

George Mason University  
THR 440: Advanced Studies in Directing and Dramaturgy  
Spring 2012  
Mondays & Wednesdays 9:00-10:15 am  
PAB A105

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### Goals of the course

This course meets the Synthesis requirement of the University General Education program. The university-wide learning outcomes for Synthesis courses are below. Upon completing a synthesis course, students will be able to:

1. Communicate effectively in both oral and written forms, applying appropriate rhetorical standards (e.g., audience adaptation, language, argument, organization, evidence, etc.)
2. Use perspectives from two or more disciplines, connect issues in a given field to wider intellectual, community or societal concerns
3. Apply critical thinking skills to:
  - a. Evaluate the quality, credibility and limitations of an argument or a solution using appropriate evidence or resources, OR,
  - b. Judge the quality or value of an idea, work, or principle based on appropriate analytics and standards

While we will address both 3(a) and 3(b), our primary focus in the critical thinking area will be on 3(b).

For more information on General Education, please see the University Catalog, [http://catalog.gmu.edu/preview\\_program.php?catoid=5&poid=1437](http://catalog.gmu.edu/preview_program.php?catoid=5&poid=1437), and the Provost's Office General Education website, <http://www.gmu.edu/departments/provost/gened/index.html>

### A note about critical thinking

This course is designed to stimulate and evaluate critical thinking. Through research, collaborative problem solving, written projects, and presentations, you will demonstrate your ability as a critical thinker, able to:

- \* Identify important questions/problems/issues;
- \* Analyze, interpret and make judgments about the relevance and quality of information
- \* Assess assumptions and consider alternative perspectives/solutions
- \* Draw conclusions and make judgments based on evidence gathered
- \* Integrate ideas into a coherent argument/solution/presentation, etc.
- \* Communicate the results of your thinking

This synthesis course requires students to use skills developed in the major and general education courses (e.g. textual analysis, critical thinking, written and oral expression, sociology and history, visual literacy, data analysis).

### Work of the course

**PROJECT #1: CREATE A THEATER COMPANY.** Working in teams, students will be required to analyze a need in society and create a prospective theater company, situated in a specific locality, in response. Each theater company will have a four-play season that expresses the company's mission. Two of the four plays will be developed by the team for presentation as described below.

Teams will present their mission, season, and relevant sociopolitical, historical, and/or demographic information about the chosen locality to the class in a 15-minute session, accompanied by a one-page written mission statement and a page or more of source citations for the locality information presented. Consideration should be given to the viability of the company's work in the chosen locality, e.g., sources of support including earned and contributed income. These items along with other visual materials in support of the presentation may be posted on Blackboard or distributed.

In an open forum following the team presentations, the class will discuss the artistic and civic merits of each team project, giving special consideration to the socioeconomic and political climate affecting the plan's projected success. Teams will defend the timeliness, accuracy, and relevance of their ideas about the companies they envision and the two plays that they choose to prepare for production (each of the plays representing one of the major course projects).

**PROJECTS #2 & 3: PRODUCTION PRESENTATIONS.** Students will develop their production projects in director-dramaturg teams, switching roles for the second project. For each production project, each student will create a paper of approximately 2500 words (either a director's approach or dramaturg's protocol) accompanied by a joint 20-minute presentation to the class, followed by discussion. More information on the specific features of the written work and oral presentations, including guidance on form, content, and scoring rubrics, will be posted on Blackboard.

For the first round of papers/presentations student teams will choose a play from the classical repertoire and argue for its contemporary resonance in production. The second round will focus on modern or contemporary plays.

**Theater as a collaborative and interdisciplinary art**

A theater production is by nature an interdisciplinary activity: it incorporates the visual arts, text, movement, and frequently music, and almost always requires research into different historical, social and philosophical contexts. Creating a theater company requires quantitative and qualitative evaluations of need, feasibility, and alignment.

Students will be introduced to the directing and dramaturgy partnership as a collaborative relationship, and they will be encouraged to apply their experience of interdisciplinarity within the theater to other fields related to their chosen plays, such as politics, literature, business, religion, science, and history.

