

THE 4481: Production Dramaturgy

Spring 2019

Tu/Thu 8-9 (9:35-11:30 am)

Constant Theatre 219

Dr. Sean Bartley

Office Hours: Tu/W/Th 5 (11:45am-12:35pm) and By Appointment

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Course Description (from Schedule of Courses): “Introduces the field and concepts of production dramaturgy. Includes script analysis, text editing, research, adaptation, new play development, season selection and programs. Students complete a production protocol.”

Course Objectives and Teaching Philosophy

In my own personal life and career inside and outside academia, I find myself constantly trying to accurately and precisely describe the role, function, and importance of a dramaturg. While the exercise can be fun, it is also, at times, deeply frustrating. How can I help my friends, colleagues, and family understand just what it is I really do and why it matters? Each member of my immediate and extended families, one by one, has needed to be walked through the basics of term’s history and contemporary meanings. My youngest brothers haven taken to lovingly (but deridingly) calling me the “dramaturd,” shrieking the term as they howl with laughter. Most people, when they meet me in a coffee shop or at a party, listen to my thoughtful pitch in favor of dramaturgy and look at me with combinations of bemusement and confusion. More than a decade after serving as dramaturg on my first production and beginning my study of the field, I have no all-encompassing or programmatic definition of the practice to offer my students. Instead, I hope you will all help me think about how the term and its connotations might be clarified, expanded, and redefined.

Dramaturgy and the Academy have a very complicated relationship. Dramaturgy courses at some other universities privilege the abstraction of a few of the skills of a dramaturg (research, analysis, and textual exegesis) over the practical skills needed by Production Dramaturgs, Literary Managers, and Directors of New Play Development in producing theatres themselves. Employable dramaturgs must wear many hats, collaborating fruitfully with actors, designers, directors, arts managers, artistic directors, audiences, media outlets, and funding institutions. I urge students to think of this as a class in theatrical practice as well as an exploration of Theatre Studies. I hope to combine my theoretical and historical perspectives with my experience in the practice of dramaturgy to give students a concrete and practical training in the field, just as students might expect in a course outside Theatre Studies devoted to acting, directing, designing, or stage management. Dramaturgy, as I conceive it, is not merely studied, but embodied and enacted.

The trajectory of the course’s modules serves to introduce students to the field, then to invite them to practice their skills, and finally to expand their understandings of it. We’ll begin by tracing the history of the term and the ways it has been applied, then begin the process of dramaturgy in its most traditional sense, researching contemporary adaptations of work by Shakespeare and Ibsen. Next, we’ll explore how the dramaturg functions in American institutional theatres and create our own “New Scripts Office” in class. Finally, we’ll consider how dramaturgy

might be applied to other forms (opera, dance, performance art, etc.) and how it is theorized and enacted across the globe today.

By the end of this course, students will successfully be able to:

- Critically investigate a wide range of plays, exploring not just their forms and conventions, but also their historical, social, and cultural contexts.
- Perform dramaturgical research on classical and contemporary plays.
- Present their dramaturgical findings in a wide variety of formats and for a range of audiences, sharing their work in writing and in formal oral presentations.
- Discuss the role and function of dramaturgs in producing theatres around the world.
- Practice the collaborative processes and skills of a production dramaturg.
- Explore the breadth of contemporary American theatre and develop their own individual aesthetics.
- Conceive a theatrical work that derives itself from dramaturgical research, an inversion of the traditional dramaturgical process.

Tickets: In addition to seeing all Spring SOTD Productions (see school-wide “Attendance at Performances” policy on page 5), students are required to see the Hippodrome production of Lucas Hnath’s *A Doll’s House, Part 2* before our in-class discussion on Thursday, 1/24. Student tickets are \$15.00 and there are two “Pay-What-You-Want” nights on 1/9 and 1/10 and a performance with \$10 tickets on 1/15. For more information, see <https://thehipp.org/a-dolls-house-part-2/>.

Printing and Copying: Students may incur printing and photocopying costs in this course by making hard copies of readings posted to Canvas or completing the Casebook assignments.

Course Fees: Information about course fees can be found at <https://one.ufl.edu/soc/2188>.

Course Schedule: Students will collaborate on some aspects of the course schedule with the professor on the first day of class (1/8). The finalized course schedule will be posted on Canvas by 5:00pm that evening and distributed in hard copy at the following class meeting (1/10).

Canvas and Email: Students will need to access Canvas frequently in this course. Because of state and federal laws, all emails related to course content or delivery *must* come from students’ UF accounts rather than personal accounts (like Gmail and Yahoo).

