

Professor Diana Lobontiu (they/them)

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Tuesdays & Thursdays 4:00pm – 5:20pm, 110 Kupfrian Hall

Office Hours: Thursdays 5:20pm – 6:20pm, 113 Kupfrian Hall, or by appointment

Course prerequisites: HUM 101 and 102, HUM 2XX

THTR 365 PRINCIPLES OF PLAYWRITING, FALL 2024

(subject to change!)

This is an introductory playwriting class. There are two parts:

1. The reading. In order to write good, you need to read good (things)!

We will read and analyze contemporary, bold, explosive playwriting. These writers' works will help you understand how to play with conventions to create truly original pieces.

2. The writing. In which, you guessed it, you write! And also listen. And also share. And also support. And also rewrite.

Throughout the semester you will complete writing exercises and tap into your creative voice. You will write 2 different short plays and present them to the class. You will also provide verbal and written feedback to classmates throughout the semester, and participate in class discussions.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Exploration of the writer's craft from the page into the physical life of the play.

Covers the basic tools in crafting plays by developing skills in play formatting, character work, story structure, and workshop techniques.

COURSE OUTCOMES

Understand the language and crafting of a stage script. Read and analyze contemporary, explosive plays and hone own artistic voice. Work with story structure, write and rewrite to develop 2 short plays.

ABSENCE POLICY

Attendance is important for this course as most of the coursework will be discussions happening in class. Lateness and unexcused absences will be reflected in your grade.

If a student has a note from the Dean of Students stating there was a valid reason for missing class and/or assignments, then an appropriate schedule to make up work will be scheduled. If there are mitigating circumstances, contact me before the class you will miss. If you are feeling sick, please do not attend class in-person.

HONOR CODE

Academic Integrity is the cornerstone of higher education and is central to the ideals of this course and the university. Cheating or use of AI (Chat GPT, etc.) to complete assignments is strictly prohibited and devalues the degree that you are working on. As a member of the NJIT community, it is your responsibility to protect your educational investment by knowing and

following the academic code of integrity policy that is found at:
<http://www5.njit.edu/policies/sites/policies/files/academic-integrity-code.pdf>.

Please note that it is my professional obligation and responsibility to report any academic misconduct to the Dean of Students Office. Any student found in violation of the code by cheating, plagiarizing or using any online software inappropriately will result in disciplinary action. This may include a failing grade of F, and/or suspension or dismissal from the university. If you have any questions about the code of Academic Integrity, please contact the Dean of Students Office at dos@njit.edu.

GRADING

A = 100 - 89.5

B = 89.4 - 79.5

C = 79.4 - 69.5

D = 69.4 - 60

F = 59 and lower

ASSIGNMENT BREAKDOWN

Writing Exercises (12%)

These will occur periodically throughout the semester, in class. Please turn these in on paper (written out, or typed if you know your handwriting may be unreadable) at the end of the class in which we cover the assignment.

In Class Participation/Workshop Feedback (18%)

You will read the required materials participate in class discussions on the writer's craft. Be bold, be inquisitive, be lively – your voice is wanted in the space!

And, workshop feedback is huge! We can only improve with thoughtful, considered feedback. You will provide verbal and sometimes written answers to classmates' pieces throughout the semester. If you cannot participate verbally, will submit your feedback on Blackboard under the discussion tab. You will answer 2 things:

1. What popped: things (lines, moments, characters, ideas) that stuck out to you.
2. Questions: any confusion, curiosity, wishes for the piece, or things you wanted more of.

Please note! This is not a review or an essay. It's an honest emotional response to your peers' pieces. They may be (and perhaps should be) written in bullet point format.

Note that you may be asked to read others' pieces in class. While I do not expect an award winning caliber of acting, please make an effort.

And, **DO NOT!!** Be on your cellphone in class. This will affect your grade.

Presentation on a Piece in Class (5%)

You will each be responsible for presenting one of the pieces/authors we will be studying. You will give us context as to who the author is, what their background/influences are, how the piece came about, any interesting snippets from interviews, etc. Basically, anything you think is useful in terms of understanding the piece better. You will select a passage (or a snippet, if it's a

video) for us to read/watch as a class out loud. You will then pose 2-3 discussion questions for the class. You will upload the presentation as an assignment on the day you present.

Response to On Campus Show (10%) – Due Saturday, November 16, 11:59pm

You will watch 1 play on campus (this semester, *Peter and the Star Catcher*) and write a 2-3 page response about your impressions of it. What worked? What didn't? What surprised you? What bored you? What made you laugh? And why?

Play 1 (15%)

You will write a 10-15 page original play and present it to the class in workshop. **You will print out enough copies (13) for everyone ahead of time.** You will receive feedback in class -- please take notes on your peers' feedback as well as mine, as you will have to incorporate it at some point into the final. You will submit it the day you are presenting both as an assignment and in the appropriate discussion thread.

