

Point Loma Nazarene University
Department of Communication Studies
TRE 1001-2: Introduction to Theatre
Spring Semester, 2020

Professor: Walter O. Williams, Ph.D. wwilliam@pointloma.edu
 Office Hours: MTWR 9:30 – 11:00 am, or by appt.

Office: Cabrillo 207
 Phone: 849-2724

Liberal Arts General Education Purpose Statement

It is the goal of the university to provide an education in the liberal arts tradition and in professional areas, balancing a broadening experience in its general education program with the depth necessary to concentrate in one of the major programs. Students who complete the general education curriculum should be in possession of well-rounded knowledge, skills, and wisdom to understand the world around them, to continue learning throughout their lives, to contextualize disciplinary study, and to live meaningful, productive lives for Jesus Christ.

PLNU GE Mission Statement

PLNU provides a foundational course of study in the liberal arts informed by the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In keeping with the Wesleyan tradition, the curriculum equips students with a broad range of knowledge and skills within and across disciplines to enrich major study, lifelong learning, and vocational service as Christ-like participants in the world's diverse societies and culture.

Course Overview

This one-semester course explores the art of theatre that has powerfully affected and reflected societies from the beginning of recorded history. Though the structure and format are primarily oriented toward lecture, you will take part in participatory activities related to the theatrical art.

Required Texts

Cassady, Marsh. *An Introduction to: The Art of Theatre*.
 Shakespeare, William. *Much Ado About Nothing & Hamlet*
 Beckett, Samuel. *Waiting for Godot*.

Academic Accommodations

While all students are expected to meet the minimum academic standards for completion of this course as established by the instructor, students with disabilities may require academic accommodations. At Point Loma Nazarene University, students requesting academic accommodations must file documentation with the Disability Resource Center (DRC), located in the Bond Academic Center. Once the student files documentation, the Disability Resource Center will contact the student's instructors and provide written recommendations for reasonable and appropriate accommodations to meet the individual learning needs of the student. This policy assists the University in its commitment to full compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities (ADA) Act of 1990, and ADA Amendments Act of 2008, all of which prohibit discrimination against students with disabilities and guarantees all qualified students equal access to and benefits of PLNU programs and activities.

COURSE PROCEDURES & REQUIREMENTS

1) Try to be timely. We have very little time in this course and must be very conscientious in our use of it. Though the class structure is primarily oriented toward lecture, I strongly encourage questions, ideas, and discussions. Take an active role in the process and you will get far more from the experience. I present most of the material with the aid of PowerPoint technology. **I do not post the lectures online, or make them available anywhere outside class.** If you are not adept at notetaking (which is a form of shorthand through paraphrasing), you might want to check out this website: <https://learningcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/effective-note-taking-in-class/> Also, I have no problem with small sound-recording devices. Please, no image recording.

2) Exams: There will be four examinations, each weighted at 12.5% of the course grade. The exams consist primarily of multiple choice and essay questions. If you know you're going to miss an exam for an official university activity (as evidenced by an email from the provost's office excusing a student), schedule the exam with me prior to your scheduled departure. If you miss an exam for any other reason, you may take a (more difficult) make-up exam (time permitting) at a 20% point reduction.

3) Quizzes: There will be occasional, unannounced quizzes. The purpose of the quizzes is to help you keep up on the readings and to provide you with sample test questions. Each quiz accounts for 1% of your final grade. The quizzes are graded on a modified curve. **There are NO make-up quizzes.**

4) Review: You will submit a written review in a newspaper style of the PLNU (Salomon Theatre) Spring production, *Urinetown* (March 26-28, April 2-4). The format of the review will be according to the *MLA Style Manual* and will be two typed double-spaced pages (1" margins, font size: #12 Times New Roman). The review will critically evaluate all the pertinent artistic and craft-elements of the production (as discussed in class) and will assess their effectiveness within the overall endeavor. The review will account for 10% of your final grade. See attached review for example.

