ENGL-UA 9201-L01
Reading as a Writer: Playwriting

Instructor Information

- Clare Bayley
- 07941 918114 (please only use this number on class trips or in an emergency. In other instances, please email me on clare.bayley@virgin.net.)
- Office hours: available on request.
- clare.bayley@nyu.edu

Course Information

- Wednesdays 1pm-4pm.
  - 6 Bedford Square, room
- The course is open to all students.

Course Overview and Goals

This is a class which teaches you how to read in both a critical and a creative way. We will be studying dramatic texts with a writerly eye in order to gain as much knowledge as possible about the craft of playwriting. By understanding the technique of some of the greatest classical and contemporary playwrights, we aim to improve our own dramatic writing skills.

We will read both to ourselves, and aloud in class, and ask questions such as: why is this scene so emotionally powerful? How does the playwright create this character we all recognize? Why is the release of plot information so effective at this point in the narrative?

Since a playscript is merely a blueprint for a performance, we will also be going to watch plays at the theatre. We'll study how the way that the text is written can influence the performance. We'll think about the extent to which the dramatist must be aware of stagecraft in order to overcome the limitations and exploit the possibilities of theatre.

In each class we will apply the knowledge gleaned in a practical way. Writing to prompts and briefs set by the instructor, students will take part in a series of creative writing exercises. We will share the work to give and receive feedback. Students are encouraged to be adventurous and experimental in writing exercises, to share their work with each other and give positive and generous feedback. Learning how to edit your work and the work of others and provide constructive criticism and praise is an important element in the writing process. Learning to receive and apply the comments of others is equally essential.
During the course of the semester, students will build up a number of scenes which they may decide to develop into a short play.

Upon Completion of this Course, students will be able to:
- Read dramatic texts and watch plays with greater insight and understanding of the conventions of theatrical writing
- Recognise and appreciate theatrical craft and dramatic technique in scripts
- Understand the context that classical theatre and contemporary plays have been written and performed in
- Identify the influence of historical playwrights on contemporary work
- Improve their own writing skills in playwriting

Course Requirements

Grading of Assignments

The grade for this course will be determined according to these assessment components:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Assignments/Activities</th>
<th>Description of Assignment</th>
<th>% of Final Grade</th>
<th>Due</th>
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</table>
| Class participation     | This includes 6 writing blogs, reading and contributing to discussion in class and volunteering feedback to peers in writing exercises. **Blogs** must be 380-500 words, thoughtful and considered pieces responding to the question, written in grammatically correct English without typos or spelling mistakes. They should be submitted to the Wordpress site by 7pm on the Tuesday evening before class. | 40%              | Blog 1
|                         |                            |                  | Blog 2
|                         |                            |                  | Blog 3
|                         |                            |                  | Blog 4
|                         |                            |                  | Blog 5
|                         |                            |                  | Blog 6 |

- Mid-term essay 1500-2000 words, the question will be discussed in class 20% Wednesday 10 October 2018

- Final project This can be either:
  - A portfolio of scenes (roughly 1,800-2,000 words) with an accompanying reflective essay (1,500-2,000 words). Scenes and essay to total 3,800-4,000 words. The reflective essay can be written in the first person, and should illustrate the ways in which your scenes have been influenced by the technique of other writers. The essay should give a fluent and analytical account of your understanding of the craft of playwriting, always backed up with specific examples from other texts. You should include a bibliography.
  - OR
  - A short play (30 pages or between 3,800-5,000 words) with a one-page Wednesday 5 December 2018
Assignments/Activities | Description of Assignment                                                                 | % of Final Grade | Due |
---|---|---|---|
| reflective essay outlining your influences and your creative process, which should refer to a number of other writers and texts. OR An academic essay (2,500-2,800 words or 8-10 pages) on a question devised by the student in consultation with the instructor arising from the questions raised during the course. It may well emerge from one or more of your writing assignments and exercises. This essay should be written according to academic conventions, referring to a number of texts and secondary sources, correctly referenced and with a bibliography. | | |

Failure to submit or fulfill any required course component results in failure of the class

