

THFM 2701-001 (6 credit hours)

PLAYWRITING I

FW 2017-18
Mon/WedFri 11:30 am to 12:20 pm
Room: 0T19

Instructor: Brian Drader
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Office Hours: by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The goal of Playwriting 1 is the conception and creation of a short (30 to 45 minute) one-act play.

The pedagogical philosophy anchoring the course is that each student playwright is an individual, and their playwriting journey is towards discovering their own unique process, one that serves their emerging voice and theatrical vision.

To this end, the focus will be practical vs. theoretical. In first term seminar dialogues, we'll be looking to plays and established playwrights to inform our investigation of the elements of craft, artistry, and the creation process. Writing prompts and exercises will be used to illuminate the discussions at hand.

As the first term progresses, we will begin to turn our attention to form and style, developing the material generated in the writing exercises into 'mini-plays'. We will also begin to develop the student's one-act play. Through a variety of exercises, prompts, and techniques, we will be seeding and investigating story ideas, developing characters, and testing possible plots, themes, and socio/political contexts, all while exploring creation processes that might best support the individual and their developing story.

The expectation is that by the end of the first term, the student will have what they need to begin the first draft of their one-act play.

The second term will be largely devoted to the development of the one-act plays. We will be reading and discussing work in class. Dramaturgical feedback and writing prompts will assist and support the student towards completing a first draft by mid-term. We will then investigate, through workshops, the deeper process of playwriting, which is ... rewriting.

The expectation is that by the end of the second term, the student will have completed two drafts of their one-act play.

PLAYS and TEXTS (required reading)

Tomson Highway, *The Rez Sisters*

Judith Thompson, *Lion In The Streets*

Michel Tremblay, *Hosanna*

Jordan Tannahill, *Concord Floral*

Jill Connell, *The Supine Cobbler*

Brian Drader, *Liar*

Joan Harrington & Crystal Brian, *Playwrights Teach Playwriting*

Toby Cole, *Playwrights on Playwriting from Ibsen to Ionesco*

Students will also be encouraged to attend productions in the Winnipeg 2017/2018 theatre seasons. Attending the U. of W. Theatre Department season shows is compulsory, as we will be discussing the 'play to stage' principles of each.

EVALUATION

1st term Writing Assignments

1st assignment (due Sept. 18th)	2 %
2nd assignment (due Oct. 2nd)	2 %
3rd assignment; the 'mini-play' (due Oct. 30th)	6 %
End of 1st term One-Act Play Pitches	20 %
One-Act Play, 1st draft (due Feb. 16 th , 2018)	20 %
One-Act Play – 2nd Draft (due April 5th, 2018)	40 %
Participation	10 %
TOTAL	100 %

Participation includes preparation for seminars; curiosity, attentiveness and contributions in discussions; and insight into and respect for the work, risks, and creative process of one's peers.

Student writing assignments will be assessed for content, and specifically for comprehension of concepts as discussed in class and/or in feedback and dramaturgical sessions. Criteria for your creative writing and pitches will include a willingness to take risks; to vigorously pursue one's vision and voice as a dramatist; to explore the ideas and preoccupations at the core of one's work with sincerity and passion.

The one-act play, 1st and 2nd drafts, will be assessed in equal parts for **Clarity** (of story, of given circumstances, of arguments), **Character** (vitality, viability, consistency, authenticity), **Vision** (ambition, originality, breadth and reach of ideas) and **Quality of Writing** (rhythm, style, voice, tone).

This class depends on full participation. Unexcused absences not due to medical or other legitimate reasons will lead to deductions in the final mark. Students who miss 5 classes will have 5% of their final mark deducted. After having missed 5 classes, each missed class will result in a further deduction in the final mark of 2%.

Late Assignments will **NOT** be accepted.

CONVERSION SCALE

For the calculation of the final grade the following conversion table will be used:

A+	90 – 100%	GPA 4.5	C+	65 – 69.9%	GPA 2.5
A	85 – 89.9%	GPA 4.25	C	60 – 64.9%	GPA 2.0
A-	80 – 84.9%	GPA 4.0	D	50 – 59.9%	GPA 1.0
B+	75 – 79.9%	GPA 3.5	F	below 50%	GPA 0.0
B	70 – 74.9%	GPA 3.0			

Work not submitted will be graded as 0%

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE (subject to change)

Please note – The schedule below will adjust to respond in particular to the time needed for in-class reading and discussion of student writing exercises, assignments, and work-in-progress.

FALL TERM – 2017

Sept. 6 & 8

Introductions, and overview of the course. General discussion about storytelling, plays, and theatre, and the relationship of the play to the production.

