

TEACHING PORTFOLIO

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Teaching Philosophy

I do not teach theatre as an art form; I teach theatre as a way of knowing and understanding the world.

A theatre education should not only orient students as emerging artists, but also as public intellectuals and citizens of the world. To that end, a theatre classroom should be a laboratory wherein students are empowered to examine their assumptions about how theatre works; question what it is that makes theatre “good;” and develop a sense of their own role in making the better theatre (and better world) of tomorrow. The findings in theatrical laboratories should provide students with the skills to critically engage with theatre practice and history, as well as to evaluate their world with a keen critical eye toward a better future.

I create that kind of laboratory space in my classroom through student-led learning strategies, which gently push students to teach themselves and their classmates about the topic of the day and work together to grow towards learning outcomes. These student-led learning strategies give students a sense of ownership in the classroom as “we” work together to strive towards mastery of our subject. By recentring classroom strategies on students rather than solely on the instructor, my classroom forges in students an individual sense of intellectual curiosity that they can carry well beyond my classes.

Through my teaching, I provide students the necessary schema to develop three major skills. First, the skill of thinking as both theatre artists and as global citizens; second, the skill of collaborating as an intellectual and artistic mind; and third, the skill to express and support their opinions both verbally and in writing.

Through student-led learning, my students develop the skills to close read theatre performance and dramatic literature, as well as experience with applying those skills to everyday interactions with the world around them. For example, students might read a monologue, record their intuitive responses, and make connections to one or more current events; or index every detail of the “world of a play” – its rules, its weather, its culture - using a corkboard idea map and connect those details with historical context. These exercises allow for moments of critical reflection on a global scale even when students least expect them. My favorite example of which is when students have challenged other students who declare Henrik Ibsen’s titular character *Hedda Gabler* to be an unmentionable gendered insult. I take these challenges between students to reflect both a comfortable classroom climate and a level of intellectual respect.

In my classroom students use their logical and creative minds in tandem, bridging a gap I often see in those who have determined they are either solely an artist or solely a student of theatre literature. Each major assessment provides students with an opportunity to use their research and persuasive writing skills to support creative choices, whether they be what color to dye a costume or whether or not to produce a play in the first place. Classroom discussion on the major themes of a play often lead to fanciful brainstorming of a dream production; a phenomenon I encourage.

My students are also empowered to improve their writing and verbal communication skills through demystifying frameworks for successful writing and frequent opportunities for low-stakes failure. Students in my classroom spend one full class period learning a basic academic writing template which provides students with a clear pathway to success. Students also complete short writing assignments with frequent assessments for high-quality feedback, so students can monitor their own progress and see growth throughout the semester.

In teaching my students to look at the world with the critical mind of a theatre artist; in teaching them to bridge the gap between the intellectual and the creative; in teaching them to communicate clearly and persuasively with those around them, I hope to foster fiercely independent young artists with keenly critical insights. In giving them the framework for finding their voice in an already outspoken discipline, my greatest goal as a teacher is to encourage students to be so vocal and true that they cannot help but be heard.

Teaching Activity Overview

	2015					2016					2017					2018					
	Win	Spr	Smr	Smr	Fall	Win	Spr	Smr	Smr	Fall	Win	Spr	Smr	Smr	Fall	Win	Spr	Smr	Smr	Fall	
THET 110*					14					23											
					25					9											
THET 223+										23			21		9						12
THET 486*																		7			

Key 1 Figures represent number of students in course section(s). (*) indicates work as a Teaching Assistant and (+) indicates work as an Instructor of Record.

