

**GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY  
COLLEGE OF VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS – DEPARTMENT OF THEATER**

**THR 484 – Dramatic Adaptation and Translation for Stage and Screen**

Winter/Spring 2012      Monday & Wednesday 1:30 – 2:45 pm

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Office Hours by appointment M, W, F in PAB A407

A copy of the full course syllabus can be found online: [theater.gmu.edu/academics](http://theater.gmu.edu/academics)

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*The director Milos Forman (Amadeus, One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest) worked with playwright Peter Shaffer on adapting his stage play Amadeus into the film of the same name. Forman described the process of adaptation as one of "giving birth a second time."*

*"You are what you love, not what loves you."  
Adaptation by Charlie Kaufman*

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## **Course Description**

This interdisciplinary course will introduce students to the arts of dramatic adaptation and translation for the stage and screen. Students will read and see examples of adaptations and translations, identify challenges in each form, and discuss them with professionals who adapt or translate works for theatre, film, opera and other dramatic medium. Students will apply their skills to short creative exercises, critical analysis, a longer adaptation or translation project and present their work to the class.

## **Course Texts and Materials**

1. The Art of Adaptation by Linda Seger
2. Ruined by Lynn Nottage
3. I Am My Own Wife by Doug Wright
4. The Laramie Project by Moises Kauffman (Tectonic Theatre Project)
5. Shine – The Screenplay by Jan Sardi
6. The Shawshank Redemption – The Screenplay by Frank Darabont
7. Different Seasons (novella "Rita Hayworth and the Shawshank Redemption") by Stephen King.
8. Brokeback Mountain: Story To Screenplay, Story by Annie Proulx, Screenplay by Larry McMurtry and Diana Ossana

Examples of **other adaptations and translations** will be drawn from works in film, theatre, opera, television, librettos, “books” for musicals and devised performance.

Adaptation by Charlie Kaufman

The End of the Affair by Graham Greene, opera libretto by Heather McDonald

Translations by Brian Friel

“On the Task of the Translator” by Walter Benjamin

The Seagull by Anton Chekhov, translation by Kristin Johnsen-Neshati

The English Patient by Michael Ondaatje, screenplay by Athony Minghella

No Country For Old Men by Cormac McCarthy, screenplay by The Coen Brothers

How I Learned To Drive by Paula Vogel

Sense and Sensibility by Jane Austen, screenplay by Emma Thompson

Friday Night Lights non-fiction book by H.G. Bissinger, adapted for television by Peter Berg, Brian Grazer, David Nevins

The Rivers and Ravines by Heather McDonald

The Three Trials of Oscar Wilde by Moises Kaufman (Tectonic Theatre Project)

Sunday in the Park with George by Stephen Sondheim

Sweeney Todd by Stephen Sondheim

“Writing the Book” by Marsha Norman

WELL by Lisa Kron

Nine Parts of Desire by Heather Raffo

Atonement by Ian McEwan, screenplay by Christopher Hampton

Amadeus by Peter Shaffer, film by Peter Shaffer and Milos Forman

To Kill A Mockingbird by Harper Lee, screenplay by Horton Foote

Into The Wild by Jon Krakauer, film by Sean Penn

Out of Africa by Isak Dinesen, screenplay by Kurt Luedke and Sydney Pollack

About A Boy by Nick Hornby, screenplay by Peter Hedges, Chris and Paul Weitz

One Flew Over The Cuckoo’s Nest by Ken Kesey, screenplay by Bo Goldman and Lawrence Harben, directed by Milos Forman, play by Dale Wasserman

West Side Story by Leonard Bernstein, Stephen Sondheim, Jerome Robbins. Adapted from the play Romeo & Juliet

Social Network by Aaron Sorkin (screenplay) based on the book The Accidental

Billionaire by Ben Mezrick and other materials about Mark Zuckerberg

Walk The Line by Gill Dennis and James Mangold (screenplay) about Johnny Cash

Shakespeare In Love by Marc Norman and Tom Stoppard

The Hours by Michael Cunningham, screenplay by David Hare

FEN by Caryl Churchill, JOINT STOCK Theatre Company

## **Nature of Course Delivery**

This course is taught through studio practice, lectures, discussion, and workshop. The coursework includes assigned readings, viewings of films, discussion, short craft-oriented writing assignments, critical analysis papers and a creative adaptation or translation project.

## **Goals of the Course and Learning Outcomes**

The objectives of the course are to expose students to the art forms of dramatic adaptation and translation for the stage and screen, significant critical writers about the form, several contemporary playwrights and screenwriters and their works, and through example, craft-oriented exercises and workshop discussion, encourage the development of students' own writing in the medium.

In addition to the writing requirements, the course asks students to participate constructively in discussions, to offer their writing for workshop critique, and to conduct themselves with academic integrity.

This course is designed to develop the foundations of the art and craft for writing dramatic adaptations and translations for the stage and screen.