Sept. 11, 13, 15 – Have *The Rez Sisters* by Tomson Highway read by Sept. 11th.

Plays with multiple characters and multiple arcs. Socio/political/cultural context. Where do we write from, as communities and individuals? What are we trying to do with our plays? Who are we writing for?

Sept. 13th – First (short) writing exercise assigned, Due Sept. 18th.

Sept. 18, 20, 22 – Have *Lion in the Streets* by Judith Thompson read by Sept. 18th; first writing assignment due Sept. 18th.

Authentic Voice. Dramatic Action, Character, Conflict, Story vs. Plot. What drives Character? Obstacles, Tactics, Beats. Literary vs. Dramatic Action.

Reading and discussion of first writing assignments.

Sept. 25, 27, 29 – Have *Concord Floral* by Jordan Tannahill read by Sept. 25th.

One act play structure. Inciting Incident, Rising Action, Crisis, Climax. Setting, Time and Place as story elements. Using all five senses in our story telling.

Reading and discussion of first writing assignments.

Sept. 27th - Second (short) writing exercise assigned, due Oct. 2nd.

Oct. 2, 4, 6 – Have *The Supine Cobbler* by Jill Connell read by Oct. 2nd; second writing assignment due Oct. 2nd.

One act play structure. Alternative approaches and structures. Style and genre.

Reading and discussion of second writing assignments.

Week of Oct. 9 (Thanksgiving) – mid-term reading week. No classes.

Oct. 16, 18, 20 – Have *Liar* by Brian Drader read by Oct. 16th.

Discussion with the playwright. Writing practices and process. Where do our ideas come from? How do we tap into and direct our personal passions? How do we release our “voice”? How do we discover and release the story we want to tell? How do we discover the style and theatricality that will best support our stories?

Reading and discussion of second writing assignments.

Oct. 23, 25, 27 – Have *Playwrights Teach Playwriting* read.

Oct. 23rd - Third writing exercise assigned – moving material generated in earlier writing assignments towards its “mini-play” form. Due Oct. 30th.

Discussion of *Playwrights Teach Playwriting*.

Reading and discussion of second writing assignments.

Oct. 30, Nov. 1, 3 – Third writing assignments due Oct. 30th.

Further discussion of *Playwrights Teach Playwriting*.

Reading and discussion of third writing assignments.

One-act play development. Exercises, prompts, exploration.

Nov. 6, 8, 10

Further discussion of *Playwrights Teach Playwriting*.

Reading and discussion of third writing assignments.

One-act play development. Exercises, prompts, exploration.

Nov. 13, 15, 17

Reading and discussion of third writing assignments.

One-act play pitches. Discussion and feedback.

Nov. 20, 22, 24

One-act play pitches. Discussion and feedback.

Nov. 27, 29 & Dec. 1

One-act play pitches. Discussion and feedback.

Note on 1st term one-act play pitches - The "pitch" will be a 15 minute in-class share of the foundational elements for your one-act play, followed by feedback and discussion. The pitch may entail a story outline, images, music, inspirations and agitations, character sketches, bits of dialogue, themes, histories, personal stories ... we'll discover the best form and components for your pitch through the play development activity earlier in the term. The pitch is used to share your ideas, but more so to focus intention and direction before beginning the actual writing of your first draft.

Dec. 4 (Final day of Fall term) – See the U. of W. production of *Concord Floral*, running Nov. 28 to Dec. 2.

A return to Jordan Tanahill's *Concord Floral*. Investigate the play vs. production.

One-act play development exercises and prompts assigned for the break.

WINTER TERM - 2018

Jan. 5

One-act play development. Readings, discussion; exercises and prompts assigned.

Jan. 8, 10, 12

One-act play development. Readings, discussion; exercises and prompts assigned.

Jan. 15, 17, 19

One-act play development. Readings, discussion; exercises and prompts assigned.

Jan. 22, 24, 26

One-act play development. Readings, discussion; exercises and prompts assigned.

Jan. 29, 31 & Feb. 2

One-act play development. Readings, discussion; exercises and prompts assigned.

Feb. 5, 7, 9

One-act play development. Readings, discussion; exercises and prompts assigned.

**Feb. 12, 14, 16 – Read *Playwrights on Playwriting* by Feb. 12.
(Feb. 14 is final day to withdraw from the class without penalty)**

Discussion of *Playwrights on Playwriting*.

One-act play development. Readings, discussion; exercises and prompts assigned.

First draft of one-act play due on Feb. 16th.

Feb. 18 – 24 – mid-term reading week. No classes.

Feb. 26, 28, & March 2

Further discussion of *Playwrights on Playwriting*.

