

Eastern Illinois University
Department of Theatre Arts
Fall Semester 2012

THA 2258: SCRIPT ANALYSIS

A University-designated "Writing Intensive" Course

Instructor. Dr. Chris Mitchell
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Office Hours: TR, 2 – 4:30 pm, or by appointment.

Professor's website: ux1.eiu.edu/~cjmitchell (check often)

Class Meets. TR, 12:30 – 1:45 pm, in DFAC 2040

Texts. Jacobus, *The Bedford Introduction to Drama* (6th ed.)
BRING IT TO EVERY CLASS, NO EXCEPTIONS!

Prerequisites. ENG-1001G and ENG-1002G.

Overview. "This course is designed to teach the student how to analyze playscripts in terms of and in preparation for performance and production, regardless of theatrical specialization. The student will learn basic concepts and terminology associated with dramatic literature, examine several genres and their traits, and discover means of presenting the playwrights' ideas on the stage." (from *Eastern Illinois University 2012-2013 Undergraduate Catalog*)

The main idea behind this course, in simpler terms, is to give you the tools you'll need to intelligently dissect playscripts as an actor, director, designer, etc., to organize your thoughts on the script, and to communicate your ideas effectively. Good practitioners of theatre, in my experience, tend to spend a great deal of time analyzing a script before they begin to make production choices about it. You will do no less here.

If you are NOT prepared to devote the time this semester to:

- reading scripts several (many) times;
- attending class regularly, *regardless of your production work*;
- staying sharp and focused during group and class discussions on these plays;

you may wish to reconsider taking this course.

Requirements and Grading.

The grading scheme is mathematically simple for this class. All of the numbered requirements listed below are of equal weight, and are **each scored out of 100 points**. Your final score is a simple average of the scores for these requirements, adjusted for attendance (see “Attendance,” below) and any extra credit received (see “Extra Credit,” below). The letter grade equivalent is as follows:

- A = final adjusted score at least 90 points out of 100
- B = final adjusted score at least 80 but less than 90 points
- C = final adjusted score at least 70 but less than 80 points
- D = final adjusted score at least 60 but less than 70 points
- F = final adjusted score less than 60

The course requirements are as follows:

1. **Active participation and keeping up with assigned readings.**

This includes ensuring that the scripts assigned are read frequently enough for you to make an intelligent contribution to class discussion, and that you make said contributions on a regular basis so as to be a valuable member of the class. You will be rated TWICE for participation: once at midterm and once at the end of the semester. Each rating is an independent grade; i.e. the first one covers the first half of the semester and the second one covers the second half of the semester. There is a rubric sheet explaining how participation is evaluated on [my website](#).

Script-reading assignments are covered in a separate handout, which is posted on your class page of [my website](#).

SPECIAL NOTE TO THEATRE FOLKS: Repeat this until it sticks in your head— *“Being in rehearsal, in shop, in tech, or in performance does not excuse me from my responsibilities to this class.”* Part of being a theatre major/minor is learning to achieve a balance between classwork and the practice of your art. Strive to achieve that balance. I expect no less.

2. **Analysis papers.** You will chose a script to work with from a list I provide. (You will use the same script for each analysis paper, so choose wisely.) In the papers, you will apply a selection of the analytic tools you’ve encountered to the script so as to evidence your facility with the tools. There will be THREE of these to do, each of approximately 3 page length. Only the first of these is done in 2 drafts: a rough draft and a final draft. (The rough draft is

not graded; it is returned with comments to assist you in preparing the final draft.) The other two are final-draft only. Due dates: first paper, **September 13** rough draft, **October 9** final draft. Second paper, **October 30**. Third paper, **November 27**. These dates are subject to adjustment dependent on our class progress.

Paper particulars are covered in handouts unique to each assignment. Each handout will be posted on your class page of [my website](#).

