

English 117: Shakespeare
SYLLABUS

Fall 2017

Class: 2:00-3:05 pm, MWF; Reynolds 109

Office Hours: 3:15-5:00 pm MWF or by appointment

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Suit the action to the word, the word to the action, with this special observance, that you o'erstep not the modesty of nature: for any thing so o'erdone is from the purpose of playing, whose end, both at the first and now, was and is, to hold as 'twere the mirror up to nature.

—*Hamlet*, 3.2.17-22

Hamlet instructs the players that the aim of art is “to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature” (*Hamlet* III.ii.19), and the phrase precisely describes Shakespeare’s own dramatic purpose. Indeed, the mirror that Shakespeare speaks of is one that his work provides in a manner unrivaled in English literature. In it, we see the rich variety of human characters, presented in all of their complexity and contradictions. Through it, we witness the breathtaking human capacity for both virtue and depravity, oftentimes within a single individual. From it, we take away images of ourselves, reflected portraits that alternately comfort and challenge, admonish and affirm. To discover Shakespeare, therefore, is to discover the gift that all art seeks to bring—a description of the nature and shape of reality that affords us a glimpse into what it means to be human.

But if literature is “an imitation of an action,” as Aristotle described it, drama is “the imitation of an action in the form of an action.” In poetry we can hear about a poet having to choose when “two roads diverged in a yellow wood,” or in fiction we can read about a protagonist having to choose whether to keep drawing when his father denounces art as childish. But in the theatre we actually see an actor who must respond when another actor tells him to revenge his father’s murder at the hands of his uncle who is also his stepfather and king. The actor playing Hamlet may seem more sad or more angry, more distraught or more vengeful. None of these ways of playing Hamlet are “wrong.” But decisions about *how* to play the character are a necessary part of bringing any performance of *Hamlet* to the stage. And until *Hamlet* receives theatrical performance it is not being experienced in the way intended by the playwright, a word which means maker or builder rather than just author.

The poet writes a poem or a novelist writes a novel and you “close the loop” when you sit in your room reading that imaginative literature. You can also sit in your room and read a play, which is another form of imaginative literature. But foundational to this course is the recognition that a play script—like a novel—may be published as a book but the two works are fundamentally different. A script is just a blueprint that does not become fully realized until it is enfolded in a stage performance. Vital to this aspect of the course is recognition of the fundamental corporeality of drama.

This course starts from the premise that the plays of Shakespeare are works written for the stage, and are not fully realized except in the context of live performance. Thus, we will see a number of plays in production over the course of the semester, and will endeavor, through both research and imagination, to construct a vision of the myriad performance possibilities present within any Shakespearean text. In so

doing, we will hold to the principle that to relish aesthetic difference is to participate in the ongoing process of Creation, a process that both nourishes the spirit and reflects the light of the Creator.

While you can “close the loop” on a poem or novel by reading it in your room, closing the loop on a play involves seeing it in a theatre where actors and a director along with lighting, set, sound, and costume designers are all involved in working artistically. This course fulfills the GE requirement for “Working Artistically” because you will not only engage in exploring the critical principles which guide theatre artists, and participate in interpreting their work as you expand your perceptual faculties, but you will also play a role in creating theatre by planning, preparing, and performing in a scene.

COURSE OBJECTIVES: This course meets the English major requirements for a course in a single author and for a course on literature written in English prior to 1800. It fulfills the General Education requirements for Working Artistically and for a writing-intensive class. It can also apply towards required upper-division elective units for the English major, English minor, or Theatre Arts major. Undergirding our study is the belief that dramatic literature cannot be fully comprehended without studying the nature of theatrical performance, and theatrical performance cannot be fully understood without an understanding of dramatic writing. Further, the course affirms the stance that the appreciation of both text and performance is enhanced by knowledge of the principles that guide the creative process, both in literary creation and in theatrical production. Finally, knowledge of texts in performance is incomplete apart from the individual’s own creative process of interpreting a text for performance, and so you will not only have the opportunity to appreciate Shakespeare on stage, but you will also create Shakespeare on your own stage. All of these facets of study will be undertaken with the goals of helping you to:

