“Lloyd, honey, be a playwright with guts.
Write me one about a nice, normal woman who just shoots her husband.”
- Margo Channing, from All About Eve

The class!

A playwright’s job is to be brave.

In this class you will be a playwright. You will investigate what a play is, how a play works, how to write a play, and why anyone would want to. You will write. You will write what scares you. You will write what makes you laugh. You will write what is strange. You will ask questions of yourself, of others, of the theater - out loud, and in your writing. You will hear your work read out loud. You will learn how to listen. You will learn how to offer feedback. You will learn how to revise. You will write a play. You will see part of that play “performed” in front of an audience. You will be brave. Because that is your job.

By the end of this semester you will have gained an understanding of all the tools necessary to be a professional playwright, and even have put some of them into practice. Welcome one and all.

Expectations

1. Mandatory Attendance. More than two absences will result in a failing grade. In case of emergency or illness contact me ASAP via email. Preferably by 9am the day of class.
2. Complete all the readings. Be prepared with hard-copies, and a few written thoughts about each reading for class.
3. Complete written assignments. Come with printed pages of all prompts (enough copies for your readers, and me) every class. We may not get to all of the short pages, but always keep them on hand. You will sign up for timeslots to read longer pieces in class.
4. Participate in our writing workshop with an open mind and open heart. Be generous. Abide by the workshop and critique guidelines that we will outline in class.
5. Bring a pen/pencil and notebook! All in-class writing will be done with pen and paper. No lap-tops. If you have an i-pad, you may use that in class to reference any readings in electronic form.
6. See plays, and attend special events in the theater department. This is not a requirement, nor will it affect your grade, however, if you wish to write for the theater I strongly encourage that you see as much as possible. I have included a list of events happening on campus this semester below.
Assignments

**Weekly writing prompts** - You will complete an assortment of short writing prompts each week, which you will submit in your final portfolio, due on the last class.

**One short analytical response paper** - You will write one short (3-4 page) response to one of the readings we do this semester. This is due in class on October 16th.

**One-Act Play** - You will complete a one-act play, which you will submit in your final portfolio, due on the last class.

**Individual Conferences** - You will sign up for two 15-min slots during office hours, where we will discuss your writing.

**Portfolio** - You will submit a final portfolio of all of your work this semester. The portfolio will be a binder or folder which will include typed copies of:

- All weekly prompts (including new play research assignment, and one revised prompt from in-class revision workshop)
- One-Act Play

This portfolio is due on the last class: November 20th

**Final presentation** - You will cast and rehearse a reading of a 10-minute excerpt from your One-Act play, to be presented on December 4th, 2:40 - 6:30pm.

Grading policy

30% Participation
30% Portfolio
35% One Act & Final Presentation
5% Response Paper

I will evaluate your work based on your commitment to the craft, your individual growth as a writer, and your level of engagement with the work in and out of class.

Events at Wesleyan

**Outside the Box Series: The Builders Association Sontag: Reborn**
October 2 - 3

**Outside the Box Series: Lecture with Lin-Manuel Miranda and Quiara Alegría Hudes**
October 13, 7pm
CFA Theater

**Outside the Box Series: Lecture with Leigh Fondakowksi**
October 28, 7:30pm
CFA Theater

Theater and Music Depts present Fall Faculty production: *In the Heights*
November 12 -16
CFA Theater

Theater Dept presents Fall Senior Thesis production: The Serpent
Directed by Sivan Battat ’15
Thursday December 4 - 6
Patricelli ’92 Theater

Plays

Plays are available for purchase at Broad Street Books. Some will be on course reserve at the library. It is your responsibility to acquire the readings you need in a timely fashion.

