

University of West Georgia
Spring 2019 Syllabus
Playwriting I: Devising

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Course Meets: Mon/Wed 11-12:15pm, MM 105

Texts: *Strategies for Playbuilding: Helping Groups Translate Issues into Theatre* by Will Weigler
Your Handy Companion to Devising and Physical Theatre by Pilar Orti

Performances:

Townsend Center for the Performing Arts (TCPA). Reserve tickets at TCPA Box Office.
Home, TCPA Richard L. Dangle Black Box, Feb 20-24th

Episodes in Sexuality 2019, TCPA Richard L. Dangle Black Box, March 6-9

She Kills Monsters by Qui Nguyen, TCPA Mainstage, April 17-21

Course Description

Devised Theatre is an alternative approach to playwriting that emphasizes collaborative ensemble-building and a focus on movement based play-making. Devised theatre may also encompass community research and outreach, and social and political awareness. Utilizing improvisational techniques to create performance-based research, students will explore and make plays based on their communities, interests, and concerns.

Degree Learning Outcomes addressed in this course

- Students will demonstrate knowledge of selected plays, theatrical conventions, and theatrical movements important in the formation of the modern theatre.
- Students will demonstrate skills in analyzing plays, using theatre technology, and conducting research.
- Students will express through performance, writing, speaking and other modes of communication the results of research and critical judgment, indicated by a demonstrable ability to reach an audience effectively through at least one of the components of theatrical art.
- Students will illustrate awareness of the complex human condition acquired through aesthetic and intellectual perceptions as evidenced in various modes of theatrical production.
- Students will apply skills learned in course to a variety of work and social environments.
- Students will function safely and effectively while using theatre technology.
- Students will demonstrate knowledge of the various means (acting, directing, designing, constructing, playwriting, etc.) through which a theatrical concept is realized.

Course Learning Outcomes

- Students will demonstrate proficiency applying the techniques of devised theatre, including improvisational performance, collaborative writing, and non-textual play development.
- Students will develop basic playwriting skills integral to both devised and traditional performances.
- Students will express the results of their research and writing through showcase performance of their devised plays.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS/EXPECTATIONS

1. Attendance is mandatory. You are required to attend all class sessions and to actively participate. Students are allowed ONE unexcused/excused absence (not on presentation days). Absences beyond the one, whether excused or unexcused, will result in a 5 point deduction for any absence thereafter.
2. BE ON TIME. Class begins promptly at 11am. Two (2) lates will count as one absence.
3. All assigned work must be on time or it will not be accepted.
4. Be prepared for physical warm-ups and to sit on the floor during every class; wear comfortable, loose fitting clothes. Tie your hair back and do not wear excessive jewelry, skirts, heels, sandals, boots or tight fitting jeans. Hats are not permitted during class. Also, NO FLIP FLOPS!! This applies to everyone.
5. There is no eating or gum chewing in class. A bottle of water is permitted.
6. Please use the restroom before entering class.
7. Cell phones are not permitted during class.
8. Disruptive Behavior: Faculty, staff, and students have the right to be treated with respect and professionalism by students and peers in all classes and activities sponsored by the Theater department. Disruptive behavior will not be tolerated. If, in the opinion of the responsible faculty member, a student becomes disruptive in class or rehearsal, faculty may exercise their judgment on how best to address the situation, be it by requiring the student to leave, calling Campus Police, or taking other steps deemed necessary for the safety and well being of the class, rehearsal or group. Such action may affect the student's final grade and standing in the University.

This class *requires* out of classroom work, specifically rehearsals and attending the departments productions. *If you are unable to make the time commitment to class meetings, additional outside rehearsals, attending performances and the thorough exploration of the material, you should consider taking another course.*

A few thoughts on Participation & Professionalism

This class requires collaboration, communication and a trusting ensemble. You are expected to conduct yourself in a mature and professional manner; focus, consideration and support of others in the group are paramount. Participation also includes attendance. Not showing up for class and lateness **will** affect your grade.

- Since expanding your sense of self is part of the devising process, a positive attitude and a willingness to expand one's comfort zone are expected and are part of the participation grade.

- An element of risk taking, initiative and willingness to fail are also expected.
- Some of the work in class will necessitate human contact. You will be allowed to step out of any exercise that raises significant discomfort. If you have problems with touch or with individuals in the class, please communicate this to me as soon as possible.

