



SPA

**Contra Costa School of
Performing Arts**

www.cocospa.org • 925-690-8600

The mission of Contra Costa School of Performing Arts is to provide a distinguished, pre-professional experience in performing arts within a college and career preparatory setting. We believe in fostering a culture of excellence with the core values of RIGOR, RELEVANCE, RESILIENCE, & RELATIONSHIPS.

Course Syllabus 2022-2023

COURSE TITLE:	World of the Play: Exploring the -ISMS		
PREREQUISITE	Theatre History and Culture		
GRADE LEVEL:	LEVEL 2 THEATRE THEORY	COURSE LENGTH:	1 year
TEACHER:	AeJay Mitchell	CREDIT:	5 credits/semester
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COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Crafted as a seminar course, students will investigate eight distinct movements (defined as the -isms) within the theatre canon beginning with realism of the mid 19th-century and concluding with postmodernism. Each unit will feature the reading of a play indicative to the movement in study, an understanding of key players within the movement in study, an analysis of theme, text, philosophy and styles within a particular play of the movement in study, and a literary circle discussing the cultural, political, and social ideals of the culture in which the play was written. The students will also complete six reflective projects, using theatrical mediums of their choice, to reflect their understanding of the works.

Pre-Unit: ROMANTICISM

In this mini-unit, artist-scholars will be briefly introduced to romanticism's influence on the theatrical stage, and its impact as a catalyst to realist and naturalist theatrical thought.

Unit 1 - REALISM AND NATURALISM

In this unit, artist-scholars will investigate the style, themes, and philosophies within theatrical genres of realism and naturalism. In addition, this unit will highlight the playwrights and thinkers behind this movement as well as detail the cultural, social, and political atmosphere in which this style was created. Within realism, we will connect artist-scholar's understanding of Stanislavski's acting technique and focus on a play by Eugene O'Neill. Within naturalism, we will discuss Emile Zola's philosophy of Naturalism and focus on a play by August Strindberg.

Unit 2 -EXPRESSIONISM

In this unit, artist-scholars will investigate the style, themes, and philosophies within theatrical genre of expressionism. In addition, this unit will highlight the playwrights and thinkers behind this movement as well as detail the cultural, social, and political atmosphere in which this style was created. Artist-scholars will experience the text of the *Adding Machine* by Elmer Rice. Finally, within this unit, we will connect psychological, philosophical, and visual art precursors to expressionism as a theatrical form.

Unit 3 - AGITPROPISM AND EPIC THEATRE

In this unit, artist-scholars will investigate the style, themes, and philosophies within theatrical genre of epic theatre as influenced by agitprop. In addition, this unit will highlight the playwrights and thinkers behind this movement as well as detail the cultural, social, and political atmosphere in which this style was created. Artist-scholars will also be introduced to the canon and style of Bertolt Brecht.

Unit 4- DADAISM AND (symbolism) SURREALISM

In this unit, artist-scholars will investigate the style, themes, and philosophies within theatrical genres of dadaism and surrealism. In addition, this unit will highlight the playwrights and thinkers behind this movement as well as detail the cultural, social, and political atmosphere in which this style was created. Artist-scholars will compare and contrast the works of Tzara (Dadaism) and Lorca (Surrealism).

Unit 5 - ABSURDISM AND POSTMODERNISM

In this unit, artist-scholars will investigate the style, themes, and philosophies within theatrical genres of absurdism and its proceeding influence on the the work of postmodern playwrights. In addition, this unit will highlight the playwrights and thinkers behind this movement as well as detail the cultural, social, and political atmosphere in which this style was created. Artist-scholars will be introduced to the work of an absurdist playwright focusing on theatrical features of character, language, and plot. Artist-scholars will also be introduced to the work of a postmodern playwright, comparing and contrasting style and theme with absurdist theorist.

Important Dates:

- All families will receive a calendar with tentative performative and assignment “due dates.”
- Though this calendar may fluctuate, this calendar is a general guide to what you can expect to experience this year.
- It is requested that one puts mainstage show dates, assignment due dates, and performative showing dates in their planner in pencil (in the rare case they may change.)

CORE TEXT & SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS:

Texts:

This course will feature excerpts, full reads, and video excerpts of works from 8 theatre genres. Plays and performances viewed in class will shift as new theory and criticism arises around theatre performance, but will mostly include (but not limited to) the following text:

- 1) Naturalism: *Miss Julie* by August Strindberg
- 2) Realism: *Long Day's Journey into the Night* by Eugene O'Neil
(Excerpts Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar*)
- 3) Expressionism: *Adding Machine* by Elmer Rice
- 4) Agitprop-ism: *Threepenny Opera* by Bertolt Brecht
(*Urinetown* by Mark Hollman and Greg)
- 5) Dadaism: *The Gas Heart* by Tristan Tzara
- 6) Surrealism: *Yerma* by Federico Garcia Lorca
- 7) Absurdism: *The Zoo Story* by Edward Albee
Funnyhouse of a Negro by Adrienne Kennedy
Songs of the Dragon Flying to Heaven by Young Jean Lee
- 8) Postmodernism: *Top Girls* by Caryl Churchill

Supplemental Materials:

www.theatrefolk.com/dramateacheracademy

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uhmnMSdok28>

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Artist-scholars are required to use reference text available on SORA. Though a composition notebook or binder is not required, some students may find the use of one valuable to keeping documents in one secure location.

