I. Course Information

Course Name: Playwriting
Course Number: THA 71a
Course Start & End Dates: June 1-August 7, 2015
4 credit hours
Requirements Fulfilled: ca (Creative Arts) wi (Writing Intensive)

Instructor’s Name and Contact Information

• Joseph A. Coroniti, PhD
• Professor, Drama & Film
• coroniti@brandeis.edu
• 617-747-8148

Document Overview

This syllabus contains all relevant information about the course: its objectives and outcomes, readings, assignment descriptions, and due dates. Consider this your roadmap for the course. Read through the syllabus carefully, and let me know if you have any questions. Please print a copy of this syllabus for reference.

In this Online Scriptwriting Workshop, students develop short plays or screenplays. Members give and receive written feedback on the due dates (according to their own time zones).

Sample Topics: creating compelling action, three-dimensional characters in conflict, engaging dialogue, and stories that grab the audience’s attention. In addition to stage plays or screenplays (drama or comedy) members may choose to create one-man/woman shows; performance art; or multimedia options employing additional arts forms, e.g., music, video, or photography.

As models for writing, we will consider a several plays and films by great dramatists. However, the focus will be on students' original scripts. Participants will write one ten-minute piece and one one-act piece.

Scripts will be considered for publication in FUSION Magazine: Global Art, Words, and Music: http://www.fusionmagazine.org/

Materials of Instruction

Required Texts:
Plays In One Act. Edited by Daniel Halpern. The Ecco Press.

NB: As you develop your script, check your dramatic structure against the Story Sense checklist: http://www.storysense.com/checklist.htm

Required FREE Software
Celtx Scriptwriting Software, Free: http://celtx.com/

Optional Software, Education Pricing:

Online Course Content
• The LATTE course site contains the course syllabus, assignments, discussion forums, links/resources to course-related resources and sites, weekly checklists, and other materials. Access information will be emailed to participants before the start of the course. To begin participating in the course, review the Welcoming Message and the Week 1 Checklist.

Overall Course Objectives:
The course is intended to provide students with an understanding of:
Dramatic Sound and Structure (including Story arcs and the essential ingredient to all drama: Conflict)
Characterization
Dramatic dialogue
The Mythic Structure of storytelling in dramas
The nature of tragedy, comedy, and ritual

Overall Course Outcomes:
At the end of the course, the student will be able to:
Build intriguing, believable characters the reader will care about.
Create scripts with high dramatic tension and internal and external conflict.
Breathe life into his/her characters by writing sharp, convincing dialogue.
Construct a dramatic structure that holds the attention of the audience.
Create characters, conflict, and a storyline that follow, e.g., the stages of Joseph Campbell’s The Hero’s Journey, such as the Call to Adventure and Crossing the First Threshold.
Write with a heightened understanding of form, metaphor, voice, style, sound (the “music of what happens”), humor, and ritual.
Internalize and act upon the truth that in writing, as in many things, “less is more.”
Create settings that reflect the conflict in a scene.
Harness the power of "unresolved conflict" between characters.

**Course Grading Criteria:**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Component</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>33%</td>
<td>LATTE: Peer Editing: Scenes &amp; Plays</td>
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<tr>
<td>33%</td>
<td>LATTE: Weekly Exercises &amp; Scenes, including Ten-Minute Play</td>
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<tr>
<td>33%</td>
<td>LATTE: Final Portfolio (Including your One-Act Play)</td>
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**Description of Assignments:**

We will discuss the readings, especially how the plays assigned impact your own writing. This is not a course in analyzing drama; rather, you will learn to “read like dramatists,” noting matters of craft in these plays, which you will then incorporate into your own exercises, scenes, and peer feedback.

**LATTE Portfolio:** a collection of original scenes; exercises from *The Art and Craft of Playwriting* (ACP): commentaries on reading the one-act plays, and your final one-act play. All writing assignments will be clearly articulated on LATTE, with individual Forums for each category.

1.) **Post Weekly ACP Exercises by Monday on LATTE:** See Outline below.

   Note: Exercises marked “Scene” should be dramatized, i.e., write Dialogue, not Prose.

2.) **Wednesday SHORT Scene(s):** For each Wednesday, Weeks 2-9, write an original scene. You can “double dip,” i.e., integrate your Scene Exercises into these Scenes for your ten-minute and one-act plays.

3.) **Feedback (FB) to peers** will be posted on LATTE.

5.) **Final Project:** Your Final One-Act Script (*due Monday of Week 10.* You may incorporate (and revise) the scenes you’ve written in earlier weeks for this one-act play.

