



CURRICULUM GUIDE for THA 50 – *Introduction to Theatre Arts*

Department of Communications & Performing Arts

Submitted: Fall 2014; Revised: Fall 2020

Textbook (adopted as of Spring 2018):

Theatrical Worlds (Beta Version)

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NOTE: *As this is a "guide", the sample units, overall topics and progression are a guideline as to what should be covered throughout this introductory survey course. That said, your course should not look dramatically different than what is outlined below and the information herein should be explored in some manner. The plays listed at the end are available through the CUNY Library system. A valid login is required to access these e-versions.*

Course Description:

This survey course is designed to provide students with a thorough understanding and greater appreciation of the theatrical form. Readings and lectures will focus on the relationship between theatrical theory and practice, the various creative/production roles essential to theatre, as well as major artists and movements throughout theatrical history. Students will analyze major works of dramatic literature to offer context for course content, as well as attend a live theatrical performance on campus.

Course Objectives:

CUNY Flexible Core Learning Outcomes

- Gather, interpret, and assess information from a variety of sources and points of view.
- Evaluate evidence and arguments critically or analytically.
- Produce well-reasoned written or oral arguments using evidence to support conclusions.

Revised Course Specific Objectives

- ❖ **Theatrical Theories & Terminology:** Identify and apply the fundamental concepts, theories and roles associated with modern theatrical practice and professional theatrical production (i.e. suspension of disbelief, empathy, actor, designer, Broadway, Off-Broadway, etc.).
- ❖ **Theatre & Creativity:** Examine and define the skills, considerations and tasks associated with the creation of theatre, both individually and as a collective whole.
- ❖ **Theatre & Society:** Evaluate and articulate how theatre is a socially-responsive artform that creates meaning and fosters discussion, debate and community.
- ❖ **Theatre, History & Cultures:** Analyze and define the central characteristics of the theatrical artform, both generally and in relation to the history of the United States and Global Cultures.
- ❖ **Oral Communication & Writing Skills for the Theatre:** Analyze and evaluate the experience and the various components of live theatrical production, and articulate its value both verbally and in writing.

REQUIRED FROM EACH STUDENT:

1. A performance review of the current semester maintstage production that the department is producing.

POSSIBLE SUPPLEMENTAL MAJOR ASSIGNMENTS:

1. Additional performance review of our laboratory production (2nd production of the semester) or from a production outside of KBCC. This assignment is frequently used for extra credit.
2. In-class “page to stage” concept and/or mock production.
3. Group playwriting project.

COURSE CURRICULUM AND CONTENT (in no particular order)

UNITS #1 - 3: Plays in Context

- Units on 3 to 4 plays taught as both examples of play analysis but also to illuminate one of more of the units below.
- See appendix for approved list of possible plays for this course.

UNIT #4: Theatre History

- Origins of theatre, rituals, various cultures and their forms of presentation.
- Introduction to Greek theatre and corresponding playwrights (*Sophocles, Euripides, Aeschylus, Aristophanes*)
- Aristotle’s POETICS (*6 components of drama*)
- Roman Theatre
- Medieval Theatre
- Elizabethan Era & Shakespeare

UNIT #5: Dramatic Literature/Play Analysis/Playwriting

- Introduction to Genre & Style. Trends of distinct historical periods.
- Play Structures (episodic, climactic, circular, etc.)
- Basic play analysis (*protagonist, antagonist, rising action, climax, dénouement*)
- The PLAYRIGHT and process
- The CRITIC and process

UNIT#6: Genre

- Introduce and provide examples of different genres of playwriting and theatre-making: tragedy, comedy, farce, melodrama, tragicomedy, etc.
- How does genre connect and develop out of moments or events in world/theatre history? Theatrical Movements/”Isms” – realism, absurdism, surrealism, post-modernism, etc.
- What genre encapsulates the majority of playwriting? i.e. Psychological Realism? What sub-categories are born out of realism and why?

UNIT #7: Current Theatre

- “What is happening in NYC now?!” – current trends and productions
- Theatrical venues and vehicles – Broadway, Off-Broadway, Off-Off-Broadway, Community Theatre, Repertory/Regional theatre & Educational Theatre (*mention the role of KCACTF*)
- Commercial vs. non-profit theatre model.

UNIT #8: Actor

- The profession of an actor today.
- Actor training (Stanislavsky & Realistic Acting Techniques)
- Theatre vs. film acting
- Introduction to development of character, playing actions and given circumstances.
- Actor toolbox: headshots, resumes, agents.

