

# The Word's the Thing

A combined class, focusing on dramatic literature through script analysis, dramaturgy, and playwriting.

Course Information:  
Tues & Thurs: 1-2:30pm  
Room: CSPAC 3745

Instructor: Dr. Nadja Masura  
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## Course Objectives/Goals

- Topics include: What is a dramaturg? What is the dramaturg's function? What is the dramaturg's function in relation to certain institutional structures, special tasks, ways of organizing rehearsals, etc.
- Students will examine performance texts through distinctions manifest according to various theatre-making roles (actor, director, designer, etc.), and via select critical lenses (feminism, post-colonialism, etc.).
- Students will plan and execute research strategies to investigate contextualizing factors of performance texts (i.e.: environment within the play, production history, playwright's history, contemporary issues of relevance, etc.)
- Students will interpret, dissect, and explicate performance texts according to form and content (i.e., structure, rhythms, character, themes, etc.)
- Students will develop proficiency at editing, revising, and refining their writing.

## Required Texts

- Ball, David. *Backwards and Forwards: A Technical Manual for Reading Plays*. Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1983.
- Cardullo, Bert, ed. *What is Dramaturgy?* New York: Peter Lang, 2005.
- Hodge, Francis. *Play Directing: Analysis, Communication, and Style*. 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1988
- Olf, Julian. "Reading the Dramatic Text for Production." *Theatre Topics*. 7.2 (1997): 153-170.
- Jonas, Susan, Geoffrey S. Proehl, and Michael Lupu. *Dramaturgy in American Theater: A Source Book*, ed.

## Definition of Dramaturgy

Dramaturgy involves the critical investigation of drama and other performance texts as it contributes to the collaborative production of theatre. A dramaturg (or dramaturgy as a practice) utilizes the following tools:

- Textual analysis
- Research strategies and patience

- Cultural/societal history
- Theatre history
- Dramatic literature
- Critical/performance theory
- Experiential knowledge of theatrical roles (director, designer, actor, etc.)
- An appreciation of theatre as collaboration
- Comprehension of the role of audience in theatre
- Thorough knowledge of the immediate community
- Desire to question, investigate, and explore
- Comprehension of relationship of language, theatre, and context

### **Expectations**

- All written work (including drafts) must be word-processed and proof-read before submission.
- Assignments will be handed in on or before the assigned date.
- There will be no food in class, although feel free to bring a beverage.
- Turn off all cell phones.

### **Attendance and Participation Grade**

Students must come to class, sign in on the attendance sheet and participate in all demonstrations and in class exercises. Students should come to class with the reading for the week done on Tuesdays and written work ready to be turned in on Thursdays. Attendance and participation will be partially determined by in class written learning exercises (quizzes). The policy on attitude to participate and willingness to learn listed under policies will be strictly adhered to. Students missing classes (without properly authorized notes) will not receive points for that day.

### **Script/Scene Analyses**

As the dramaturg is the “literary advisor” for a theatrical production, s/he must exhibit a thorough grasp of the chosen production text, including a detailed analysis of structure, language, character, design cues, etc. You will likewise be expected to demonstrate your insight via a notated “close reading” of one act/scene from the selected text. Each member of your group will be assigned a different and sequential scene from the play; individual analyses should illustrate continuity (in complexity, interpretation, etc.) with those of the group—they should read as one continuous explication.

### **Production Casebook**

As a dramaturg will provide assistance to the varied theatre collaborators, it is imperative that data be thoroughly examined and readily accessible. For this assignment graduate students will assist in the amassing of information, review/assess relevance, and document content and sources. Such information may include production reviews, biographical commentary on the playwright/period, historical photos, critical essays on

the play, etc. While this information will most certainly be accumulated by the entire group, it will be the role of the graduate student to maintain a record of all content. The casebook will be submitted on the date of each group's final presentation, and will be evaluated according to thoroughness of research, clarity of written assessment and ease of organization/format.

### **Program Packet (w/Presentation)**

Students will construct a packet of materials for an educational outreach program; this project is intended to serve as a resource both for secondary educators and their students. Think of this packet as a "group developed" writing/research portfolio. Though each packet will vary depending on the characteristics of the play/production, for the purposes of this class all packets must include:

- Letter of introduction and welcome
- Table of contents
- Background essays on playwright
- Background essays on historical period and timeline
- Synopsis and analysis of the play & critical commentary
- Production note
- Essays exploring points of contemporary relevance
- Discussion questions
- Bibliography
- List of group members and specific contributions

### **Playwriting**

Students will write a series of monologues. Based on the play students had chosen for their script analysis, students will then write a short, one-act play, based on that format.

### **Grading Procedure**

Grades are based on points accumulated through homework, essays, exams, project, and in class participation.

6 script analyses 5 pts each =	30
Production Casebook =	50
Program Packet (w/Presentation) =	50
Monologue =	10
One-Act Play =	50
participation =	10
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<b>total =</b>	<b>200 pts</b>

A=90% and higher, B=80% +, C=70% +, D=60% +, F=50%