Students will be expected to communicate a realizable vision for a new theater company as well as two compelling and viable production proposals (each proposal consisting of a written and oral component). The faculty envisions these projects as the culmination of extensive undergraduate study within the field, distinguished by the student's ability to apply specialized theater experience to a larger world of life-long inquiry.

Students may expect to leave this course with several important portfolio materials to be used for application to graduate schools, professional interviews, and/or fully-realized productions of the plays proposed. In presenting their work before their peers and faculty, students will be introduced to the experience of defending one's research and artistic pursuits in a formal, semi-public venue.

Texts:

Bogart, Anne. *A Director Prepares*. ISBN 9780415238328.

Additional texts will be posted on Blackboard.

Grading:

1. your work as a class member: 25%
2. your work on the Prospective Company statement and presentation: 25%
3. your work as dramaturg on a project: 25%
4. your work as director on a project: 25%

Your work:

1. As class member: completion of all assigned readings, timely attendance, and willing, well-prepared participation. (Arrival past 9:10 will not count toward class attendance.)
2. Equitable collaborative contribution to your team's Prospective Company Statement and Presentation, including the one-page mission statement, list of sources cited, and any additional visual materials you choose to develop.
3. As dramaturg: full partnership in the conceptualization and presentation of a production idea, including any visual materials created for the presentation; and a dramaturg's protocol. See Blackboard for specific guidance on the elements of the Dramaturg's Protocol of approximately 2,500 words.
4. As director: full partnership in the conceptualization and presentation of a production idea, including any visual materials created for the presentation, and a Director's Approach of approximately 2,500 words (see Blackboard for specific guidance).

For all written assignments, excellence in both form and content is required. Thus, style, mechanics, and appearance are vital and will be graded along with the quality of the ideas presented.

You should be able to use the materials created for this course as portfolio items for graduate school admissions, professional interviews, and—a consummation devoutly to be wished—as springboards for fully-realized productions of the plays you have prepared.

Written work is due on the day of your presentation.  
Course Outline (subject to change and guest artist availability).

January 23 & 25:

- Course overview
- The work and roles of the director and dramaturg
- Introduction to the collaborative process between director and dramaturg
- Discussion: "Dramaturgy and Silence" by Geoffrey S. Proehl in *Theatre Topics*, v. 13, No. 1, pp. 25-33

January 30 & February 1:

- Begin team formation
- Mission, vision, feasibility, alignment: creating a theater company
- Reading: from Robert Edmond Jones, *The Dramatic Imagination* (Chapter 2)

February 6 & 8:

- Confirm formation of teams.

- Textual fidelity and infidelity
- The role of research
- Reading: from Jonas/Proehl/Lupu, *Dramaturgy in American Theatre*: "The Compleat Dramaturg" by Leon Katz, pp. 115-16 in *Dramaturgy in American Theater: A Source Book*; "Toward a Dramaturgical Sensibility" by Jane Ann Crum, pp. 70-77 in *American Theater: A Source Book*.
- Guest artist: TBA

February 13 & 15:

- Designers and Actors and Staff, Oh My! Collaboration writ large.
- Reading: Schneider and Cody, *Re:Direction*. Introduction and chapters TBA.
- Working with translators and translations
- Guest artist: TBA

February 20 & 22:

- The dramaturg's process

February 27 & 29:

- TEAM PRESENTATIONS: MISSIONS AND SEASONS

March 5 & 7:

- TEAM PRESENTATIONS: MISSIONS AND SEASONS
- Open Forum/debriefing on Prospective Theaters missions and seasons.

### **SPRING BREAK – No class March 12 & 14**

March 19 & 21:

- Working with new plays and living playwrights
- Reading: "A Conversation with Mame Hunt" (interview by Susan Mason), pp. 421-30 in *Dramaturgy in American Theater: A Source Book*.
- Guest artist: TBA

March 26 & 28:

- CLASSICAL PRESENTATIONS

April 2 & 4:

- CLASSICAL PRESENTATIONS

April 9 & 11:

- CLASSICAL PRESENTATIONS

April 16 & 18:

- building a career in directing and dramaturgy
- Guest artist: TBA
- "The Deadly Theatre" in *The Empty Space* by Peter Brook, pp. 9-41.

