

TH 134: Introduction to Playwriting

Seminar Leader: Cory Tamler

Course Meeting Time: Thursdays 3:45-7pm

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Office Hours: Thursdays 2:30-3:30pm (by appointment)

Course Description

This introductory course will be guided by the question of *what makes a play a play*. Students will learn the fundamentals of writing for text-based theatre primarily through reading/watching other staged works and trying things out themselves as writers, and they'll develop their own definition of a stage play. Students will learn about and try out different possibilities for the role of the playwright in the contemporary theatremaking process, from solitary author to co-writer, from collaborator in a development process to interpreter of research material and beyond. They will read and respond to one another's work from the perspective of performers, directors, and playwrights to get a hands-on understanding of how different positions in the theatre approach texts. Students in this course will write extensively during and outside of class. Working together throughout the semester with students in the "Introduction to Directing" seminar, instructed by Julia Hart, playwriting students will have several opportunities to have their writing staged by the directing class.

Requirements

Course Goals/Outcomes (What You'll Learn)

- Develop your ideas about what a playtext is / what a playwright does. By develop I mean there's a change or evolution in your ideas: maybe you come to a deeper understanding, maybe a *new* understanding, maybe you change your mind totally, maybe you find stronger ways to express what you think.
- Be able to apply those ideas when you're talking about / analyzing plays (your classmates', published work, stuff we see or read).
- Put those ideas into practice in your own writing in new (to you) ways, through shorter and longer writing experiments and through the development of and reflection on your final class project, a 25-minute text for the stage.

Assessment/Grade Breakdown

- Your grade assesses how well you're meeting the goals of this class (see above), and the goals are about growing in your writing practice from where you starting.
- This is not an evaluation of your "talent" (because who am I to tell you your stuff's good or not?) *and* you won't get an A in this class based on "talent." It's an evaluation of whether you're consistently working your writing muscle this semester.
- If you are prepared, if you complete all the assignments, and if you participate in class including timeliness and consistent attendance, you will earn a B.
- If you only sometimes do those things you will earn a C.
- To earn an A, you need to do all of those things (be prepared, complete all assignments, participate) *and* you need to discover something new, to you, in your writing. If you consistently work your writing muscle, you will.
- Your end-of-semester grade will not be more than one full letter grade higher or lower than your mid-semester grade.

Expectations

Students are expected to:

- Turn off phones during class time.
- Initiate appointments with the Professor or arts staff outside of class time.
- Always allocate extra time for work preparation and clean-up for independent production.
- Respond to emails from their professors in a timely manner.
- Inform their professors at the beginning of the semester if photos of student's identity, artwork, works in progress are NOT to be taken and / or used for Bard College Berlin.
- Remove all artworks, art materials, and / or any personal belongings before the end of the semester. Failure to remove works or return spaces clean and empty may result in final grade penalization. Donating unrequested artworks and / or art materials is not permitted and will still be considered student property, expected to be removed by your inspection deadline. Please contact Studio Arts Manager Joon Park for more information: j.park@berlin.bard.edu

Academic Integrity

Bard College Berlin maintains the highest standards of academic integrity and expects students to adhere to these standards at all times. Instances in which students fail to meet the expected standards of academic integrity will be dealt with under the Code of Student Conduct, Section 14.3 (Academic Misconduct) in the Student Handbook.

Accessibility

Bard College Berlin is committed to inclusion and providing equal access to all students; we uphold and maintain all aspects of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and the ADA Amendments Act of 2008, and Section 3 of the German Disability Equality Act of April 27, 2002 (Federal Law Gazette I p. 1468). If you have a disability, or think you may have a disability, please contact the Disability Accommodation Coordinator, Atticus Kleen, (accommodations@berlin.bard.edu) to request an official accommodation.

Requests for longer-term accommodations should be made as early as possible to ensure adequate time for coordination and planning. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive and may require advance notice to implement.

If you have already been approved for accommodations with the Disability Accommodation Coordinator, please arrange to meet with me outside of class so that we can develop an implementation plan.

