

Play Writing

School year 2019-2020

Instructor: Shom Shamapande

Email: Shomwa@gmail.com

Course Description

Introduction to Playwriting is dedicated to process. Students learn to write plays by writing plays. The primary goal of the course is to encourage students to write quickly, fluidly, and fearlessly. Students will write one 10 minute play (approximately 10 pages) twice a month, or a 10 page scene which will be outlined in an assignment. Our emphasis is on experimentation and process.

The course will introduce the traditional approach to theatre which is rooted in character and narrative structure, with emphasis on a play's arc through its beginning, turning point, and ending. In class exercises are designed to circumvent students' first lines of defense, to silence the negative editor voice, to experience trusting first instincts, and to encourage students to write both visually and concretely. Each week's assignment will introduce another element of craft, including high and low context dialogue, revealing action, the power of the unspoken word, disrupted ritual, etc.

After a session devoted to the ground rules of giving and receiving constructive feedback, work is read in class and the group responds. Character maps, clustering, storytelling from personal experience, and monologues are the starting points. Reading is a component; a short play or scene by a contemporary playwright will be read and discussed each week in class. These plays introduce students to the wide world of individual voices and styles.

Rewriting follows feedback. The process may also include seminars with guest playwrights and seeing local productions.

Class Outline:

- I. Introduction to Storytelling
- II. What are stories
- III. Understanding the format and the function
- IV. Aristotle's Poetic
- V. Drama
- VI. Themes
- VII. Character Development
- VIII. Dialogue writing
- IX. Elements of Suspense
- X. Crafting a scene (Stage Direction)
- XI. Comedy
- XII. Writing workshop

Writing Requirements/ Projects

You will write a 10 minute play (approximately 10 pages) each twice a month or be working on revisions of a play.

Your final project at the end of every advisory can be:

- One (1) expanded 10 minute play (a long one act of 20-30 pages) or
- Two polished 10 minute plays. These would be 2nd or 3rd drafts of plays you have written during the course of the Advisory.
- Or continued work on one strong piece you wish to develop for production

Writing Goals

Your goal should be to write between 7 and 10 pages a week. Many of these will be "false starts" that you throw away. **Keep going.**

Journals

- You should keep a writing journal to record ideas, overheard conversations, made-up conversations, character profiles, research, images, titles, words you like the sound of, settings for scenes, etc.
- Buy a notebook small enough to carry with you all the time.
- Get in the habit of writing your ideas and your questions down. Keep a notebook next to your bed.
- Write it down. Write it down. Write it down.
- Date all your work.
- Collect images, postcards.
- Begin to pay attention to your imaginative life; feed it a little.
- Make writing a habit.

Attendance:

Attending school is required by DC Law. Therefore, our goal is that our students attend school **every day** and **on time**.

- Students with 1 or 2 unexcused absences will have their parent/guardian notified of day absence.
- Students with 5 or more unexcused absences during a single advisory will receive a grade reduction. Parent/Guardian and student will also be required to have a Student Support Team meeting conducted by Attendance Counselor.

Grading

ACTIVITIES	PERCENTAGES
Assignments/	60%
Final Project (per Advisory)	20%
Class Participation / Share Journal entries ...	20%

The factors in consideration beyond the quality of your writing include:

- Attendance
- Reading the Assigned Texts and Being Prepared for Discussion

- Meeting the Assigned Deadlines for Scenes and Drafts
- Degree of Improvement
- Quality of your Critique of your Peers
- Willingness and Ability to Rewrite