

TEXTUAL STUDIES FOR PERFORMANCES

#529B

Spring 2017

FRANK DWYER

fdwyer@usc.edu

OFFICE HOURS

I'm usually available after class or by appointment. Email me at fdwyer@usc.edu to set up an appointment.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Close reading of dramatic texts as a fundamental tool for rehearsal and performance.

COURSE OVERVIEW

(See Fall 2016 Syllabus; if you need another copy, ask me)

We will read plays together in class, as if we were doing the first round of table work in rehearsal for a production. You are expected to come to the first day of each new play as prepared as you would be for that first day of rehearsal. We will be tender and painstaking. The course outline is a best guess, but we won't be on a strict schedule: we will learn more by going deep than by sprinting to cover a wider area. Here are two ideas to encourage you, by two major American literary figures:

"Try to be one of the people on whom nothing is lost!"

—Henry James

"You can observe a lot by watching."

—Yogi Berra

TEXTS

Marc Blitzstein: *The Cradle Will Rock* (email attachment)

Bertolt Brecht: *Mother Courage*, translated by David Hare (Methuen)

Anton Chekhov:

The Anniversary, translated by Saunders & Dwyer (email attachment)

The Proposal, translated by Saunders & Dwyer (email attachment)

Maxim Gorky: *The Summer People*, translated by Saunders & Dwyer (email attachment)

Henrik Ibsen: *An Enemy of the People*, translated by Rolf Fjelde (Ibsen: 4 Major Plays, Vol. 2: *Ghosts/An Enemy of the People/The Lady from the Sea/John Gabriel Borkman* (Signet Classics) ISBN-13: 978-0451528032)

Julie Jensen: *Two-Headed* (Available online: go to dramaticpublishing.com/two-headed)

Archibald MacLeish: *The Fall of the City* (email attachment)

William Shakespeare: *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Arden edition)

You already have *Mother Courage*, *The Proposal*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* from last semester. I will email you *The Cradle Will Rock*, *The Anniversary*, *The Summer People*, and *The Fall of the City*. Julie Jensen's *Two-Headed* is available online from Dramatic Publishing (google "Two-Headed Jensen"). The others can all be found inexpensively on Amazon. **Be sure to get exactly the edition I'm asking for. If you have any questions, check with me before you buy.** Be sure and order the texts in time to have them when you need them for class. (Check the syllabus.) **YOU MUST HAVE YOUR OWN COPY, AND YOU MUST BRING IT TO CLASS.** You're only about 1/4 present without your text in a Textual Analysis. **If you don't bring your own text to class, I will consider you unprepared; repeat offenses will lower your grade.**

ASSIGNMENTS

We'll conclude the reading and discussion of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* which began last semester. Then, in this order, we'll read and discuss *A Cradle Will Rock* (and follow the text as we listen to the music), *Mother Courage, Two-Headed*, *The Fall of the City*, and *The Summer People*. We will also read, without discussion, this semester's journal assignment, *An Enemy of the People* in the Rolf Fjelde translation. We will also set aside two days to work again with our MFA1 playwright classmates from last semester. We will also hope to find time for more Shakespeare text work, in scenes or monologues.

QUIZZES

To test your preparation for the table work in class, there will be occasional QUIZZES, announced in advance. You will be given your parts in advance, so you should be able to discuss the plot and characters in the acts or scenes being tested. You will be expected to know what the words and the lines you are reading mean, so I will ask you to define selected words and sometimes ask you to explain a line by putting it in your own words. I may also give you lines and ask which character speaks them, or to whom or about whom they are spoken. (I'll provide a list of the characters.) None of this will be hard unless you haven't prepared for the reading. If you fail a quiz, I will give you an opportunity to make up the grade with extra credit.

WRITING QUIZZES

Occasionally I will ask you to write a good quiz yourselves. This will help you understand what is important for the actors to know and understand before the classwork – or rehearsals – begin. You won't do well by writing hard questions, or by asking about trivial things. Go to the essence. What do we need to know to make our rehearsal more productive. I'll pick the two class quizzes I think are best and half the class will take one, half the other. You will be graded on your quiz, as well as on the quiz you take.

RANDOM SPOT CHECK

I will sometimes question you in the table work to make sure you know what you are saying.

CLASS PARTICIPATION is crucial. Also, please do not eat in class.

JOURNAL

You will keep a JOURNAL, a kind of diary, chronicling your encounter with Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People* in a first, second, and then third read. Read the play through three times; don't read the first act three times, then the second, etc. Make sure to comment on the whole play again for each read. The course outline gives the dates when the three different reads are due. You will read the play yourselves the first time, and then we'll read it together in class, without discussion. Shortly after that the first read is due: 2-3 pages of reactions, questions, what you think may be important, what confuses you. In the second read (5-7 pages), I expect to see evidence of closer attention, more careful investigation, critical thinking, and many more questions than theories. You won't "win" by jumping to clever conclusions before you really know the play. This should be as open-minded, tender, probing, and sympathetic approach to the play as you can manage. In the third read (8-10 pages), I expect more reactions, more questions, but also some answers, some ideas about the intention of the author and the meaning of the play: real evidence of your growing understanding. If you are still confused or uncertain after the third read, you may need to read the play again. Don't turn in the 3rd read journal until you have a pretty good at least preliminary understanding of the work. I'll give you two clues about this play: many students spend their time discussing the simple conflict at its heart. When they identify that conflict, they have no doubt they've figured out what the play is about, so they take one side or the other and argue their case. Be careful: Ibsen is tricking us in order to make us think. The conflict is not what the play is about, though he will make most of you think so. That central conflict is more or less resolved by the end of Act III. If you don't get farther than that, you will have to figure out how to answer the question, "Then why did Ibsen write two more acts?" Most of you know, after struggling last semester with a different sort of tricky, thought-provoking playwright, Carol Churchill, that this detective work can be taxing but is

also fun. Watch carefully. Remember Yogi Berra's advice: "You can observe a lot by watching."

