

## **PERFORMANCE IN HISTORICAL CONTEXT: SCRIPT ANALYSIS**

[THEA 3323.001](#)

(3 Semester Credit Hours)

SPRING 2026

Wednesday

4:00pm - 6:45pm

FN 2.210

Instructor:

Sibyl Kempson

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JO 5.708

Office hours: Tuesdays 12 noon – 2pm in person, on Teams, or by appointment

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Prerequisite: THEA 1310 or equivalent. Repeat Limit - THEA 3323 may only be repeated for a maximum of 9 semester credit hours.

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### **Course Description**

For the aspiring actor, director, stage manager, designer, writer, animator, or passionate observer. This course is open to any student and will make an excellent follow-up to Understanding Theater, Acting 1, or Directing 1. We will examine modern dramas by authors such as Buchner, Ibsen, Strindberg, Chekhov, Shaw, Pirandello, Brecht, Beckett, Williams, Harris, Lee, Baker, and Handke, as well as classics by Euripides, Sophocles, Shakespeare, and Molière. Beginning by looking at approaches to structure, detail, composition, form, atmosphere & mood, language, setting, character, plot/conflict, tension and focus built in these works, students will ‘get under the hood’ to ‘see how they work.’

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### **Student Learning Objectives/Outcomes**

Discovering a solid basis for their own creative choices as they interact with the dramatic script, students will learn to classify and place most works within their historical context, and be able to trace the political, social, economic, technological, mythic, literary and aesthetic forces that shape the questions the plays pose – both in their own time and in ours.

Students will gain understanding, familiarity, and proficiency with the Western canon of dramatic literature.

Students will gather tools with which they can tackle any script, identify patterns, structures, trajectories of character development, plotline, etc. as well as find inspiration in any script for purposes of performing, directing, design, dramaturgy, critique, passionate observation as an audience member, thinker, participant.

Students will learn to identify, classify, and make purposeful the aesthetic, historical, and cultural influences present in their creative efforts and those of others.

Penchants for independent, curiosity-based research will be indulged, gratified and richly rewarded.

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### **Required Textbooks and Materials**

Dramatic and supplementary texts will be distributed by web link or by PDF by email. Students may choose to print these texts for themselves.

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### **Suggested Course Materials**

Specific translations are listed by the plays on the syllabus calendar when known and applicable. Also recommended are:

Amato, Andy. *The Tragic Imagination in Shakespeare and Emerson*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2024.

Eisler, Riana. *The Chalice and the Blade: Our History, Our Future*. New York: HarperOne, 1988.

Gilman, Richard. *The Making of Modern Drama*. Yale University Press, 1999.

Rokem, Freddie. *Strindberg's Secret Codes*. London: Norvik Press, 2004.

Rokem, Freddie. *Theatrical Space in Ibsen, Chekhov, and Strindberg: Public Forms of Privacy*. Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1986.

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### **Assignments & Academic Calendar**

*Note: This list is an embarrassment of riches and it is likely that we will not be able to cover all of the listed texts. We will try and see where we get to.*

WEEK 1: JANUARY 21<sup>st</sup>

AESCHYLUS – *The Oresteia*, Ted Hughes translation

WEEK 2: JANUARY 28<sup>th</sup>

SOPHOCLES – *Oedipus the King*, translation TBD.

