

Script Analysis

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Course Objectives:

In this course we will study three different approaches to script analysis. You will practice each of the approaches through class assignments and discussions. By the end of this course you should be able to explain which approach or combination of approaches works best for you and why.

Course Philosophy:

I believe that students learn through doing. For that reason there are several small assignments that give you the opportunity to analyze sections of a script based on the method we are exploring. I hope this class will not overwhelm you with the amount of work, but that we can take a steady pace through the different approaches.

Required Texts:

Ingham, Rosemary. From Page to Stage: How Theatre Designers Make Connections Between Scripts and Images. Heinemann: Portsmouth, NH, 1998.

Ball, David. Backwards & Forwards: A Technical Manual for Reading Plays. Southern Illinois UP: Carbondale, IL, 1998.

Thomas, James. Script Analysis for Actors, Directors, and Designers. Focal Press: Boston, 1999.

Required Scripts:

The Glass Menagerie by Tennessee Williams

Mother Courage by Bertolt Brecht

Hamlet by Shakespeare

A Raisin in the Sun by Lorraine Hansberry

Additional Optional Sources:

The Actor's Script : Script Analysis for Performers by Charles Waxberg
Script Analysis : Reading And Understanding The Playscript For Production by David Grote

Play Directing: Analysis, Communication, And Style by Francis Hodge
Script Into Performance : A Structuralist Approach by Richard Hornby.

Understanding Playscripts : Theory And Method by Roger Gross

Studying Plays by Mick Wallis and Simon Shepherd

Course Grading: There are 1400 points possible in this class. I will use a traditional 10 point grading scale 100%-90%=A, 89%-80%=B, 79%-70% =C etc.

1350 — 1215 = A	3 Play Synopsis @ 100 pts each	300
1214 — 1080 = B	10 Assignments @ 50 pts each	500
1079 — 945 = C	2 Creative Writing Projects @ 150 pts each	300
944 — 810 = D	2 Peer Evaluations @ 25 pts each	25
Below 810 = F	1 Final Paper @ 200 pts	<u>200</u>
		1350 total points

Written Assignment Guidelines:

All assignments you turn in must be typed, double-spaced, with 1” margins. Please use Times or Times New Roman for your font and a point size of 13. The Creative Writing Assignments are the only time Standard Written English is not a requirement. Please proof-read and spell check. 1 point will be deducted for every misspelled word or typo.

Play Synopsis:

These assignments are intended for you to think about the play you just read. The play synopsis should be no longer than a half a page(see guidelines above). This should not be an attempt to re-tell every detail of the play, but a chance for you to reflect on the main events of the script.

Creative Writing Projects:

These assignments give you a chance to reflect on the material in a creative, non-academic way. While Standard Written English is not a requirement for these assignments, I still do expect you to proof read carefully.

Four copies of your rough draft will be due in class and will be evaluated by your peers as well as by me. You will get to take these written evaluations home to help you revise before turning in your final project. The rough draft is worth 50 of the 100 points of your CWP grade. Spelling and typos will not be counted against you in the rough draft stage. Spelling and typos will be graded in your final draft.

CWP #1: You are Shakespeare. Write a 1 page typed letter to a friend about Hamlet, the new play you are writing. In this letter describe some of the techniques you are using to capture the audience’s attention and tell your story. Why will audiences love this play. Please cite at least 5 examples from the script.

Contemporary language is appropriate, however you may venture into Old English if you wish. Use the techniques described in David Ball’s book Backwards & Forwards and those we discussed in class. Perhaps you could include in your letter some ideas that you (as Shakespeare) have decided not to use. If so, why wouldn’t they work? Remember, this is a creative project, so allow yourself some freedom.

CWP #2: Choose one character from A Raisin in the Sun and write a 1 page diary entry in their voice, from their point of view. Concentrate on how that character speaks. You may use events from the script, or elaborate upon the action of the play. Perhaps you write about the day before the play begins, or the day after. It should be plausible, reflect the attitude, age, and biases of the character, and sound realistic to the language of the character.

Final Paper:

In your final paper you will compare the three texts we used in class. You should consider the following questions. Which method works best for you? Is there one that is the most complete or are they all lacking in some way? If they are all lacking, what combination of approaches would be the most helpful? Do you know of an approach that is more appropriate for you? Is there another book, perhaps one on the optional reading list, which enables you to more clearly analyze a script? Please give SPECIFIC examples from our work in class as well as from the books themselves. Which of these would work best for actors/designers/directors/ scholars? This paper should be 3-5 pages in length and use Standard Written English. Please follow the guidelines for written assignments on the previous page.

Attendance Policy:

I understand that you all have other classes and obligations pulling you in many directions. If you need to be gone from class for any reason please let me know ahead of time. Please do not ask me for permission. This class is important too. You have three free absences. Any absences above three will reduce your final grade by half a letter grade (equivalent to 70 points). Three tardies equal one absence. A bit of advice: if you know you will need to be absent for a legitimate reason, don't waste your freebies on frivolous activities.

