Course Syllabus – Red Rocks Community College
Tuesday/Thursdays – 2:30 p.m. – 3:45 p.m.

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Office Hours: MW 10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.; TR 11:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m., or by appointment

Pre-requisites: ENG 090 (Basic Composition) and REA 090 (College Preparatory Reading); or higher.

REQUIRED TEXTS: How To Read A Play by Ronald Hayman; Backwards and Forwards by David Ball (These texts are available in the RRCC Bookstore.)

REQUIRED MATERIALS: Notepaper, pens, a computer, or access to a computer that includes Office Word or a comparable word-processing program. Data stick for holding electronic materials utilized in the production portfolio presentation due at the end of the semester.

GENERAL COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course introduces students to methods of reading and analyzing literature for the stage. In addition, students apply staging and design concepts in visualizing and analyzing how a play looks, sounds, and feels when produced.

COURSE OBJECTIVES
(Standards for the Colorado Community College Common Course):

The students shall be able to:

I. Learn how to read play scripts silently and orally.
   Students are required to meet this competency by participating in in-class exercises and completing all written assignments that train them to read scripts out loud and silently. (See Pages Three, Four, Five, Six and Seven of this Syllabus.)
II. Interpret a script.
    This competency is met when students have completed assigned reading in the two texts: How to Read A Play by Ronald Hayman, and Backwards and Forwards by David Ball. In addition, they are required to complete assignments 1-3 as described in this Syllabus. (See Pages Three and Four in this Syllabus.)
III. Analyze play structure in terms of plot (climactic, situational, episodic) acts and themes, dramatic action, "beats," and character objectives. Students demonstrate their comprehension of this competency by completing all course requirements and assignments. (See Pages Three through Seven in this Syllabus.)
IV. Scripts may be chosen to represent various types; including, but not limited to: classical, contemporary, developmental (new, unpublished, unproduced works). Students are required to meet this competency by completing the first three course requirements/assignments. (See Pages Three and Four in this Syllabus.)
V. Present a full character analyses for a play.
*Students demonstrate their comprehension of this competency by completing the Final Production Assignment.* (See Page Five of this Syllabus.)

VI. Read a play in advance of a production of that same play and analyze the differences between the play as written and the play as performed.
*Students meet this competency by completing assignments: “Critical Examination of Two Live Theatre Performances”.* (See Page Four in this Syllabus.)

VII. View and critique a play in production.
*Students meet this competency by attending a play performance and then participate in class discussions, and then write a critical analysis of the performance.* (See Assignment Three on Page Four, and Week Ten on Page Six of this Syllabus.)

VIII. Analyze and visualize a production in terms of setting, costuming, sound, and lighting.
*Students meet this competency by completing the terms of the “Final Production Project”.* (See Pages Four and Five in this Syllabus.)

IX. Visualize stage movement in term of reading a play and introduce students to the idea of "blocking" and have them block out select pages from a play they are working on collectively.
*This competency is met by students in completing the “Final Production Project”.* (See Pages Four and Five in this Syllabus.)

X. Present a production concept.
*Students meet this competency by completing the “Final Production Project” and then presenting their completed work in class.* (See Pages Four and Five in this Syllabus.)

XI. Defend a production concept and evaluate other (presented) concepts.
*This competency is met by students who complete the “Final Production Project”.* (See Pages Four and Five in this Syllabus.)

Upon completion of **Theatre Script Analysis**, students will be able to:

A. Read plays silently and orally with fluency.
B. Acquire techniques of reading dramatic literature for purposes of entertainment, research, analyses and criticism.
C. Synthesize all elements of play structure and content as a basis for interpreting scripts.
D. Visualize a look, sound, and feel of a script as it could be brought to life on the stage.
E. Formulate a personal viewpoint about a script.
F. Prepare class projects that illustrate a script.
G. Present the illustrative project in class, using visual and aural methods and explanations.
H. Defend interpretation of textual analysis that led to the class presentation.
I. Critique one’s own project and other students; projects as presented in class.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

1. **Three Reaction Papers: (Worth 50 points each for a total of 150 points.)**
   These papers are based upon specific play scripts announced in class. They should be type-written (minimum four pages; double-spaced; 850-1,000 words; 12 point font) as a critical and/or analytic essay. The criteria to include in the essay are:
   
   A. The plot (story) of the play as well as the main conflict, or dramatic question that the play answers.
   
   B. Identify all characters and briefly describe their personality traits and relationship(s) to other characters in the play. In addition, identify the protagonist and antagonist found in the play. Last, identify how each major character serves as an “agent” of the action of the play.
   