One-act play readings and workshops. Individual dramaturgical sessions outside of class time, by appointment.

March 4, 7, 9

One-act play readings and workshops. Individual dramaturgical sessions outside of class time, by appointment.

March 12, 14, 16

One-act play readings and workshops. Individual dramaturgical sessions outside of class time, by appointment.

March 19, 21, 23

One-act play readings and workshops. Individual dramaturgical sessions outside of class time, by appointment.

March 26, 28 (March 30 is Good Friday, University closed)

One-act play readings and workshops. Individual dramaturgical sessions outside of class time, by appointment.

April 2, 4, 5

(Wed/4th is final day of term, but April 5th will be the make up day for the Good Friday holiday, and last day of classes)

Class topics suggested by students.

Second draft of One-act plays due on April 5th.

Individual follow-up dramaturgical sessions by appointment.

Recommended reading list (in no particular order) –

There is a rich cannon of “how to” and theory books concerning the art and craft of playwriting. The recommended reading list is a sampling of some of these viewpoints, approaches and analysis. As we move deeper into the course and writing assignments, and as I get to know you as individuals, I may be able to point towards specific publications listed below (or other publications not listed) that may suit your particular sensibility.

That said, all theory is worth investigating, even if it’s to discover what doesn’t work for you. I strongly encourage you to explore on your own, and share your findings.

Aristotle, *Poetics*

David Ball, *Backwards and Forwards: a Technical Manual for Reading Plays*

Clem Martini, *The Blunt Playwright*

Jordan Tannahill, *Theatre of the Unimpressed*

David Mamet, *Three Uses of the Knife*

Lizbeth Goodman, *Contemporary Feminist Theatre*

Peter Brook, *The Empty Space*

Kathleen Betsko & Rachel Koenig, *Interviews With Contemporary Women Playwrights*

Antonin Artaud, *The Theatre and its Double*

David Edgar, *How Plays Work*

Lajos Egris, *The Art of Dramatic Writing*

Jean Claude Van Itallie, *The Playwright's Workbook*

Joseph Campbell, *The Hero With a Thousand Faces*

The 22 Rules of Storytelling According To Pixar (google it)

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 2018 is the final date to withdraw without academic penalty from courses which begin in September 2017 and end in April 2018 (2017-18 Fall/Winter Term).

HEALTH AND ACCESSIBILITY SERVICES

Life happens to everyone. If you are experiencing a crisis in your life, or if you have a physical or mental health issue, communicate with your Professor or Accessibility Services – let us know so we can provide support or direct you to those who can. The earlier we know, the earlier we can discuss what resources might be available. Students with documented disabilities, or temporary or chronic medical conditions requiring academic accommodations for tests/exams/presentations (e.g., private space or more time) or during lectures/labs (e.g., note-takers) are encouraged to contact Accessibility Services (AS) at 204-786-9771 or accessibilityservices@uwinnipeg.ca to discuss appropriate options. All information about a student's disability or medical condition remains confidential <http://www.uwinnipeg.ca/accessibility>. If you are registered with Accessibility Services, do not assume that Accessibility Services (AS) has informed your instructor that you have registered with them.

"THE REAL THING" LECTURE SERIES

The Department of Theatre and Film is presenting a series of six lectures which will be held on Wednesdays during the free period (12:30-13:20) in Theatre 1T15. Please note the dates in your diary **NOW**: Sept 20 (playwright Judith Thompson), Oct 18, Nov 15, Jan 17, Feb 28, Mar 14. This series will feature speakers from a range of areas in the performing arts: technical, performance, design, management, film, directing, playwriting, etc. These speakers will specifically address issues related to "the business of the business."

Attendance at **ALL** lectures is **MANDATORY** for **ALL** Honours students in Theatre (4000-level courses, all areas), **as well as** students in: THFM-3101 Acting III: General, THFM-3201 Styles in Design, THFM-3801 Production II, and THFM-3920 Musical Theatre. Penalties for absence may be assigned by individual instructors.

Attendance for potential Theatre Honours/Majors and for Film Majors is optional but highly recommended.

2017 ORIENTATION ASSEMBLY

Each year in September we hold an *Orientation Assembly* to welcome students to the new term, introduce our new students to faculty and other students; provide information about the department, its various activities and those of its professors; and deliver news about what's coming up. This year our *Orientation Assembly* will be held on **Wednesday, September 13, 2017, 12:30-13:20 in Theatre, 1T15. ATTENDANCE IS COMPULSORY** for all Majors and Honours students. Those considering Honours are strongly recommended to attend. All others are welcome and encouraged to attend.

