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THEA 485: SENIOR/JUNIOR SEMINAR

Spring Semester, 2012; TR 12:30

The Theatre Department's Senior/Junior Seminar aims to be the culminating academic experience for Theatre majors at Rhodes, and provides you an opportunity to demonstrate your particular expertise in the three r's: research, reason, and 'riting. The practical objective of the course is the production of the "Senior/Junior Paper", a required element of the Theatre degree, and all aspects of the course aim at this end. The structure of the semester intends to provide stepping stones and benchmarks which will help you develop your paper. Most classes will have something to do with your chosen topic and with the process of going from a vaguely conceived idea to a well-reasoned and well-argued paper. The course also expects that you all will actively engage in helping each other, by reading each others' drafts, offering sources, interrogating each others' ideas, and so on.

Which is to say that although the schedule below is inflexible in some respects, you all will supply much of the content of the course. Your individual topics, and the particular approaches each will require, will determine the "whats and whys" of the course. Nevertheless, become very familiar with the "hows and whens" of the schedule. Due dates are inflexible because the process that is the premise of the course depends on fully realized stages. If you miss a deadline, you may very well fail this course and, then, not graduate. And we will all be sad.

The Theatre Department has high standards for the Senior/Junior Paper. We expect that it will demonstrate keen thinking, substantial research, meticulous composition, and significant intellectual weight.

required texts

Mamet, David. *Oleanna*

Online Reader. www.yavanika.org/classes/

required work. Note that this course does not have a 'topic' apart from your own, individual paper project. Consequently, across the semester, our class periods do not require extensive reading. There is no midterm exam. There is no final exam. Note also, then, that you have much more time to work on your paper. The time you don't spend studying a 'topic' for this class is yours to commit to the topic of your own paper, and I will grade your paper, accordingly. Between finding sufficient source material, reading that source material, critically analyzing that material, writing annotations of that material, developing your own argument about your topic, coordinating the arguments of your source material with your own argument, writing introductory paragraphs, writing a history of your topic, writing critical analyses of preceding arguments about your topic, organizing the components of your argument, writing the components of your argument, and revising the components of your argument, you have more than enough to keep you anxiously busy *every day of this semester*. The academic regulations of the college expect that you will spend at least ten hours every week preparing for this class. If you do not commit two hours *every day* (excepting weekends) to reading, reasoning, and 'riting for this paper, *throughout the semester*, you will likely fall behind. This class is built to give you this time, and I expect that you will use it.

attendance. I do have an attendance policy. Please see the "Participation" section under **grades**, below. Keep in mind that you have a significant project to complete by the end of the semester, and being in class will only help you.

late work. Work is due **IN CLASS** on the day indicated by the syllabus. If you don't have the required work in class on the appropriate day, you have missed the deadline, and could fail this course. Understand that this is not a punitive policy. You cannot "catch up" if the show opens and you haven't memorized your lines—the show has moved on without you. You cannot "catch up" with the writing process once it has outrun you. If you had six months to a year to write this paper, the due dates might be more flexible. But you don't, and neither do I. Keep up, or accept that you've fallen behind. And falling behind in this case means you cannot complete the material of the course.

course units. The course concerns two projects. The first part of the course concerns the preparation of applications which may be essential (though not necessarily) to what you will do after you graduate. The second portion of the course concerns the senior paper.

applications. The course expects you to prepare *some* application for *something* that you might do after graduating (or, perhaps, following your Junior year). Whether or not you submit the application and do what the application proposes will be up to you, but you will prepare and submit the application to me. Any application for anything will be fair game, as long as the application requires the following:

1. A significant writing component.

Whether a “Statement of Purpose” or a “Research Statement” or a “Personal Essay” or whatever it is, the application you prepare for this class must have a significant writing component.

When you identify your application early in the semester we will decide if the writing component meets the “significant” benchmark.

senior paper. We (and by *we*, I do mean *I*) anticipate that your individual papers will be individual, and imposing too many universal standards might be counterproductive. We also hope to keep the senior paper from overwhelming your other schoolwork, production work, and other activity. We have developed the following guidelines and requirements for the senior paper:

1. The senior paper must be proposed to and approved by the Theatre faculty. The due date for the proposal appears in the attached schedule.
2. Each paper must have three faculty readers: me, a second Theatre faculty reader, and a faculty reader from outside the Theatre department. You must make arrangements with all readers in advance of the submission of the proposal.

required work for the papers. Find below some specific guidelines for the course’s various bits of work required in the preparation of your papers.

1. **Paper Topic**, due **February 9**: one-page identification of your senior paper topic, including the reasons for your interest in the topic, viable research questions related to the topic, and a reasonable working hypothesis.
2. **Senior Paper Proposal**, due **February 21**: Completed proposal form, including all required signatures.
3. **Exhaustive Bibliography**, due with the Proposal on **February 21**: complete bibliography of material related to your senior paper. Fewer than fifty sources indicates either a flimsy senior paper topic (which will not have been approved) or inadequate research. The Exhaustive Bibliography should also indicate those of its sources which are *most* relevant to your specific thesis (upwards of fifteen).
4. **Faculty Approval/Stipulation Form**, **Feb 28**: You don’t have to prepare this yourself. I will prepare this document and give it to you on Feb. 22 to sign in class. This document will serve as your acknowledgment of the department’s expectations for the final form of your senior paper.
5. **Project Presentation**, **February 28 - March 6**: in-class explication of your senior paper plan. The presentation will include the working premise (thesis) of your paper, how you arrived at this premise, how you will investigate/test the premise, and analysis of *three* of your most relevant sources. By Feb. 23, you must provide me with a digital copy of one of these three sources, so I can distribute copies to everyone.

