

## SYLLABUS ENG278

### **COURSE #: ENG 278 TITLE: Advanced Playwriting**

Course Description [*from CDCS*]: Advanced Playwriting builds on students' work in earlier playwriting or creative writing courses, honing and developing the aspiring playwright's craft while continuing to explore and investigate the discipline of writing for live performance. Each semester, students study with a different, award-winning guest playwright. In so doing, they get to experience instruction and guidance under the tutelage of some of the most exciting voices working professionally in the American theatre. By permission of instructor.

**Credits: 4**

**Semester/Year:** Spring 2020

**Class Day/Time/s:** Mondays 12:30 - 3:15

**Location:** Todd Union Rm 202F

First Class: 1/27/20

Last Class: 4/27/20

**Lab Days/Times:**

Labs begin:

Last Lab:

**Location:**

**Does this course use Blackboard Learning Management?**    Y    N    (TBD)

**If yes, explain how Blackboard will be used:** TBD

**Course Webpage/s** [if applicable]: N/A

**Instructor:** Mashuq Mushtaq Deen

Contact Email: TBA

Contact Telephone:

Office Hours: directly after class by appt

Office Location: TBA

**Entrance Prerequisites** [if applicable]:

Students need permission from the instructor to register for this class. Permission can be granted if students have taken the following prerequisites: ENG 123 Playwriting or any creative writing course offered by the UR English Dept.

*"We have to remind each other of the privilege and the responsibility of the act of empathy."*

~ Meryl Streep

*"I hate writing, I love having written."*

~ Dorothy Parker

### **Course Aims & Objectives:**

Over the course of the semester, I want you to work on developing your unique writer voice, as well as your aesthetic. (This is a lifelong journey, but let's see if we can make a dent in it this semester.) I also want you to work on your critical response skills, both giving and receiving. And I want you to *wrestle*: with the concepts, with the work we read, with me, but most of all with yourself and your own blindspots. We often think of writers as having something to say, and that's not untrue. But a good deal of writing is getting out of the way and listening. It's a humbling experience, and also a vulnerable one, if you're doing it right.

Towards that end, I expect you to be good to each other. Be generous. Be kind. Be on time to class and with your assignments.

There are things I can teach you, about craft, about structure, about dramaturgy. But there are things I can't teach you — you'll either be willing to *go there* or you won't. But I expect you to try, so dig deep.

Besides weekly writing assignments and readings, you will write two short plays and revise them for submission to short play festivals.

I run my classroom like a rehearsal room and a writers workshop rolled into one. I welcome questions. I expect engagement. If you have an issue or concern, please come talk to me.

Also. Please do not bring me a masterpiece. Instead, I challenge you to fail, and to fail better with each exercise. Meaning, don't try to get it "right," rather try employ your effort in learning, experimenting, trying something you've never tried before.

### **General Course Requirements:**

- There will be reading and writing assignments every week. You should expect to spend at least 4 hours per week on your homework, give or take.
- Everyone will meet with me for a private conference during the semester to go over your progress and talk about your one act plays. These conferences are mandatory.
- Please turn in your assignments on time as that is the only time they will be accepted.
- All writing must be in standard play format unless otherwise specified.

### **Required Texts & Readings [if applicable]:**

This is a preliminary reading list and will be finalized in the fall:

- Baltimore Waltz by Paula Vogel
- Act Without Words by Beckett
- Mud by Maria Irene Fornes
- The Conduct of Life by Maria Irene Fornes
- The Dumbwaiter by Harold Pinter
- Trifles by Glaspell

- Sanford Meisner On Acting by Meisner
- Cloud 9 by Caryl Churchill

**Other Recommended Reading** [if applicable]:

This is a preliminary recommended reading list and will be updated before the spring semester:

- short play and one-act play anthologies
- Four by Chris Shinn
- Neighbors by Brandon Jacob-Jenkins
- Backwards & Forwards by David Bell
- Dramatists Guild Resource Directory 2018
- Plays (lots of them)
- Bluebeard by Matt Freeman

**Assignments and Exams/Quizzes/Tests** [if applicable]:

- reading and writing assignments will be given every week
- you will write and revise two short plays (10-min and 20-min) by the end of the semester
- you will submit the plays to a festival for consideration
- you are required to see both MainStage productions as well as two other arts events, and to respond to them in writing
- there may be pop quizzes

**Recommended Attire** [if applicable]:

Dress comfortably. We will on occasion need to move around, and so you should wear clothes that would not impede your ability to do so.