THET 110 - Introduction to Theatre: An introductory course to theatre literature, history, and practice, focusing on theatre practitioners including actors, directors, designers and backstage personnel to understand how theatre is produced. Considers popular entertainment in Europe and America, with a particular focus on musical theatre and Broadway to explore how theatre communicates, resonates, and remains relevant to all audiences. (See Appendix II)

THET 223 – Text & Context in Western Theatre: Introduction to the analysis and critique of the play script. Students have the opportunity to read, analyze, and interpret western dramatic literature from a range of periods and styles. Texts are analyzed from a variety of theatrical analytical perspectives, with an eye towards choices theatre artists must make in the creation of a theatrical production. (See Appendix III)

THET 486 – Modernisms Theatres/Theatre’s Modernisms: By examining scholarly debates about 20th and 21st century populism and fascism, and by coordinating this examination with analyses of specific works of theatre, this seminar provides students with numerous examples not only of how to examine theatre and performance in relation to the socio-political issues that have defined specific historical periods but also of how to relate those examinations to current political events and to the contemporary practice of theatre. (See Appendix IV)

Other courses I am prepared to teach

- Theatrical Feminism(s)
- Playwriting
- The Art of Communication and Presentation

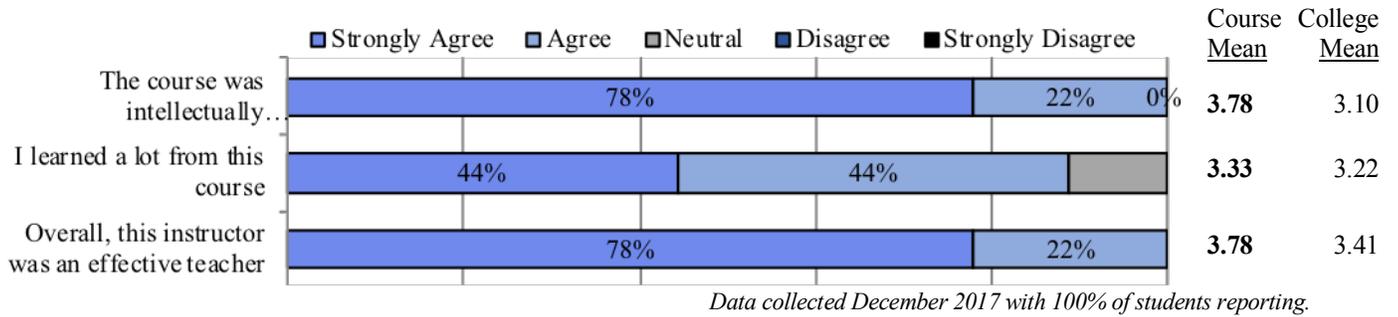
Teaching Effectiveness

During my graduate training, I have taught as an Instructor of Record or Teaching Assistant continuously for four years during which I have demonstrated a commitment to teaching excellence and my own pedagogical growth. Qualitative and quantitative feedback from my students highlight intellectual rigor, inviting course climate, and strides in their learning as outcomes of my classes. I have also embraced pedagogical growth by responding to substantive feedback from students to alter course content in order to improve both course climate and the scope of the material.

Qualitative feedback from students reflects my commitment to nurturing young intellectuals and challenging them to expand their horizon of knowledge in a student-centered classroom. Select feedback from 2015-2018 includes:

- “Awesome! Really focused on openly involving all student ideas and thoughts regarding the material covered.”
- “I think Jonelle was a wonderful TA. She was very knowledgeable and always willing to help out her students.”
- “This was by far my favorite class this semester, and I think a lot of that credit is due to Jonelle – she is a wonderful teacher and human being. Her teaching style was extremely engaging and she always took the time to address students' questions and comments, as well as embrace our many different perspectives and opinions. The course content was also structured in a very logical [way] that kept up the energy of the flow of the class. I felt that the standards for grading were a bit high, but it's also good to be challenged now and again.”
- “[N]ot only did I enjoy every class, but I also learned so much!”
- “Professor Walker is extremely knowledgeable and presents the course materials in a very organized and edible manner, which helps to make the learning environment less stressful. Additionally, she is friendly, professional, and especially sensitive to student questions and concerns. When offering guidance, she creates a good balance of support and autonomy which encourages the learning process rather than stifling our abilities. I also appreciated her general availability, and the willingness to encourage our interests beyond the class.”
- “Jonelle is amazing! She is sweet and extremely smart and it was a joy to have her in class – she asked us a lot of thought-provoking questions, looked at things in a unique way, and shared a wealth of knowledge in our discussions.” (See Appendix II for additional feedback)