UNIT#9: Director

- The profession of a stage director today.
- Director training
- Theater vs. film directing
- Introduction to the role of the director (casting, working with the producer and designers, blocking rehearsals).
- Related tasks: choreography, fight choreography, dramaturgy.

UNIT#10: Theatrical Design & Technical Theatre

- Introduction to the various roles within technical theatre. Designers: Scenic, Lighting, Costume, Sound.
- Additional roles: Stage Manager & ASM's, House Manager/Ushers, Choreographer and Musical Director.
- Stage Configurations (*Black Box, Proscenium, Thrust, Arena*)
- Parts of the theatre (House, stage, wings, fly system, booths, shop, dressing rooms)
- Areas of the stage (*Up, Down, Center, Left, Right*)

UNIT #11: Specialty Discipline/Topic of Instructor

- Example units have included Musical Theatre, Asian Theatre Traditions, Devised Theatre, Contemporary European Theatre, London & the West End, Shakespeare, Theatre of Latin America, Applied Theatre, Theatre of the Global South, etc.

Appendix #1: Desired Vocabulary Proficiency

PLO #1 - Techniques, Terminology & Theories: *Students will identify and define significant theatrical techniques, terms, trends and theories that are centerpieces of dramatic literature, theatrical performance and production, both today and across the theatrical timeline.*

In keeping with the above Program Learning Outcome, students should be able to identify and define the terminology below through their studies in THA 50.

THA 50: Introduction to Theatre

1. Actor
2. Character
3. Conflict
4. Components of Drama (Plot, Character, Theme, Language, Music, Spectacle)
5. Convention
6. Design Disciplines (Scenic, Costume, Lighting, Sound)
7. Director
8. Drama
9. Empathy
10. Genre(s)
11. NYC Theatre markets (Broadway, Off-Broadway, Off-Off Broadway)
12. Playwright
13. Producer
14. Regional Theatre
15. Script
16. Stage areas (Up, Down Left, Right)
17. Stage Configurations (Proscenium, Thrust, Theatre in the Round, Alley, Black Box/Flexible)
18. Style
19. Summer Stock
20. Suspension of Disbelief

Appendix #2: Plays for Inclusion in THA 5000: Introduction to Theatre Arts (25 plays)

In creating lesson plans and units for THA 5000, it is asked that instructors only include plays from the list below. This is for two reasons. First, these plays are (mostly) available online and are fully accessible at no cost to our students. Second, it helps maximize the number of plays that theatre students are exposed to in their studies and minimizes the possibility of plays being repeated throughout the theatre program. 3-5 plays are recommended per semester. Please see the program director with any questions regarding course content.

1. It is recommended that at least two of the eight plays below be included in the course design:

- Akhtar, Ayad *Disgraced***
- Cruz, Nilo *Anna in the Tropics**
- Hudes, Quiara Alegria *Water by the Spoonful^*
- Hwang, David Henry *M. Butterfly***
- Kushner, Tony *Angels in America: Millennium Approaches**
- Nottage, Lynn *Ruined**
- Parks, Suzan-Lori *Topdog/Underdog**
- Ruhl, Sarah *Eurydice**

2. It is recommended that one of the two plays being produced each semester by the Kingsborough Theatre Arts Program be included in the course design. Please see the program director for access to scripts and for information on production dates.^

3. It is recommended that an additional one to three plays be selected from the list below to be included in the course design:

- Euripides *Medea**
- FastHorse, Larissa *The Thanksgiving Play***
- Glaspell, Susan *Trifles****
- Harris, Aleshea *What to Send Up When It Goes Down***
- Hwang, David Henry *Yellow Face**
- Ibsen, Henrik *A Doll's House****
- Ōizuka, Naomi *(Anon)ymous***
- Lindsay-Abaire, David *Good People**
- Lee, Young Jean *Straight White Men***
- Morisseau, Dominique *Pipeline***
- Nwandu, Antoinette *Pass Over***
- Parks, Suzan-Lori *365 Days/365 Plays**
- Shange, Ntozake *for colored girls... ^*
- Sophocles *Antigone**
- Wilson, August *Joe Turner's Come and Gone^*
- Wilson, August *Radio Golf***
- Wolfe, George C. *The Colored Museum***

* Available from ProQuest, via the KCC Library Database

** Available from Academic Search Complete/American Theatre Magazine, via the KCC Library Database.

*** Available online at Project Gutenberg.

^ See program director for access.