April 23 & 25:

- MODERN PRESENTATIONS

April 30 & 2:

- MODERN PRESENTATIONS

May 14 (FINAL EXAM PERIOD, 7:30-10:15 am)

- MODERN PRESENTATIONS

## UNIVERSITY POLICIES

*As a courtesy to others in the class, and in accordance with George Mason University policy, please turn off all beepers, cellular telephones and other wireless communication devices at the start of class. Also, please refrain from using Instant Messenger, surfing the Web, or checking email during class.*

## 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 wellbeing of the class, rehearsal or group. Such action may affect the student's final grade and standing in the University.

## GRADING

Letter grades will be assigned based on the George Mason University undergraduate grading system in which a letter grade of "A" is equal to 4.00 grade points, "A-" equals 3.67 grade points, etc. See the Academic Policies section of the *University Catalog* (available online at [www.gmu.edu](http://www.gmu.edu)) for more information.

## GRADING STANDARDS

What makes a project or other assignment an "A"? (B, C, D, F)

- A grade of "A" is given for superlative work that demonstrates a profound commitment to the course material, and further, employs 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 in content, but meets the standards of submission.
- A grade of “F” is given for work that fails to fulfill the requirements of the course.

#### MASON’S ADD/DROP POLICY

The last day to drop this class with no tuition liability is **1/31/2012**. The last day to drop this class without Dean’s permission is **2/24/2012, by 5 pm**. The selective withdrawal period is 2/27/2012 – 3/30/2012. 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.

#### HONOR CODE, COPYRIGHT & COMPUTER USE 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.

#### DISABILITY RESOURCES

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.

#### MASON EMAIL ACCOUNTS

Students must use their MasonLive email account to receive important University information, including messages related to this class. The Mason email accounts are the official accounts for this class. All communications regarding this course must occur via Mason email accounts.

## WRITING CENTER

Students 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). These services are available by appointment, online and, occasionally, on a walk-in basis.

## OTHER MASON 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

The University Catalog, <http://catalog.gmu.edu>, is the central resource for university policies affecting student, faculty, and staff conduct in university affairs.

## MASON ALERT SYSTEM

You are encouraged to sign up for the Mason Alert System by visiting the website <https://alert.gmu.edu>. Emergency information is posted in each classroom explaining what to do in the event of crises. Further information about emergency procedures can be found at <http://www.gmu.edu/service/cert>. **NOTE:** Cell phones, pagers and alarms must be turned off in class. Exceptions will only be made in advance or in case of emergency.

<i>January 1 Day of Week</i>	<i>Sunday</i>
Martin Luther King Day (no classes)	Mon Jan 16
<b>First day of classes</b> ; last day to submit Domicile Reclassification Application; Payment Due Date; full semester waitlists removed	Mon Jan 23
Summer 2012 Graduation Intent Available via Patriot Web	Mon Jan 30
Last day to drop with no tuition penalty	Tues Jan 31
<b>Last day to add classes</b> —all individualized section forms due	Tues Jan 31
Last day to drop with a 33% tuition penalty	Tues Feb 14
Last day to drop with a 67% tuition penalty	Fri Feb 24
<b>Last day to drop</b>	Fri Feb 24
Last day to file your Spring 2012 Graduation Intent	Fri Feb 24
Immunization Record Deadline	Tue Mar 1
Midterm progress reporting period (100-200 level classes)—grades	Mon Feb 20 -

available via <a href="#">Patriot Web</a>	Fri Mar 23
Selective Withdrawal Period (undergraduate students only)	Mon Feb 27 - Fri Mar 30
Spring Break	Mon Mar 12 - Sun Mar 18
<b>Incomplete work from Fall 2011 due to instructor**</b>	Fri Mar 30
<b>Incomplete grade changes from fall 2011 due to registrar**</b>	Fri Apr 6
Dissertation/Thesis Deadline**	Fri May 4
Last day of classes	Sat May 5
<b>Reading Days</b>	Mon May 7 & Tue May 8
Exam Period (beginning at 7:30 a.m.)	Wed May 9 - Wed May 16
<b>Commencement and Degree Conferral Date</b>	May 19, 2012