The most recent quantitative feedback from students collected during my Fall 2017 course Text & Context in Western Theatre demonstrates that strategies praised by students above support effective learning:



While feedback on my teaching has been generally positive, I take substantive critical feedback from students seriously and address it directly whenever possible. For example, during the same Text & Context in Western Theatre course referenced above, one of the students expressed concern about the racial diversity of playwrights and narratives covered by the syllabus:

“The only suggestions I could make for this course is to offer a bit more diversity in choice of text. Although I enjoy learning in general and was able to find content I could latch on to, I had a hard time getting excited about many of the stories we studied. This is not to say Prof. Walker is not aware or sensitive to cultural differences. She is. She both referenced and made other sources available. It would have been a bit more engaging for me however, to see more ethnic diversity among the key characters and stories we discussed as a group.”

In direct response to this feedback, I worked with my graduate student colleague to rework the syllabus for the course which, in turn, required a revision to the introductory curriculum for our department. We worked together to identify a structure that would facilitate a greater diversity of texts from playwrights representing various genders, races, and sexualities. (See Appendix I) This revision is in its first semester of implementation, but I suspect it will receive positive feedback from students.

While my teaching career to date has been short, I have demonstrated both a track record of excellent, student-centered teaching and a commitment to addressing students concerns directly and effectively. In the future I hope to continue along this trajectory and grow an increasingly more impactful pedagogy.

Reflections and Future Goals

Compiling this teaching portfolio has been an edifying and encouraging project. At times, I have simultaneously wondered at both how much and how little teaching experience is needed to make a statement of teaching effectiveness or philosophy! I am proud of the feedback I have received from students, but I am excited to move forward in my teaching work with more intention and informed, scientific support for my teaching strategies. Though, reflecting on my four years of teaching at the University of Maryland has led me to thinking about how I can build on what I have learned to improve my teaching effectiveness and bring more thoughtfulness to my syllabus design.

In the future, I would like to specifically work on the following: 1) Integrate universal design for learning and backward design into my syllabi and assessments; 2) Experiment with a variety of ELMS design tools to maximize the effectiveness of online engagement and organization; and 3) Pursue more structured professional development opportunities to make sure my teaching keeps pace with scholarship of teaching and learning. Thankfully, through our class, I have the skills I need to pursue the first two goals in the short term. The final goal is something I would like to commit to for my entire teaching career, but in the short term I do have ample opportunity through the TLTC to sharpen my knowledge.

Appendix I: Sample Syllabus

Description: This syllabus is the product of collaboration with my colleague Kelley Holley after reflecting on feedback from students that the reading material did not include enough women and/or people of color. In response, Kelley and I expanded the scope of reading beyond the canonical texts to include three women of color playwrights – Young Jean Lee, Lynn Nottage, and Suzan-Lori Parks – as well as a trans playwright, Taylor Mac. Ours is now the standard curriculum for this foundational course as of August 2018.

Text and Context in Western Theatre THET223

Course Description and Objectives:

This course is an introduction to the practical skills of play analysis and critique foundational for all theatre practitioners. You will read, analyze, and artistically interpret western dramatic literature from a range of periods and styles. Texts will be analyzed from a variety of theatrical analytical perspectives, with an eye towards choices theatre artists must make in the creation of a theatrical production.

By the end of this course you will:

- Become well-versed in the vocabulary of dramatic literature and playwriting. Through a variety of written assignments, you will prove your mastery of that vocabulary as an artist and critic.
- Learn how to “read” a script as both a literary work and blueprint for production. To this end, you will strengthen your ability to recognize a play’s significant content (themes and motifs; socio-political or cultural concerns, etc.) as well as to understand the ways in which dramatic form (genre, style, structure, language, etc.) and the site/time of production affects the meaning and reception of a work.
- Further strengthen your writing skills by articulating your ideas about the plays through written play analysis, dramatic criticism, and engagement with discussion posts.