5) Critique: You will analyze *Waiting for Godot*, by Samuel Becket, and/or *Much Ado about Nothing* by William Shakespeare, and/or *Hamlet* by William Shakespeare, in a written historical/critical or rhetorical critique. You will format according to the *MLA Style Manual*: three typed double-spaced pages (1" margins, font size: #12 Times New Roman). The critique will develop an argument in which you analyze the chosen play as to its effect on society, or its underlying meaning, or its philosophical thrust, or its religious implications, or its historical context, or etc. The critique will account for 15% of your final grade. I will discuss this more fully in class.

6) SceneFest: Each student will participate in the staging and presentation of an original scene. You will base your ensemble scenes (loosely) on *Much Ado about Nothing*, or *Hamlet*, or *Waiting for Godot* (or a combination). To the degree that you are able, given the restraints, you will incorporate all the components of the process (i.e. students will be directors, playwrights, actors, designers, etc.). These are group projects and will require some time commitment outside of class; therefore, cooperation with the ensemble will be considered in grading. SceneFest counts for at 20% of your course grade, but lack of participation in SceneFest will result in failure of the course. SceneFest will be discussed more fully in class.

PLEASE NOTE: I offer NO extra credit in this course (or any other), nor any additional work that can augment your grade. Your grade will be based on the course assignments only. There will be no "bumping up" of grades at the end of the semester; so please **DO NOT** email me asking for this kind of accommodation.

100 POINT GRADING SCALE:

<u>GRADE</u>	<u>POINT VALUE</u>
A	93-100
A-	90-92
B+	87-89
B	83-86
B-	80-82
C+	77-79
C	73-76
C-	70-72
D+	67-69
D	63-66
D-	60-62
F	0-59

A: Indicates excellent work that reflects thinking, creativity, individuality, and a very high level of intellectual attainment.

B: Indicates good work that reflects a thorough understanding of theory but is lacking in individual thinking and creativity.

C: Indicates work that reflects a satisfactory completion of the assignment as directed, but is lacking in thoroughness, individual thinking, and creativity.

D: Indicates work that reflects a lack of understanding of theory and/or fails to fulfill the assigned tasks.

F: Indicates work that reflects an inability or unwillingness to do the assigned task.

GRADE BREAKDOWN

Grading for this course will be determined in the following manner:

Exams	4 @ 12.5%
Quizzes	5 @ 1 %
Live Performance Review	10 %
Play Critique	15 %
SceneFest	<u>20 %</u>
TOTAL	100 %

Student Responsibility:

It is the student's responsibility to maintain his/her class schedule. Should the need arise to drop this course (personal emergencies, poor performance, etc.), you, the student, not me, the professor, has the responsibility to follow through (provided the drop date meets the stated calendar deadline established by the university). Simply ceasing to attend this course or failing to follow through to arrange for a change of registration (drop/add) will result in a grade of F on the official transcript.

COURSE SCHEDULE

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Assignment</u>
1/16	Course orientation and overview	Syllabus
1/21	What are Theatre and Drama?	Chapter 1
1/23	Structure, Style & Genre	Chapters 2 & 3
1/28	Structure, Style & Genre	Chapters 2 & 3
1/30	The Beginnings	Chapter 11
2/4	The Beginnings	Chapter 11
2/6	EXAM #1	
2/11	The Actor	Chapter 6
2/13	Medieval Theatre	Chapter 12
2/18	Renaissance Theatre	Chapter 13
2/20	The Playwright	Chapter 5
2/25	<i>Hamlet</i>	<i>Read Hamlet</i>
2/27	EXAM #2	
3/3	<i>Much Ado</i>	<i>Read Much Ado</i>
3/5	Discussion of Genre	Ref. Chapter 3
3/17	Criticism (&Asian Theatre)	Chapter 10
3/19	17 th & 18 th Century Theatre	Chapter 14
3/24	Designers & Supporting Artists	Chapter 8
3/26	Modern Theatre: Realism	Chapter 15
3/31	EXAM #3	
4/2	Modern Theatre: Antirealism	<i>Read WFG</i>
4/7	The Director/Producer	Ref. Chapter 15
4/14	Musical Theatre	Chapters 7 & 9
4/16	Musical Theatre	<i>Critique Due</i>
4/20	Theatre Today	Ref. Chapter 15
4/23	Theatre Today	<i>Review Due</i>
4/28	SceneFest Tech	Ref. Chapter 15
4/30	EXAM #4	
5/7	SceneFest (10:30 – 1:00)	