- gain knowledge of the scope and variety of Shakespearean drama
- notice the interplay of form, style, and content in Shakespeare’s language
- articulate and wrestle with the moral questions implicit in Shakespeare texts
- write clear, perceptive analysis of individual plays
- enjoy a number of plays in performance
- develop a set of critical standards that will help you discriminate among productions
- acquire language for discussing performance, design, and staging practice
- investigate the ways in which a Shakespearean text is a blueprint for performance
- develop a familiarity with the poetic and performative uses of scansion
- engage in research on a literary topic
- integrate borrowed material successfully into a well-documented research paper
- challenge yourself to put theory into practice in staging your own Shakespeare scene
- examine the image of mankind reflected in one of the best mirrors of all time . . .
- and consider that reflection’s relevance for the time being.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS: The requirements of this course are for you to:

- obtain all required texts listed below in the editions listed
- read assigned materials from texts prior to class, and bring those texts to class meetings
- attend theatre performances
- come to class ready to discuss what you have read and seen
- write three play reviews
- research and write a research essay
- complete scansion, memorization, and scene performance assignments
- write two mini-essays on scansion

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- rehearse and perform a Shakespearean scene
- participate with gusto in class discussion

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CLASS DISCUSSION: As a means to the ends outlined above, the course seeks to equip you with the ability to read works of literature—and to respond to dramatic literature in live performance—more perceptively, more discerningly, more intensely. Mostly, that endeavor will be pursued through discussion rather than lecture.

In a discussion class we are all engaged in teaching and learning from one another. You are responsible to participate in this process by contributing your perceptions to our classroom discussion and by considering seriously the remarks of other students. We need to hear from one another about your experience of reading the text. You're an expert on that—in fact, you're the only expert on what captivated you, what stumped you, what bored you. Be willing to listen to others; but be willing to speak about your own reading experience. You are responsible for synthesizing the best of what we all have to say in coming to an informed critical position of your own. Your own contribution to the class will not be measured quantitatively. What matters is that you raise questions about the literature and make intelligent, creative attempts to handle the questions of others.

I require courtesy in the classroom. Save your private conversations for outside of class and make your remarks that apply to the class discussion public for the entire class to enjoy.

TEXTS: You are required to purchase either a *Riverside Shakespeare* (or *Wadsworth Shakespeare*) or the RSC version of the ten Shakespeare plays listed below as published by Modern Library. You need to have your own book to underline and make marginal comments. You need to have the text indicated so we may all quickly refer to the same act, scene, and line number during class discussion. Used copies of any of the books are fine.

Author	Title	Publisher	ISBN
Shakespeare	<i>The Wadsworth Shakespeare</i>	Wadsworth second edition	978-1133316275
Shakespeare	<i>The Riverside Shakespeare</i>	Houghton Mifflin second edition or first edition	978-0395754900 978-0395044025
Shakespeare	<i>Hamlet</i>	Modern Library	978-0812969092
Shakespeare	<i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i>	Modern Library	978-0812969122
Shakespeare	<i>The Tempest</i>	Modern Library	978-0812969108
Shakespeare	<i>King Lear</i>	Modern Library	978-0812969115
Shakespeare	<i>Richard II</i>	Modern Library	978-0812969306
Shakespeare	<i>Henry IV, Part One</i>	Modern Library	978-0812969245
Shakespeare	<i>Twelfth Night</i>	Modern Library	978-0812969238
Shakespeare	<i>Much Ado About Nothing</i>	Modern Library	978-0812969177
Shakespeare	<i>Richard III</i>	Modern Library	978-0812969139
Shakespeare	<i>Merchant of Venice</i>	Modern Library	978-0812969276
MLA	<i>MLA Handbook</i> , 8th edition	MLA	978-1603292627

PHYSICAL ATTENDANCE POLICY: When you are healthy, your attendance is expected. After three unexcused absences, each unexcused absence will be recorded as a zero for class participation for

that day. Grounds for an excused absence are illness or a family emergency. Exams which are missed because of unexcused absences may not be made up. If you get sick, stay in bed and rest. Illness is grounds for excused absence from class, for delay of papers, for rescheduling of exams. However, exams will not be rescheduled nor excuses for late papers granted for such reasons as travel plans, ski trips, or extracurricular activities. According to college policy, a student may be dropped from a class with a grade of F if “the number of unexcused absences equals or exceeds twice the number of times the class meets per week.” Our class meets three times a week. Do the math.