These skills will prepare you for future studies in the School of Theatre, Dance, and Performance Studies and allow you to enter the field as a well-rounded practitioner.

Course Materials:

Canonical Plays & Performances:

- *Oedipus the King*, Sophocles
- *King Lear*, William Shakespeare
- *Hedda Gabler*, Henrik Ibsen
- *Mother Courage and her Children*, Bertolt Brecht
- *Paradise Now*, The Living Theatre

Canonical Responses:

- *All My Sons*, Arthur Miller
- *Lear*, Young Jean Lee
- *Intimate Apparel*, Lynn Nottage
- *In The Blood*, Suzan-Lori Parks
- *24-Decade History of Popular Music*, Taylor Mac

Textbooks:

- Aristotle, *Poetics* ([E-book](#))
- Additional materials on ELMS

Major Class Assignments:Participation

You are expected to actively participate in discussion and take notes in each class session you attend. Your participation score will be discretionary and reflect not only the quantity, but the quality of your contributions to class. Please note the attendance policy below; if you are absent from class unexcused, you cannot participate and, therefore, your participation grade will be affected.

Context Presentations

*Please note that your assigned day is a **Major Scheduled Grading Event!***

For each canonical play we read, a small group (2-3) of students will present a 10-15 minute context presentation outlining the following:

- Basic biography of the playwright
 - When/where were they born? When/where did they die?
 - How did they come to be a playwright?
 - What key elements of their experience influenced their playwriting?
- Historical & social context for the play
 - When/where was it written?
 - When/where was it first performed?
 - What were three (3) historical and/or social conditions at the time that impacted the play's creation?
- Three (3) discussion questions for the class
- Bibliography of at least three (3) sources: one book, one scholarly article, and at least one other source, e.g. online encyclopedia, documentary, etc.

Your presentation and any presentation notes should be submitted to ELMS **30 minutes prior** to class and presented at the start of class on the day your play's reading is due. You should post your discussion questions in the Discussions tab on ELMS. You and your partner(s) will sign up for your presentation slot in the third week of class. Each student will only need to work on one context presentation.

DUE DATE(S): See schedule of classes

Discussion Post Responses

You will respond four (4) times during the semester to the Context Presentation discussion questions posed by your classmates on ELMS. Each response should be 500-600 words. You cannot respond to questions for the play on which you make a Context Presentation.

Your response for any given play should address all of the questions and use correctly cited quotes from the play to support your ideas. Your discussion post responses are **due at midnight on the Friday following each context presentation**. You are encouraged to use our in-class discussion to inform your responses – take thorough notes!

DUE DATE(S): See schedule of classes

Play Review Blog

You will attend one theatre performance from the School of Theatre, Dance, and Performance Studies (TDPS) and write a 500-word blog on ELMS analyzing the production, evaluating its choices and their relationship to the text. This article should be written as if you are a critic for a local theatre blog, such [Maryland Theatre Guide](#), [DC Metro Theatre Arts](#), or [DCist](#). You must choose which production you are reviewing by **October 1**.

Performance Options:

- *Little Shop of Horrors* – October 5-12
- *Citizen* – November 9-16

Tickets:

- Student tickets for all TDPS productions are \$10.
- You are eligible for FREE tickets to TDPS performances on free ticket Mondays.
- TDPS productions sell out quickly - make sure to plan ahead and get your tickets early!

DUE DATE(s): October 15 and November 19

Final Project

Your final project will give you the opportunity to synthesize the skills you have developed to analyze scripts both critically and artistically. You will select one of the plays we have read this semester and assign yourself a role in your dream production of that play: Director, Actor, or Designer. You will create a portfolio of all the script analysis a practitioner in that role would need to do to bring the story from page to stage. You will also present your portfolio to the class during our final exam period.