**Attendance Policy:**

- Arrive on time. You will lose one point off your grade each time you're late. (More than 20 minutes late will count as an absence.)
- Be at every class. If you're not in class, I will assume you've lost a limb and will be worried about you. If you can, let me know ahead of time if you plan to lose a limb. Do bring in a note from your doctor. Unexcused absences will be 4 points off your grade.

You will receive one Get Out of Jail Free Card which will give you back one point on your grade (so you have one freebie in terms of lateness). To receive your GOOJFC, you must do the following: On a blank sheet of colored paper, preferably a pretty color, write me a limerick, a tanka or a haiku poem. If I like it, you'll get your point.

**Grading:**

You will be graded on a point system. Each assignment will be worth a certain amount of points, each day's class participation will be worth a certain amount of points, etc. The average breakdown of how that's spread out looks like this:

Two Plays & Two Revisions	22%
Class Participation	28%
Written Assignments	34%
Overall Growth	6%
Good Collaborator vs Diva Deduction	10%

Your two short plays will be weighted more than your weekly writing assignments, and the revisions of those will be worth additional points.

Late assignments will not be accepted, so they are worth zero points.

No devices are allowed in class. A distracting device will get you ejected from class and you will receive a 0 for the day.

**Academic Support Services:**

Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning: [www.rochester.edu/college/cetl/](http://www.rochester.edu/college/cetl/)

Writing, Speaking and Argument Program: <http://writing.rochester.edu/>

**Academic Honesty:**

Please see: [www.rochester.edu/college/honesty/undergraduates.html](http://www.rochester.edu/college/honesty/undergraduates.html)

**Disability Resources:**

Please visit: [www.rochester.edu/college/disability/](http://www.rochester.edu/college/disability/)

**Content/Weekly Outline or Schedule:**

**\*\*THIS SYLLABUS IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE.\*\***

1. DATE: 1/28

- Introduction
- What is a play?
- Dramatic action

**HW**

- Reading: Aristotle's *Poetics*
- Writing Exercise 1: eavesdropping

2. DATE: 2/4

- Character & Dialogue
- Meisner Technique

HW

- Reading: TBA
- Writing Exercise 2: character backgrounds & Meisner

3. DATE: 2/11

- Place & Environment

HW

- Reading: TBA
- Writing Exercise 3: 2-person scene

4. DATE: 2/18

- Conflict
- Stakes
- Unity of Opposites

HW

- Reading: TBA
- Writing Exercise 4: TBA

5. DATE: 2/25

- Behavior v Activity
- Visiting Artist (depending on availability)

HW

- see *Cardenio*
- Reading: TBA
- Writing Exercise 5: write a short play (8-10 minutes)

6. DATE: 3/4

- Plot & Exposition
- discuss *Cardenio*

HW

- Reading: TBA
- Writing Exercise 6: write an “impossible” short play (8-10 min)

7. DATE: 3/11 — SPRING BREAK, NO CLASS

HW

- Reading: TBA
- Writing Exercise 7: think through your idea for one-act

8. DATE: 3/18

- Subtext
- Individual conferences

HW

- Reading: TBA
- Writing Exercise 8: begin your one-act plays

9. DATE: 3/25

- Realism v Non-Realism
- Revisions
- Critique

HW

- Reading: TBA
- Writing Exercise 9: Revise 10 minute plays; keep going on one-acts

10. DATE: 4/1

- Critique

HW

- Reading: TBA
- Writing Exercise 10: One Acts

11. DATE: 4/8

- Critique
- Visiting artist (actor) depending on availability

HW

- Reading: TBA
- Writing Exercise 11: One Acts

12. DATE: 4/15

- Critique

HW

- Reading: TBA
- Writing Exercise 12: One Acts

13. DATE: 4/22

- Critique

HW

- see *The Conduct of Life*
- Reading: TBA
- Writing Exercise 13: finish one act plays

14. DATE: 4/29

- discuss *The Conduct of Life*
- critique
- discuss submissions

HW

- Reading: n/a
- Writing Exercise 14: One Act Revisions & Proof of Submissions due by May 5

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**Other Information:**

*Resources*

TBA

*Field Trips*

We may take a field trip. This is TBA for now.

*Arts Explorer Initiative*

As part of this program, all student will be required to see *both* main stage productions as well as two *additional* outside arts events. I will require you to write responses to these and they will factor into your grade. (See handout for additional information.)