Grades

Letter grades for the entire course will be assigned as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Example: 93.5% and higher</td>
<td>Excellent creative/academic work, demonstrating superior writing skills and a sustained engagement with the course. A sophisticated understanding of dramatic technique and craft. Originality of thought. Writing is presented to an excellent standard in terms of layout, grammar, punctuation and spelling.</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Example: 82.5% - 87.49%</td>
<td>Good creative/academic work, demonstrating competent writing skills and a sustained engagement with the course. An adequate understanding of dramatic technique and craft. Ideas are good but may lack originality. Writing is presented to a good standard in terms of layout, grammar, punctuation and spelling.</td>
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<td>C</td>
<td>Example: 72.5% - 77.49%</td>
<td>Fair creative/academic work, which is uneven in quality. Writing skills need to be more consistent and the work would benefit from closer editing. Engagement with the course</td>
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<tr>
<td>Letter Grade</td>
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<td>D</td>
<td>Example: 62.5% - 67.49</td>
<td>Poor creative/academic work, with significant writing flaws and questionable engagement with course work. The writing reveals too many gaps and confusions. Language and/or structure may be muddled. Ideas are uninspiring and ill-thought out. Presentation is inaccurate at times in layout, basic grammar, punctuation and spelling.</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Example: 59.99% and lower</td>
<td>Inadequate written work, insufficient engagement with course requirements. Some evidence of familiarity with appropriate methods or concepts but a great deal of confusion and inaccuracy. The standard of presentation is unacceptable.</td>
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**Course Materials**

**Required Textbooks & Materials**
- *Othello*, William Shakespeare (available from DramaOnline)
- *Medea*, Euripides (available from DramaOnline)
- *Jerusalem*, Jez Butterworth (available from DramaOnline)
- *The Wild Duck*, Henrik Ibsen (available from DramaOnline)
- *Hannah and Hanna in Dreamland* (available as PDF in NYU Classes)
- *Our Country’s Good*, Timberlake Wertenbaker (available from DramaOnline)
- *Maydays*, David Edgar (available from DramaOnline)
- *White Teeth*, Zadie Smith (novel)

**Optional Textbooks & Materials**
- *Playwriting: An Artists’ and Writers’ Companion*, Fraser Grace and Clare Bayley
- *Poetics*, Aristotle
- *Three Sisters*, Anton Chekhov

**Resources**
- Access your course materials: [NYU Classes](nyu.edu/its/classes)
- Databases, journal articles, and more: [Bobst Library](library.nyu.edu)
- NYUL Library Collection: [Senate House Library](catalogue.libraries.london.ac.uk)
- Assistance with strengthening your writing: [NYU Writing Center](nyu.mywconline.com)
- Obtain 24/7 technology assistance: [IT Help Desk](nyu.edu/it/servicedesk)
## Course Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session/Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Session 1: 5 September</td>
<td>Introduction to the course</td>
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<td>Please read <em>Medea</em> by Euripides by next class</td>
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<tr>
<td>Session 2: 12 September</td>
<td><em>Medea</em> and Greek theatre</td>
<td><em>Medea</em>, Euripides</td>
<td><strong>Blog 1:</strong> How can classical stories be appropriated for our times? Due 9am Tuesday 18 September</td>
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<tr>
<td>Session 3: 19 September</td>
<td>Shakespeare and Elizabethan theatre</td>
<td><em>Othello</em> by William Shakespeare</td>
<td><strong>Blog 2:</strong> A review of <em>Othello</em> due 9am Tuesday 25 September</td>
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<td>Theatre trip: Wednesday 19 September</td>
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<td>Session 4: 26 September</td>
<td>Contemporary theatre; creating character, dialogue</td>
<td><em>Jerusalem</em>, Jez Butterworth</td>
<td><strong>Blog 3:</strong> The power of the anti-hero in drama, due 9am Tuesday 2 October</td>
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<tr>
<td>Session 5: 3 October</td>
<td>Naturalism and realism; structure</td>
<td><em>The Wild Duck</em>, Henrik Ibsen</td>
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<td>Session 6: 10 October</td>
<td>Visit to class from playwright and director John Retallack. Writing your own plays</td>
<td><em>Hannah and Hanna in Dreamland</em>, John Retallack</td>
<td>Mid-term essay due 10 October.</td>
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<td>Theatre trip: Tuesday 16 October</td>
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<tr>
<td>Session 7: 17 October</td>
<td>Epic theatre; handling time; writing from life</td>
<td><em>An Adventure</em>, Vinay Patel</td>
<td>Theatre trip: <em>An Adventure</em> at the Bush Theatre Tuesday 16 October at 7.30pm <strong>Blog 4:</strong> Whose story can you tell? Due Tuesday 23 October 9am</td>
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<td>Session 8: 24 October</td>
<td>Setting and situation</td>
<td><em>Our Country’s Good</em>, Timberlake Wertenbaker</td>
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<tr>
<td>Theatre trip: Tuesday 30 October</td>
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<td><strong>The Wild Duck</strong>, Almeida Theatre at 7.30pm</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Session 9: 31 October</td>
<td>Visit to class from acclaimed playwright David Edgar; political theatre</td>
<td><em>Maydays</em>, David Edgar</td>
<td>During the break, read <em>White Teeth</em>, Zadie Smith (novel)</td>
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<td>Session 10: 14 November</td>
<td>Script workshop</td>
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<td>Blog 5: reflections on writing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Session 11: 21 November</td>
<td>Script workshop</td>
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<tr>
<td>Theatre trip: Tuesday 27 November</td>
<td>White Teeth, Kiln Theatre at 7.30pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Session 12: 28 November</td>
<td>Adaptation: visit to class from Stephen Sharkey, adapter of <em>White Teeth</em></td>
<td><em>White Teeth</em>, Zadie Smith</td>
<td>Blog 6: <em>White Teeth</em>: the musical. A review</td>
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<tr>
<td>Session 13: 5 December</td>
<td>Final class</td>
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<td>Final project due 5 December</td>
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<tr>
<td>Session 14: 12 December</td>
<td>Exam week – no class</td>
<td>If you would like one to one feedback on your final project, please contact me for an appointment.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Assessment: Due 5 December</td>
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**Co-Curricular Activities**