In summary, your project will have the following components:

- Critical script analysis:
 - 7-page paper using historical/social context from your research and close analysis of quotes from the play to support the vision for your production.
 - A bibliography citing the play and at least five (5) sources: two (2) books, one (1) scholarly article, and at least two (2) other sources, e.g. online encyclopedia, documentary, etc.
- Artistic portfolio:
 - Director – five (5) pages of the script with your notes, casting descriptions, description of production vision, inspirational images
 - Actor - five (5) pages of the script with your notes, Stanislavski paperwork, inspirational images or playlists
 - Designer - five (5) pages of the script with your notes, sketches, inspirational playlist, inspirational image collages
- Final presentation

DUE DATE: December 14 (final exam period)

Extra Credit Opportunities

You may take advantage of the following opportunities for up to 10pts. of extra credit.

- **Work on a TDPS Production:** Bring a program for the show highlighting your name in the crew credits and a 2-3 page reflection on how you or other artists working on the production used text analysis.

- **Additional Play Review Blog:** Write an additional 500-word play review on a TDPS production or professional production. You will need instructor approval for your production – plan ahead!

DUE DATE: Must be submitted by the start of class time on December 11

Grading Breakdown:

100 pts. Participation
150 pts. Context Presentation
500 pts. Discussion Responses (4 @ 125pts. ea)
100 pts. Play Review Blog
150 pts. Final Project

TOTAL: 1000 points possible (divide by 10 to understand your grade on a 100 point scale)

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

Week One:

Foundations: Text, Context, & Dramaturgy

MONDAY 8/27: Getting to know you & getting rid of “I liked it”

WEDNESDAY 8/29: Who is the dramaturg and what is dramaturgical?

Week Two:

Foundations: Writing & Talking About Theatre

WEDNESDAY 9/5: Introduction to critical writing on theatre & the program note

Week Three:

Foundations: How to Read Theatre

MONDAY 9/10: Intuitive & Contemplative Reading

WEDNESDAY 9/12: READ: Fuchs, Elinor. “Visit to a Small Planet.” (ELMS)

Week Four:

Foundations: Aristotle & *Poetics*

MONDAY 9/17: READ: Selections from *Poetics* (ELMS)

WEDNESDAY 9/19: READ: Selections from David Ball, *Backwards & Forwards* (ELMS)

Week Five:

Plot: *Oedipus*

MONDAY 9/24: READ: Sophocles, *Oedipus the King*

WEDNESDAY 9/26: IN CLASS DISCUSSION

Week Six:

Plot: *All My Sons*

MONDAY 10/1: READ: Arthur Miller, *All My Sons*

WEDNESDAY 10/3: IN-CLASS DISCUSSION

Week Seven:

Language: *King Lear*

MONDAY 10/8: READ: William Shakespeare, *King Lear*

Teaching Portfolio: Jonelle Walker
WEDNESDAY 10/10: IN-CLASS DISCUSSION

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Week Eight:

Language & Adaptation: *Lear*
MONDAY 10/15: WATCH: Young Jean Lee, [Lear](#)
WEDNESDAY 10/17: IN-CLASS DISCUSSION

Week Nine:

Character & Subtext: *Hedda Gabler*
MONDAY 10/22: READ: Henrik Ibsen, *Hedda Gabler*
WEDNESDAY 10/24: IN-CLASS DISCUSSION

Week Ten:

Character & Subtext: *Intimate Apparel*
MONDAY 10/29: READ: Lynn Nottage: *Intimate Apparel*
WEDNESDAY 10/31: IN-CLASS DISCUSSION

Week Eleven:

Thought & Style: *Mother Courage and Her Children*
MONDAY 11/5: READ: Brecht, Bertolt. *Mother Courage*
WEDNESDAY 11/7: IN-CLASS DISCUSSION

Week Twelve:

Thought & Style: *In The Blood*
MONDAY 11/12: READ: Suzan-Lori Parks, *In The Blood*
WEDNESDAY 11/14: IN-CLASS DISCUSSION