Students may face extenuating circumstances related to various personal or external factors, which impact their academic performance. While these circumstances often do not fall within the legal framework of Disability Accommodations, Bard College Berlin is committed to supporting students experiencing such circumstances. A student needing a short extension or a replacement assignment because of an extenuating circumstance is encouraged to make arrangements directly with instructors if possible. If further support is needed, please visit the [Bard College Berlin Accessibility page](#). Questions about this process can be directed to James Harker (j.harker@berlin.bard.edu) or Maria Anderson-Long (m.andersonlong@berlin.bard.edu).

Attendance

- Attendance at ALL classes is expected.
- More than one absence (that is, absence from one three-hour session per week) in a semester will affect the participation grade for the course.
- Students who are unable to attend some in-person classes due to travel restrictions, quarantine

measures, or illness should discuss remote participation options with me as early as possible.

- Students are expected to attend all off-campus classes punctually, from start to finish. If there is a scheduling / travel conflict, you must inform me in advance.
- Attendance will be taken at the beginning of each class through a creative exercise that takes approx. 5 minutes. If you miss this exercise (i.e. if you arrive to class more than five minutes late) this will be considered an absence.
- Bard College Berlin may not offer credit for any course in which a student has missed more than 30% of classes, regardless of the reasons for the absences. The full Bard College Berlin attendance policy can be found in the Student Handbook, Section 2.8.

Major Assignments

This is *not* an exhaustive list of your assignments. There will be smaller assignments, both in and out of class, throughout the semester. But these are the big three. Think of them as works-in-progress! I would rather that you turn in something messy and unfinished than nothing at all!

Semester notebook: I'll introduce this on the first day of class and it will be due at the end of the semester. It's a daily practice for your writing muscle based on writer and cartoonist Linda Barry's method and it requires 5 minutes of writing per day. You will bring this notebook to class every week and practice generating source material with it.

Midterm project: A text that translates to about 10 minutes' worth of stage time. First draft due on September 19 and you will keep working on it until the midterms. Part of the midterm project includes working with the directors to stage these texts; you will be expected to take on roles in your classmates' work and participate in rehearsals for an in-class performance on October 31.

Final project: A text that translates to about 25 minutes' worth of stage time. First draft due on November 7, final draft due on November 28. If you want your work to be staged by one of the directing students, you will have specific guidelines to follow (clear delineation of performance excerpt, 2 performers and 10-minute time limit for performance excerpt, deadline for final revisions to performance excerpt). Otherwise you'll have more freedom.

Policy on Late Submission of Artworks / Presentations; Assessment of Assignments

Assignments don't receive a letter grade: they are marked full credit, partial credit, or incomplete/no credit.

This is a writing course. **Timely submission of your writing assignments is crucial**, especially if it is your turn to be workshopped. Assignments that are up to 24 hours late will be marked partial credit. I am not obliged to accept assignments that are more than 24 hours late. If I agree to accept a late assignment, we will agree on a new deadline together and this new deadline will become binding. If you fail to turn in the assignment on the revised deadline, you will receive a failing grade for the assignment. Grades and comments will be returned to you in a timely fashion. You are also entitled to make an appointment to discuss assignments and feedback during my office hours.

Bard students receive mid- and end-of-semester grades for their seminar work. You are entitled to make an appointment with me to discuss seminar participation, or I may ask you to meet with me at any stage in the semester regarding class progress.