Funnyhouse of a Negro, Adrienne Kennedy
God’s Ear, Jenny Schwartz
In the Next Room (or the vibrator play), Sarah Ruhl
Sixty Miles to Silver Lake, Dan LeFranc
Betrayal Harold Pinter
God of Carnage Yasmina Reza
The Shipment, Young Jean Lee
Watch: The Shipment via OnTheBoardsTV
Fucking A, Suzan Lori Parks
Our Town, Thornton Wilder
*Microdramas, Wolfgang Bauer
*Far Away, Caryl Churchill
*The Venus De Milo is Armed by Kia Corthron

*Trifles, Susan Glaspell
*A Map of Virtue, Erin Courtney
*Cat on a Hot Tin Roof, Tennessee Williams
  (edition with both 3rd Acts + Williams’ note)
*Tragedy a Tragedy, Will Eno
*A Thought in Three Parts, Wallace Shawn
*End Game, Samuel Beckett

Other Readings & Theory

*36 Assumptions about Writing Plays, Jose Rivera
*The Poetics of Space (Chapter 1), Gaston Bachelard
*“Writing About Sex,” Wallace Shawn
*“Elements of Style,” Suzan Lori-Parks
*“A Visit to a Small Planet,” Elinor Fuchs

* Plays and readings marked with “*” will be distributed in class, or via Moodle, you do not need to purchase.

Disability Resources

Wesleyan University is committed to ensuring that all qualified students with disabilities are afforded an equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from its programs and services. To receive accommodations, a student must have a documented disability as defined by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the ADA Amendments Act of 2008, and provide documentation of the disability. Since accommodations may require early planning and generally are not provided retroactively, please contact Disability Resources as soon as possible.
THE CLASS SCHEDULE

*Subject to change*

- WEEK 1 -

Tuesday, Sept 2

The Beginning

In class:
Introductions, Syllabus Overview
In-class writing prompt (with pencil and paper!)

Assignment Due Next Class:
Continue in-class writing, bring in printed copies for next class
“36 Assumptions”, Jose Rivera

Thursday, Sept 4

In class:
Workshop scenes
Discuss “36 Assumptions”
Read “A Visit to a Small Planet,” Fuchs

Assignment Due Next Class:
36 Assumptions/Action Scene Prompt
Microdramas, Wolfgang Bauer
Far Away, Caryl Churchill

- WEEK 2 -

Tuesday, Sept 9

In class:
Discuss Microdramas, Far Away
Workshop 36 Assumptions prompt.
Impossible Play prompt.

Assignment Due Next Class:
Complete Impossible Play
God’s Ear, Jenny Schwartz

Thursday, Sept 11

In class:
Read selection of Impossible Plays.
Discuss *God’s Ear*
- Language, Poetry, Musicality in plays

**Assignment Due Next Class:**
Language prompts:
- A short scene where each character speaks using only 1-3 words per line.
- A short 2 character scene where one character uses big language, the other uses small language. At some point, they switch.

*The Venus De Milo is Armed* by Kia Corthron

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**WEEK 3**

**Tuesday, Sept 16th**

Field trip to YALE for the Windham-Campbell Lectures in Drama

**ATTENDANCE IS REQUIRED**
Meet in classroom at 10:55am, departure at 11am
Arrival at Yale at 11:35am
Lecture 12 – 2pm
Departure back to Wesleyan at 2:30pm
Arrival back at Wesleyan 3:15pm

**Thursday, Sept 18th**

**In class:**
Discuss Lecture.
In class writing.

**Assignment Due Next Class:**
*Trifles*, Susan Glaspell
*Funnyhouse of a Negro*, Adrienne Kennedy
*The Poetics of Space* (Chapter 1), Gaston Bachelard

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**WEEK 4**

**Tuesday, Sept 23rd**

**In class:**
Discuss *Trifles, Funnyhouse, Poetics of Space*
Room as Landscape prompt: “In this room”
Character monologue prompt: Room as psychological landscape of a character

**Assignment Due Next Class:**
*In the Next Room (or the vibrator play)*, Sarah Ruhl
Reacquaint yourself with a fairy tale or myth and be prepared to discuss it
Thursday, Sept 25th

In class:
Discuss *In The Next Room*
- Use of symbols, imagery in plays (seen and unseen)
Discuss fairy tales/myths
- story, structure, symbolism.
Begin prompt.