Week Thirteen:

Thought & Style: Staging the Playwright's (Political) Perspective
MONDAY 11/19: IN-CLASS VIEWING: "Theatre of War"

Week Fourteen:

Spectacle: *Paradise Now*
MONDAY 11/26: WATCH: The Living Theatre, *Paradise Now* (ELMS Streaming)
WEDNESDAY 11/28: IN-CLASS DISCUSSION

Week Fifteen:

Spectacle: *A 24-Decade History of Popular Music*
MONDAY 12/3: READ: Erick Neher, "[The Brooklyn Marathon: Taylor Mac's A 24-Decade History of Popular Music](#)"
WEDNESDAY 12/5: IN-CLASS DISCUSSION

Week Sixteen:

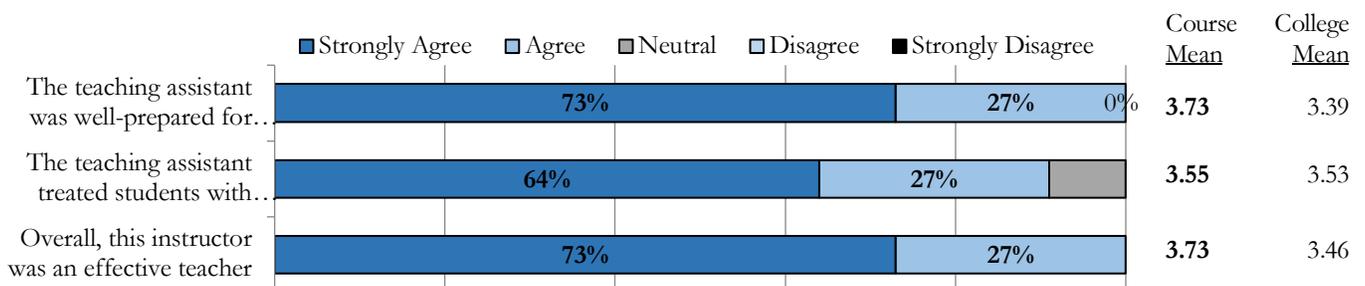
Wrapping Up
MONDAY 12/11: Course Wrap-up & In-class Paper Swap