WEEK 3: FEBRUARY 4<sup>th</sup>

EURIPIDES – *Medea*, Svarlien translation

WEEK 4: FEBRUARY 11<sup>th</sup>

SHAKESPEARE – *King Lear / MacBeth*

WEEK 5: FEBRUARY 18<sup>th</sup>

MOLIÈRE / RACINE *Tartuffe / Phèdre* Richard Wilbur translations

WEEK 6: FEBRUARY 25<sup>th</sup>

ZOLA / BÜCHNER *Thérèse Raquin & Woycek*

WEEK 7: MARCH 4<sup>th</sup>

IBSEN *The Wild Duck*

WEEK 8: MARCH 11<sup>th</sup>

STRINDBERG *Miss Julie*

**\*\* MIDTERM PROJECTS DUE \*\***

WEEK 9: SPRING BREAK

WEEK 10: MARCH 25<sup>th</sup>

CHEKHOV *The Seagull / Three Sisters*

WEEK 11: APRIL 1<sup>st</sup>

SHAW / PIRANDELLO *Pygmalion / Six Characters in Search of an Author*

WEEK 12: APRIL 8<sup>th</sup>

BRECHT / BECKETT *Mother Courage / End Game*

WEEK 13: APRIL 15<sup>th</sup>

WILLIAMS / MILLER *Streetcar Named Desire* / *Death of a Salesman*

WEEK 14: APRIL 22<sup>nd</sup>

WILSON / HANSBERRY *Joe Turner's Come and Gone* / *A Raisin in the Sun*

WEEK 15: APRIL 29<sup>th</sup>

LORCA / FORNES *The House of Bernarda Alba* / *Fefu and Her Friends*

WEEK 16: MAY 6<sup>th</sup>

BAKER / SIBBLIES-DRURY *The Flick* / *Fairview*

**\*\* FINAL PROJECTS DUE \*\***

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### Grading Policy

Attendance	10 points
Participation	10 points
Written assignments	20 points
Mid-semester project	20 points
End-of-semester project	20 points
Process Narrative	20 points

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**TOTAL** **100 points**

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### Course & Instructor Policies

Attend class. Be fully present and attentive in class. See Attendance Policy below.  
**It is your responsibility to get any material I may have handed out if you are late or absent.**

Assignments: Written assignments are turned in via email **by 9am the morning they are due.**

We will offer feedback to one another on work shown and submitted. See below for conduct & classroom citizenship expectations and requirements.

All assignments are to be **turned in / shown on time** or you will not get full credit.

Be prepared to take and keep written notes. Taking notes is an important skill to be cultivated. The class will not be recorded. Unless you can provide express written approval for accommodation from the AccessAbility Resource Center (see below), do not record me or any part of the class meetings at any time. Again: **You do not have my consent to record me at any time.**

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### **Class Attendance & Conduct**

PLEASE READ CAREFULLY AND NOTE:

Attendance at scheduled class meetings is mandatory, starting with the first day of class. Students who are absent more than two times will receive a grade of **F**. In other words: If you miss more than two (2) classes, **including the first class**, for any reason whatsoever, you will fail the class.

Also: show up on time! Three latenesses = one absence. Failure to return to class on time after a break or failure to return altogether IS NOT ACCEPTED. If you return late, it counts as a lateness, and if you do not return at all, the whole class becomes an absence.

Consider this before making your decisions.

Late arrivals disrupt the flow and concentration of the students who have arrived on time to class.

In the interest of minimizing distractions in the workshop classroom, do not bring or eat food during class.

Phones, tablets, and laptops are to be turned completely off and stowed away during class, unless we are using them for a particular exercise or group activity.

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### **Class Materials**

The instructor may provide class materials that will be made available to all students registered for this class as they are intended to supplement the classroom experience. These materials may be downloaded during the course; however, these materials are for registered students' use only. Classroom materials may not be reproduced or shared with those not in class or uploaded to other online environments except to implement an approved AccessAbility Resource Center accommodation. Failure to comply with these University requirements is a violation of the [Student Code of Conduct](#).

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## **Class Participation**

Regular class participation is expected. Students who fail to participate in class regularly are inviting scholastic difficulty. A portion of the grade for this course is directly tied to your participation in this class. It also includes engaging in group or other activities during class that solicit your feedback on homework assignments, readings, or materials covered in the lectures (and/or labs). Class participation is documented by faculty. Successful participation is defined as consistently adhering to University requirements, as presented in this syllabus. Failure to comply with these University requirements is a violation of the [Student Code of Conduct](#).

***Note: the instructor may choose to include one or neither of the following statements:***

- (a) Texas Senate Bill 17, the recent law that prohibits diversity, equity, and inclusion programs and activities at public universities in Texas, does not in any way apply to academic course instruction. Students should not feel the need to self-censor or limit their participation in academic courses pertaining to topics of race and racism, structural inequality, LGBTQ+ issues, or diversity, equity, and inclusion, and related topics.
  