Sample Review

Spit flew freely, vocal chords strained, and veins stood out on the actors' necks as they skillfully delivered the demanding text, but the inner life seemed lacking at Wednesday night's performance of Edward Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*, at the San Diego Repertory's Lyceum Stage.

Albee's first great success, *Woolf*, debuted in 1962, changing the face of American theatre. A psychologically compelling tale of alcohol-saturated disillusionment and dysfunction in the middle-American family, the play has often elicited adjectives such as "gut-wrenching," "excoriating," "shattering," and "stunning;" however, the adjective that perhaps best describes the Rep's current production of *Woolf* is . . . competent.

Ellen Crawford, Mike Genovese, Peter Friedrich, and Carla Harting who play (respectively) Martha, George, Nick, and Honey, are competent, capable, skillful, even proficient in their presentation of the material. Their diction is excellent, volume is never a problem in the cramped-feeling Lyceum black-box space; the pace seems to be what the play demands, but in the end one is left oddly cold by the sum total—not shattered, not drained, not really even thoughtful, but . . . what is a fitting description . . . entertained? Perhaps it is that a generation has passed and what was once shocking is now passé; or perhaps we as an audience are desensitized by the radical familial dysfunction that defines our current culture. But what is more likely is that Todd Salovey's by-the-numbers direction created a mild disconnect, a barrier between the actors' skilled recitation of the text and the inner life that must be present to give it the power that lies dormant in Albee's written word.

Three of the four performers (Crawford, Genovese, and Friedrich) suffer most from this malaise of competence. Their mouths, faces, and bodies go through the proper motions; they portray anger at the necessary moments, they yell when the scene calls for it; they are "hitting the marks" demanded by the script, but it feels like just that—hitting predictable marks determined by pedestrian directorial choices. The rising action rises because the script says it must, not because the actors have tapped into the truths beneath these character's tormented lives. The only antidote for this malaise is found in Carla Harting's

portrayal of Honey. Harting is compelling in her shocked but manipulative simplicity. She has discovered the essence of Honey—perhaps the true beneficiary of the play’s exorcism, and the hope for the next generation—and she plays her with a subtle nuance.

The other elements of the production actually exacerbate rather than relieve the general malaise. Giulio Cesare Perrone’s set, a neoclassical façade (replete with massive columns, ceiling-to-floor bookshelf, fireplace, bar, and sparse furnishings) is completely whitewashed—all, that is, except the rich, caramel-colored liquors populating the bar. Before the first word is uttered, this set tells us exactly what to expect—the lives of these people are a whitewashed sham, a self-delusion, a colorless façade—except for the life-giving, truth-revealing, exorcism-inducing alcohol. The feeling of the settings is a cramped one, which could be used effectively to give a sense of the imprisonment of the characters, but again, the direction seems to subvert this with a good deal of impulse-laden, or craft-laden wandering in and about the furnishings in a much too predictable cat-and-mouse visual metaphor.

Jerry Sonnenberg’s lights, too, tend to draw the viewer out of the action by their too blatant focus-shifting, telling us what we should see and how we should feel—all these being necessary components of the theatrical adventure, but they would benefit from a bit more “art” and a bit less “craft.”

Generally speaking, the audience members seemed to be entertained by the San Diego Repertory Theatre’s production of *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf*, but the talk on the stairwells after the production centered more on the pedestrian than the profound—whether or not to get a decaf tall mocha at Starbuck’s? This cannot have been Albee’s intent.