   C. Identify and define the themes and meaning/importance of the play in its own historic context as well as why it is relevant to contemporary American culture and society.
   
   D. In your opinion, what are the strengths and weaknesses of the play script? Support your answers with examples from the script and supplemental information that illustrates elements of dramatic literature proven to be successful in production.
   
   E. Identify what might be the major challenges inherent in producing this play for live performance? Be certain to focus on casting considerations, scenic elements, costumes, properties, lighting and other production aspects.
   
   F. Summarize your personal response to the play and support your opinion with tangible examples.
   
   G. Complete the paper by the announced deadline. Late work is generally not accepted.

2. **Analysis of Dramatic Literature Script Structure: (Structural Analysis Assignment: Worth 100 points.)**
   This paper is based upon analytic concepts outlined in your text, *Backwards and Forwards* by David Ball. Using your text, write:
   
   A. Each character’s “super-objective”.
   
   B. Identifying dialogue that is expositional in nature.
   
   C. Identify the play script’s dramatic action.
   
   D. Identify if the play is situational, episodic, or climactic in nature. Please also note the key complicating incidents and the climactic peak of the play’s action.
   
   E. Working backwards, as the text suggests, dissect the action of the play into its smallest units (beats) and determine if these units follow each other in...
an identifiable, “logical” pattern. As the text suggests, label each beat with its own title, as if it were a short play that “stands alone”.

F. Incorporate points presented in our in-class lecture/discussion of Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, which provides the foundation of the text’s analytic example.

3. **Critical Examinations of Two Live Theatre Performances: (Worth 75 points each for a total of 150 points.)**

These performances will be assigned at least 6 weeks in advance. The reviews are due the following Thursday’s class. Two of the Reaction Papers described earlier will be based upon the theatre scripts that provided the basis of these performances. This is for the purposes of comparing and contrasting the elements of the theatre play script as written, and then applied in an actual, live performance.

- Identify the name of the play, the playwright, the theatre company producing the play, and the date and place of the production.
- Give a detailed analysis of three major characters and two minor characters (include more if you wish). Include in your comments statements that clarify believability of character portrayal, appropriate acting decisions, and technical execution of the part.
- Identify the elements that imply directorial vision. Things like stage movement patterns, overall rhythm of the play, the mood of the production, cohesiveness, line interpretation, and theme are all aspects of directorial vision.
- Identify the set, costume and lighting designs, as manifested in the production. Were they appropriate? Did they enhance the play’s themes and intent? Were they cohesive? Include other observations that help to clarify impressions.
- Include a short synopsis of the plot in the beginning of the review.
- Describe the audience(*s*) response(s) to the play.
- Highlight especially memorable moments of the production. (See more requirements on the next page.)
- General length of review: approximately 3-4 pages; typed and double spaced using a 12 point font.
- Attach a program of the performance.
- End the review by summarizing your overall impression. Include a statement that indicates whether you recommend this production to others.

4. **Final Production Project: (Worth 100 points.)**

In completing this project you’ll create the following:

- Character bios for all characters
- Costume Design for all characters, both written descriptions and sketches
- Scenic Design for the play (Ground plans and front renderings)
- Lighting Design for the play (Light plot, descriptive and rendered)
Experience directing and acting by participating in group sessions that involve blocking, speaking, and expressive delivery of a specific scene of the play script for this project.

5. **Attendance and Participation:**
   Coming to class and participating every day is in your best interest. You should also arrive on time, or you will miss important instructions and announcements. Repeated tardiness may result in a loss of points. Missing a class often makes participation in and/or understanding of the following class activities and discussion difficult or impossible. If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to find out what you missed from a classmate and catch up during your own time. If you are absent more than three times, you severely impact your ability to keep up with course work. An exceptional attendance record may also be worth some extra credit at the end of the semester, making the difference in borderline grade situations.

