



THST*2120 Writing for Performance

Fall 2020

Section(s): 01

School of English and Theatre Studies

Credit Weight: 0.50

Version 1.00 - August 18, 2020

1 Course Details

1.1 Calendar Description

This course is a theoretical and applied study of creative writing for performance.

Pre-Requisites: THST*1040

1.2 Course Description

To engage the students in the exploration and practice of writing for performance, in any medium, but concentrating on theatre. The students will explore effective ways to translate ideas, insights, politics and passions into words that will be performed, in the myriad rhythms of human dialogue and monologue, within an effective story structure.

1.3 Timetable

Mondays, 10-11:20

Wednesdays: 10-11:20

on ZOOM

1.4 Final Exam

Exam time and location is subject to change. Please see WebAdvisor for the latest information.

NO EXAM

2 Instructional Support

2.1 Instructional Support Team

Instructor:	Judith Thompson
Email:	juditht@uoguelph.ca
Telephone:	+1-519-824-4120 x58750
Office:	MASS 106
Office Hours:	Mondays, 330-530

3 Learning Resources

We will try to read the following texts together in class, but if we do not have time, I highly recommend that each student read these plays and more. Most of the plays can be easily accessed through the U of G dramaonline library. The students will present seminars on one of the plays below in groups of two.

3.1 Required Resources

The December Man by Colleen Murphy (Other)

The December Man by Colleen Murphy is a required text.

Ruined by Lynn Nottage (Other)

Ruined by Lynn Nottage

This is How We Got Here by Keith Barker (Other)

This is How We Got Here by Keith Barker

Crash by Pamela Sinha (Other)

Crash by Pamela Sinha

Concord Floral: Jordan Tanahill (Other)

Deer Woman by Tara Beagan (Other)

Deer Woman by Tara Beagan.

Gas Girls: Donna-Michele St. Bernard (Other)

Kill Me Now: Brad Fraser (Other)

Letters to my Grandma: Anusree Roy (Other)

You Fancy Yourself: Maja Ardal (Other)

Read Headed Stepchild: Johnny Walker (Other)

Riot: Andrew Moodie (Other)

3.2 Recommended Resources

Non Fiction: *The Anatomy of Story* by John Truby (Other)

4 Learning Outcomes

4.1 Course Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, you should be able to:

1. The students will be able to apply what they learn in writing for performance to myriad tasks, such as playwrighting, writing for radio, screenwriting, television writing, ad writing and speech writing. An advanced understanding of story telling through voice will enable them to parse the nuances and implications that are layered into human speech, thus increasing their understanding of psycho-social dynamics.
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5 Teaching and Learning Activities

6 Assessments

6.1 Assessment Details

Seminar (15%)

The students will present an in-depth seminar on one of the plays required in pairs. This includes a thorough explanation of the plot and the characters and the central themes of the play, as well as the critical and audience response. The presenters will also perform a memorized scene for two and a monologue from the play each. Presentation skills, i.e. eye contact, vocal clarity, enthusiasm, physical engagement, and innovative ideas for class engagement will all be taken into consideration. Please submit a hard copy of your seminar to the Instructor.

Seminar questions to consider:

1. What makes this play theatrical, rather than a work of fiction to be read only.

2. How open is this play to interpretation? Some productions cut and paste plays without permission. Give an example of how that might damage/improve/change the play.
3. Character is action. Explore character in this play. Describe each character, and their function, and how they collide with each other.
4. What is the plot? How is that different than the structure? How is the story told, through narration? Character? Event?
5. Discuss the notion of universality. Are the emotional moments in the play universal? Is that possible? Or are they just specific to the characters? Who can relate? Is it possible to cross cultural barriers?
6. Context of this play in Theatre History: compare to a Classic. How is it the same? How does it differ. Has there been "progress?"
7. Materialism: cost of tickets, type of venue. Who is the audience for this play? Do they have influence? Will it/can it/ make a difference? Is it aimed at young people, older, wealthier people? How to make it accessible to everyone?
8. "Performativity" How much room for Acting, for individual interpretation is there? Give an example by acting a scene or monologue in two very different ways.
9. Philosophy/Politics Discuss the ideas in the text. A play is most successful if the audience needs to talk about it. What will they be talking about?
10. Religion: Is God, or the Divine in the play?
11. Psychology: the behaviour of the characters: is it unexpected, or predictable. Does it enlighten us about human behaviour? About ourselves
12. Sociology. What does the play say about culture, groups, urban life vs. rural life, war, peace, etc.?
13. History: Is this play an accurate historical document as well as a cultural artifact? In what way?
14. Gender/ Queerness/ Heteronormativity or Not/ Discuss.
15. Marxism: Look at the play through a Marxist lens: What is the currency in the play, what is the trade, who is oppressed
16. Text/subtext/ dialogue as lies, avoidance, implication. Monologues as actions-how is truth told? The objective of a play is to tell/reveal a hidden truth, to provoke autonomous thought/questions in the audience. How does the play achieve this?

Dramatic monologue based on story of Transformation (10%)

Date: Wed, Sep 16

A drama always is concentrated on turning points in the lives of the characters. The students will write a monologue no longer than two pages but not shorter than one, spoken by a character in the story that the writer told in the first class. How does a story differ from a theatrical monologue? What is the sub-text driving the monologue? What is the psychological need of the speaker/character. How does it engage the audience in a different way? Who is the speaker addressing?

On September 16 students will read their monologues aloud.

Monologue pulled from the headlines, current or historical: (10%)

Date: Mon, Sep 28

In this assignment, the students will write in a voice that is unfamiliar, and not personal to them. Despite the character being from another world, writers are encouraged to bring in details of personal experience in order to make the character real and relatable, along with details that can only be learned through research.