- (b) Texas Senate Bill 17, the recent law that prohibits diversity, equity, and inclusion programs and activities at public universities in Texas, does not in any way apply to academic course instruction.

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## **Class Recordings**

Unless the AccessAbility Resource Center has approved the student to record the instruction, students are expressly prohibited from recording any part of this course. Recordings may not be published, reproduced, or shared with those not in the class, or uploaded to other online environments except to implement an approved AccessAbility Resource Center accommodation. Failure to comply with these University requirements is a violation of the [Student Code of Conduct](#). Students are expected to follow appropriate University policies and maintain the security of passwords used to access recorded lectures.

***NOTE: if the instructor records any part of the course, then the instructor will need to add the following syllabus statement:***

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## **Class Recordings for AccessAbility Accommodation**

As mentioned above, unless the AccessAbility Resource Center has approved the student to record the instruction, students are expressly prohibited from recording any part of this course. In the case of an *approved* accommodation, class recordings may not be published, reproduced, or shared with those not in the class, or uploaded to other online environments except to implement an approved AccessAbility Resource Center accommodation. Failure to comply with these University requirements is a violation of the [Student Code of Conduct](#).

The instructor may record meetings of this course. These recordings will be made available to all students registered for this class if the intent is to supplement the classroom experience. If the instructor or a UTD school/department/office plans any other uses for the recordings, consent of the students identifiable in the recordings is required prior to such use unless an exception is allowed by law.

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## **Classroom Citizenship**

The territory we will traverse will cause everyone in the class to feel vulnerable at times (including the instructor!) Because of this, we will agree to cultivate an inclusive, supportive environment of acceptance, permission, tolerance, respect, encouragement, and trust, with regard to feedback and critique especially.

In this course, you will often work as part of a pair or group. This will involve the navigation of interpersonal dynamics which are not always easy or smooth, and which also happen to be a very large part of making theater and performance. Much of our work this semester will be about navigating these dynamics with care and grace. Rest assured that these skills, while sometimes very challenging to build, will be enormously beneficial in almost any endeavor in the outside world. Patience with yourself, and patience and respect for others (including the instructor!) will be required.

NOTE: Disrespect or endangerment in any form, in class or during the preparation of presentations for this class, will not be tolerated.

### **●Trigger Warning and Disclaimer**

This course may explore artistic and theatrical works that include challenging, provocative, or potentially distressing themes and material, including but not limited to: violence, discrimination, trauma, sexuality, and death. These topics are part of the historical, cultural, and creative context of the works studied, and of theatre and drama generally. They are presented to foster critical thinking, artistic

exploration, meaningful discussion within in a wider cultural discourse, and even a degree of collective or personal healing. While every effort will be made to approach these materials with sensitivity, students should be aware that engagement with such content may evoke strong emotional responses. Participation in class activities, discussions, and assignments is expected and will contribute to your growth as an artist, citizen, and thinker.

Disclaimer: By staying enrolled in this course, students acknowledge that exposure to sensitive content is part of the theatrical and educational experience. Students are encouraged to seek support from campus resources (e.g., counseling services) if needed and to communicate any concerns in advance so appropriate accommodations can be discussed. If you feel that specific content may present significant challenges, please notify the professor privately to discuss potential strategies for navigating the material.

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### **Comet Creed**

*This creed was voted on by the UT Dallas student body in 2014. It is a standard that Comets choose to live by and encourage others to do the same:*

“As a Comet, I pledge honesty, integrity, and service in all that I do.”

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### **Accommodations for Students with Disabilities**

Please review [the section](#) within the UT Dallas Syllabus Policies and Procedures webpage.

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### **Academic Support Resources**

Please visit the [Academic Support Resources](#) page to view the University’s academic support resources for all students.

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### **UT Dallas Syllabus Policies and Procedures**

Please visit the [Syllabus Policies](#) page to view the University’s policies and procedures segment of the course syllabus.

Please review the catalog sections regarding the [credit/no credit](#) or [pass/fail](#) grading option and withdrawal from class.

*The descriptions and timelines contained in this syllabus are subject to change at the discretion of the Professor.*