The Play’s The Thing: Metatheatre, Performance, and Dramatic Form

Course Description
This course will survey a wide range of plays that take up dramatic writing and theatrical performance as their subject. In other words, we will read drama that is about drama itself. In reading plays that reflect on and self-consciously draw attention to various techniques and devices of the theatrical medium, we will explore the relationships and tensions between life and dramatic art.

Student Learning Outcomes
- To understand the history of dramatic writing and theatrical performance.
- To learn how to read dramatic texts as literature and as the basis of performance.
- To learn how to write analytically about dramatic form and genre.
- To hone close reading skills and to use textual evidence to support complex arguments.
- To learn how to conduct research and engage with secondary writings on dramatic texts.

Major Course Requirements (How you will earn your grade)

Short Paper (10%): This 2-3 page paper will ask you to do a close textual analysis of one or more passages from the texts we have read on our syllabus, and to generate a complex thesis about your passages. This assignment will help you develop the close reading and analytical skills necessary for the final paper.

Long Paper (20%): A 5-6 page paper, in which you will develop a critical argument on a topic of your choice, which will be pre-approved with me during a brief meeting. We will use class time to discuss the selection of appropriate topics, the crafting of a clear and effective thesis statement, and other essential writing skills.
Scene Performance and Reflection Paper (10%): I will divide the class into groups and you will perform selected scenes from the texts in our course. You will not have to memorize lines or have any prior experience as an actor, but you will be graded on other aspects of your performances, including gesture, blocking, tone, costumes, and props. You will be asked to submit a 2-page paper at the end of your performance, analyzing your performance choices and how they impacted the meaning of the performances. You will be given more information about this assignment before it is due.

Director’s Note and Oral Presentation (10%)
You will write a 2-page “director’s note” for one play we read this semester. You will sign up for one play at the beginning of the semester, and you will be responsible for explaining your directorial vision for this play. Where and when would the play be set? What would the stage look like? What actors or kinds of actors might you cast? What would the costumes look like? What do you want your audience to understand about the play, its historical context, or what it can teach us today? Your director’s note is due on the final day of discussion for that play, which is the same day you will present your directorial vision to the class.

Production Review (10%): You are required to attend one of the TAMUCC theatrical productions this semester and write a review (2-3 pages). I will provide more details about the productions as they become available, and we will discuss the features and conventions of the theater review. You may attend an additional production and write a second review for extra credit.

Participation (15%): Your active participation in class discussion and group work is essential to your learning as well as that of your peers. You should therefore come to class having done all of the reading, but I do not expect you to have mastered the material. Rather, you should take careful notes on the reading and generate questions for each class session. What do you find confusing? Difficult? Interesting? Exciting? This process will prepare you to become an active learner and participant in class discussions. It will also help you to prepare for in-class writing assignments, papers, and exams. You must bring your textbook(s) and any relevant additional readings to class with you in order to receive full credit for participation.

Midterm Exam (10%) and Final Exam (15%): The exams for this course (a midterm and a final) are designed to provide an opportunity for you to demonstrate your knowledge of key concepts as well as your ability to analyze texts using the reading and writing skills that we have developed throughout the semester. Both exams will consist of key terms and concepts, passage identification, and an essay.

REQUIRED READINGS
**NOTE**: Please make sure that you purchase the second edition. The first edition does not include the same plays.)

Tom Stoppard, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead (Grove Press, ISBN 978-0802132758)
**Course Policies**

**Attendance/Tardiness:** The success of this course depends on your regular attendance. No more than **two (2)** unexcused absences are permitted in this course. Any absences beyond this allotted number will negatively affect your grade. Contact me by e-mail, preferably before the class, to explain the reason for your absence. It is also important that you arrive to each class **on time** out of respect for your peers and the instructor. Habitual lateness will also result in the lowering of your grade. In the event of extenuating circumstances, please contact me as soon as possible.

**Deadlines:** Assignments are due on the deadlines listed on the syllabus. In fairness to everyone in this class, late work will be penalized. If you are experiencing difficulty meeting the deadline for an assignment, please notify me **in advance** rather than waiting until the deadline has passed.

**Communication and Office Hours:** I encourage you to come to my office hours or schedule an appointment with me if you have questions or would like to discuss your writing and your progress in the course. The best way to contact me outside of class and office hours is by e-mail. Any communication I send out to the entire class will be to your Islander e-mail address, so please check your university e-mail on a regular basis.

**Technology Policy:** The success of this course depends on your full attention to the materials and the conversations that develop around them, so you are not permitted to use laptops, tablets, and cell phones during this class. (I will make exceptions for students with documented disabilities that make note-taking by hand difficult.)

**Paper Guidelines:** Papers should be double-spaced, in 12-point Times New Roman font. Please do not use Cambria or Calibri font. You should have a consistent documentation style and should always site your sources; I have uploaded a guide to citing works and ideas using the MLA citation style on our class’s Blackboard site. If you have any questions about citations, or how to acknowledge ideas or language other than your own, please come visit me in office hours; we will also review citation practices before the first paper. I also strongly encourage you to come to discuss your papers before they are due, and may require meetings as the semester progresses. I do not read full drafts, but I would be delighted to set up a meeting to discuss your writing assignment with you before it is due.