MENTAL ATTENDANCE POLICY: You need to be present mentally as well as physically. If you bring a laptop to class it should only be used for taking notes pertinent to the class discussion. If you use your laptop or phone to check your email, browse the web, play games, update your Facebook status, text or tweet friends, or work on stuff for other classes, your mental absence will be counted as an absence.

NON-ATTENDANCE POLICY: If you have flu-like symptoms—fever, cough, body chills or aches, congestion, diarrhea or vomiting—you need to stay in your room and notify the Health Center. Inform me of your situation by email or voice mail if you are able. But you are not to come to class, nor to go to any stage production, nor to show up in person to report your illness, until you have been free of all of the above symptoms for at least 24 hours.

POLICY ON CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES: Please do not bring food to class or chew gum during class. Please do not bring liquids other than water to class. Please do not wear baseball caps in class—in discussion it helps to be able to see each other’s eyes.

PROMPTNESS: Please be on time. Being on time means that you’re present and in a cap-free, gum-free state. Being late to class three times will be treated as an absence.

EXAMS: There will two one-hour exams and be a comprehensive final.

PAPERS: Besides paraphrases and response papers of 250-300 words (ca. one page), you will write three play reviews of 800-1,200 words (ca. 2½–3½ pages), two short essays on scansion of 800-1,200 words (ca. 2½–3½ pages), and a research essay of 2,000-3,000 words (ca. 8-10 pages). The number of words is the operative guideline. The parenthetical reference to pages is an informal guide since font sizes can vary considerably. A description of these papers follows.

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LATE PAPERS: Late papers not excused for illness will be penalized one third of a letter grade for each academic day they are late. Thus a “B+” paper handed in one day late would receive a “B.”

FORMAT FOR PAPERS: All written work is to be submitted both electronically (as an email attachment) and in hard copy. The electronic copy of your paper should be named using the following convention: your surname—an indication of the assignment—a short title. So, if your name is Jenna Catalon and you’re writing your first review on *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, your filename might be: Catalon-R1-Two Gents.doc. Please submit all work as a Word file in .docx format. Yes, that means you might need to do a “save as” to get the file into .docx format. Please have your word-processing program **automatically** add a running head to each page consisting of your surname and the page number. So the second page of Jenna’s review should have “Catalon-2” at the top. Do not type “Catalon-2” into the body of your paper; it’s a running head.

PLAY REVIEWS: In writing a review tell us what was most distinctive about the production you have seen. If you have seen prior productions of the play, or have read the text previously, or have an insight

related to our class discussion, by all means feel free to use those perceptions in your review. But be sure that you tell us not only how a play *might* be performed but how it *was* performed in the version you witnessed. Some sample reviews will be available. As with all of the written work in this course, play reviews will be evaluated for style and clarity as well as for content. Offer a clear statement of what you see as central to the production as a whole, then support that clear, central statement with insightful arguments and reasons to accept that understanding. Additional guidelines for reviews are in an appendix.

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RESEARCH ESSAY: In your research essay you will be responsible for researching a past production of a play we will be studying, describing its staging, explaining its goals, and delineating something of the range of critical responses to it. An RSC Shakespeare edition of your play might provide a place to start with brief references to an array of productions from which you might choose. Consult enough sources so that you can identify from ten to sixteen scholarly articles, chapters of books, or chapter-length articles or interviews with actors or directors. At least half of your sources must consist of such scholarly or chapter-length sources. If you want to substitute newspaper or magazine reviews for up to five of the above sources, you may do so at an exchange rate of three for one. So if you substitute three reviews for each of five scholarly sources you would need to have a minimum of twenty sources (5 chapters + [3 x 5 newspaper articles] = 20 sources).

Structure your research essay so that you establish some coherent groupings among the critics you cite. Your remarks on each source should take up no more than one-half to three-quarters of a page. But within that space clearly identify the central contribution the source offers and make meaningful comparisons which show how it complements or diverges from other sources.

Your second task in the essay is argumentative. Having established the voices of your sources, you will then offer some measure of your own argument about what you believe the past production was trying to achieve. What were its primary goals? What was it fundamentally saying about the text? How did you think it went about achieving those goals? How well did it succeed? Why does any of this matter? It would be possible, in a straight research paper, to integrate this material into your discussion of the primary sources. To do this, though, would mean that you would not be writing a bibliographic essay anymore. So do make the distinction between your own work and the work of others clear in the flow of the essay.