You will find a lengthy description of the journal assignment in the Fall 2016 syllabus. This semester, I still want you to be aware that plays may contain deep secrets, but I want you to think less about searching for "big" discoveries ("the lemons"), and focus instead on the joy of the small discoveries. Remember, this is still detective work – as you read each scene, each line, and consider each character with growing understanding. If you need another copy of the Fall 2016 syllabus, or if you have any questions, come to me.

THERE WILL BE NO MIDTERM OR FINAL EXAM, but we will have a FINAL PROJECT (TBA)

COURSE OUTLINE

(QUIZZES TBA)

Jan. 11: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*
Jan. 13: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*
Jan. 18: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*
Jan. 20: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*
Jan. 25: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; begin *The Cradle Will Rock*
Jan. 27: NO CLASS (to be rescheduled)
Feb. 1: *The Cradle Will Rock*
Feb. 3: *The Cradle Will Rock*
Feb. 8: begin *Mother Courage*
Feb. 10: *Mother Courage*
Feb. 15: *Mother Courage*
Feb. 17: *Mother Courage*
Feb. 22: *Mother Courage*
Feb. 24: *Mother Courage*
Mar. 1: begin *The Enemy of the People*: Act I & II
Mar. 3: *The Enemy of the People*: Acts III-V
Mar. 8: *Two-Headed*; *Enemy Journals* 1st Read due (2-3 pages)
Mar. 10: *Two-Headed*
Mar. 15: NO CLASS
Mar. 17: NO CLASS
Mar. 22: *The Fall of the City*; *Enemy Journals* 2nd Read due (5-7 pages)
Mar. 24: MFA1 Playwrights
Mar. 29: MFA1 Playwrights
Mar. 31: *The Summer People*: Act One
Apr. 5: *The Summer People*: Act One
Apr. 7: *The Summer People*: Act Two
Apr. 12: *The Summer People*: Act Two
Apr. 14: *The Summer People*: Act Three; *Enemy Journals* 3rd Read due (8-10 pages)
Apr. 19: *The Summer People*: Act Three
Apr. 21: *The Summer People*: Act Four
Apr. 26: *The Summer People*: Act Four
Apr. 28: Discuss *Enemy*
FINAL PROJECT (finals week) (TBA)

CLASS MEETINGS

W, F 12:00-1:50pm

Location: KAP 134

GRADES

| | |
|---|------------|
| Class Participation | 15% |
| Quizzes | 25% |
| Random spot checks for meaning during table work | 5% |
| Writing quizzes | 10% |
| Journal (<i>An Enemy of the People</i>) | 45% |

Attendance, Tardiness, Absences

We expect the highest level of commitment from MFA actors. Lateness is not tolerated without prior notice. Unexcused absences are not permitted. Communication with the instructor is essential in case of emergency or illness. Violation of these requirements will result in disciplinary measures.

Statement for Students with Disabilities

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me (or to TA) as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Website and contact information for DSP: http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html, (213) 740-0776 (Phone), (213) 740-6948 (TDD only), (213) 740-8216 (FAX) ability@usc.edu.

Statement on Academic Integrity

USC seeks to maintain an optimal learning environment. General principles of academic honesty include the concept of respect for the intellectual property of others, the expectation that individual work will be submitted unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and the obligations both to protect one's own academic work from misuse by others as well as to avoid using another's work as one's own. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles. *SCampus*, the Student Guidebook, (www.usc.edu/scampus or <http://scampus.usc.edu>) contains the University Student Conduct Code (see University Governance, Section 11.00), while the recommended sanctions are located in Appendix A.

Statements on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Academic Conduct

Plagiarism – presenting someone else's ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in *SCampus* in Section 11, Behavior Violating University Standards <https://scampus.usc.edu/1100-behavior-violating-university-standards-and-appropriate-sanctions/>. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct, <http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct/>. Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university. You are encouraged to report any incidents to the *Office of Equity and Diversity* <http://equity.usc.edu/> or to the *Department of Public Safety* <http://capsnet.usc.edu/departments/departments-public-safety/online-forms/contact-us>. This is important for the safety whole USC community. Another member of the university community – such as a friend, classmate, advisor, or faculty member – can help initiate the report, or can initiate the report on behalf of another person. *The Center for Women and Men* <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/cwm/> provides 24/7 confidential support, and the sexual assault resource center webpage sarc@usc.edu describes reporting options and other resources.

Support Systems

A number of USC's schools provide support for students who need help with scholarly writing. Check with your advisor or program staff to find out more. Students whose primary language is not English should check with the *American Language Institute* <http://dornsife.usc.edu/ali>, which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students.

The Office of Disability Services and Programs

http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations. If an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, *USC Emergency Information* <http://emergency.usc.edu/> will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology.

Emergency Preparedness/Course Continuity in a Crisis

In case of a declared emergency if travel to campus is not feasible, USC executive leadership will announce an electronic way for instructors to teach students in their residence halls or homes using a combination of Blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technologies.