**GRADING:**
Adding all points earned will indicate the final grade placement on the scale given below. You will receive zero points for any missed assignments.

- **Critical Examinations of Two Live Theatre Performances:** 75 points each (150 total)
- **Analysis of Dramatic Literature Script Structure:** 100 points
- **Three Reaction Papers:** 50 points each (150 total)
- **Final Production Project:** 100 points

**Attendance:** Minus 3 points for every class missed beyond the three absences allowed.

**TOTAL POINTS POSSIBLE:** 500 POINTS

**Grade Breakdown:**
- 435-500 points: A
- 370-434 points: B
- 300-369 points: C
- 234-299 points: D
- 233 points or less: F

**Tentative Schedule:**

- **Week One:** Course Introduction and syllabus orientation. You’ll practice problem-solving through in-class exercises that present problems typical to theatre arts. Assigned reading: *Backwards and Forwards* by David Ball.
- **Week Two:** We’ll discuss reading assignment and then using the text’s concepts; we’ll analyze Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*. Homework: Complete Structural Analysis paper following parameters presented earlier in this syllabus. In addition, bring Play Script #1 copies to next class.
- **Week Three:** You’ll read Play Script #1 out loud in class. We’ll have a class discussion
focusing on analyzing the play using concepts applied in writing the reaction papers. Homework: read the first 40 pages in the text, *How to Read a Play*.

**Week Four:** Analysis of Dramatic Literature Script Structure assignment due. We’ll discuss Aristotle’s six aspects of a well-made play and apply to Play Script #1 and *Hamlet*. We’ll begin discussion of the creative team’s responsibilities in creating theatre productions: producer, director, set, costume, and lighting designers. Homework: Read next 30 pages in *How to Read a Play*.

**Week Five:** Reaction Paper #1 due on Play Script #1. We’ll continue discussion of creative team’s responsibilities. Homework: Read Play Script #2 and begin Reaction Paper #2. We’ll discuss the set design process and examine photographic images and drawings of set designs for various theatre productions locally and nationally. We’ll also begin discussion of the actor’s process, including character analysis.

**Week Six:** We’ll explore acting exercises: warm-ups and improvisation and vocal training exercises that practice diction and oral interpretation. We’ll read out loud from Script #2 incorporating exercise concepts. We’ll discuss traits of characters in Play Script #2 and outline typical casting processes. We’ll begin to discuss characters as an “agent of the action”. Homework: Complete reading of *How to Read a Play*.

**Week Seven:** Reaction Paper #2 due focused on Play Script #2. We’ll discuss the Lighting Design process and examine images and light plots of lighting designs as applied to Play Script #1 and Play Script #2. We’ll begin discussion of Costume Design process. We’ll finish our discussion of techniques presented in *How to Read a Play*.

**Week Eight:** We’ll examine images of costume designs of various play productions including Play Script #1 and #2, and analyze design choices of these productions. We’ll reading the first script of the “Critical Examinations of Live Theatre Performance” assignments, and determine a date for the group to attend the live performance together.

**Week Nine:** We’ll discuss concepts of directorial vision and a director’s responsibilities. We’ll explore the “Open” or “Contentless” script to experience directing and being directed. We’ll begin discussion of similarities and differences in reading a play script and imagining it in production; then, explore potential choices that may be present in the upcoming Live Theatre Performance.

**Week Ten:** We’ll attend the first Live Theatre Performance and discuss the methods used to translate a script into a fully realized theatre production. We’ll cover the parameters for the written critique of the performance. In addition, we’ll discuss ethical issues present in the production and methods of staging, etc. Last, we’ll begin discussion of final project parameters.

**Week Eleven:** We’ll continue our discussion of the parameters of the final project assignment. Play Script #3 and Reaction Paper #3 assignment details will be explained. We’ll continue exploration of ethical issues/themes in dramatic literature and examine theatre’s function as a reflection of society’s focus and priorities past and present.
We’ll form groups for the final projects. Last, we’ll schedule attendance to Live Performance #2.