Your third task in the essay is to compare and synthesize. Using what you know of the earlier production from your sources, what you believe about the earlier production from your own analysis, and what you both know and believe about the production of the same play that we saw as a group, offer some meaningful comparisons between the two productions. Give us a sense of what is similar in their aims, as well as what is different. Make sure we know how things were done, and why it matters that they were done that way.

In addition to learning something about criticism and scholarship the assignment is also designed to help you learn how to use bibliographic tools for literary research. You are to use the on-line MLA International Bibliography and at least three different online research databases as you conduct your examination. Your paper should be 2000-3000 words (ca. 8-10 pages).

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SCANSION: We will be looking at the ways in which the close analysis of Shakespeare's use of iambic pentameter may inform performance choices and reveal a character's inner world. You will scan two passages of your choosing from plays we read. Pick a passage of poetry of 14 lines or more (pentameter

lines rather than the short lines of a song). Type the passage using bold all caps for accented syllables and Roman lower case for unaccented syllables:

When **I** do **COUNT** the **CLOCK** that **TELLS** the **TIME**.

For words with more than one syllable, add a space between the syllables:

Till **BIR** nam **FOR** est **COME** to **DUN** si **NANE**.

We will talk about the difference between heartbeat and heartbreak in the metrical pattern. Use some color other than black to indicate the metrical feet that you read as heartbreak. In your accompanying essay, explain why you made the choices you did in your scansion, and what your scanning of the passage reveals to you about the character who is speaking. Explain any surprises that you found. If there were places where you debated, what were the options you weighed? Why did you end up making the choice you did?

MEMORIZATION: You are to take the second of your scanned passages and memorize it, and then recite it for the class. The passage you memorize should consist of at least 14 lines of iambic pentameter. The passage you choose should be a coherent whole (i.e., don't start or stop in mid-sentence even if that means you have to memorize 15, 16, or even—would you believe it—17 lines). If you want to memorize a longer passage, feel free.

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DOCUMENTATION: For any written work submitted in this course you are required to provide a "List of Works Consulted." That list must identify any source you have consulted about your subject (including books, SparkNotes, Wikipedia, other students' papers, or on-line sources of information) whether or not you have used material from that source. The list of works consulted needs to provide full bibliographic information in impeccably correct MLA format (see the MLA Handbook, 8th edition). In addition, you need to provide MLA-formatted parenthetical documentation (including specific page numbers) for any direct quotations or paraphrased ideas from any source.

ACADEMIC HONESTY: Plagiarism consists in taking the words or the ideas or the organizational structure of someone else and presenting them as if they were your own. Copying someone else's paper is an obvious form of plagiarism. But finding ideas in a book or online source and paraphrasing them in your own words as if the ideas were your own is an equally serious form of plagiarism. Any piece of work guilty of plagiarism will receive a zero and will result in your mark for the semester being lowered one letter grade. (A zero is to an "F" as 0% is to 50%). A second offense will result in failure for the term. For a full statement of Westmont's policy on plagiarism please see the webpage: http://www.westmont.edu/_academics/pages/provost/curriculum/plagiarism/index.html

PERFORMANCES: An individual can read in solitude a novel or poem that was written by another individual in solitude. But drama, the most communal of the arts, requires a company of actors and a body of people for an audience. We will go to the theatre together, share the experience of seeing a performance, and sometimes find a place to discuss the play afterward. Your participation in this aspect of the course is expected, but you need not feel that you have to attend each production if you have conflicts some nights. As an educational expense, a fee of \$150 for drama field trips will be collected along with tuition. The field trips fee covers your theatre tickets, the cost of transportation, and group booking costs for productions we attend as a group.

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QUIZZES: You may expect unannounced quizzes and in-class paraphrasing. Quizzes and in-class paraphrases that you miss may not be made up. However, you may drop one quiz grade for every five quizzes we have.

GENERAL EDUCATION: This course fulfills the goal of Working Artistically (in the Common Inquiries section of General Education) and serves as a writing-intensive course (in the Common Skills portion of General Education). Within the English major it fulfills the requirements of a course focusing on a single author and of a course in literature written in English prior to 1800.