Play 2 (15%)

You will write a different 10-15 page original play. **You will print out enough copies for everyone ahead of time.** You will receive feedback in class -- please take notes on your peers' feedback as well as mine, as you will have to incorporate it at some point into the final. You will submit it the day you are presenting both as an assignment and in the appropriate discussion thread.

Final (25%) – Due Friday, December 20th, 11:59pm

You will take one of your two pieces and, applying the feedback you received on it from your professor and classmates, extend it another 10-15 pages (plus make any edits to the first 10-15 pages you submitted). So, you will submit 20-30 pages, total.

You will provide a statement (1-2 pages) talking about your process of writing, noting what changes you made between drafts, and how your piece changed.

COURSE MATERIALS (all will be provided to you on Canvas)

***please bring a notebook and pen/pencil to class, or a laptop, if you prefer to write on that.**

- Excerpts from *The Art & Craft of Playwriting*, Jeffrey Hatcher
 - The Six Principles of Aristotle
 - Structure/Dialogue
- Naomi Iizuka, [playwriting craft lecture](#)
- *Is God Is*, Aleshea Harris
- *Plano*, Will Arbery
- *Guards at the Taj*, Rajiv Joseph

Workshops round 1

- *Agua de Luna*, Caridad Svich
- *Endlings*, Celine Song
- *A Map of Virtue*, Erin Courtney

Workshops round 2

TENTATIVE COURSE CALENDAR

Week 1

Tuesday, 9/3 Course introduction, set in class expectations. **Sign up for workshop slots.**

HW: read and complete “The Six Elements of Aristotle” assignment. Look at pieces you want to present on and email Prof. Lobontiu your choices ahead of class.

Thursday, 9/5

Discuss “The Six Elements of Aristotle” from *The Art & Craft of Playwriting*, by Jeffrey Hatcher. **Sign up for presentation on one of the course materials slots. Show playwriting format.**

HW: read and complete “Structure” and “Dialogue” sections from *The Art & Craft of Playwriting*, by Jeffrey Hatcher.

Week 2

Tuesday, 9/10

Discuss “Structure” and “Dialogue” sections from *The Art & Craft of Playwriting*, by Jeffrey Hatcher. **In class writing exercises.**

Thursday, 9/12

Watch Naomi Iizuka’s [playwriting craft lecture](#) from the Sewanee Writers’ Conference. **In class writing exercises, if time.**

HW: Read *Is God Is*, by Aleshea Harris.

Week 3

Tuesday, 9/17

Discuss *Is God Is*, by Aleshea Harris.

Thursday, 9/19

In class writing exercises, TBD.

Week 4

Tuesday, 9/24

Discuss *Plano*, by Will Arbery

Thursday, 9/26

In class writing exercises. Discuss expectations for workshop.

HW: Read *Guards At The Taj*, by Rajiv Joseph

Week 5

Tuesday, 10/1

Discuss *Guards At The Taj*, by Rajiv Joseph.

WORKSHOPS BEGIN!

Thursday, 10/3 Workshop: Play 1 (2 student present)

Week 6

Tuesday, 10/8

Workshop: Play 1 (2 students present)

Thursday, 10/10

Workshop: Play 1 (2 students present)

Week 7

Tuesday, 10/15

Workshop: Play 1 (2 students present)

Thursday, 10/17 Workshop: Play 1 (2 students present)

Week 8

Tuesday, 10/22 Workshop: Play 1 (2 students presents)

Thursday, 10/24 Workshop: Play 1 (1 student presents)
HW: Read *Agua de Luna*, by Caridad Svich

Week 9:

Tuesday, 10/29 Discuss *Agua de Luna*, by Caridad Svich

Thursday, 10/31 **In class writing exercises.**
HW: Read *Endlings*, by Celine Song.

Week 10

Tuesday, 11/5 Discuss *Endlings*, by Celine Song.

Thursday, 11/7 **In class writing exercises.**
HW: Read *A Map of Virtue*, by Erin Courtney.

Week 11

Tuesday, 11/12 Discuss *A Map of Virtue*, by Erin Courtney.

Thursday, 11/14 Workshop: Play 2 (2 students present)

Week 12

Tuesday, 11/19 Workshop: Play 2 (2 students present)

Thursday, 11/21 Workshop: Play 2 (2 students present)

Week 13

Tuesday, 11/26 Workshop: Play 2 (2 students present)

THANKSGIVING BREAK

Week 14

Tuesday, 12/3 Workshop: Play 2 (2 students present).

Thursday, 12/6 Workshop: Play 2 (2 students present)

Week 15

Tuesday, 12/10 Workshop: Play 2 (1 students presents). Final activity.

FINAL PLAY READINGS: TBD

Final due: Friday 12/20, by 11:59pm.