6. **Annotated Bibliography**, due **March 1**: remember that list of *most* relevant sources? Here you will provide a detailed annotation for ten selected sources (and I reserve the right to select a few I think are necessary to your project). This means you will write a detailed summary and analysis for each. Journal articles will each require *at least* one page of well-written analysis. Books will each require *at least* two pages. Your analysis should include how the source is relevant to your own argument, whether you agree with the source, and why/not you agree with the source.

7. **Senior Paper**, due **April 3**: Absolutely inflexible 12-page minimum. This is a final, graded senior paper.

8. **Senior Paper Revision**, due **May 2, 5:00 PM**: Absolutely inflexible 15-page minimum. Copies to all readers; *for me alone, include the version of the paper previously submitted to me on April 3 (the same copy on which I wrote comments).*

peer review sessions. Scheduled throughout the semester, these sessions provide you a double opportunity: first, to get feedback on your writing from your fellows, and second, to practice reading critically and thoughtfully through your fellows' writing. I will be especially unhappy with anyone missing one of these sessions, or appearing in class unprepared, and I imagine your grade will somehow reflect my displeasure. I will subdivide the class into peer groups of three students each, and you will read the work of your fellow group members on an ongoing basis throughout the semester.

group presentations. Following up on peer review sessions in March, each group will conduct one full class period between March 27 and April 3. In these class periods, each group will offer a summary and analysis of each of its group members' papers. *Authors of papers are NOT to take the lead in summarizing and analyzing their own papers.* Group members should demonstrate, here, that they have all read and critically responded to each of the papers written by their group fellows.

grades. Your final grade will emerge from a combination of the final grade you receive on your application project and the final grade you receive on your senior paper. The final grade you receive on your senior paper will be roughly averaged from the three grades received from your readers.

In addition, I will account in your grade for the following:

1. Participation: Your participation is essential for your own work and for your classmates'. I cannot evaluate your participation in your absence. The effect of "participation" on your grade comes from my evaluation of your involvement in the work of the course and in the activity of classes (completion of reading assignments, depth of reading, response to criticism, constructive input, and general good-naturedness). Your preparation and presence for **Peer Review Sessions** and for **Group Presentations** are especially important (see "peer review sessions" and "group presentations" above).

2. Paper Development: this includes my evaluation of required work including the Paper Topic, Senior Paper Proposals, Exhaustive Bibliography, Annotated Bibliography, and in-class presentations. It is possible, I suppose, to write a very good senior paper and yet fail this course by ignoring the course's required work. And, of course, you could fail this course by missing a deadline.

SCHEDULE

1/12: First Class: Know the syllabus. Find an application. Get your paper topic.

Unit One: Applications

1/17: Find an Application: what do you want to do?

1/19: Application presentations: what application will you do and what does it require?

1/24: Some Sample Application Essays

Reading: "How to Write with Style" (Reader), "How to Say Nothing in 500 Words" (Reader)

1/26: Start Write Now: early writing exercises

- 1/31:** Peer Review Session - Group 1
For Class: arrive with *four* copies of the writing component(s) of your application
Due: Writing component(s) of your application (give one of those four copies to me)
- 2/2:** Peer Review Session - Group 2
- 2/7:** **Senior Papers:** The proposal. Finding sources: databases, the library, interlibrary loan, etc.
DUE: Applications

Unit Two: Senior Papers (And Señora Research)

- 2/9:** Finding Sources: the unexplored nooks and crannies
DUE: Paper Topic
- 2/14:** Evaluating Arguments/Writing Annotations
Reading: “The Simpsons” (Reader)
- 2/16:** *Oleanna*, pt. 1
- 2/21:** *Oleanna*, pt. 2
DUE: Senior Paper Proposal with Exhaustive Bibliography
- 2/23:** Evaluating Arguments/Developing Annotations
Reading: Badenhausen (Reader)
DUE: Digital copy of one of the three sources you will discuss in your Project Presentation
- 2/28:** Project Presentations
Sign the “Faculty Approval/Stipulation” Form
Reading: One article for each of today’s presentations
- 3/1:** Project Presentations
Reading: One article for each of today’s presentations
- 3/6:** Project Presentations
Reading: One article for each of today’s presentations
DUE: Annotated Bibliography
- 3/8:** TBD
- 3/13 - 3/15: SPRING BREAK**
- 3/20:** Peer Review Session
For Class: arrive with *three* copies of at least seven pages of written argument
- 3/22:** Peer Review Session, cont.
- 3/27:** Research Discussion: Group Presentations
- 3/29:** Research Discussion: Group Presentations
- 4/3:** Research Discussion: Group Presentations
DUE: Paper (absolutely inflexible 12-page minimum; *don’t be late*)
- 4/5:** **EASTER BREAK**
- 4/10:** Revising the Paper
Graded Papers Come Back
- 4/12:** **Peer Review Session**
For Class: arrive with *three* copies of the latest revision of your paper
- 4/17:** **Peer Review Session**
- 4/19:** TBD
- 4/24:** **No Class: Work On Your Papers**
- 4/26:** TBD
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- 5/2:** **DUE: Final Paper by 5:00 (copies to me and all your readers)**
 - Copies to All Readers; My copy in my hand or in the bin on my office door, with the copy you submitted on April 7th
 - **DO NOT BE LATE**