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WORKING ARTISTICALLY AS A MODE OF INQUIRY: As a class we will attend five or more live theatre productions which we will discuss in class. In writing performance reviews on at least three of those productions you will have ample opportunity to hone your interpretive skills in assessing live performance. In class we will not only discuss criteria for interpreting live performance and reflect on the principles that undergird live performance, we will also get on our feet to take part in readers' theatre explorations of how intonation, facial expression, or body movement can alter the effect created by live performance. Through such exercises you will participate directly in the processes of enactment that characterize the art of the theatre. Your engagement in this aspect of the course will culminate in your participation with one to four of your classmates in performing a scene from one of the plays we study.

SCENE PERFORMANCE: If your performance group of two to five students perform a scene from a Shakespeare play, each actor should have 25-35 full-length lines. If you want to stage a longer scene and learn more lines, feel free. All actors are to have their lines memorized and each scene is to be rehearsed at least four times for an hour each. In presenting your scene to the rest of the class, you may either perform in the classroom or you may choose some other location on campus. However, any place you choose must not pose a risk of injury to performers or to college property nor a risk of disrupting some other class. Members of your group should be appropriately costumed and provided with props if called for by the scene. By preparing and performing this scene you will be making theatre by participating in the very processes of enactment that characterize the art of the theatre.

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WRITING-INTENSIVE COURSEWORK: Fulfilling a writing-intensive requirement (in the Common Skills portion of G.E.), this course seeks to contribute to your development as a writer. As indicated in the section on Papers above, you will write six papers totaling 24 pages. You will receive detailed written instruction regarding grammar, punctuation, ways of incorporating quotations into your prose, and accepted bibliographic style. In addition, part of our class time will be devoted to writing instruction as we workshop your essays to sharpen your prose style. Writing in a variety of modes throughout your college career will, we hope, equip you to:

- ❖ express yourself clearly, cogently, and grammatically
- ❖ develop the ability to distinguish information from opinion
- ❖ marshal evidence in support of points you wish to make
- ❖ disagree with others without expressing disrespect
- ❖ agree with others without plagiarizing their views
- ❖ structure your presentation of ideas in ways that prove persuasive
- ❖ use words skillfully, craft sentences forcefully, and develop paragraphs robustly

COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES (CLOS): As the above lists indicate, the goals for this course are many and various. But for assessment purposes we specify measurable things you will all be able to do by

the end of the course. The expected learning outcomes for this course will be assessed through the papers you write and the scene you perform. You will be able to:

1. **Demonstrate effective interpretive processes in analyzing live theatrical performance** (an outcome as a GE Working Artistically course)

In your three play reviews you will explain how the interpretive choices of directors and actors affect the emphases and meaning of live theatrical performance. Rather than just offering plot summary or character sketches, you will analyze what individual actors do to convey the mannerisms, mindset, and emotions of their character. Further, you will interpret the significance of how the actors interact with each other on stage to create the dynamics of a given situation. You might, for example, be able to explain how the performance of one actor affects how we see the significance of behavior by a different actor. You may also show how the choices made by costume designers, set designers, and sound or lighting designers contribute to our understanding of characters. For new plays, you will also assess the work of the playwright in crafting a theatrical script that does justice to whatever conflict he or she chooses to dramatize.

2. **Demonstrate emerging levels of skill in the creation, development, and presentation of theatrical performance** (an outcome as a GE Working Artistically course)

In exercises when we get on our feet to enact scenes in class and to a much greater degree in the scene you memorize and perform, you will demonstrate an understanding of how intonation, facial expression, and physical movement contribute to the effectiveness of theatrical performance. At the most rudimentary level, you will show that you recognize theatre exists to be seen and heard by ensuring your actions are visible to your audience and your lines are enunciated clearly enough for your audience to hear, process, and understand the words you speak. Beyond that, you will “suit the action to the word, the word to the action,” as Hamlet says, so that you “hold as ’twere the mirror up to nature.” That is, you will be seeking to reflect in your performance the personality of the character you are embodying.

3. **Demonstrate the capacity to communicate in written form for a variety for purposes and audiences** (an outcome as a GE writing-intensive course)

In your play reviews, you will be engaging in a journalistic form of writing consisting of brief paragraphs and beginning with a compelling “hook” that conveys the most significant feature of the production you are reviewing. With an intended audience of, say, *Horizon* readers, you will be writing for fellow students in a mode in which contractions, somewhat casual diction, and pop culture references are all fair game.

