ENG 288: Devising an Original Docudrama

Instructor: Jenni Werner
Wednesdays, 5:30-8pm
Welles Building, Room 119
Spring, 2012

Office Hours: By appointment
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Phone: (Geva Theatre Center) 585-232-1366

Course Description
If dialogue is a conversation between opposing points of view, then theatre is the perfect place for an exploration of the critical topics we face today. It’s an ideal environment to draw attention to, or fuel a debate about, an issue in the community. In this course, students will use interview theatre techniques pioneered by Anna Deavere Smith and living newspaper theatre techniques of the Federal Theatre Project to create an original piece of theatre focusing on an issue central to SUNY Geneseo and the five county area. Class participants will research, create, dramaturg, perform, market and develop audiences for the piece, giving students hands-on experience of the creation of new work for the theatre.

Learning Outcomes:
Through this course, students will demonstrate:
- An understanding of documentary theatre – its purpose, process and pioneers
- A thorough understanding of the collaborative process in the creation of a new work for the theatre
- A critical understanding of the issues facing the Geneseo and surrounding communities today, as seen through the eyes of community members

Reading List


*Democrat and Chronicle* website: www.democratandchronicle.com

Class Projects
- **This Week’s News**
  Students will, each week of the course, come in with a set of articles from this week’s news – primarily local, but national as well. A portion of the class each week will be dedicated to the discussion of the issues, and how they impact the issue under consideration for the docudrama.

- **Research Presentations**
  Students will have two brief research projects for this course. In the first, due on January 25, students will make a 5 minute presentation (preferably with video or photo images) on the techniques of some of today’s docudrama artists. Students will be assigned an artist for this presentation during the first class.
The second research presentation, due on February 15, will be necessary for the creation of this docudrama. Students will gather contextual and historical information about the issue chosen for the piece. Specific research assignments will be made in class on February 1. In addition to the presentation, the research must be turned in electronically.

- **Interviews**
  Every student will be responsible for interviewing between 2 and 5 subjects, and accompanying a partner on their interviews. Students will then transcribe the interviews and prepare notes about the interview subject’s appearance and physicality while talking (did the subject touch his face, move her glasses, play with his hair, etc.?). The entire interview must be transcribed, along with notes from both partners. Interview transcripts will be due both in hard copy and electronic format. The first interviews will be due on February 15, the second set of interviews will be due on February 29.

- **Website Presence**
  For this course, students will edit video from the interviews and from the class’ process into material for the English department website. Each student in the course will be responsible for compiling at least one video for the website. All website material must be turned in by April 4.

- **Marketing**
  Students will be responsible for creating a plan of action for the marketing and disseminating of this piece, as well as putting that plan into action. Students will write press releases, create marketing images and set up a reservation system.

**Grading**
Students will be graded on participation in class, on the quality of their interviews and notes, and on the supporting work (marketing, audience engagement, website preparation, etc.). There are 400 possible points for the course, and they are broken down as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Points</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research Presentation #1</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Presentation #2</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website Presence</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance</td>
<td>100</td>
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- 360-400 points: A
- 320-359 points: B
- 280-319 points: C
- 240-279 points: D
- Below 239 points: Failing

**Attendance Policy**
This class is a discussion class, so each class is vitally important for every student. There will be no excused absences – part of your grade is based on your participation, and if you aren’t there to participate, your grade will suffer.
Policy for Accommodating Students with Disabilities
SUNY Geneseo will make reasonable accommodations for persons with documented physical, emotional, or learning disabilities. Students should contact the Director in the Office of Disability Services and their faculty advisor to discuss needed accommodations as early as possible in the semester.

Office Hours
I am happy to meet with you to discuss any issue pertaining to this course. Send me an email to set up an appointment. As I am only on campus on Wednesdays, all appointments will be held on Wednesdays.

Plagiarism
Plagiarism is the representation of someone else’s words or ideas as one’s own, or the arrangement of someone else’s material(s) as one’s own. Such misrepresentation may be sufficient grounds for a student’s receiving a grade of E for the paper or presentation involved or may result in an E being assigned as the final grade for the course. Any one of the following constitutes evidence of plagiarism:

1. direct quotation without identifying punctuation and citation of source;
2. paraphrase of expression or thought without proper attribution;
3. unacknowledged dependence upon a source in plan, organization, or argument.

For more information on Geneseo’s policies go to:
### Course Itinerary

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tr>
<td>January 18</td>
<td>Class Introduction; Discussion of Methodology and Issues Assignment of docudrama practitioners</td>
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| January 25 | *Fires in the Mirror* discussion, Presentations on docudrama artists; This Week's News; Issue discussion  
**DUE:** Read *Fires in the Mirror*, including the introduction; read the Democrat and Chronicle all week; Research Presentation #1 |
| February 1 | *Triple-A Plowed Under* discussion, Practice Interviews, finalize topic, select interview subjects, equipment sign-out; This Week's News  
**DUE:** Read *Triple-A Plowed Under* photocopy |
| February 8 | No class meeting – students interview subjects                                               |
| February 15| Interview sharing and discussions; Research Project #2 presentations; This Week's News  
**DUE:** At least two interviews; Research Project #2 |
| February 22| No class meeting - Students re-interview and transcribe                                      |
| February 29| Transcripts due, begin piecing the piece together; This Week’s News  
**DUE:** All transcripts |
| March 7    | No class meeting – students gathering supporting material                                    |
| March 14   | No class – SPRING BREAK                                                                     |
| March 21   | Creating shape of piece, rehearsal; Assignment of marketing responsibilities; This Week’s News  
**DUE:** Thoughts on shaping |
| March 28   | No meeting – students edit pieces for website, create marketing materials                    |
| April 4    | Rehearsal; This Week’s News  
**DUE:** Press release drafts, marketing images |
| April 11   | Rehearsal; This Week’s News  
**DUE:** Memorization |
| April 18   | Rehearsal; This Week’s News  
**DUE:** Memorization |
| April 25   | Performance and talk-back                                                                  |
| May 7: 6:45-9:45pm | Post-mortem                              |