Week Twelve: We’ll discuss Play Script #3 as the focus for the final project. Reaction Paper #3 due. Students get together in their groups and discuss approaches to the final project that they might utilize. They assign their individual responsibilities in context of the final project as directors, designers, and actors. We’ll attend Live Performance #2. Homework: begin preparation to fulfill individual’s responsibilities in the final project. Complete any necessary meetings out of class, and research.

Week Thirteen: We’ll discuss the elements and practices inherent in the Live Performance #2. Assign 2nd Critical Examination paper. Each group provides a progress report of their final projects and continues working together in rehearsals and other activities as time allows.

Week Fourteen: We’ll convene our groups in class to polish final projects. Reaction Paper #3 due.

Week Fifteen: You’ll present your final projects. 2nd Critical Examination due.

STUDENT CONDUCT AND ACADEMIC HONESTY:

Academic Honesty: Students at RRCC are expected to adhere to the policies for academic integrity and the student conduct code described in the Student Handbook. All students in this class will sign a pledge to be on their honor to do their own work and to follow these policies. There is a zero tolerance policy for any form of academic dishonesty in this course. Disciplinary action will be taken against any student found guilty of academic dishonesty such as cheating or plagiarism. Although you will often be working with others in groups, all written work you prepare MUST be your own. If your words match those of others, I will assume you copied rather than thinking about the answers yourself. The penalty for being dishonest in this way is far greater than simply getting a wrong answer. If you are unclear whether or not your actions are acceptable, please ask in advance. Any student guilty of any form of academic dishonesty will receive a grade of ZERO for that assignment or exam and will be subject to additional disciplinary action, up to and including failing the course and/or being expelled from the college.

Classroom Etiquette and Policies:
1. Be courteous. Treat me, and your fellow students, with respect, and I will do the same.
2. Get to class on time, do not leave early, and do not be disruptive.
3. Turn off all cell phones and other electronic devices during class, unless we are using them to complete an in-class exercise.
4. Refrain from side conversations when the entire class is being addressed by me or by one of your classmates. These are very distracting to everyone.

Students not adhering to these policies are subject to disciplinary action. This may include being asked to leave the class for the day (and not being given the chance to make up what you miss as a result).
**Students with disabilities:** RRCC will provide accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. To ensure the provision of reasonable and appropriate services at Red Rocks, students with disabilities must identify themselves in a timely manner to the Office of Special Services (OSS), Room 1182, Learning and Resource Center, 303-914-6733, in order to be eligible for the requested accommodation(s). Current and comprehensive documentation must be on file with the office prior to approval of the accommodation. It is strongly encouraged that students self-disclose their disabilities at the beginning of their academic experience because accommodations are not retroactive. If you have a learning or physical disability requiring special accommodations, please get the appropriate paperwork to me and talk to me about it by the end of the second week of the course.

**STRATEGIES TO SUCCEED:**

- First, set aside adequate time to complete homework assignments every week while enrolled in this course. Don’t stress yourself by falling behind. Commit to the process for the entire semester.
- Ask questions if you don’t understand something. Take notes in class and record main concepts from the reading assignments as necessary.
- If you need extra help, please don’t hesitate to set an appointment with me as soon as possible. Don’t wait until the last minute if you are having trouble with any part of this course.
- Although there are no traditional mid-terms or final exams in this class, you should complete all assignments by the time they are due because they are designed to build one upon the next. As the semester progresses, expectations are that you are absorbing the information and are able to incorporate key concepts in your class projects and assignments. If you don’t understand, again, always ask questions. If you don’t ask, I assume you understand and will apply your understanding to your work in and out of class.
- Participate in class discussions and group exercises. They are designed to assist you in learning how to read, analyze and produce a play script in live performance. Don’t wait for me to call on you; be proactive.
- If you are not already, become acquainted with your medium of theatre. If you do not have the habit of going to the theatre, develop it during this semester. You will strengthen your understanding and get ideas by going to see live theatre productions, and perhaps be entertained in the bargain. Even “bad” productions are informative and educational. And, there are some theatres that offer free tickets or discounted tickets to students. Take advantage of these offers.
- Find the fun in this course. Enjoy the creative process of formulating informed opinions of artistic works and be open to insights about our world and its people, and how and why dramatic literature serves us in our cultural expressions and societal interactions.