By contrast, in your analytical essays you will be writing more formally with an introductory paragraph spelling out an original thesis and using effective argumentative transitions as you progressively build a case using topic sentences at the start of well-developed paragraphs and culminating in a conclusion which goes beyond a mere restatement or summary of what has preceded. In such formal writing, you will avoid contractions and pop culture references as you write for a more scholarly audience.

4. **Incorporate all quotations into your own prose grammatically**, either by embedding brief quotations into your own sentence or by crafting an introductory sentence that identifies the speaker and context of the passage. This learning outcome contributes to

❖ the GE expectation regarding your capacity to communicate in written form, and also to

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- ❖ a Program Learning Outcome of the English Department that students will “engage various audiences in writing with sensitivity to rhetorical situations and scholarly standards.”
5. **Employ MLA citation and formatting style for incorporating sources into written work.**
This learning outcome, which you will demonstrate in all of your written work including play reviews, contributes to
- ❖ the GE expectation regarding your capacity to communicate in written form, and also to
 - ❖ a Program Learning Outcome of the English Department that students will “engage various audiences in writing with sensitivity to rhetorical situations and scholarly standards.”

STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS: Students who have been diagnosed with a disability (learning, physical or psychological) are encouraged to contact the Disability Services office as early as possible to discuss appropriate accommodations for this course. Formal accommodations will only be granted for students whose disabilities have been verified by the Disability Services office. These accommodations may be necessary to ensure your full participation and the successful completion of this course. Please contact Sheri Noble, coordinator of disability services (x6186, snoble@westmont.edu), as soon as possible.

WRITERS' CORNER, the campus writing center, is an academic support service that is free for all students. Peer tutors, who offer help with your writing, are available for one-on-one tutorials in Voskuyl Library 215. Open hours are 4-11 p.m. Monday through Thursday and 6-11 p.m. on Sunday. Drop-ins are welcome (first come, first served). For more information on policies and services, please visit the Writers' Corner website: <http://www.westmont.edu/academics/departments/english/writers-corner.html>

BASIS OF EVALUATION: Your grade will be determined by your papers and your participation in class discussion and by your performance on quizzes and the final exam. Your grade for class participation gauges your conscientiousness in reading the material, the depth of your understanding of the literature, and your ability to articulate your ideas in comments and significant questions. . The weighting of these factors is as follows: each one-hour exam—4 grades, final exam—5 grades, each play review—2 grades, each scansion—1 grade, each scansion analysis—1 grade, memorization—1 grade, scene performance—2 grades, research essay mature draft—1 grade, research essay final draft—5 grades, class participation—5 grades, quizzes—2 grades. Translated into percentages, that weighting is approximately as follows: each one-hour exam 10%, final exam 13%, each play review 5%, each scansion 3%, each scansion analysis 3%, memorization 3%, scene performance 5%, research essay mature draft 3%, research essay final draft 13%, class participation 13%, quizzes 5%.

APPENDIX:

Play Review Assignment Guidelines

The writing of play reviews requires a journalistic style of prose, which means leaping into your subject, writing brief paragraphs, and communicating your main observations and opinions clearly within the first few sentences. In writing a review you should respond to the actual production you see, and not enter into a discussion of matters related solely to the text of the play. If you have seen the play before, or read it before, or have an insight related to our class discussion, feel free to use those perceptions in your review. But be sure that you focus primarily not only how a play *might* be performed but how it *is* performed in the production you witness.

As you reflect on the performance, remember that doing theatre is about making choices. Some choices work well, some don't. One choice may appeal to you, and strike another person as bizarre. However, in theatre, it is rare that an actor, director, or designer will make a choice that is not motivated by some idea. Before you dismiss a choice as foolish, try to figure out why the theatre artist made that choice in the first place.