**LABEL AND NUMBER THE ENTRIES, for example,**
Your Name.Wk 3. Ex 1
Your Name.Wk 4 Wednesday scene

**LATTE Workshop Participation:** Regular involvement in the workshop. This includes your contribution to the development of others’ work as well as the presentation of your own work. Depending on the size of the group, we may break into two groups to make giving feedback to each other more manageable.

**Thoughts on Discussions:** Keep in mind that these postings to the forums will be as rich as we make them. They are required to encourage you to share your knowledge and ideas while gaining from the experiences of your peers as well. You will quickly adjust to the weekly requirements and become familiar with the review criteria, and I look forward to some rich discussions.
## II. Weekly Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
<th>LATTE Discussions: Exercises, Scenes, Feedback</th>
<th>Readings</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
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| **Week 1** | June 1 | • Investigate the elements & meaning of Drama (from the Greek, “to do”)  
• Formulate dramatic questions & suspense | ACP: “Introduction”; Chapter 1: Drama and Theatre, p 19, Exercise #3, in Prose  
Chapter 4: Getting the Great Idea and Turning It Into a Play, p 77, Exercises #1-5: just make notes for 1-4 and concentrate on the Scene for exercise 5. While #5 calls for 3 ideas, one will suffice. [The exercise gives sample scenarios; create your own.] | • Chapters listed above from *The Art and Craft of Playwriting*  
• Read one-act plays, from List below | • Post your Exercises, Scenes |
| **Week 2** | June 8 | • Compose subtle exposition & “ordinary world.”  
• Implement various types of beginnings. | Chapter 6: Great Beginnings, p 111, Exercise #6, as a Scene Original Scenes, leading to your One Act Play  
Provide Feedback (FB) on each other’s scenes | • Chapters from *The Art and Craft of Playwriting*  
• Read one-act plays, from List below | • Post your Exercises, Scenes, Feedback |
| **Week 3** | June 15 | • Write concise, rhythmic, persuasive dialogue  
• Create characters who don’t sound like each other  
• Reveal Personality through dialogue  
• Omit Voice Over and Excessive Narration | Chapter 5: Structure, p. 92, All exercises, #1-4, Prose | • Post your Exercises, Scenes, Feedback |
| **Week 4** | June 22 | • Dramatize Aristotle’s Element of Character  
• Demonstrate you understanding that “character is action; | | • Post Progress Report: Playwriting Town Square, LATTE |
- Create characters with “active goals.”

**LATTE Discussions**  
Chapter 2: The Six Elements of Aristotle:  
Week 4, section 1. Character, p 33, All: #2-4, Prose

Write a SCENE (not prose) incorporating chapter topics. Make short list at the top of your Scene document, in Celtx, the items listed in exercises:  
#2: protagonist's concrete goal  
#3: list action  
#4: Abbreviated: Only 1 paragraph max prose character sketch of the Antagonist, and have Antagonist play a key role in your Scene. Do some free writing on the bios of your characters that you do **not** have to post.

**Readings**  
- Chapters from *The Art and Craft of Playwriting*
- Read one-act plays, from List below

**Assignments**  
- Post your Exercises, Scenes, Feedback

**Week 5**  
**June 29**

**Outcomes**  
- Dramatize Aristotle’s Elements of Action & Ideas  
- Distinguish the difference between Actions & Activities  
- Reveal Ideas through Showing, not Telling

**LATTE Discussions**  
Chapter 2: The Six Elements of Aristotle:  
Week 5: Section 3: Ideas, p 45, #4, Scene

**Readings**  
- Chapters from *The Art and Craft of Playwriting*
- Read one-act plays, from List below

**Assignments**  
- Post your Exercises, Scenes, Feedback

**Week 6**  
**July 6**

**Outcomes**  
- Dramatize Aristotle’s Elements of Language & Spectacle  
- Write dialogue that Defines Character  
- Create Theatricality (rather than “talking heads”) by orchestrating Spectacle

**LATTE Discussions**  
Chapter 2: The Six Elements of Aristotle:  
Week 6, section 4. Language, p 47, #3, Scene  
Section 6. Spectacle, p 52, #1, Scene