Grade Breakdown:

- Attendance and Participation: 15%
- Quizzes: 15%
- Production Casebook: 15%
- Evidence into Action Casebook: 20%
- Script Report: 5%
- *Rough Magic* Lobby Display: 10%
- Literary Adaptation: 10%
- Mobile Performance: 10%

Grading Scale (UF does not award an A+ grade):

A = 93-100 A- = 90-92 B+ = 89-89 B= 83-86 B- = 80-82 C+ = 77-79
C = 73-76 C- = 70-72 D+ = 67-69 D = 63-66 D- = 60-62 F = <59

(For more information: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/>)

Course Expectations:

1.) To attend class. This course will rely on discussion, class exercises, and group work. For this format to succeed, you must be present and on time. You will receive points for participation and attendance in this course. You may miss **TWO** unexcused class sessions without penalty to your grade. After this, 10 percentage points will be deducted from your Attendance and Participation grade for each absence beyond the allotted two. Tardiness is not acceptable. Three late arrivals and/or early exits will equal one absence. **If you know you will be absent from class, it is your responsibility to notify the instructor prior to the absence and turn in any work prior to the start of class time.** Excused absences, which are defined in the University Attendance Policy (<https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies/#absencestext>), must be documented. *Only absences covered in the University Attendance Policy* may be documented and considered as excused. Athletes must submit official, written documentation for *every* absence. Students who miss class due to an excused absence must contact the instructor to make up missed work (including quizzes) **within one week of your return to class.** All students are responsible for providing their own documentation – I cannot track it down for you.

2.) To read the assigned materials. A professional Dramaturg or Literary Manager typically spends more time and energy reading than anyone one else employed by their theater. Indeed, a successful dramaturg must devote significant attention to reading in order to stay current with new playwrights, plays, and conversations in the field. Keeping up to date with the reading and coming to class with questions, comments, and observations on each reading are absolutely essential. This course is founded on both group and individual textual analysis; failure to come to class prepared to explore the reading is not simply frustrating for the instructor, but unfair to your colleagues in the course. All students are required to bring the texts that we read for the day to class. No exceptions. Failure to keep up on the reading will affect not only a student’s quiz grades, but also their final Attendance and Participation grades.

3.) To be attentive and participate in class. Participation does not simply mean speaking aloud in class, although that is essential. Students should participate by actively following discussion and by contributing to our semester-long conversation through the insights they present in their papers and assignments. Other examples of participation include coming prepared to class, asking questions that help to clarify the assigned readings, and making thoughtful comments that link the readings to outside material (perhaps even from other courses). Examples of activities that detract from that atmosphere include arriving late or leaving early, cell phone use, distracting behavior during lectures or student presentations, speaking unkindly or disrespectfully to or about anyone in the classroom, or expecting special treatment. These activities will not be tolerated, and offenders may be asked to leave class or face other disciplinary measures.

4.) To complete the required assignments in a timely fashion. The assignments provide you with both informal and formal opportunities to articulate your responses to the issues we’ll be discussing. You will get the most out of the course if you turn in your work on time. **If you know**

you will be absent due to school related functions, family events, etc. it is your responsibility to make prior arrangements with the instructor. Late assignments are subject to a 10% deduction per day. Some assignments, such as presentations, cannot be made up except in the case of unanticipated, excused absences. While I appreciate that computer problems happen, they are not an acceptable reason for submitting work late and will result in the same 10% per day late penalty. All deductions are calculated based upon the possible points for each assignment.

Quizzes: There will be at least 10 quizzes during the course of the semester which are graded on a pass/fail system and designed both to ensure that students keep up with the assigned reading and to reward students for being attentive during class. Quizzes will typically cover the reading due in class that day. On days when reading is due the quiz will take place prior to our class discussion. Thus, students should come to class with the reading completed and be prepared to be quizzed on the material. Students with unexcused absences are not afforded the opportunity to make up a quiz at a later date, though each student will be awarded one quiz drop at the end of the semester. **Students who miss a quiz due to an excused absence must arrange to complete their make up quiz within one week of the date it was originally administered in class; those who do not make this deadline forfeit the opportunity to make up missed work.**

Casebooks: Casebooks are widely utilized in the field of production dramaturgy to aid work on contemporary plays and classics alike. Students in this course will complete two casebooks:

- **PRODUCTION CASEBOOK**- A casebook designed to support a production of a classical or contemporary script. Students will be able to select their own texts pending my approval. Scripts must be approved by 1/15. Only one student in the class may select a given play. First come, first served. Students are encouraged, but not required, to select a play they might hypothetically work on as a production dramaturg. I'll also be happy to recommend texts by request. Students must meet with the instructor to discuss their casebook "tabs" by 1/22. Production Casebook Presentations begin 1/29.