ASSIGNMENTS

Seven Interviews

Create a short questionnaire/survey to give to seven random students, faculty or staff members that target questions about current events issues. Questionnaires/Surveys must be approved by the instructor before they are administered on 1/23. Each student will administer the questionnaire/survey to seven **strangers. You must not know the people whom you ask to fill out the survey.** It's also important that these interviews happen in person; people communicate verbally and non-verbally. It's hard to see and translate the non-verbal communication if you only interview via email or text. **A summary of the seven interviews will be due on Course Den under assignments on 2/4.**

Summary of interviews

Rather than handing in the surveys, students will transcribe them, read them, analyze them and then write a written summary of how each person answered each question, highlighting the commonalities in each answer and the things that each answer didn't have in common. **Though you are summarizing, it's important not to generalize. Be as specific as possible.** For example, if a person answers a question in one way, but the way they're carrying her/himself physically says something different, include this in the summary (perhaps someone answered a question without looking at you in the eye; interpret what s/he might be saying by not looking at you for that response).

Solo Project

Each student will research and make a 2-4 minute solo piece that is based on the interviews. There are no parameters to creating this piece other than the 2-4 minute time limitation and that it be about your findings from the interviews. Any piece that is shorter in length than two minutes will have points deducted. Any piece longer than four minutes will also result in a points deduction. If the piece calls for props or set pieces, it is the student's responsibility to find, obtain, and bring to the space the piece(s) needed. It is also the student's responsibility to strike the props or set pieces once the presentation is over. Allow coding to guide you. More on this as we approach the project.

Readings

You will be assigned readings that we may discuss in class, so reading the chapters for the day they are assigned to discuss or work on is important. You will also be required to submit one to two page journal entries based on the readings.

- **Three Journal Essays: Based on the assigned readings,** these journal entries are to be a minimum of 500 words each. Please follow MLA format (Times New Roman, One inch margins, double spaced). ****Do not summarize the chapters. Write about the purposes of the exercises, how they translate from reading to doing, identify exercises that speak directly to you, and those that you don't comprehend.**

Episodes Performance Response

Respond to the production in terms of devising. That is, determine where it is in its process—is it a polished piece, or is it raw? In what style is it? How do you respond to its style? How were the actors, design elements used in the production? What was its message? Was it clear? These are just some examples of what to cover. Be sure to utilize the class reading assignments to support your arguments. Be specific; use specific scenes or moments to support your arguments as well. The paper should be a minimum of 750 words. MLA format (TNR, double spaced, one inch margins).

Research Performance Project

We will create three groups of 3-4 people and each group will select a current event topic, one that is in the news today and that is a national or international issue. Examples: mass shootings in the U.S., Russian hacking into Brexit elections in the UK and in the presidential election in the US, women's reproductive rights, sexual harassment, gender equality, etc. While this "performance" is a work-in-progress, it will be performed for feedback in preparation for the Final Project.

Upon selecting a topic, each group will be responsible for making an 8-10 minute play about that topic.

- The play must have a point of view
- Each member of the group must read four different articles about the topic and include them in the group's portfolio that will be handed in on the day of the Research Performance. Articles may not be duplicated by two or more group members.

The portfolio will be composed of three sections:

- Traditional Research: this will include each group members' articles along with a written paragraph on each article describing how the information was used in the devising of the play.
- Performance Research: this will include a list of exercises that the group used to make the play, along with a paragraph on how each exercise contributed to the making of the play. **Do no include ensemble building exercises, unless they in some way contributed to actual material used in the play. You may include material building exercises, even if the material that came out an exercise ended up not being used.** Discuss how scenes were created and evolved.
- The Play (There should also be a cover page for the portfolio that includes the tentative name of the play, the names of the members of the group, and a short summary of the play)

Some thoughts about sources for the required articles:

- Wikipedia is **not** a proper source for any articles about your topic.
- In the Traditional Research section of your portfolio, you should also identify what **type** of source each article is from.
 - For example, papers like The New York Times, The Washington Post, The Chicago Tribune, The LA Times should all be labeled as Mainstream Press.

- Websites such as Breitbart, InfoWars should be labeled as White Nationalist.
 - Websites such as The Raw Story, Occupy Democrats should be labeled as Liberal.
 - Fox News, MSNBC should be labeled according to the ideology they espouse (Fox News is conservative, MSNBC is progressive).
- If you're unsure what is considered mainstream and what is not, try googling it. You may also ask me to assist you in figuring this out.
 - What's important is to understand the difference between *fake news*, *balanced news*, and *news that might have a particular bias in its reporting*.