FINAL: Friday, December 14, 8:00am-10:00am

Appendix II: Course Profile

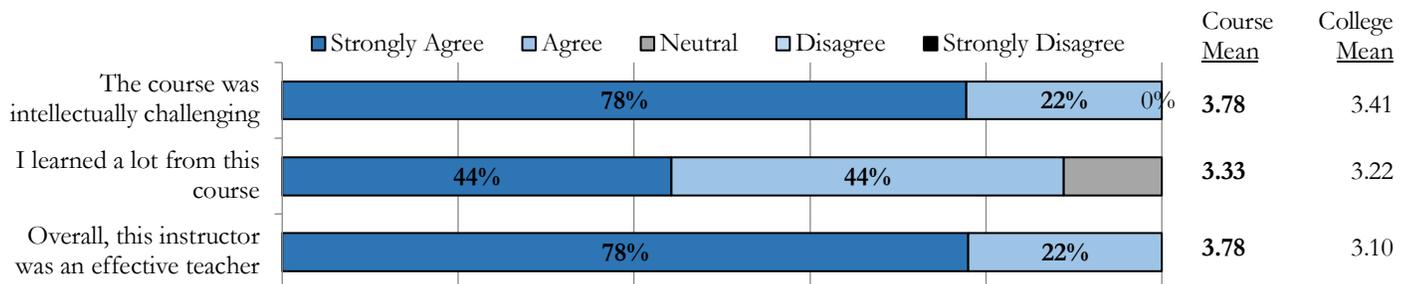
THET110 Introduction to Theatre

Course Description	In the age of pop music and blockbuster films – of memes and viral videos – we often forget that theatre was one of the original forms of popular entertainment. Although theatre now can seem like an entertainment reserved for the elite or elderly – theatre and theatricality informs all facets of contemporary cultures. In the first part of the class we will focus on theatre practitioners to understand how theatre is produced. In the second half we will consider popular entertainment in Western Europe and America – with a particular focus on musical theatre and Broadway – to explore how theatre communicates, resonates and remains relevant to all audiences.
Learning Outcomes	<p>Students who successfully complete this course will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be informed and experienced audience members who can think critically about theatre. • Understand the jobs of theatre professionals and the relationship between theatre & popular culture. • Understand how theatre addresses gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, and class.
Course Format	Blended: two 75-minute full class lectures each week and a 50-minute discussion section once a week. Typically 10-35 students per section.
Class Meetings	Full class meetings address the topic of the week using three key strategies: lecture; physical theatre exercises; and open discussion with the Professor. Discussion sections are smaller group discussions led by Teaching Assistants on the topic of the week, including reading quizzes, small group work, and preparation for a collective final performance project.
Learning Assessments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading quizzes • Performance quizzes • Performance adaptation project developed with discussion section • Midterm and Final exams, including multiple choice and essay questions
Student Evaluations	Spring 2016 - 11 of 32 (35%) responding (Complete evaluation reports with open-ended comments are available upon request.)



Appendix III: Course Profile THET223 Text & Context in Western Theatre

Course Description	This course is an introduction to the practical skills of play analysis and critique foundational for all theatre practitioners. You will read, analyze, and artistically interpret western dramatic literature from a range of periods and styles. Texts will be analyzed from a variety of theatrical analytical perspectives, with an eye towards choices theatre artists must make in the creation of a theatrical production.
Learning Outcomes	<p>Students who successfully complete this course will be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Become well-versed in the vocabulary of dramatic literature and playwriting. • Learn how to “read” a script as both a literary work and blueprint for production. • Further strengthen your writing skills by articulating your ideas about the plays through written play analysis, dramatic criticism, and engagement with discussion posts.
Course Format	75-minute full class meeting twice a week, with an online writing assignment every other week (four total for each student). Typically 10-25 students per class.
Class Meetings	Full class meetings are used to review and expand on text analysis strategies with a focus on discussion of each week’s assigned play and formative assessments. One class each week is dedicated to discussing the assigned play in-depth with the entire class led by students who independently develop discussion questions. The remaining class is dedicating to active small group work applying relevant text analysis concepts to that week’s play.
Learning Assessments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group context presentations for assigned plays & playwrights • Short online writing assignments based on in-class discussion questions • Blog play reviews • Final play analysis paper and artistic portfolio
Student Evaluations	Fall 2017 - 9 of 9 (100%) responding (Complete evaluation reports with open-ended comments are available upon request.)



Appendix IV: Course Profile

THET486 Modernism’s Theatre, Theatre’s Modernisms

Course Description	By examining scholarly debates about 20th and 21st century populism and fascism, and by coordinating this examination with analyses of specific works of theatre, this seminar will provide students with numerous examples not only of how to examine theatre and performance in relation to the socio-political issues that have defined specific historical periods but also of how to relate those examinations to current political events and to the contemporary practice of theatre.
Learning Outcomes	Students who successfully complete this course will be prepared to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyze theatre practice based on its position in the mainstream or the margins • Understand political theories of populism, fascism, and right-wing authoritarianism. • Apply artistic strategies to address race, gender, class, and politics in theatre.
Course Format	Two 75-minute full class meetings each week.
Class Meetings	The first half of class meetings consist of introductory short lectures from both the Professor and the Teaching Assistant, followed by rigorous group discussion of the reading materials for that day. The second half of class consists of presentations of “storyboards” reflecting students’ artistic interpretations of scenes from and panel discussions of reading materials for that day.
Learning Assessments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading quizzes • Conceptual storyboards of reading material scenes • Panel discussions with short written responses • Group project, devising an original piece of political theatre
Student Evaluations	Spring 2018 - 7 of 7 (100%) responding (Complete evaluation reports with open-ended comments are available upon request.)