Full outline of Solo/Dialogue Project (15%)

Date: Mon, Oct 26

This is a full length (20-45 minute) solo or dialogue play that each student will write throughout the semester and present at the end of the semester to an invited audience. Students will read their outline/idea for their solo project in class, and the class will respond.

First Draft of Project (20%)

Date: Wed, Nov 18

. **Reading** in Class, plus student work.

Final Draft (20%)

Date: Wed, Nov 25

The student's willingness to listen carefully to notes given on the first draft, and to state clearly why they chose to use or disregard the notes is crucial. The student must provide a point form list of changes made and the reasons for them.

Public Presentation (Solo or Play of 2) (10%)

Date: Mon, Nov 30

Project Preparation and commitment to the public presentation, including recruitment of audience

6.2 Method of Evaluation

Students will be evaluated on their understanding of how to translate ideas, insights, and character into performable text; how silence, fragmented speech, monologue and dialogue and structure create a piece which will penetrate the consciousness of the audience. They will enhance their understanding of how class privilege or lack of it is demonstrated and performed in everyday speech.

6.3 Final Exam

There is no final exam for this class.

7 Course Statements

7.1 Participation

Participation is essential in this class. Students must turn phones off during class unless there is a medical or family related reason to have the phone on.

8 University Statements

8.1 Email Communication

As per university regulations, all students are required to check their e-mail account regularly: e-mail is the official route of communication between the University and its students.

8.2 When You Cannot Meet a Course Requirement

When you find yourself unable to meet an in-course requirement because of illness or compassionate reasons please advise the course instructor (or designated person, such as a teaching assistant) in writing, with your name, id#, and e-mail contact. The grounds for Academic Consideration are detailed in the Undergraduate and Graduate Calendars.

Undergraduate Calendar - Academic Consideration and Appeals

<https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-ac.shtml>

Graduate Calendar - Grounds for Academic Consideration

<https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/graduate/current/genreg/index.shtml>

Associate Diploma Calendar - Academic Consideration, Appeals and Petitions

<https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/diploma/current/index.shtml>

8.3 Drop Date

Students will have until the last day of classes to drop courses without academic penalty. The deadline to drop two-semester courses will be the last day of classes in the second semester. This applies to all students (undergraduate, graduate and diploma) except for Doctor of Veterinary Medicine and Associate Diploma in Veterinary Technology (conventional and alternative delivery) students. The regulations and procedures for course registration are available in their respective Academic Calendars.

Undergraduate Calendar - Dropping Courses

<https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-drop.shtml>

Graduate Calendar - Registration Changes

<https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/graduate/current/genreg/genreg-reg-regchg.shtml>

Associate Diploma Calendar - Dropping Courses

<https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/diploma/current/c08/c08-drop.shtml>

8.4 Copies of Out-of-class Assignments

Keep paper and/or other reliable back-up copies of all out-of-class assignments: you may be asked to resubmit work at any time.

8.5 Accessibility

The University promotes the full participation of students who experience disabilities in their academic programs. To that end, the provision of academic accommodation is a shared responsibility between the University and the student.

When accommodations are needed, the student is required to first register with Student Accessibility Services (SAS). Documentation to substantiate the existence of a disability is required; however, interim accommodations may be possible while that process is underway.

Accommodations are available for both permanent and temporary disabilities. It should be noted that common illnesses such as a cold or the flu do not constitute a disability.

Use of the SAS Exam Centre requires students to book their exams at least 7 days in advance and not later than the 40th Class Day.

For Guelph students, information can be found on the SAS website
<https://www.uoguelph.ca/sas>

For Ridgetown students, information can be found on the Ridgetown SAS website
<https://www.ridgetownc.com/services/accessibilityservices.cfm>

8.6 Academic Integrity

The University of Guelph is committed to upholding the highest standards of academic integrity, and it is the responsibility of all members of the University community—faculty, staff, and students—to be aware of what constitutes academic misconduct and to do as much as possible to prevent academic offences from occurring. University of Guelph students have the responsibility of abiding by the University's policy on academic misconduct regardless of their location of study; faculty, staff, and students have the responsibility of supporting an environment that encourages academic integrity. Students need to remain aware that instructors have access to and the right to use electronic and other means of detection.

Please note: Whether or not a student intended to commit academic misconduct is not relevant for a finding of guilt. Hurried or careless submission of assignments does not excuse students from responsibility for verifying the academic integrity of their work before submitting it. Students who are in any doubt as to whether an action on their part could be construed as an academic offence should consult with a faculty member or faculty advisor.

Undergraduate Calendar - Academic Misconduct
<https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-amisconduct.shtml>

Graduate Calendar - Academic Misconduct
<https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/graduate/current/genreg/index.shtml>

8.7 Recording of Materials

Presentations that are made in relation to course work - including lectures - cannot be recorded or copied without the permission of the presenter, whether the instructor, a student, or guest lecturer. Material recorded with permission is restricted to use for that course unless further permission is granted.

8.8 Resources

The Academic Calendars are the source of information about the University of Guelph's procedures, policies, and regulations that apply to undergraduate, graduate, and diploma programs.

Academic Calendars
<https://www.uoguelph.ca/academics/calendars>

8.9 Disclaimer

Please note that the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic may necessitate a revision of the format of course offerings and academic schedules. Any such changes will be announced via CourseLink and/or class email. All University-wide decisions will be posted on the COVID-19 website (<https://news.uoguelph.ca/2019-novel-coronavirus-information/>) and circulated by email.

8.10 Illness

The University will not require verification of illness (doctor's notes) for the fall 2020 or winter 2021 semesters.
