

DART 4F56: Advanced Studies in Theatre

Course Outline subject to revision of details

Instructor: Gyllian Raby

Office Hours: or appt.

Class: Tues 3p.m.-8p.m.

Room: TH 141

Email: graby@brocku.ca.

Phone: 905 688 5550 ext.3221

“Collaborative work in one or more theatre productions” LL5 hours weekly.

Course Description:

Whether producing existing scripts or creating new works, 4F56 is always a class where students collaborate artistically in a theatre ensemble, or group of ensembles, to self-produce existing or new works.

This year's course will pursue the non-linear RSVP group process in developing a new ensemble performance piece of approximately 75 minutes (80-90 pages of prompt script) for an April 2011 outcome. The resource base will be open for students' proposals and instructor input. In developing the production, we will explore the principle of cycling between **modes** of creative work in **Resource**, **Score**, **eValu-action**, and **Participation**.

The class plan is to work as a single ensemble. This may be changed, with consultation and approval of the instructor and a majority vote of the ensemble, to work in smaller groups. We will aim to show a workshop presentation of the piece for a focus audience in early December, and to follow this with a fully produced outcome in exam week, April 2011. Students will therefore apply to take the course with a particular production role in mind (details below). Working in their specialty role, group members will all participate in creative research (details of the first assignment below).

Enrolment:

The course has a limited enrolment of 16. The project can hold 12-14 performers, 2-4 designers or technicians or stage managers and 1-2 writers or dramaturges or assistant-directors (role descriptions below).

In preparing assignments, there may be cross-over between roles such that, for example, writers and technicians act as performers in order to communicate the material they are proposing. Flexibility and communication at each step of the course is important.

(Could a student's initial role be changed after enrolment? Potentially, depending on how the creative situation evolves and on consultations with the instructor, with whom the final decision rests.)

Enrolment Restrictions:

Due to the outcome schedule, students in 4F56 may not enroll concurrently in Community Theatre. Due to the outcome schedule, students must request special permission from the Department to enroll in Directing 3P54 or Praxis 3P96. Students are strongly advised not to take on extra-curricular projects with a March/ April production outcome without first discussing it with the instructor. If students are also working

intensely on a department Main stage show, consideration will be extended in the opening week and the week prior. However, such group members will be expected to organize their time and energy so as to make up for time lost in availability.

Production Work:

Note that, regardless of their role in the ensemble, **ALL** 4F56 members are producer-members of the ensemble, expected to do additional work on specific production committees. These constitute an important part of the collective experience. Although Department Production staff will be available for building, support, and supervision, the class will be responsible for most of this work. (Committees may include writing and editing; stage management; design: stage, costume, sound, lighting, media; script; publicity/foh; volunteer management; set purchase, transport; construction).

Schedule:

The production demands of 4F56 should fall somewhere between the usual class expectation and the demands of a main-stage.

Classes are 5 hours weekly. Between 3-4 hours preparation/research/homework time is expected most weeks; sometimes this will be “banked” towards production. Students should expect the Fall semester workshop schedule to be about **115 hours** (60 of which are in-class hours) **with two 12 hour production weeks**. The schedule for the Winter semester show would be about **115 hours with an additional 20 hour production week** (provided the students do 3 shows then strike, as has been precedent for 456).

The class requires **frequent** presentations. IN 4th year performance, students should anticipate group rehearsals weekly. As larger group rehearsals are required from the mid-term point onwards, students are asked to keep Saturdays and Wednesday nights available as part of their agreement when registering for the course.

From the mid-point of the process, day time Saturday rehearsals and Wednesday night rehearsals will constitute an important part of this commitment and students in 4F56 commit to time management that will enable full participation without jeopardizing their work in other courses.

A preliminary production schedule (subject to change) is attached.