TAFSA

All students enrolled in at least one theatre or film class are automatically members of TAFSA, the Theatre and Film Students' Association, which plans a number of exciting activities each academic year. We are looking forward to regular **Performance Jams, Socials, DioFest** (an exciting new play festival featuring student written and produced plays), and the very popular **24/7 Event** during which students move into our building and several plays are written, rehearsed, produced, and presented – all in a period of 24 hours! Please join TAFSA to find out more at its organizational meeting: Mon Sept 18, 12:30-1:20, Room 0T10. This is a great opportunity for students to connect with other like-minded people and a way to get involved in the department events.

BUILDING SECURITY

The Asper Centre for Theatre and Film (home to the Department of Theatre and Film) is open from 8:00 am and 5:30 pm weekdays only. Students are permitted to be in the building between 8:00 am and 10:00 pm seven days per week (except statutory holidays when the University is closed) **BUT PLEASE NOTE:** outside of regular building hours, it is **MANDATORY** that everyone in the building **EITHER** carry an access card **OR** have a booking confirmation form in their possession (hard copy or electronic). **ALL EVENING STUDENTS in the building for classes MUST have an access card.** If a Security Guard checks and you do not have proper accreditation, **you may be evicted.**

These rules are in place to protect our students and our equipment; please respect them.

ELECTRONIC COURSE OUTLINE ADDENDA

Students must check our website at <http://uwinnipeg.ca/theatre-film> and read the menu items called ***Fire Safety Instructions in the Asper Centre for Theatre and Film, Access Card/Building Use Policy AND Room Booking Instructions.*** The link to the electronic ***Online Room Booking Form*** is also found at this location. Please read and note all instructions carefully.

GENERAL NOTES

This course outline should be considered a guideline only. Time constraints and other unforeseen factors may require that some topics be omitted or covered in less detail than indicated.

Archival records such as videotapes, sound recordings, and photographs may be made or taken during class or lab times. The University uses such materials primarily for archival, promotional, and teaching purposes. Promotional use may include display at open houses or conferences, or use in advertising, publicity, or brochures. In reading and accepting the terms in this course outline, students acknowledge consent for such use by the University. Should a student not wish to convey such consent, s/he should withdraw from this course immediately.

Cellular phones **MUST** be turned off during classes and examinations; texting is **NOT** permitted in class.

Any student attending a test or final examination may be required to present proof of identity; photo identification is preferred.

It is the student's responsibility to retain a photocopy or computer disk copy of **ALL** assignments submitted for grading; in the event of loss or theft, a duplicate copy is required.

Students are strongly advised to read the sections 8, 9, and 10 of the *Academic Calendar* for information on Academic Misconduct including plagiarism, and Appeals, (found on-line at: <http://www.uwinnipeg.ca/academics/calendar/docs/regulationsandpolicies.pdf>).

Students conducting research interviews, focus groups, surveys, or any other method of collecting data from any person, including a family member, must obtain the approval of the appropriate ethics committee before commencing data collection. Exceptions are research activities in class as a learning exercise. See <http://www.uwinnipeg.ca/research/human-ethics.html> for submission requirements and deadlines.

All students, faculty and staff have the right to participate, learn and work in an environment that is free of harassment and discrimination. The UW Respectful Working and Learning Environment Policy may be found online at www.uwinnipeg.ca/respect.

Students may choose not to attend classes or write examinations on holy days of their religion, but they must notify their instructors at least two weeks in advance. Instructors will then provide opportunity for students to make up work examinations without penalty. A list of religious holidays can be found at <http://uwinnipeg.ca/academics/calendar/docs/important-notes.pdf>

STUDENT PARTICIPATION POLICY

Theatre is a communal art form in which a number of interdependent artists and crafts people co-operate to create a work of art. This fact is necessarily transferred to the learning situation, and is reflected in many of the Department's courses. Consequently, it is the Department's policy that students are required to: complete homework such as reading, line-learning, script analysis, prop lists, design drawings, etc.; attend classes; attend rehearsals both within and outside of class times; and, in short, to exhibit commitment towards the inevitably shared endeavours of our field of study.

Any student failing to fulfil these requirements is harmful to the progress of dedicated students and may, after due warning, be asked to withdraw from any individual Departmental course.

COURSE CONTENT NOTE

Dramatic Literature depicts a wide variety of human action, both elevated and base, public and private, physical and psychological, sexual and non-sexual, etc. The Department of Theatre and Film will not undertake to censor the subject matter of dramatic works.

Students who have concerns about dealing with the full range of content and style in drama/film are urged to discuss these concerns with the course instructor.