3. **Oral defense of script interpretation.** Using the same script you've chosen for your written analysis papers, you will apply a specific set of tools we've covered in class and prepare a cogent, 5-minute oral defense of the application of those tools to that script. Presentations will be made in the final week of class as well as the final exam day, **Monday, December 10, 12:30 - 2:30 pm**. While you will have a choice as to when to present on these days, you must attend all presentations, listen attentively, and respond to them (that's participation).

Oral defense particulars are covered in a separate handout, which will be posted on the class page of [my website](#).

ATTENDANCE. Along with active participation, consistent and prompt attendance is absolutely necessary to reap the maximum benefit from the course. As such, you will be held accountable for your attendance. An attendance sheet will be circulated at every class meeting on and after Tuesday, August 28, and it is YOUR RESPONSIBILITY to ensure you have signed it before you leave class. In tracking absences, the following definitions apply:

- **“Excused absence”:** An excused absence results **ONLY** from a university-sanctioned activity, a family emergency, a health-related absence in which you are under a physician's care, or an extraordinary circumstance as determined by the professor. All “excused absences” must be supported by a note from an official (physician, university official, etc.) supporting the absence.
 - “Excused absences” do not result in a penalty applied to your final average.
- **“Unexcused absence”:** Anything not defined by “excused absence” above. This includes, but is not limited to: “personal” days or non-

university business, oversleeping, and health-related absences not supported by a physician's note.

- You are permitted TWO “unexcused” absences without penalty to your final average; more than two, see box below.

For every unexcused absence beyond the two you are permitted, you will lose **four points** off your final average. (That's nearly half a letter grade, folks. ATTENDANCE IS SERIOUS BUSINESS IN MY CLASSES.)

EXTRA CREDIT. There will be some opportunities for you to earn some extra points that can bolster your final average. As a general rule, these will be posted to [my website](#), so it is up to you to keep checking it!

Late Policy.

Written assignments. Unless an alternate arrangement is made with me in advance, I will accept your work past the due date subject to the following late penalty: for each class period of lateness, FIVE points will be deducted from the score for that assignment.

Oral defense. Since these will be scheduled for the last few occasions we meet, it is difficult to reschedule. If you miss your presentation time, you will only be permitted to reschedule if your absence meets the criteria for “excused absence” above.

Classroom Etiquette. A few ground rules to maximize fairness to all and to make everyone's learning experience enjoyable and productive:

1. Be on time and stay the whole time. Class begins at 12:30 pm and ends at 1:45 pm (i.e. don't begin getting ready to go at 1:40 pm; the shuffling around will distract the class).

“**The 10-minute rule.**” Even though I can't remember the last time this was relevant (I'm very time-conscious), you can safely assume that the “10-minute rule” is valid for this class, according to the “official time” of the classroom (usually the classroom clock, unless otherwise designated by the professor).

2. Respect other class members' right to learn as well as your own. This includes not having distracting conversations with your

neighbor (or cell phone/text message buddy), not listening to your iPod/mp3 during class time, not reading newspapers or other non-class material during class, and always respecting others' opinions in class conversation, even if you disagree. While you may keep your cell on "VIBRATE" in case of emergencies, all other electronic devices must be turned OFF during class time.

Disabilities.

Should you require any special accommodations due to a documented disability, please contact the Office of Disability Services at 581-6583 as soon as possible. It is YOUR RESPONSIBILITY to give me a copy of the "Academic Accommodations" statement by September 4.

Academic Integrity.

All assignments are expected to be your original work, and ALL text you quote must be properly cited using an abbreviated version of MLA citation, which I will explain on the first paper handout. You can always ask for help from me on citation method; that's what I'm here for.

Academic honesty, suffice it to say, is taken VERY seriously here, and any instance of plagiarism (see me if you are not clear on the definition of the word) or cheating will result in a zero for the assignment AT MINIMUM (depending on the severity of the infraction). Don't risk it—be diligent and honest.

No project will be accepted for a grade without proper documentation of sources. If I see a paper without citations, I will return it to you the next class period and you will begin losing points as per the late policy above.

***THIS SYLLABUS IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE
AT THE DISCRETION OF THE PROFESSOR.***