Learning Objectives

1. Students will learn a process approach to Resource, Score, eValuaction and Participation in devising theatre. This **RSVP** studio creation process is best described as one:

- a) where assumptions are deconstructed and narrative syllogism (this-plus-this-equals-that) are manipulated, questioned and disrupted.
- b) where modes of exploration into resources are invented through shared vocabulary, disciplined repetition and openness to new scores (exercises);
- c) where a high quality bar is set by the group and the instructor to define performable, stage-worthy material for an independent, student-run production;
- d) where the contract with the audience is of paramount concern;

e) where numerous approaches to improvisation are utilized in developing material: epic, contact, expressionist, commedia, or sportive.

2. Students will work to foster a ***flexible ego and team outlook*** within group creation and commit to working responsibly and respectfully with other artists and their materials. They will gain a respect for the rigour, perseverance, and stamina involved in the demands of creating and producing an original show with polished production values.

3. Students will use, develop further, and share the creative skills developed in 3P09 (Improv), 3P53 (Dramaturgy), 3P92 (Script writing), 3F50 (Performance), 3F61 (Design), 3P56 (Praxis) and 3P54 (Directing). Students will also share techniques and teach their particular skills to others in the class.

Grade Breakdown

Semester 1

Artistic Contribution to December workshop/focus group presentation process: 10%

Artistic Achievement in workshop/focus presentation: 5 %

Ensemble Contribution in developing project: 10%

Research in writing and presentation (detail, scope, analysis): 10%

Studio Work in developing December presentation (imagination, precision, rigour): 10%

Semester 2

Artistic Contribution to April project process: 10%

Artistic Achievement in April presentation: 10%

Ensemble Contribution in developing April Project: 10%

Research in writing and presentation, including 5% chapbook (scope, art, analysis): 15%

Studio Work in developing April project (imagination, precision, rigour): 10%

Total: 100%

Note:

Artistic Contribution grade includes inspiration, resource development, demanding from and generously enabling collaborators, polishing work and “raising the bar” of production values.

Artistic Achievement grade: includes effort, personal growth, self-challenge, ability, and creation in the face of process anxiety, in equal parts.

Ensemble Contribution: includes openness, listening and ability to work ***in the zone***, production committee responsibilities (preparation, execution, follow-through according to peer/ instructor evaluations which are 50/50 weight in assessment).

Research in writing and presentation is divided between project assignments and in-class work. This grade reflects analytical insight and consistent effort to deepen meaning through research. A midterm grade with feedback will be provided. The “chap-book” is an end of project artistic record that plots “mile-stones” of the process and synthesizes aspects of the experience into an artist’s statement and/or artefact.

Roles in the Ensemble

Actors must commit to a level of physical fitness that will enable tumbling, contact dance, stage fighting, and the ability to sustain a demanding scene at full energy. Actors should be capable of running 5kms, forward and backward rolls, handstand, cartwheel in both directions, 10 press-ups, sun salutation. *Problems or questions? Please contact Gyllian.*

Actors must learn by heart and by rote a non-dramatic text of 20-24 lines that interests them sufficiently that they can use it throughout the whole year in vocal work.

Actors will prepare work in rotating groups who are sometimes directed by the instructor or fellow students.

Actors will be cast by the instructor with in-put from the director/design team, and not on the basis of the material they invent. Roles held in the workshop performance will probably not be reprised in the April show.

Designers, Media Artists and Technicians/Stage Managers (referred to collectively below as Designers...) must commit to researching design histories implicit in actors' presentations and to extensive model building, lighting and media experiments and resource-finding hours. Designers... will use the unfinished storyboard to propose a concrete design to the directors.

Designers... will be required to do some performance demonstration with object resources during the creative process. Designers... may be required to direct some scenes, working with actors.

Designers... will prepare extensive paperwork preparing the set, props and costumes for both shows. Designers... will manage the committees who are task- delegated to achieve the technical aspects of the production.