Final Performance Project: This project may be a continuation of what was presented for the Research Performance Project. We may put groups together along with your plays. We may add your solo projects as well. You'll work together to find a way to put both plays together with some sort of framework or device that will connect them. **The entire play should last a minimum of 20 minutes.** On the performance date the group will submit one portfolio that includes:

- A 2-3 page paper from **each** deviser that describes in detail the individual's experience in the group: were you the leader, or add ideas but let others take over the organization? Did you feel that your voice was heard? How did the two groups combine? Did the small group dynamic or vibe continue, or was it lost? After working in a small group and then graduating to a bigger one, what are your insights on collaboration? Please feel free to add more insights as they come up.
- A rehearsal schedule that includes rehearsals that took place during class time and those that took place outside of class time. It should also include the agenda and location of each rehearsal.
- A cover sheet with the title of the play and each deviser's name listed.
- The play.
- Other Sources must be added to this process and you must use **PRIMARY SOURCES ONLY**. Examples of Primary Sources:
 - archives and manuscript material
 - photographs, audio recordings, video recordings, films
 - journals, letters and diaries
 - speeches
 - scrapbooks
 - published books
 - government publications
 - oral histories
 - records of organizations
 - autobiographies and memoirs
 - printed ephemera
 - artifacts, e.g. clothing, costumes, furniture
 - research data, e.g. public opinion polls

Grading:

Participation & Professionalism	30pts
Seven Interviews Summary	20pts
Solo Project	25pts
Three Journal Entries (10 pts each)	30pts
Episodes Performance Response	25pts
Research Project Performance & Portfolio	30pts
Final Performance Project & Portfolio	40pts

180-200pts	A
160-179pts	B
140-159pts	C
120-139pts	D
Below 119pts	F

Course Schedule

Syllabus and/or Course Schedule are subject to revision by the Instructor at any point during the semester

This section of the syllabus provides an outline of what you can expect to experience throughout the semester. However, I believe that learning occurs best when teachers have the flexibility to adapt their plans in light of students' responses and questions. This, therefore, is my attempt to share with you what I think will happen from week to week. It is subject to change, based on my assessment of our collective needs. Each class, I will clarify the exact assignment for the subsequent class.

- Week 1

Mon 1/7

Introduction of Class & Discuss Syllabus

Ensemble Building Exercises

Homework: Begin thinking about topics for the research project

Wed 1/9

Ensemble Building Exercises

Homework: Watch *Devising The American Family*

- Week 2

Mon 1/14

Ensemble Building Exercises

Discussion of Video

Wed 1/16

Homework: Read Weigler, pgs 1-29

- Week 3

M 1/21 – No Class

W 1/23

Due: Questions for interview survey

Homework: Read Weigler, pgs 31-50

- Week 4

M 1/28

Administer questionnaires/surveys to seven random students/faculty/staff

Homework: Work on transcribing for coding

W 1/30

Material/Ensemble building exercises

Read: Weigler, pp 51-74

- Week 5

M 2/4

Due: Survey Summary

Material/Ensemble building exercises

Discuss Weigler

Homework: Read: Orti, pgs 1- 31

W 2/6 - No class - KCACTF

- Week 6

M 2/11 - Review

Homework: Read Orti, pgs. 33-50

W 2/13 = Solo Pieces Rough Presentation (for evaluation/feedback)

- Week 7

M 2/18 - Solo Pieces Presentations

Due: Journal Essay #1 (covering Weigler, pgs 1-74 & Orti, pgs 1-50)

Home opens in the Dangle, Feb 20-24th

W 2/20 - Reflection of Process

1st Meeting for Research Project

Homework: Read Orti, pgs 51-69

- Week 8

M 2/25 - Work with group on Research Project

W 2/27 - Work with group on Research Project

Homework: Read Weigler, pgs 75-84

- Week 9

M 3/4 - TBD

Episodes in Sexuality opens in the Dangle, March 6-9

W 3/6 - TBD

- Week 10

M 3/11

Due: Journal #2 (covering Weigler, pgs 75-84; Orti, pgs 51-88)

W 3/13 - Research Project Performance for class (for evaluation/feedback)

- Week 11 – Spring Break

- Week 12

M 3/25 - Due: Episodes Performance Response Paper

W 3/27

Homework: Read Weigler, pgs 85-101

- Week 13

M 4/1 - Research Performance Project

W 4/3 - Discussion of Experience. Where do we go from here?

- Week 14

M 4/8

Due: Journal #3 (covering Weigler, pgs 85-101)

W 4/10 – TBD

- Week 15

M 4/15 - Work on Final Project

She Kills Monsters Opens April 17-21st.

W 4/17 - Work on Final Project

- Week 16

M 4/22 - Work on Final Project

W 4/24 – Daniel Banks

- Final, Monday, May 6, 11:00 am-1:00 pm

Presentations of Final Project

Due: Portfolio for Final Project

Federal, State and University Policies Regarding Course Work

This is very important for you to read! You may also find this information at

https://www.westga.edu/administration/vpaa/assets/docs/faculty-resources/common_language_for_course_syllabi_v2.pdf

ACADEMIC SUPPORT

Accessibility Services: Students with a documented disability may work with UWG Accessibility Services to receive essential services specific to their disability. All entitlements to accommodations are based on documentation and USG Board of Regents standards. If a student needs course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability or chronic illness, or if he/she needs to make special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, the student should notify his/her instructor in writing and provide a copy of his/her Student Accommodations Report (SAR), which is available only from Accessibility Services. Faculty cannot offer accommodations without timely receipt of the SAR; further, no retroactive accommodations will be given. For more information, please contact Accessibility Services.