Grade Breakdown

Class participation (includes attendance, maintenance of all common and private spaces used for production / rehearsal, communication with Professor and other students): 30%

Homework and in-class work: 30%

Project presentations for critiques (includes end of semester presentations / performances): 40%

Schedule

The spring semester runs from Monday, September 2 and runs until Friday, December 20, with fall break planned from Monday, October 21 – Sunday, October 27. The academic calendar can be found here: <https://berlin.bard.edu/for-students/academic-calendars/>

5.9 Intro class

- Overview of syllabus
- What is a play? Write your definition
- Share and read theatre texts
- Writing exercises
- Form pairs for *Geteilte Welten* assignment

12.9 *OFF SITE, SELF-DIRECTED (in Tiergarten)* [Geteilte Welten](#), an audio walk by Miriam Schickler

- Due: Edited “What is a play?” definition
- Complete the walk with a buddy (2 hours): <https://geteiltewelten.net/en/>
- Complete reflection assignment together

19.9 *This class will meet via Zoom*

- *Geteilte Welten* discussion
- Writing exercise

26.9 Meet the directors

- Writing exercise
- Second half of class: collab with directors

19.9

- Due: First draft of midterm writing assignment
- Intro to workshopping; first workshop (read-and-respond)
- Writing exercise

26.9

- Second workshop
- Writing exercise

3.10 NO CLASS, FEDERAL HOLIDAY

- Due: Midterm revisions

10.10 Midterm rehearsals 1

- Third workshop
- Half of class is midterm rehearsals

15.10 (Tuesday) EVENING, TENTATIVE DATE: Playwriting and directing classes field trip to see a show, TBA

17.10 Midterm rehearsals 2

24.10 No class, fall break

31.10 Midterm showings

- Due: Midterm reflections

2.-3.11 Acting intensive with Heinrich Horwitz for those enrolled in the acting workshop

7.11 Visit from writer/dramaturg To Doan

- Due: Read text for To's visit, TBD. + Final playwriting project (first draft)

14.11 Final project work

- Due: ACTORS: Rehearsal reports
- Workshop in small groups (1.5 hours)
- Writing (1.5 hours)
- ACTORS: Rehearsals

21.11 Final project work: groups determined

- Due: ACTORS: Rehearsal reports
- Workshop in small groups (1.5 hours)
- Writing (1.5 hours)
- ACTORS: Rehearsals

28.11 Final project work

- Due: Final revisions; ACTORS: Rehearsal reports
- Read work that's not part of Factory, discuss staging ideas
- ACTORS: Rehearsals

5.12 Final project work

- Due: Revised "What is a play?" definition; ACTORS: Lines memorized + Rehearsal reports
- Read work that's not part of Factory, discuss staging ideas
- ACTORS: Rehearsals

12.12 Performances of final projects (with directing class)

- Due: Class notebooks, "Something New" analysis; ACTORS: Final reflection

19.12 Final class + Performance Factory

Policy on the use of facilities:

1. The Factory (Eichenstrasse 43) and Monopol (Provinzstr 40-44) at BCB offer space and facilities to BCB art students. Chip access is from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. every day, including the weekends during the semester. The buildings cannot be used outside these hours.
2. Fire exits and lanes must be kept clear of any obstructions.
3. Students agree only to use the designated class spaces or communal workshops. Respecting the building and its facilities is crucial, as they are shared resources that need to be preserved for the benefit of all.
4. For your safety and the safety of others, smoking and drinking alcohol are strictly prohibited anywhere inside the building.
5. Unauthorized events and/or parties are not permitted. Projects using open flames (such as candles, torches, lanterns, fireworks, etc.) are not permitted inside the building.
6. Spray painting and handling any hazardous (chemical or combustible) material is not permitted inside the building.
7. All work surfaces (indoor and outdoor) must be adequately protected with the workshop's drop cloth before spray painting or working with plaster.
8. During completion week, any space used by a student must be emptied, with clean walls and floors. All garbage must be adequately disposed of. Final grades may be affected or withheld if any item remains by the inspection deadline.
9. When leaving the building, students must ensure all lights are turned off, all electrical items must be unplugged, and doors must be closed.
10. Contact the Studio art manager directly with any questions: j.park@berlin.bard.edu

Emergency phone numbers:

Police (calling from a German landline or cellphone): 110

Fire (calling from a German landline or cellphone): 112

Ambulance and Paramedics (calling from a German landline or cellphone): 112

Out-of-Hours Medical Care (calling from a German landline or cellphone): 116 117