- Compulsory theatre trips:
  Wednesday 19 September, *Othello* at Shakespeare’s Globe at 7.30pm,
  Tuesday 16 October, *An Adventure* at the Bush Theatre at 7.30pm
  Tuesday 30 October, *The Wild Duck* at the Almeida Theatre at 7.30pm
  Tuesday 27 November, *White Teeth* at the Kiln Theatre at 7.30pm

- Suggested theatre trips:
  Friday 16 November, Criterion New Writing Showcases, Criterion Theatre at 2pm
  *Maydays* and *Trying It On* at the RSC in Stratford-Upon-Avon, Saturday 20 October at 2pm and 7.30pm

**Classroom Etiquette**

Please be punctual, and email in advance if you are unable to attend a class. There is no food or drink (apart from water) allowed in the classroom. You can use laptops or tablets
to view assignments, exercises and pages of script or to take notes. Please turn wi-fi off however to avoid distraction. Similarly mobile phones must be switched off when in class. Students must not under any circumstances electronically record any classes or parts of classes or stream classes live as this would breach U.K. copyright law.

Classes will be delivered informally and students must be prepared for a participatory, seminar-style experience. Student input will be required at most times. At other times students will be expected to present material and direct the progress of the class if appropriate. There will be some elements of creative writing in the course. Pen and paper will be essential tools for some writing exercises, so please make sure to bring both with you to all classes.

**NYUL Academic Policies**

**Attendance and Tardiness**
- Key information on NYU London's absence policy, how to report absences, and what kinds of absences can be excused can be found on our [website](http://www.nyu.edu/london/academics/attendance-policy.html)

**Assignments, Plagiarism, and Late Work**
- You can find details on these topics and more on this section of our NYUL [website](https://www.nyu.edu/london/academics/academic-policies.html) and on the [Policies and Procedures section of the NYU website](https://www.nyu.edu/academics/studying-abroad/upperclassmen-semester-academic-year-study-away/academic-resources/policies-and-procedures.html) for students studying away at global sites.

**Classroom Conduct**
Academic communities exist to facilitate the process of acquiring and exchanging knowledge and understanding, to enhance the personal and intellectual development of its members, and to advance the interests of society. Essential to this mission is that all members of the University Community are safe and free to engage in a civil process of teaching and learning through their experiences both inside and outside the classroom. Accordingly, no student should engage in any form of behaviour that interferes with the academic or educational process, compromises the personal safety or well-being of another, or disrupts the administration of University programs or services. Please refer to the [NYU Disruptive Student Behavior Policy](https://www.nyu.edu/academics/studying-abroad/upperclassmen-semester-academic-year-study-away/academic-resources/policies-and-procedures.html) for examples of disruptive behavior and guidelines for response and enforcement.

**Disability Disclosure Statement**
Academic accommodations are available for students with disabilities. Please contact the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities (212-998-4980 or mosescsd@nyu.edu) for further information. Students who are requesting academic accommodations are advised to reach out to the Moses Center as early as possible in the semester for assistance.
**Instructor Bio**

Clare Bayley is a playwright whose plays include *The Enchantment* (National Theatre), *The Container* (Young Vic, London and Edinburgh Fringe Festival, Toronto, Melbourne, Rome and Mexico), *Blue Sky* (Hampstead Theatre, Sherman Theatre, Cardiff and in Raleigh, North Carolina), *Pixel Dust* (Assembly Roxy, Edinburgh). She has also written for radio. She is the co-author of *Playwriting: An Artists’ and Writers’ Companion* (Bloomsbury) and her plays are published by Nick Hern Books. Her most recent production was *On The March*, a site-specific, promenade production to celebrate the centenary of women’s partial enfranchisement, for Oxford Playhouse’s in March 2018. Before starting to write for the theatre, Clare was a theatre critic and arts journalist for *The Independent* newspaper and other London publications. She teaches Creative Writing at London South Bank University and mentors MA students in playwriting at the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama. She has taught Advanced Playwriting for NYU/TISCH London, and Modern Drama in Performance for NYU London.