**Readings**  
- Chapters from *The Art and Craft of Playwriting*
- Read one-act plays, from List below

**Assignments**  
- Post your Exercises, Scenes, Feedback
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<tr>
<th>Week 7</th>
<th>July 13</th>
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<tr>
<td>Outcomes</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Consolidate Space, Time and Causality in your dramatic writing</td>
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<td>• Design Scenes according to principles of Causality</td>
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<tr>
<td>LATTE Discussions</td>
<td>Chapter 3: Space, Time and Causality, p. 66, #5, Scene</td>
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<tr>
<td>Readings</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Chapters from <em>The Art and Craft of Playwriting</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Assignments</td>
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<td>• Post your Exercises, Scenes, Feedback</td>
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<tr>
<th>Week 8</th>
<th>July 20</th>
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<td>Exercises</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chapter 9: Dialogue, p 152, Exercises # 2, 4, <em>Only read and think about chapter and exercises. No writing required for chapter 9.</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Chapter 7: Great Middles, p. 121, #1: Just Make a LIST. 6-10 Actions will be enough. This is only an informal jotting of actions, not an exercise per se.</td>
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<td>Post your Wednesday Scenes, Feedback</td>
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<tr>
<th>Week 9</th>
<th>July 27</th>
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<tr>
<td>Exercises</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chapter 8: Great Endings, p. 132, #6, Scene</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friday: Post your Final One-Act Script</td>
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<th>Week 10</th>
<th>August 3</th>
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<td>No Exercises</td>
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<tr>
<td>Post Feedback on each other’s Final One-Act Plays</td>
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<td>Wrap-up &amp; Curtain Calls</td>
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The One-Act Play: Limitations and Opportunities:

Read the following plays from Plays In One Act as models for your writing. The plays are arranged alphabetically playwright's last name. Read 1 play for each class (two per week).

Read the "Preface"

Week 1:
1. Four Baboons Adoring the Sun / John Guare page 115
2. Protest / Václav Havel (tr. Vera Blackwell) 188

Week 2:
3. Am I Blue / Beth Henley 208
4. Teeth / Tina Howe 236

Week 3:
5. Prodigal Son / Garrison Keillor 242
6. She Talks to Beethoven / Adrienne Kennedy 248

Week 4:
7. Linda Her / Harry Kondoleon 259
8. Medusa's Tale / Carol S. Lashof 272

Week 5:
9. A Life With No Joy In It / David Mamet 291
10. Prelude and Liebestod / Terrence McNally 309

Week 6:
11. The Last Yankee / Arthur Miller 341
12. Tone Clusters / Joyce Carol Oates 349

Week 7:
13. A Bond Honored / John Osborne 369
14. Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey, II /Jonathan Reynolds 401

Week 8:
15. The Boundary / Tom Stoppard and Clive Exton 434
16. Tender Offer / Wendy Wasserstein 452

Week 9:
17. Bye-bye Brevoort / Eudora Welty 459
18. The Chalky White Substance / Tennessee Williams 467
III. Course Policies and Procedures

**Late Policies:**
Exercises, Scenes, Outlines, and Feedback (FB) will be marked late after the due date, since they are part of the process of workshopping your work.

This is a graded workshop.

**Work Expectations:**

Students are responsible to explore each week's materials and submit required work by their due dates. The calendar of assignments and due dates is located near the end of this syllabus.

On average, a student can expect to spend approximately 8 hours per week reading, completing assignments, and posting to discussions.

**Feedback:** The workshop leader will give feedback on each member’s weekly Scenes, Ten-minute Play, and Final Project (One-act play): on LATTE as uploaded Celtx files [free software] with written comments.

**Confidentiality**

- **We should respect our fellow classmates and work under the assumption that what is discussed here stays within the confines of the classroom.**
- **For your awareness, members of the University's technical staff have access to all course sites to aid in course setup and technical troubleshooting. Students enrolled in online courses can expect that individuals other than their fellow classmates and the course instructor(s) may visit their course for various purposes. Their intentions are to aid in technical troubleshooting and to ensure that quality course delivery standards are met. Strict confidentiality of student information is maintained.**

IV. University Policies and Standards

**Learning Disabilities:** If you are a student with a documented disability on record at Brandeis University and wish to have a reasonable accommodation made for you in this course, please contact me immediately.

**Academic Honesty and Student Integrity:** Academic honesty and student integrity are of fundamental importance at Brandeis University and we want students to understand this clearly at the start of the term. As stated in the Brandeis Rights and Responsibilities handbook, “Every member of the University Community is expected to maintain the highest standards of academic honesty. A student shall not receive credit for work that is not the product of the student’s own effort. A student's name on any written exercise constitutes a statement that the work is the result of the student's own thought and study, stated in the students own words, and produced without the assistance of others, except in quotes, footnotes or references with appropriate acknowledgement of the source.” In particular, students must be aware that material (including ideas, phrases, sentences, etc.) taken from the Internet and other sources MUST be appropriately cited if quoted, and footnoted in any
written work turned in for this, or any, Brandeis class. Also, students will not be allowed to collaborate on work except by the specific permission of the instructor. Failure to cite resources properly may result in a referral being made to the Office of Student Development and Judicial Education. The outcome of this action may involve academic and disciplinary sanctions, which could include (but are not limited to) such penalties as receiving no credit for the assignment in question, receiving no credit for the related course, or suspension or dismissal from the University.

University Caveat: The above schedule, content, and procedures in this course are subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances.