PLAY(S): Theater and Games

Theater R1A (Section 1): Introduction to Dramatic Literature
Fall 2003
MWF 10-11 AM
221 Wheeler

Instructor: Jane McGonigal
Email: janemcg@uclink.berkeley.edu
Office: 130 Dwinelle Annex
Office Hours: Monday 11:30 am - 1:30 pm and by appointment
Course Web Site: http://theaterandgames.blogspot.com

CLASS DESCRIPTION
Members of this class will improve their writing skills as we explore the connection between plays (theater) and play (games).

Questions we’ll explore include:
What is a game, and how do we know when we are playing?
What kinds of live performance are particularly game-like?
Why do games appear so frequently in modern drama as a central metaphor?
Is “playing” a part on stage really playful?
Do audiences and spectators get to play, too?
How do contemporary game designers draw on theatrical models?
How do we play (roles and games) in everyday life?

Our collective investigations will consist of:
reading (dramatic literature, theater history, theories of play, and game criticism);
playing (acting exercises, playground games, party games, computer games, life);
brainstorming (informal weekly discussion on our course blog); and
writing (3 formal writing assignments with peer review, a midterm writing workshop, and a final exam paper)

REQUIRED TEXTS
Note: While specific editions are recommended, any edition you may already have or can find for a better price is also fine.

Course Reader.
GRADING
Your final grade will be based on the following criteria:

- **Class participation** (including in-class discussion, peer review writing workshops, game play and “minute papers”, see below): **20%**
- **Blog responses** (informal weekly writing assignments, see below): **20%**
- **Papers** (3 formal writing assignments and a final exam paper, see below): **60%**

COURSE POLICIES
**Attendance** is crucial for succeeding in this course. As per department policy, I will allow TWO unexcused absences (which may NOT fall on a Peer Review Workshop day). Each additional unexcused absence will reduce your final grade by 1/3 of a letter grade. (An A becomes an A-, i.e.) Excused absences include documented medical appointments or emergencies, religious observances or absences cleared with me at least 24 hours in advance. NOTE: If you arrive late to class or leave class early, it may count as an unexcused absence. Please see me in either case.

Positive and consistent **class participation** is essential! I expect to hear everyone’s voice at every class meeting. When we play games together, you are expected to participate or observe with interest, enthusiasm and creativity. When we conduct Peer Review Workshops, you are expected to generate and accept useful feedback for and from your classmates.

Unless we are discussing and playing mobile games, please have (and keep) your **cell phones** turned off and put away when you enter the classroom.

You will be responsible for completing all reading and play assignments, without exception, by the day they will be discussed. Be prepared for regular “**minute papers**,” short and open-ended in-class writing assignments of 5 minutes or less that focus on the assigned readings. Sometimes these minute papers will be written at the beginning of class, to evaluate your preparation; sometimes they will be written after class discussion, to gauge your participation and attention. If you are keeping up with readings and discussion, these minute papers should be a fun and non-stressful alternative to quizzes.

You will be asked to comment at least once a week on our **course blog**, where I will post my own reflections, suggestions for at-home play experiments, and questions for you to consider after each class meeting. You can choose which day each week to post, but you are responsible for keeping track of your posts so that you do not get behind in your posting or accidentally miss a week. Your comments will be evaluated primarily for thoughtfulness and willingness to engage in our collective investigation. Because these are informal writing assignments, you are encouraged to be personal and/or creative in your responses. As always, good faith efforts at proper spelling and punctuation are important, but this is secondary to the exchange and flow of ideas. You are encouraged to aim for about a paragraph’s worth of writing when you post, and to read as many of your classmates’ posts as possible. More frequent posting will be considered for extra-credit if the posts are consistently of high quality.
WRITING ASSIGNMENTS
You will be asked to complete four formal writing assignments for this course, including first and final drafts for Assignments #1, 2, and 3. They are:

1. A review of a personal “play experience” (3 pages, 10% of final grade);
2. A close reading of dramatic literature (4 pages, 15% of final grade);
3. An open letter to a play or performance theorist (4 pages, 15% of final grade);

Detailed instructions for each assignment will be provided later in the semester. Please keep in mind: Writing assignments must be turned in at the beginning of class on the day they are due, or they will be considered late. Papers drop half a letter grade for each class meeting they are late. Papers more than one week late will not be accepted. The final exam paper will not be accepted late, period.

FULL OR PARTIAL PLAGIARISM (1 or more paragraphs) WILL RESULT IN AN F ON THE ASSIGNMENT, not to mention bad karma. Don’t do it.

SCHEDULE
August 25 MONDAY
Introduction to Class.

August 27 WEDNESDAY
Read for today: Brian Sutton-Smith handout: “Diversity of Play Forms and Experiences” (1 page); Johan Huizinga handout: “Homo Ludens” (1 page); and Kevin Maroney’s “What Is a Game?” (3 pages)
In class: Discuss play vs. games, play forms and personal play experiences.

August 29 FRIDAY
Read for today: Michael Apter’s “A Structural Phenomenology of Play.” (16 pages)
In class: Lecture.

September 1 MONDAY
No Class: LABOR DAY HOLIDAY

September 3 WEDNESDAY
In class: Reading review and discussion.

September 5 FRIDAY
In class: Reading review and discussion.

September 8 MONDAY
Read for today: “Writing for College” by Joseph M. Williams and Lawrence McEnerney.
In class: Reading review; discuss writing strategies and guidelines for Writing Assignment #1.

September 10 WEDNESDAY
No reading for today.
In class: Collective Play.
Note: Mandatory blogging after today’s class.
September 12 FRIDAY
In class: Reading review and discussion.

September 15 MONDAY
In class: Reading review and discussion.

September 17 WEDNESDAY
Read for today: From Elements of Style, Chapter II: Elementary Principles of Composition: Rules 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20, 21, and Chapter V: An Approach to Style: Rules 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 14, 16
In class: Discuss Elements and MLA Formatting and Citations. Bring your MLA Handbook!

September 19 FRIDAY
Due today: FIRST DRAFT OF WRITING ASSIGNMENT #1. Bring 2 copies.
In class: Peer Review Workshop #1.

September 22 MONDAY
Read for today: AND E.M. Avedon’s “The Structural Elements of Games” (8 pages) AND Greg Costikyan’s “I Have No Words and I Must Design.” (17 pages)
In class: Reading review and discussion. (Paper drafts returned with comments.)

September 24 WEDNESDAY
Read for today: Excerpts from James P. Carse’s Finite and Infinite Games.
In class: Reading review and discussion.

September 26 FRIDAY
Due today: FINAL DRAFT OF WRITING ASSIGNMENT #1
In class: Collective Play.

September 29 MONDAY
Read for today: Thomas Whitaker’s “Speaking of Playing” from Fields of Play in Modern Drama (4 pages) and Samuel Selden’s “The Game and the Stakes” from Theatre Double Game. (13 pages)
In class: Reading review and discussion.

October 1 WEDNESDAY
In class: Reading review and discussion.

October 3 FRIDAY
No reading for today.
In class: Feedback on Writing Assignment #1; Discuss Guidelines for Writing Assignment #2.

October 6 MONDAY
Read for today: Tom Stoppard’s Rosencrantz & Guildenstern Are Dead.
In class: Reading review and discussion.

October 8 WEDNESDAY
No reading for today.
In class: Continue discussing Rosencrantz.
October 10 FRIDAY
No reading for today.
In class: Continue discussing Rosencrantz.

October 13 MONDAY
Read for today: Michael Oriard’s “The Game and the Nation” from Sporting with the Gods (28 pages).
In class: Reading review and discussion.

October 15 WEDNESDAY
Read for today: Richard Schechner’s “The Olympics: Globalism’s Signature Performance” from Performance Studies: An Introduction (4 pages).
In class: Reading review and discussion.

October 17 FRIDAY
No reading for today.

October 20 MONDAY
Read for today: Neil Labute’s “A Gaggle of Saints” from Bash.
In class: Reading review and discussion.

October 22 WEDNESDAY
No reading for today.
In class: Continue discussing “A Gaggle of Saints.”

October 24 FRIDAY
In-Class: Peer Review Workshop #2.

October 27 MONDAY
Read for today: Excerpts from Gary Izzo’s The Art of Play.
In class: Reading review and discussion. (Paper drafts returned with comments.)

October 29 WEDNESDAY
No reading for today.
In class: Continue discussion of The Art of Play.

October 31 FRIDAY Halloween!
Due Today: Final Draft Paper #2.
In class: Halloween Collective Play; Discuss guidelines for Writing Assignment #3.

November 3 MONDAY
Read for today: TBD.
In class: Acting games. Special guest acting instructor.
Note: Blogging after this class meeting is mandatory.

November 5 WEDNESDAY
Read for today: TBD.
In class: Acting games. Special guest acting instructor.
Note: Blogging after this class meeting is mandatory.

November 7 FRIDAY
Read for today: TBD.
In class: Acting games. Special guest acting instructor.
Note: Blogging after this class meeting is mandatory.

November 10 MONDAY
Read for today: Excerpts from Augusto Boal’s Theater of the Oppressed.
In class: Reading review and mini-lecture.
November 12 WEDNESDAY
No reading for today.
In class: Collective Play: Image Theater Workshop.

November 14 FRIDAY
In class: Peer Review Workshop #3.

November 17 MONDAY
Read for today: Excerpts from Martin Esslin’s *Theater of the Absurd*.
In class: Reading review and discussion. (Paper drafts returned with comments.)

November 19 WEDNESDAY
No reading for today.
In class: Existentialism primer and discussion.

November 21 FRIDAY
Due Today: Final Draft Paper #3.
In-Class: Collective Play.

November 24 MONDAY
Read for today: Eugene Ionesco’s *Killing Game*.
In class: Mini-lecture; discuss *Killing Game*.

November 26 WEDNESDAY
No reading for today.
In class: Continue discussing *Killing Game*.

November 28 FRIDAY
*No Class. Thanksgiving Break!*  

December 1 MONDAY
Read for today: Samuel Beckett’s *Play*.
In class: Reading review and discussion.

December 3 WEDNESDAY
No reading for today.
In class: Continue discussing *Play*; go over guidelines for Final Exam Paper.

December 5 FRIDAY Last Class!
No reading for today.
In class: Collective Play.

December 12 FRIDAY
Due Today: FINAL EXAM PAPER.