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## ENG 2005-001: Beginning playwriting

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## English 2005: Beginning Playwriting

Instructor: Dr. David Radavich  
Office: 3785 Coleman Hall  
Telephone: 581-6971 (Office) or 345-9280 (Home)  
Office Hours: 13:00-14:00 MWF and 12:00-13:00 F

### Required Texts:

Catron, *The Elements of Playwriting*  
Cerf, *Thirty One-Act Plays*  
McNamara, *Plays from the Contemporary American Theatre*  
Thomas, *Best American Screenplays*

**PURPOSE.** This course will introduce you to the basic building blocks of drama (e.g., plot, character, setting, climax). We will attempt to develop a sense of performance and audience awareness, increasing your understanding of the relationship between the written word and the demands of live performance. To this end, you will be expected to complete one performance-worthy script of one act or equivalent during the semester. Along the way, we will examine various genres and major playwriting philosophies, to aid you in developing your own individual approach. You may focus on writing for the stage, TV, screen, or radio.

**COURSE ORGANIZATION.** The course will be divided roughly in half. During the first half, we will be reading and analyzing plays and writing scenes to help you develop your skills before launching into the main script. The second half will focus on revising and perfecting your script through class readings, improvisations, and, performances.

**ASSIGNMENTS.** The major assignments in this class will require writing scenes to develop your skills in constructing plot, action, and dialogue within a convincing and engaging dramatic setting. The final script will represent the culmination of your learning experience. A midterm exam will cover readings and discussion. During the second half of the course, you will be expected to assume performance rôles in scripts by others in the class. There will be no final exam; instead, you will turn in your revised script for final evaluation. Two short reviews of dramatic performances (ca. 2-3 pages double-spaced) during the semester will be required.

**GRADING.** Evaluation of your work in this course will be demanding and fair and will include an assessment of your class preparedness and participation. Grading will be divided into thirds. ONE THIRD of your grade will be determined by your participation in class discussion and performance, as well as by your progress and improvement; in-class responses and play reviews will also be counted in this portion. The SECOND THIRD of your grade will be made up of your writing assignments during term. The midterm exam will be worth **two** playwriting assignments, and the rough draft of your script will be worth **three**. The FINAL THIRD of your grade will consist of the revised version of your script at semester's end, along with a writing commentary.

**LATE WORK.** Assignments turned in late will be penalized one-third grade PER CALENDAR DAY late. Missed in-class assignments cannot be made up; that is the reward for coming to class regularly.

**ATTENDANCE POLICY.** You are assumed to be professionals-in-training and are expected to attend class regularly as you would show up for work on the job. The attendance policy for the course will operate as follows: you may miss up to one week of class without penalty; this allows you flexibility in case of illness or unexpected emergency. Thereafter, the course grade will be lowered proportionately for each week missed. If you are absent more than four weeks of class, you will automatically receive an F in the course.

**PLAGIARISM.** According to University policy,

Any teacher who discovers an act of plagiarism - "The appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas, and/or thoughts of another author, and representation of them as one's original work" (*Random House Dictionary of the English Language*) - has the right and the responsibility to impose upon the guilty student an appropriate penalty, up to and including immediate assignment of a grade of **F** for the course.

**CONFERENCES.** Please feel free to consult me regarding ideas, planning, problems, revision, etc. I would be happy to meet with you at any mutually convenient time.

**INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES.** If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the Coordinator of the Office of Disability Services (581-6583) as soon as possible.

## English 2005 Assignments

- Jan. 10 - Introduction  
12 - Catron, ch. 6; France, *The Man Who Married a Dumb Wife*
- Jan. 17 - No class; Martin Luther King Day  
19 - **Character Sketch Due**
- Jan. 24 - Catron, ch. 5; Saroyan, *Hello Out There*  
26 - **Scene #1 Due**
- Jan. 31 - Catron, ch. 4; Durang, *Sister Mary Ignatius Explains It All for You*  
Feb. 2 - **Scene #2 Due**
- Feb. 7 - Screenplay (to be selected; in Thomas)  
9 - **SCENARIO DUE**
- Feb. 14 - Catron, ch. 2; Comparison of media  
16 - Odets, *Waiting for Lefty*
- Feb. 21 - Catron, ch. 3  
23 - **Excerpt #1 Due**
- Feb. 28 - Shaw, *Bury the Dead*  
Mar. 2 - **MIDTERM EXAM**
- Mar. 7 - Catron, ch. 7  
9 - **Excerpt #2 Due**
- Mar. 14-18 - Spring Break
- Mar. 21 - Catron, ch. 8; Trouble-shooting  
23 - **SCRIPT DUE**
- Mar. 28 - Sound and spectacle  
30 - Performances
- April 4 - Performances  
6 - "
- April 11 - Performances  
13 - "

April 18 - Performances  
20 - "

April 25 - Performances  
27 - Review & Wrap-Up

FINAL SCRIPT DUE, with commentary, by 5 p.m. on the day scheduled for the final exam