- **EVIDENCE INTO ACTION CASEBOOK**- In this assignment, students will begin not with a play, but with a current event, social issue, or topic of cultural or historical conversation. The subject need not strictly come from the field of performance. Rather than researching an existing text, students will produce resources that could facilitate the development of a new theatrical work based upon their chosen subject. Students must have their subjects chosen by 3/12. Students must meet with the instructor to discuss their casebook "tabs" by 4/2. Evidence Into Action Casebook Presentations begin 4/16.

A detailed assignment prompt and grading rubric are posted to Canvas. Example casebooks will be shared with the class prior to the assignment deadlines. Though it will take us two class periods to present each of these casebooks, all students must be prepared to present on the first class date, listed above.

The New Scripts Office and Script Report: Script Reports, often in strikingly similar formats, are essential documents in many Literary and Artistic offices of American institutional theatres. With a constant flow of script submissions and limited time and human resources to handle the texts, Literary Managers, Directors of New Play Development, and Artistic Directors often are able to read only the script reports for the vast majority of the submissions their theatres receive. This makes the quality and accuracy of these reports essential. Students will complete one report on a

contemporary play for the New Scripts Office. Students will select these scripts from an approved list in class on 1/31. Crucially, students will select these scripts based only on their titles and without knowledge of the plays' authors, styles, or plots. Students are encouraged not to research the authors or production history until after they have written the script reports, just as readers in a literary office would be urged to stay impartial while writing. Students will provide hard copy of the script report they complete individually for their peers, allowing each student to collect a large set of reports as a course resource. The New Scripts Office Presentations will begin 2/21. A sample report is posted to Canvas and report formatting will be discussed in class.

Rough Magic Lobby Displays: Students will work in pairs on this assignment, helping contextualize the SOTD's production of *Rough Magic* for audiences. Students will select a topic that must be approved by the instructor on or before 1/31. Students might focus on a particular figure from theatre history, event, social or political issue, or artistic movement explored in *Rough Magic* and research it in depth. Students are encouraged to meet with the instructor while developing their Lobby Displays. Final Lobby Displays are due 2/26. A detailed assignment prompt and grading rubric are posted to Canvas.

Adaptations: First, we'll investigate how a wide range of playwrights, directors, and performance artists have adapted works by Shakespeare, Ibsen, and others. In consultation with the professor, students will select their own short stories or other fictional works to adapt, workshopping their adaptations with their peers. A detailed assignment prompt and grading rubric are posted to Canvas.

Mobile Performances: We'll end the course by looking at Janet Cardiff's *Alter Banhoff Video Walk* and exploring the possibilities for using Augmented Reality and mobile technology to create site-specific performances. Students will select a site on UF's campus or in Gainesville, research that location's history and topography, and create an original 3-5 minute smartphone performance for single audience members. A detailed assignment prompt and grading rubric are posted to Canvas. Examples will be screened in class.

University and School of Theatre and Dance Policies:

University Honestly Policy: UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, "We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: "On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment." The Honor Code (<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honorcode/>) specifies several behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the professor.

Accommodations: Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

Attendance at Performances: By decision of the faculty in the School of Theatre and Dance, the following statement is included on all departmental syllabi: “*Since production is the laboratory for all theatre courses, attendance at all mainstage School of Theatre and Dance productions is required of students enrolled in classes with the following prefix designations: THE, TPA, TPP, ORI. Critiques of and/or responses to these productions may be required. Attendance at all related events is encouraged.*”

Course Evaluation: Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results/>

Student Resources:

Health and Wellness

1. U Matter, We Care: If you or a friend is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu or 352-392-1575 so that a team member can reach out to the student.
2. Counseling and Wellness Center: <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx>, 392-1575; and the University Police Department: 392-1111 or 9-1-1 for emergencies.
3. Student Health Care Center, 392-1161.
4. University Police Department, 392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies).
<http://www.police.ufl.edu/>

Academic Resources

1. E-learning technical support, 352-392-4357 (select option 2), e-mail to learningsupport@ufl.edu, or <https://lss.at.ufl.edu/help.shtml>.
2. Career Resource Center, Reitz Union, 392-1601. Career assistance and counseling.
<http://www.crc.ufl.edu/>
3. Library Support, <http://cms.uflib.ufl.edu/ask>. Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources.
4. Teaching Center, Broward Hall, 392-2010 or 392-6420. General study skills and tutoring.
<http://teachingcenter.ufl.edu/>
5. Writing Studio, 302 Tigert Hall, 846-1138. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers. <http://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/>