- ❖ Your subject for a play review is the play as performed, not the plot. If I want to know the plot of a play, I can read the text. What I can't know from the text is how the actors are interpreting that text, what the set designer is doing to create an environment for those actors, or how the costume designer saw the physical attributes of each character. More importantly, I can't know your insights into these interpretive choices.
- ❖ Your audience wants to know right away what stands out about this production as a whole. Because this is a journalistic style of writing, using several sentences to introduce your topic isn't really a good idea. You should just plunge in, giving your audience a snapshot of the distinctives of the production from the very earliest sentences of your review. Your audience will want to know some specific details, whether they are of actor choices, design choices, or directorial choices, so notice what you notice in the production. Your audience will also want to know what the overall effect of the production was, so reflect analytically on how all the individual choices coalesce to create a unified and meaningful whole.
- ❖ Your purpose in writing a play review is to give your audience both a vision of the production as a whole and an analysis of some critical details that are revelatory of that whole. You should strive to be simultaneously descriptive and analytical. Avoid simply saying, "It was good; I liked it." Instead, tell *how* it was done, and why it matters. The best reviews will be ones where every paragraph does a great deal of work, simultaneously delineating production choices, analyzing those choices, and revealing how those choices contribute to making up the larger whole. Questions to bear in mind while writing reviews include:
 - What is the director's concept in producing the play as he or she does?
 - What works, or doesn't work, in this production?
 - What key moments from this production really stand out?

- How is the actor bringing meaning to the language she is speaking?
- How do acting choices complicate, support, or undercut the words being spoken?
- How does setting, costume, or lighting enrich or expand the world of the play?
- Why are the artists making the choices they are?
- Why are these choices effective or not?
- Why is this play being produced in this manner?

Stylistic requirements

- ❖ the name of the play, the playwright, and the group producing the play must all appear early in the review; do not, however, simply dedicate one sentence to the pedestrian reporting of this information—incorporate it into the flow of engaging sentences instead
- ❖ actors must be discussed by name, not by character name: you may not say, “the guy playing Hamlet”; you must say, “Ethan Hawke” (or Mel Gibson, or Stephen Dillane, or Kenneth Branagh, or Kevin Kline, etc); this means, of course, that you must obtain a program
- ❖ the title of your review must not be the title of the play you just saw, or anything as uninspired as “a review of the title of the play I just saw”
- ❖ your review must deal with the production, not with a narrative of your journey to the production, your exhilaration as you found your seat, your dismay when you realized you were sitting behind Yao Ming in a big hat, etc
- ❖ your review should make sparing use of the first person, eschewing it entirely if possible
- ❖ paragraphs should be relatively brief, as suits a journalistic style, but ought to flow nicely from one to the next, as suits good writing in general
- ❖ your review should be 800-1,100 words long—that’s roughly 2½–3½ pages

Your objectives for your play review are to:

- ❖ present and evaluate the choices made by the theatre artists in production, using vivid language to describe key moments and relating those moments to the overall objectives of the production and its relative success
- ❖ describe the leaf in order to show us the forest (in other words, find the particular that is revelatory of the general)
- ❖ make it clear what your overall view of the production is, whether your thesis is explicit or implied, as it often is in review writing
- ❖ discuss the play as performed, not the plot
- ❖ move from what to how to why in your examination of the production
- ❖ offer specific and meaningful evidence to support your claims
- ❖ analyze and comment on this evidence fully and originally
- ❖ write in a journalistic style, opening with your most important observations, and making every sentence count
- ❖ plunge into your subject in your opening paragraph, and offer some meaningful synthesis of your evaluation of the production in your closing paragraph

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Appendix 2: Scene Preparation Work

Ten Questions

To ask and answer for yourself (as your character)
every time you attempt to create a role.

1. Who am I? Answer both in the general sense, and in the sense of
“Who am I now rather than in any other circumstances?”
2. Where am I? Country, region, city, neighborhood, house,
room, part of room. (Why?)
3. What time is it? Year, month, week, day, hour, minute. (Why?)
4. What surrounds me physically? Include everything seen and unseen.
Determine the importance of several things.
5. What are the given circumstances? Everything relevant that makes my situation specific.
Consider social class, economic status, marital status, family
situation, and any special circumstances of life.
6. What are my relationships? With self, with others in the play, with objects?
7. What do I want? In the play, scene, moment. In my life? This year? Today?
This minute? What’s the positive outcome?
8. What’s in my way? External and internal obstacles.
9. What do I do to get what I want? In the play (my “life”); in the scene (at this moment).
10. What could I lose in this scene? Consider the array of things being risked in the scene.

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