plot points
Beats	Character Driven vs. Plot Driven

### III. Grading

You are required to attend class regularly, take part in discussions read assigned material write reviews and participate in group projects. A minimum of five quizzes, a midterm and a final will also be given.

### IV. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Be present and on time for class
2. Be well prepared for class activities and discussions (inability to participate in discussion constitutes an absence)
3. Conduct research
4. Attend and review two (2) live theatre performances
5. Group projects that culminate in a final report and/or presentation
6. A minimum of Five (5) Quizzes and Two (2) Exams

## VI. GRADING SCALE

1. A -- Excellent		100-90
2. B -- Good	89-80	
3. C -- Fair		79-70
4. D -- Passing	69-60	
5. F -- Fail		59 and below

This course is a survey of information essential to an understanding of play analysis and theatre history. As with any survey course, the content must remain flexible if it is to address the specific needs of the students, therefore, the syllabus and course schedule are subject to change at any time. These changes are at the sole discretion of the instructor, and whenever possible will be made in writing. Further, every attempt is made to include department productions as works in the syllabus.

The instructor will choose chapters from a variety of sources. Students may be asked to photocopy or purchase some plays or collections.

*(If the play you see is produced in the DC metro area, the theatre company must be listed on the website below))*

- ★ for professional shows, reference [www.helenhayes.org](http://www.helenhayes.org) for a listing of area theatre companies and show openings and closings
- ★ also check “The Guide to the Lively Arts” in the **Washington Post**
- ★ check out [www.cultural-alliance.org/tickets](http://www.cultural-alliance.org/tickets) for half price ticket info in DC
- **note!!!** *Any student in this course who has a disability that may prevent him/her from fully demonstrating his/her abilities should contact me at the beginning of the semester or within two weeks of the diagnosis. The Duke Ellington School of the Arts (DESA) is committed to providing an educational environment that is accessible to all students. In accordance with this policy, students in need of accommodations due to a disability should also contact the dean of students.*
- ★ **Please note!!!** *Each student, as an active participant in the DESA community, is responsible for performing academic work that holds to the highest standards of honesty. Acts of cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, and helping others to commit such acts are all forms of academic dishonesty. Acts of academic dishonesty could result in a disciplinary action (the DESA Student Code of Conduct permits an instructor to assign either an “F” on an assignment or an “F” in the course for academic dishonesty) that may include, but is not limited to, suspension or dismissal. Consult the Student Code of Conduct in the Student Handbook for further information.*