Directors, Dramaturgs and Writers (referred to collectively as Directors...) must commit to researching resources and organizing research groups, maintaining the ensemble's bank of performance texts, running the sponsoring sessions and overseeing the copying and distribution of texts. Directors... will be key workers on the story-board, the weave and the editing processes of a production script and will be responsible for completing, generating and distributing clean formatted scripts. Directors... must commit to directing actor-created and actor-driven scenes on a regular basis. Directors... will work as editors in improvisation sessions. Directors... will work as directors and assistant directors at various points in the process.

First Assignment: Due first class

Actors, Designers & Technicians & Stage Managers and Directors, Dramaturges & Writers are ***all*** expected to bring to the first class **a text** (non dramatic) and **an object**. Each of these represents a ***proposal*** to the rest of the ensemble as a resource for exploration by the whole ensemble. One or more of these resources will be selected by the group . (The rest will be shelved; possibly for later).

Actors will memorize and perform a 2 minute piece (an excerpt, patchwork or adaptation of or spring-board off from) inspired by their proposed text and using your proposed object. This initial performance:

- a) is stage-worthy (i.e. polished) ;
- b) consciously contributes one or more artistic style vocabularies that you want to pursue (i.e. the work may be psychologically real, dance expressionist, dream-associative, socially incisive, mythically entrancing, historicized and alienating, hyper-detailed or large-scaled.
- c) is specific about your contract with the audience. (i.e. How will you **frame** your performance, what is your relationship with the audience, how will you start and end your piece with grace and power, and what EXACTLY do you want them to see and understand? What are you saying and why must you say it?)
- d) transforms your proposed object during the course of the performance. (e.g. a knife that becomes a moon or vice versa. A chair that becomes a tortoise shell or the roof. A rope, a cello. A hula-hoop that becomes a mirror or table or a time burrow, and so forth.)

Actors Note:

You should use whatever theatre medium or voice feels right for your material: mask, song, sound, voice over, instrumentation, percussion, puppets, objects, recipe, nursery rhyme, images, graffiti, movement, dance, subtitles, projections, other...

If you find that you need another person on stage with you and you are able to find adequate rehearsal time to work them in before the first class, you can invite another person from the class to participate. Keep your demands minimal; remember that they also have a piece to prepare and polish.

Designers, Technicians, Stage Managers will bring two powerful images and an object or objects. The images will be reviewed by the class and one will be selected. The object:

- a) will transform the classroom/theatre space in some way ;
- b) will create an environment suitable in some way to your text. (You will arrange sound and light for the installation that reveals it to advantage. You will ask the instructor or an actor to perform an action in the environment and, if appropriate, your text should be read in the environment);
- c) will form an installation that can work in various ways for a performer or another medium. (You will demonstrate the ways that the installation functions for media and performance).

Designers... Note

If the scale of your proposal makes it useful to partner up in the presentation and if you find someone with whom you want to brain-storm and co-present, discuss this with instructor—it is a possibility.

Writers, Dramaturgs, Directors will bring a piece of music (without lyrics) a sonnet, and a scene. The sonnet will be a piece you have created with words pulled from the text you are proposing. You will instruct 2 or 3 actors in the group in how to work with the music

you are proposing while you (or the instructor or an class member) read the sonnet. Props and costumes are allowed.

You will also bring a 5-6 page scene inspired by your text. In class, you will cast it from the group and give succinct directions that will enable a strong cold reading.

Writers...Note

(If you know how to use I-movie you can choose to make a 2 minute video with sound track).

Other Notes

We are expecting a certain degree of sophistication in this class but never underestimate the power of simplicity. There are no rules about the theatrical voices you should use; suffice it to say: challenge yourself.

Note that discussion of the text or vocabulary will **not** accompany the presentation, which will be pure performance; the context must be sufficiently apparent for the performance to impact its audience.

Contact instructor with any questions: graby@brocku.ca

Required Reference Texts:

Halprin, Lawrence. *The R.S.V.P. Cycles. Creative Processes in the Human Environment*. New York: Braziller Inc.1969. pp 1-10. On Reserve.