Assignment Due Next Class:
Prompt: Adapt a Fairy Tale or Myth into a short 3 page play, in 5 scenes, using a central symbolic image to motivate each scene.
*Sixty Miles to Silver Lake*, Dan LeFranc
*Betrayal* Harold Pinter
*God of Carnage* Yasmina Reza

-WEEK 5-

Tuesday, Sept 30th

In class:
Discuss *Sixty Miles, Betrayal, God of Carnage*
- Comparative discussion: Time in plays, Time on stage
Time play exercise

Assignment Due Next Class:
Continue Time play exercise.
*The Shipment*, Young Jean Lee
Watch: *The Shipment* video via OnTheBoardsTV

Thursday, Oct 2nd

In class:
Discuss *The Shipment*
- writing for actors, using stereotype, writing into genre, writing at audience.
Workshop Time plays

Assignment:
Comedy/Genre Prompt
*A Map of Virtue*, Erin Courtney

-WEEK 6-

Tuesday, Oct 7th

In class:
Discuss *A Map of Virtue*  
Workshop comedy/genre prompt

**Assignment:**  
_Fucking A_, Suzan Lori Parks  
“*Elements of Style*” essay, Suzan Lori-Parks  
“Write what’s scary” prompt.

**Thursday, Oct 9**

**In class:**  
Discuss Suzan Lori-Parks  
Workshop scenes.

**Assignment:**  
Choose one prompt from the semester that you wish to revise or expand: for in-class revision exercise on Thursday.  
*Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, Tennessee Williams (both 3rd Acts + Williams’ note)

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**-WEEK 7-**

**Tuesday, Oct 14**

**In class:**  
Revision Workshop (in-class writing)  
Discuss One Acts, writing longer works.

**Assignment:**  
TBA

**Thursday, Oct 16**

**In class:**  
DUE: Short response paper  
TBA

**Assignment:**  
One Act Pages!!  
Research New Play development in the United States. Find one current article about new play development/new work directors/ a theater which produces new work/ or an interview with an “emerging playwright” and share with the class - electronically, before class on **Thursday, Oct 23**.

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**-WEEK 8-**

(Tuesday, Oct 21)

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No class/Fall Recess

Thursday, Oct 23rd

In class:
DUE: New Play development research.
Read “A Visit to a Small Planet,” Fuchs
Workshop One-Acts.

Assignment:
One-Act pages.
A Thought in Three Parts, Wallace Shawn
“Writing About Sex” essay, Wallace Shawn

Tuesday, Oct 28th

In class:
Workshop One-Acts.

Assignment:
One-act pages

Thursday, Oct 30th
Mischief Night

In class:
Workshop one-acts.

Assignment:
One-Act Pages
Tragedy a Tragedy by Will Eno

Tuesday, Nov 4th
Election Day

In class:
Discuss Tragedy a Tragedy
Workshop One-Acts.
**Assignment:**
One-Act pages

*Optional:* Write a one-page monologue from the perspective of a current political candidate whom you find reprehensible and perform it in front of an audience of your peers.

**Thursday, Nov 6th**

**In class:**
Workshop One-Acts.
Report-back on candidate monologues.

**Assignment:**
One-act pages

-WEEK 11-

**Tuesday, Nov 11th**

**In class:**
Workshop One Acts

**Assignment:**
One-Act pages.
*End Game*, Samuel Beckett

**Thursday, Nov 13th**

**In class:**
Workshop One Acts

**Assignment:**
One-Act pages.

-WEEK 12-

**Tuesday, Nov 18th**

**In class:**
Workshop One Acts

**Assignment:**
Writing, rewriting, dreaming, scheming
Prepare Portfolios.
*Our Town*, Thornton Wilder

**Thursday, Nov 20th**
The End

In class:
Discuss Our Town
Portfolios due to me.

November 20th - December 4th

Assignment:
Cast and rehearse your final presentation (DUE: Thursday, Dec 4th)
-3 rehearsals, 1 in the space if possible.

-FINAL PRESENTATION!!!-

Thursday, Dec 4th 2:40 - 6:30

Readings! 10 min excerpts.
Portfolios returned to students!
The rest of our lives!