

Themes in Playwriting (PWC 310) Course Syllabus

Please note: this syllabus is subject to change based on the approach of the individual Playwrights' Center instructor and the needs of the students enrolled.

Course Description

An online playwriting workshop taught from the perspective of a professional playwright affiliated with the Playwrights' Center. Students will learn about specific themes in playwriting, including adaptation, exploration of genre, integration of music, and various play structures.

Course Objectives & Outcomes

- To understand and appreciate specific themes in the field of contemporary playwriting, such as the impulse towards adaptation, the use of genres (like horror or fairytale) in theatrical works, the integration of song into otherwise dialogue-driven scripts, and the proliferation of ten- and one-minute plays, among others.
- To read and view short plays, adaptations, and plays with music with an eye towards the specific tools and strategies employed by their creators and to apply these strategies to one's own creative work.
- To create a supportive and challenging writing community where everyone learns to give and receive constructive and respectful feedback.
- To ask strong, open-ended dramaturgical questions about one's own work with an eye towards specific artistic goals.
- To create materials necessary for an ongoing career in playwriting, such as resumés, bios, artistic statements, letters of inquiry, etc. with an understanding of the larger themes in the field.

Course Materials & Readings

- Excerpts selected from the following: *A More Perfect Ten: Writing and Producing the Ten-Minute Play* by Gary Garrison; *One Minute Plays* by Steve Ansell and Rose Burnett Bonczek; *How Musicals Work* by Julian Woolford; *Adapturgy: The Dramaturg's Art and Theatrical Adaptation* by Jane Barnette
- Playscripts including: *In the Red and Brown Water* by Tarell Alvin McCraney, *Electricidad* by Luis Alfaro, *Alice in Slasherland* by Qui Nguyen, *Eurydice* by Sarah Ruhl, *Indecent* by Paula Vogel, *The Hungry Woman: A Mexican Medea* by Cherríe Moraga, *An Octoroon* by Branden Jacobs-Jenkins
- Unpublished short scripts by Playwrights' Center playwrights (PDFs)
- Articles from the [PWC's Playwriting Toolkit](#)
- HowlRound articles, such as "Ten Minute Plays: A Breath of Fresh Air or...?" and videos of one-minute play festivals:
<https://howlround.com/happenings/minneapolis-one-minute-play-festival-walking-shadow-and-mixed-blood-theatre>

Methodology & Activities Students will engage in asynchronous online activities, such as Moodle forum posts responding to questions posed by the instructor, writing prompts, course readings and viewings, and online videos and articles; in addition, they will respond to peers' Moodle posts to deepen their reflection and learning. Individually, they will craft a range of theatrical writing, such as one-minute plays, ten-minute plays, scenes focused on genre, scenes that incorporate music, and short adaptations. Students will also engage in synchronous writing workshops, where they will share their own playwriting and receive feedback from their peers and instructor. In addition, they will develop a portfolio of professional materials (resumés, bios, artistic statements, letters of inquiry, etc.) as part of their final project in the course, along with a final script inspired by one of the themes covered.

Evaluation

Assignment	Points	Percent
Moodle Forum Posts & Peer Responses (10)	500	50%
Synchronous Writing Workshops (3)	300	30%
Professional Portfolio	100	10%
Script(s) Focused on a Theme	100	10%
TOTAL	1000	100%

Moodle Forum Posts & Peer Responses (10) – 500 points total (50 points each)

Moodle forum posts responding to questions about themes in playwriting posed by the instructor, writing prompts, course readings and viewings, and online videos and articles, in addition to responses to peers' Moodle posts.

Synchronous Writing Workshops (3) – 300 points total (100 points each)

Three meetings during the course of the semester; grades based on pages posted, as well as reading and responses to peers' work and live video feedback.

Professional Portfolio – 100 points total (50 points each)

A portfolio of professional materials (resumés, bios, artistic statements, letters of inquiry, etc.) that demonstrates an understanding of where and how the work fits into the larger field.

Script(s) Focused on a Theme – 100 points

A script or scripts focused on a theme covered during the course of the semester. Final product may take the form of a portfolio of one- and ten-minute plays, an adaptation, a genre- focused work, a play with music, etc.

Grading Scale

Grade	G.P.	
A	4.00	95-100%
A-	3.67	93-94%
B+	3.33	90-92%
B	3.00	86-89%
B-	2.67	84-85%
C+	2.33	81-83%
C	2.00	77-80%
C-	1.67	75-76%
D+	1.33	73-74%
D	1.00	71-72%
D-	0.67	70%
F	0.00	69% and below

Institutional Student Learning Outcomes (iSLOs)

- Students learn to construct coherent, polished and persuasive arguments, narratives and explications in written, oral and other formats. (Writing/Oral Communication *developed*)
 - **Methods of assessment:** Moodle forum posts; professional portfolios

- Students learn to articulate and solve problems in creative, analytical, and integrative ways. (Problem Solving/Integrative Learning *developed*)
 - **Methods of assessment:** Synchronous writing workshops; professional portfolios; script(s) focused on a theme

Departmental Student Learning Outcomes (dSLOs)

- **Knowledge**
 - Knowledge of the various means (e.g., playwriting) through which a theatrical concept is realized;
 - Awareness of the complex nature of the human condition acquired through aesthetic and intellectual perceptions as evidenced in various modes of theatrical production
 - **Methods of assessment:** Moodle forum posts; professional portfolios
- **Skills**
 - The ability to analyze and interpret plays and other theatrical events with special attention to the skills involved in acting and performance, directing, designing, and playwriting.
 - The ability to reach an audience effectively through at least one of the components of theatrical arts (e.g., playwriting).
 - **Methods of assessment:** Synchronous writing workshops; professional portfolios; script(s) focused on a theme
- **Perspectives**
 - Development of a creative imagination;
 - Development of an inquiring mind;
 - Development of professional discipline;
 - Development of a collaborative attitude;
 - Development of artistic standards and judgment
 - Development of a clear understanding of issues surrounding the representation of race, culture, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and socioeconomic class in performance.
 - **Methods of assessment:** Moodle forum posts; synchronous writing workshops; professional portfolios; script(s) focused on a theme