Bunzli, James. "The Geography of Creation: Decalage as Impulse, Process and Outcome in the theatre of Robert Lepage". *TDR* (1988-), Vol 43, No.1. (Spring, 1999), pp.79-103. (Available on JSTOR through Brock library.)

Dundjerovic, Aleksandar Sasa. *The Theatricality of Robert Lepage*. Toronto: McQueen's McGill University Press.

Lateness and Sickness:

In the professional situation we are trying to emulate, lateness for rehearsal or with work assigned is not acceptable. If students fall through on assignments three times or are consistently late, they will be asked to leave and deregistered. If the date to drop without academic penalty has already passed, the instructor will decide on a solution that best protects the work of the other students in the class.

Illness can strike at the worst of times and our manner of coping with it is an important coping mechanism relevant to our artistic work. Students who miss a production call or production week rehearsal due to sickness will be dependent on the decision of the instructor. Work responsibilities or roles may be removed in order to best alleviate the pressure that a “no show” places on other members of an ensemble. Grade penalties will be decided by the instructor and commensurate with circumstances.

Field Trips:

1. ***Blood Relations***, by Sharon Pollock. Departmental Main Stage, directed by Danielle Wilson. Nov. Tickets must be picked up 24 hours in advance from the box office. DART students attend free .
2. ***Hans Christian Andersen***. Written and directed by Robert Lepage. TBA between October 21-30. Canadian Stage Theatre, Bluma Appel Theatre, Toronto.
3. ***Phaedre***, by Racine. Departmental Main Stage directed by Virginia Reh. Feb.17-19
Additional field trips might be arranged by consensus of the class.

Please note that Field Trip tickets will be charged to student accounts as Material Fees. Every effort will be made to avoid double charging students who may be enrolled in two classes attending the same event. However, it is each student's responsibility to **check for proper field trip billing** and notify the instructor of any problem. *Please note that if you withdraw from the class after September 19 and tickets have already been purchased, it will be your responsibility to use, sell or give away the ticket purchased in your name, and to inform the instructor of who will be attending the event in your stead so as to insure their seat on the bus.*

IMPORTANT UNIVERSITY DATES:

Thurs, Sept 09 -first day of classes for Fall Session (D1 & 2)
Oct 11 - Thanksgiving. See Nov 29 for make-up.
Fri Nov 05- Last date for withdrawal without academic penalty
Thurs, Dec 02 -- last day of Fall classes. End of first term. Makeup day for Thanksgiving.
(The schedule will be that of a Monday.)
Tues, Dec 07 -snow day/ reading day
Mon Jan 10 --first day of Winter session (D3).
Fri, Jan 21 -last date for withdrawal without academic penalty for D1 courses.
Reading Week is February 21-25, 2011.
Fri, Mar 04 - last date for withdrawal without academic penalty for D3 courses

Fri, Apr 08 -last day of lectures for D1 and D3 courses. The schedule will be that of a Friday.

Mon Apr 11 Reading day/snow day. Exams start April 12-27.

DEPARTMENTAL NOTES:

DARTboard

Access the Student Resource page on <http://dartboard.pbwiki.com/> for information and updates.

Late Policy and Penalty:

Extensions will be given only in extreme circumstances and must be accompanied by supporting medical documentation. The University requires that a student be medically examined in Health Services, or by an off-campus physician prior to an absence due to medical reasons from an: exam, lab, test, seminar, assignment, etc.

Brock's Medical Exemption Policy and the appropriate medical certificate can be accessed at: <http://www.brocku.ca/healthservices/exemption.php>

Departmental policy: Late assignments with no medical documentation will be deducted 5% a day. No assignment will be accepted after 7 days.

Academic Integrity:

Brock University has established an Academic Integrity Policy. For details and guidance, see <http://www.brocku.ca/academicintegrity/>

The Academic Integrity Policy provides members of the University community general notice of appropriate academic behaviours and identifies prohibited academic conduct.

Note: Plagiarism is academic misconduct and penalties shall be imposed. In all assignments, you are required to cite all work and ideas which are not your own.