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Fall 2023

Theatre 358

Oral Interpretation

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Principles of oral interpretation and storytelling, with practice in literary analysis and performance.

OVERVIEW

The benefits of performance are often discussed in terms of the audience, of the public community that views it. But performance is not only what happens in front of an audience. For the performer, the act of performance can also be a method for learning and exploring, another way of knowing. The process calls for critical and creative thinking, skill-building, analysis, and interpretation in order to make artistic choices that effectively communicate meaning and intention. This interdisciplinary course provides the opportunity for students to actively explore the creative process and engage in the study of written texts in the context of embodying and bringing these texts to life. Readings, discussions, and assignments focus on analysis, interpretation, and performance of texts as a way of knowing, as a way of communicating, and as a way of sharing understanding and meaning.

LEARNING GOALS AND OUTCOMES

Students who fully commit to and engage in the work of this course:

- Will be able to identify specific qualities in literature and analyze the pieces selected in terms of intellectual and emotional content.
- Will be able to identify the vocal and physical qualities needed to best communicate these pieces of literature to an audience.
- Will improve performance skills through the practice of interpreting literature before an audience.
- Will sharpen critical abilities through listening to and engaging with the performances of others.

GENERAL OVERVIEW OF MAJOR ASSIGNMENTS

Performance Pieces

You will analyze, rehearse, and perform several pieces for this class, in addition to our regular activities and exercises. We'll work on these pieces in stages, so expect to go through a process that includes multiple drafts and revisions. More information about each assignment will be provided.

Workshop Responses

In preparation for workshops, you will be carefully reading, observing, and responding to other students' work. Sometimes we will workshop in small groups, sometimes as a full class. We will discuss workshop process, expectations, and requirements as those deadlines near.

Writing Exercises, Performance Exercises, Reading Reflections, Etc.

These will include short performances and written pieces—formal and informal, creative and critical—as assigned. You may also be asked to give brief presentations and/or lead discussions.

Reading/Performance Attendance

You will attend at least three literary readings and/or performance events during the semester. We'll share opportunities available in the Ames/Des Moines area in class. I encourage you to attend more literary events if you can!

Final Synthesis Essay

An opportunity to document, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate your learning and performance in class this semester.

MY EXPECTATIONS

The following expectations are simple but vital to your success in this course.

- **Fully commit to and engage in your own and others' learning.** We are creating a learning community and a safe environment for sharing creative work,
- **Be in class on time, ready to work and play, with all assignments read, turned in, or ready to present in class.** Because this is an interactive, hands-on course, attendance and participation are essential to student success and you are expected to attend all classes. However, because life happens, you will be allowed to miss up to three classes to allow for sickness or emergencies. If you have to miss a class, please notify me and get notes from a classmate. If you miss more than three meetings, your final evaluation will be affected, and you may not be able to pass the class if you have five or more absences. Of course, there are times that may require extra flexibility from all of us, so please communicate any unforeseen problems or needs with me, and we'll troubleshoot together.
- **Performance workshops are an important part of this class.** We will discuss our process in class, but know in advance that those are significant days, requiring your full preparation and engagement.
- **Please submit all assignments when due.** Let me know well in advance if you do not believe you can meet a deadline.
- **Treat the classroom and fellow learners with respect and care.** Practice active listening, keep cell phones and other non-essential electronics off and stowed, refrain from the use of profanity or other inappropriate/insensitive language, and respect other students' learning styles and needs. In our virtual classroom, this also means that you agree to keep our learning lab creatively safe—by not broadcasting any voice but your own in a shared space.
- **Do your best work.** You will set personal learning goals and track your own progress throughout the term. You'll be asked to engage in self-evaluation in this class. Your final grade will depend on your attendance, participation, and completion of and quality of assignments, as well as substantial progress toward your own learning goals and the goals of the course, and I will encourage and honor your thoughtful, honest, fair, and substantiated self-assessment.
- **Enjoy!**

SCHEDULE OVERVIEW (details on Canvas)

Week One: Introduction
Week Two: Storytelling
Week Three: Storytelling
Week Four: Conversation
Week Five: Performance Skills
Week Six: Performance Skills
Week Seven: Prose
Week Eight: Prose
Week Nine: Prose
Week Ten: Poetry
Week Eleven: Poetry
Week Twelve: Poetry
Week Thirteen: Group Performance
Week Fourteen: Group Performance
Week Fifteen: Group Performance
Finals Week: Revisions

Please note: This syllabus and its corresponding Canvas site may change to accommodate class and instructor needs. Any changes will be promptly communicated to students.

Iowa State University's policies and procedures may be found online at the ISU website; this class follows all university policies, including ISU's policies on academic integrity, discrimination, and accommodations.

Please see the following website for the most current Iowa State University syllabus statements: <https://www.celt.iastate.edu/instructional-strategies/preparing-to-teach/how-to-create-an-effective-syllabus/recommended-iowa-state-university-syllabus-statements/>. These can also be found on our Canvas site.