**Academic Integrity/Plagiarism**

University students are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with the highest standards of academic honesty. Academic misconduct for which a student is subject to penalty includes all forms of cheating, such as illicit possession of examinations or examination materials, falsification, forgery, complicity or plagiarism. (Plagiarism is the presentation of the work of another as one’s own work.) In this class, academic misconduct or complicity in an act of academic misconduct on an assignment or test will result in failure of the course.

**Dropping a Class**

I hope that you never find it necessary to drop this or any other class. However, events can sometimes occur that make dropping a course necessary or wise. Please consult with me before you decide to drop to be sure it is the best thing to do. Should dropping the course be the best course of
action, you must initiate the process to drop the course by going to the Student Services Center and filling out a course drop form. Just stopping attendance and participation WILL NOT automatically result in your being dropped from the class. [DATE from academic calendar] is the last day to drop a class with an automatic grade of “W” this term.

CLASSROOM/PROFESSIONAL BEHAVIOR
Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi has a diverse student population that represents the population of the state. Our goal is to provide you with a high quality educational experience that is free from repression. You are responsible for following the rules of the University, city, state and federal government. We expect that you will behave in a manner that is dignified, respectful and courteous to all people, regardless of sex, ethnic/racial origin, religious background, sexual orientation or disability. Behaviors that infringe on the rights of another individual will not be tolerated.

GRADE APPEALS
Students who feel that they have not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in this class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details on the process of submitting a formal grade appeal, please visit the College of Liberal Arts website, cla.tamucc.edu/students/studentinfo.html. For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Associate Dean.

DISABILITIES ACCOMMODATIONS
The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please call or visit Disability Services at (361) 825-5816 in Corpus Christi Hall 116. If you are a returning veteran and are experiencing cognitive and/or physical access issues in the classroom or on campus, please contact the Disability Services office for assistance at (361) 825-5816.

STATEMENT OF ACADEMIC CONTINUITY
Recommended text or compose your own] In the event of an unforeseen adverse event, such as a major hurricane and classes could not be held on the campus of Texas A&M University–Corpus Christi; this course would continue through the use of Blackboard and/or email. In addition, the syllabus and class activities may be modified to allow continuation of the course. Ideally, University facilities (i.e., emails, web sites, and Blackboard) will be operational within two days of the closing of the physical campus. However, students need to make certain that the course instructor has a primary and a secondary means of contacting each student.

ACADEMIC ADVISING
It is imperative that all students visit regularly with an academic adviser. Each college within the university has an academic advising center, staffed by fulltime, professional advisers to assist students with course selection, degree plans, and other academic matters. To find out how to contact the right adviser, go to: http://www.tamucc.edu/academics/advising.php
Students who have yet to declare a major are advised by the Academic Advising Transition Center. For more information, go to: http://www.tamucc.edu/~aac

The College of Liberal Arts requires that students meet with an Academic Advisor as soon as they are ready to declare a major. The Academic Advisor will set up a degree plan, which must be signed by the student, a faculty mentor, and the department chair. The College’s Academic Advising Center is located in Driftwood 203E, and can be reached at 825-3466.

**REMINDER TO ENGLISH MAJORS**
As part of the English undergraduate capstone course (ENGL 4351), all English majors are required to submit a portfolio of writings in different discourse genres that they have completed for their college classes. To help you prepare for this assignment, you should **keep a copy** of all essays, research papers, literary analyses, creative and report writing, etc., so that you will have an ample selection from which to choose when the portfolio comes due.

**COURSE CALENDAR** (This schedule is subject to revision, with advance notice.)

**Week 1**
W 8/27 Introduction to the course

**Week 2**
M 9/1 No class. Labor Day Holiday.

**Week 3**
W 9/10 *Hamlet*, Acts III-IV

**Week 4**
M 9/15 *Hamlet*, Act V

**Week 5**
M 9/22 *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*, Acts III-IV
W 9/24 *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*, Act V

**Week 6**
W 10/1 *Tartuffe*, Acts III-V
**Week 7**
M 10/6 *Tartuffe*, Act V **Short Paper Due**
W 10/8 Luigi Pirandello, *Six Characters in Search of an Author*

**Week 8**
M 10/13 *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, Midterm Review
W 10/15 Midterm Exam

**Week 9**
M 10/20 Bertolt Brecht, *The Good Woman of Setzuan*, Scenes 1-4
W 10/22 *The Good Woman of Setzuan*, Scenes 5-8

**Week 10**
M 10/27 *The Good Woman of Setzuan*, Scenes 9-10 and Epilogue

**Week 11**
M 11/3 *Waiting for Godot*, Act II
W 11/5 Library information session. We will meet in the library. Details forthcoming.

**Week 12**
M 11/10 Tom Stoppard, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*, Acts I-II
W 11/12 *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*, Act III

**Week 13**
W 11/19 *Cloud Nine*, Act II

**Week 14**
M 11/24 Peter Handke, *Offending the Audience*
W 11/26 *Offending the Audience*

**Week 15**
M 12/1 Last day of class. Conclusions

**Final Exam, Wednesday, December 10th at 1:45 PM, Location TBD**