All artist-scholars enrolled in this course must participate in the New Works Festival. This will require 2 after school rehearsals, May 19 & 19 4:30-7:00. As well as 2 performance dates, May 21 & 22 4:30-10:00. If for any reason the student can not participate they MUST inform Director Mitchell and Ms. Martinez by Feb 1st in order to receive an alternate assignment for a grade.

COURSE ASKS:

Access to a **charged Chromebook** at all times. If the artist-scholar comes to class without a charged chromebook, his/her/their participation grade will be deducted.

Potential Poster Boards or Ancillary Craft Supplies for Projects.

GRADING POLICY:

Grading Design

Within the Department of Theatre, grading has shifted from a traditional point-based system to a skills-based system. Through rubrics, as described below, artist-scholars will be assessed on their mastery of specific cognitive and performative skills. These skills have been curated by theatre faculty and advisory council, and encapsulates industry standards, National Core Arts Standards, and Common Core Standards. These skills have been grouped into nine weighted categories, which will define the artist-scholar's final grade.

In further alignment with SPA's Academic grading philosophy, artist-scholars will have multiple opportunities to show mastery of skills assessed within the scope of this course.

Grading Rubric

For all assessed materials, artist-scholars will receive a rubric detailing their progress on skills identified by their instructor. artist-scholars will be scored on a 1-5 scale.

1: Artist-scholars are not performing or producing skill indicative of their conservatory training. This score will be given if artist-scholar has shown little to no engagement in training, have not turned in written work, or performs far below their expected standard.

2: Artist-scholars are performing or producing skill below the expected average indicative of their conservatory training. This score will be given to artist-scholars who have shown some development of technique within their training, but have not yet reached levels of written, performative, and training room etiquette expected of our conservatory artist-scholars. Most artist-scholars within conservatory begins their first semester with markings of a 2.

3: Artist-scholars are performing at the baseline of their expected conservatory level. This score will be given to artist-scholars who are producing and presenting work at a surface level and are engaged in the process of their conservatory training. This marks a passing grade of C. Most artist-scholars end their first semester with markings of 3.

4: Artist-scholars are moving beyond the base of their expected conservatory level. This score will be given to artist-scholars who have deepened their skill, producing and presenting work with more nuanced and some dimensionality. This involves skills assessed in previous units to final products in current units where those skills

not necessarily being assessed. This marks a passing grade of B. Some artist-scholars are moving towards markings of 4 by end of third quarter and the beginning of fourth quarter.

5: Artist-scholars are exceeding the expectations of their conservatory level. This artist-scholar is producing and presenting work indicative of course mastery, integrating skills across multiple dimensions of assessment, and showing a deep physical understanding to performative techniques. This artist-scholar is working at high levels of intensity and focus within the craft of theatre.

WEIGHTING

As mentioned above, our cognitive and performative skills are divided into nine weighted categories. These categories included: **performance technique, audition technique, dramatic writing, dramaturgical/directorial technique, theatre theory & criticism, theatre professionalism, journaling, rehearsal/warm-up ethics, and artistry.**

Grading will be weighted as follows:

Performance Technique/ Audition Technique	10%
Dramatic Writing/ Journaling	30%
Directing & Dramaturgy/Theory & Criticism	35%
Professionalism/ Work Ethic/Artistry	25%

ACADEMIC HONESTY:

Artist-scholars at SPA are expected to maintain acceptable standards for personal integrity when it comes to submitting written work for a grade. Neither copying work (no matter how small the amount) nor providing work to another artist-scholar for the purpose of copying will be tolerated. Plagiarism will not be tolerated in any form. This includes failure to cite sources using both in-text citations and a works cited and/or consulted page. Any instance of academic cheating will result in consequences as outlined by the SPA disciplinary code, up to and including a failing grade for the given assignment.

ATTENDANCE/TARDY POLICY AND CITIZENSHIP:

Courses within the Theatre Conservatory at SPA will follow the policies laid out in the [SPA Student Handbook on pages 19 and 20](#). Furthermore, As this course is performative and collaborative, artist-scholars should make every effort to exhibit regular attendance. Absences beyond three days whether excused or unexcused during a given unit may result in removal from a performative process with either an expectation of the project to be done solo OR an alternative project being assigned.

When possible, parents or artist-scholars should inform the instructor of the artist-scholar absence prior to the beginning of class. Unexcused absences during days where artist-scholars are due to present a performative work will result in a zero (0) for that particular project with a potential for displaying skills learned in the following performative project. They must return any due writing assignments in by the deadline regardless of their absence, unless discussed with faculty beforehand.

Emergency circumstances will be discussed on a case by case basis.

Artist-scholars who arrive late to class must remain outside of the space until they are invited in by their instructor, typically after warm-ups. Excessive tardiness and absences could lead to momentary dismissals

from the training studios until an attendance contract is agreed upon by a Student Support Team including administration, faculty, parent/guardian, and student.

TEACHER CREDO:

"The most important thing you can teach an actor is to understand plays." - Stella Adler

Artist-scholar → I have read and understand this syllabus _____
Artist-scholar Signature

PARENT/GUARDIAN → I have read and understand this syllabus _____
Parent/Guardian Signature