### **Through participation in this course you will be able to:**

1. Analyze texts in a critical, personal, creative, and responsive way.
2. Demonstrate your ability to express critically and in writing an understanding of the process and craft of adaptation.
3. Discover and employ the tools necessary to express a personal, artistic vision while adhering to the rigors of adapting work from one form into another.
4. Engage in dramatic storytelling in these art forms.

## **Course Requirements and Grading Policy**

Grading: 70% written work, 25% workshop participation, 5% attendance.

Projects will involve working with a variety of source materials and adapting (and/or translating) the original "springboard" into a dramatic medium. The process of examining the material for a dramatic storyline, selection of events, choice of theme, discovering characters who reveal themselves through action and finding the story you want to tell will be examined in short, creative, craft-oriented exercises. Students will work with using source material from newspaper articles, documentary material, interviews, songs, visual prompts, site-specific pieces and devised/built projects. Longer writing includes a critical analysis paper and a final project that is an actual adaptation or translation.

### **Grading Standards:**

- A grade of "A" is given for superlative work that demonstrates a profound commitment to the course material, and further, that goes on to employ this material as a springboard for independent thought and work.
- A grade of "B" is given for very good work that completely fulfills all the requirements of the course in a conscientious and dedicated manner, and that demonstrates mastery of the course content.
- A grade of "C" is given for work that fulfills all the requirements of the course in a satisfactory manner, but that falls short of demonstrating rigor and mastery.
- A grade of "D" is given for work that is unsatisfactory
- A grade of "F" is given for work that fails to fulfill the requirements of the course.

## **GRADES**

Grading in a creative writing class is subjective, but there are concrete things I assess. Attendance. Lateness. The quality of the assigned exercises. Class participation. Respect for others. Focus during class time. Completion of the short writing assignments, a critical analysis paper (8-10 pages) and a final project of the student's choosing (in consultation with the instructor) in adaptation or translation.

Students receive feedback and critique on all work both in class and written.

**Final Grades** reflect 70% written work (creative writing, critical writing and reading work aloud), 25% class participation (contributing to discussions and critiques and reading one's work in class) and 5% attendance. **Final Class is 5/9.**

## **GMU Add/Drop Policy**

The last day to drop this class with no tuition liability is 2/24/12. It is the student's responsibility to check to verify that they are properly enrolled as no credit will be awarded to students who are not.

**All communications regarding this course are to occur using GMU email accounts.**

## **Disruptive Behavior**

Faculty, staff and students have the right to be treated with respect and professionalism by students and peers in all classes and activities sponsored by the Theater Department. Disruptive behavior will not be tolerated. If, in the opinion of the responsible faculty member, a student becomes disruptive in class or rehearsal, faculty may exercise their judgment on how best to address the situation, be it by requiring the student to leave, calling Campus Police or taking other steps deemed necessary for the safety and well-being of the class, rehearsal or group. Such action may affect the student's final grade and standing in the University.

## **Honor Code, Copyright, & Computing Policies**

*To promote a stronger sense of mutual responsibility, respect, trust, and fairness among all members of the George Mason University community and with the desire for greater academic and personal achievement, we, the student members of the university community, have set forth this honor code:* Student members of the George Mason University community pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal, or lie in matters related to academic work.

You are expected to adhere to all University policies and guidelines during your participation in this course. All work must be your own. Inappropriate use of the work of others is a George Mason University Honor Code violation. Please review the University's website for information on the following: Honor Code and Judicial Procedures; Copyright/Fair Use; and Responsible Use of Computing.

**If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations** please see me and contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at 703.993.2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office. Students must inform the instructor at the beginning of the semester, and the specific accommodation will be arranged through the Disability Resource Center.

**Writing Center:**

Students who are in need of intensive help with grammar, structure or mechanics in their writing should make use of the services of the Writing Center, located in Robinson A116 (703-993-1200). The services of the Writing Center are available by appointment, online and, occasionally, on a walk-in basis.

**Other GMU resources:**

<http://www.gmu.edu/departments/freshman/resources.html>

University Policies: University Catalog can be accessed [catalog.gmu.edu](http://catalog.gmu.edu)

University Libraries “ Ask a Librarian” <http://library.gmu.edu/mudge/IM/IMRef.html>

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) [caps.gmu.edu](http://caps.gmu.edu) or (703) 993-2380

**It is not possible to receive an incomplete grade in this class.** If you anticipate difficulty in completing this course see your instructor immediately to discuss your options.

**You are encourage to sign up for the Mason Alert System** by visiting the website <https://alert.gmu.edu>. An emergency poster exists in each classroom explaining what to do in the event of crises and that further information about emergency procedures exists on <http://www.gmu.edu/service/cert>.

**NOTE:** Cell phones, pagers and alarms must be turned off in class. No exceptions. Laptops may be used but ONLY for class work.

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*“A different language is a different vision of life.”*

*“All art is autobiographical. The pearl is the oyster’s autobiography.”*

*“The artist is the medium between his fantasies and the rest of the world.”*

*“Our real life is in our dreams.”*

*Federico Fellini*

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