Center for Academic Success: The Center for Academic Success provides services, programs, and opportunities to help all undergraduate students succeed academically. For more information, contact them: 678-839-6280 or cas@westga.edu

University Writing Center: The University Writing Center assists students with all areas of the writing process. For more information, contact them: 678-839-6513 or writing@westga.edu

ONLINE COURSES

UWG takes students' privacy concerns seriously: technology-enhanced and partially and fully online courses use sites and entities beyond UWG and students have the right to know the privacy policies of these entities. For more information on privacy and accessibility for the most commonly used sites, as well as technology requirements visit the UWG Online site. Students enrolled in online courses can find answers to many of their questions in the Online/Off-Campus Student Guide.

If a student is experiencing distress and needs help, please see the resources available at the UWG Cares site. Online counseling is also available for online students.

HONOR CODE

At the University of West Georgia, we believe that academic and personal integrity are based upon honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility. Students at West Georgia assume responsibility for upholding the honor code. West Georgia students pledge to refrain from engaging in acts that do not maintain academic and personal integrity. These include, but are not limited to, plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, aid of academic dishonesty, lying, bribery or threats, and stealing.

The University of West Georgia maintains and monitors a confidential Academic Dishonesty Tracking System. This database collects and reports patterns of repeated student violations across all the Colleges, the Ingram Library, and the School of Nursing. Each incidence of academic dishonesty is subject to review and consideration by the instructor, and is subject to a range of academic penalties including, but not limited to, failing the assignment and/or failing

the course. Student conduct sanctions range from verbal warning to suspension or expulsion depending on the magnitude of the offense and/or number of offenses. The incident becomes part of the student's conduct record at UWG.

Additionally, the student is responsible for safeguarding his/her computer account. The student's account and network connection are for his/her individual use. A computer account is to be used only by the person to whom it has been issued. The student is responsible for all actions originating through his/her account or network connection. Students must not impersonate others or misrepresent or conceal their identities in electronic messages and actions. For more information on the University of West Georgia Honor Code, please see the Student Handbook.

UWG EMAIL POLICY

University of West Georgia students are provided a MyUWG e-mail account. The University considers this account to be an official means of communication between the University and the student. The purpose of the official use of the student e-mail account is to provide an effective means of communicating important university related information to UWG students in a timely manner. It is the student's responsibility to check his or her email.

CREDIT HOUR POLICY

The University of West Georgia grants one semester hour of credit for work equivalent to a minimum of one hour (50 minutes) of in-class or other direct faculty instruction AND two hours of student work outside of class per week for approximately fifteen weeks. For each course, the course syllabus will document the amount of in-class (or other direct faculty instruction) and out-of-class work required to earn the credit hour(s) assigned to the course. Out-of-class work will include all forms of credit-bearing activity, including but not limited to assignments, readings, observations, and musical practice. Where available, the university grants academic credit for students who verify via competency-based testing, that they have accomplished the learning outcomes associated with a course that would normally meet the requirements outlined above (e.g. AP credit, CLEP, and departmental exams).

HB 280 (Campus Carry)

_UWG follows University System of Georgia (USG) guidance:

http://www.usg.edu/hb280/additional_information#

_You may also visit our website for help with USG Guidance:

<https://www.westga.edu/police/campus-carry.php>

PHYSICAL CONTACT AGREEMENT

Physical contact between instructor and student, student and student, and student and the self, is a traditional and effective pedagogical tool used to train actors in acting classes, stage movement classes, voice, speech, and dialect classes, rehearsals and coaching sessions. The instructor may employ physical contact in order to educate and facilitate:

1. Safe and effective motion
2. Alignment
3. Breathing and sound production
4. The identification of habitual holding patterns and areas of tension
5. Flexibility and / or mobility
6. Release and / or relaxation
7. The deepening of an emotional or behavioral response

Physical contact will always take place during class time and rehearsals. If you have an injury, chronic condition, or area of sensitivity or pain, please notify me immediately. If you are uncomfortable at any time with the physical contact, please inform me immediately.

While I will make every effort to provide a safe environment for students, the teacher assumes no liability for injuries resulting from participation in class, rehearsals, or coaching sessions, if applicable.

I, _____, agree to the above. I understand and agree to follow the course syllabus. I further understand and agree to monitor myself and to voice my limitations.

Student signature _____

Date _____

Please return this page signed by Monday January 14, 2019.