Late Work:

Late work will not be accepted unless accompanied by a doctor's note or a letter from the Dean of Students.

ADA:

If you have a disability and need classroom accommodations, please notify me as soon as possible. You should also register with the Adaptive Programs Office at 494-1247.

Day	In Class Discussion	At Home Activity
1	What is Script Analysis? Why do it?	Read Chapter 2 in Ingham
2	How are Plays Different from Novels? How must we approach them?	Read Chapter 3 in Ingham
3	Ingham's Playscript Analysis Outline	Read <u>The Glass Menagerie</u> Write Brief Synopsis
4	Synopsis of <u>The Glass Menagerie</u> DUE Discussion of Script	Complete Sections: Where are they? When are they?
5	Where are they?/When are they DUE Discussion of where and when	Complete Who are they? for Amanda and Tom
6	Who are they—Amanda & Tom DUE Discussion of Who are They? all characters	Complete Who are they? For Laura and Jim
7	Who are they—Laura & Jim DUE What happened before the play began	Complete the function of each character section
8	The Function of Each Character DUE How does each character function? What kind of dialogue do they speak? What is a Scene Breakdown?	Complete What Happens? And Scene Breakdown
9	What Happens and Scene Breakdown DUE What does happen? What is the theme?	Read <u>Mother Courage</u> Write 3 questions about topics you could use more information on that would help you understand the play better.
10	Questions DUE Discuss <u>Mother Courage</u> What questions need answering?	Read Ingham Chapter 4 Stop on page 96

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| 11 | Do you have a new understanding of <u>Mother Courage</u> ?
Does Ingham’s approach work for you? | Read <u>Hamlet</u>
Write Brief Synopsis |
| 12 | Synopsis of <u>Hamlet</u> DUE
Group Synopsis | Read Ball Section 1
including Foreword and
Intro pages vii – 35 |
| 13 | How is this different from Ingham?
Begin Backwards to Forwards on <u>Hamlet</u> | Complete <u>Hamlet</u> Back to For. |
| 14 | <u>Hamlet</u> Backwards to Forwards DUE
What have we learned from this? | Read Ball Section 2
Pages 37-76 |
| 15 | Exposition, Forwards, Action, Image
Theme—What can they tell us? | Do Action/What, Action/Why
<u>Hamlet</u>
See Pg. 63 in Ball |
| 16 | Action/What, Action/Why DUE
What were his actions and why?
Which moments qualify as
“theatrical moments” and what do
we learn from them? | Read Section 3 in Ball
Pages 79-95 |
| 17 | How do these sections apply to <u>Hamlet</u> ?
How could our understanding be
deeper by studying these ideas? | CREATIVE WRITING
PROJECT #1 Rough Draft |
| 18 | CWP #1 Rough Draft DUE
Peer Evaluation Due in Class | Revise CWP #1 |
| 19 | CWP #1 Final DUE
Does <u>Backwards to Forwards</u>
work for you? How does it compare
to Ingham? | Read <u>A Raisin in the Sun</u>
Write Brief Synopsis |
| 20 | Synopsis of <u>A Raisin in the Sun</u> DUE
Group Synopsis | Read Appendix A and B
in Thomas |

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| 21 | Would these considerations give a deeper understanding to the script?
How do they apply to <u>A Raisin in the Sun</u> ? | Read Chapters 1 & 2 in Thomas |
| 22 | What are the given circumstances in <u>A Raisin in the Sun</u> ? What is the Background story? | Read Chapters 3 & 4 in Thomas |
| 23 | Page 80. Answer Structure Questions as a class for <u>A Raisin in the Sun</u> | Read Chapter 5 in Thomas
Answer Questions on page 100 for one character in the play |
| 24 | Chapter 5 Questions DUE
Is this a complete character analysis? | Read Chapter 6 in Thomas |
| 25 | What is the “idea” in <u>A Raisin in the Sun</u> ?
Answer Questions on page 119 as a class | Read Chapter 7 in Thomas |
| 26 | What kind of dialogue does each character speak in <u>A Raisin in the Sun</u> ? | CREATIVE WRITING PROJECT #2 Rough Draft |
| 27 | CWP #2 Rough Draft DUE
Peer Evaluation Due in Class | Revise CWP #2
Read Chapter 8 in Thomas |
| 28 | CWP #2 Final DUE
What effect do Tempo, Rhythm, and Mood have on your reading of <u>A Raisin in the Sun</u> ? | Read Chapter 9 in Thomas
Answer Questions on Page 186 under “Statement of Playscript Style” for <u>A Raisin in the Sun</u> |
| 29 | Answers to Questions on pg 186 DUE
What is the style of <u>A Raisin in the Sun</u> ? | Be ready for a discussion of the three texts we used in class.
Which worked best for you and why? |
| 30 | Which text worked best for you and why?
Is a combination of methods most helpful? | Final Paper |

Final Paper DUE: AT THE BEGINNING OF THE SCHEDULED FINAL EXAM TIME