

# ART AND CRAFT OF THEATRE (ACT)

## **ACT 100 | POLITICS, POP CULTURE, AND THE STAGE | 4 quarter hours (Undergraduate)**

Through the aesthetic analysis of plays, and dramatists that were foundational in the development of dramatic literature, the student is encouraged to develop basic critical standards for the understanding and appreciation of dramatic production. This course can be taken by non-Theatre School students.

## **ACT 200 | MAKING PLAYS: THEATER AND THE ART OF PRODUCTION | 4 quarter hours (Undergraduate)**

Through lecture, discussion, projects and actual theatre attendance, students explore the human nature of the theatrical impulse and its evolution into theatrical form. Plays and readings deal with issues of gender identity, sexual orientation, and sexuality in performance. Students follow the process of specific drama productions from script to stage and examine the artistic process and the role that sexuality and gender play in performance and rehearsal.

## **ACT 209 | SKETCH COMEDY | 4 quarter hours (Undergraduate)**

Live performances of sketch comedy present theatre in one of its most elemental forms. With a focus on actors and text rather than technical elements, stagings of sketch revues explore the relationship between audience and artist in a dynamic and revealing way. This course will explore both the theoretical underpinnings of comedy and the practical techniques for the creation of this work. The class will examine as literature this work that is often overlooked by critics and theorists because of its perception as a "low" art form.

## **ACT 213 | SCI-FI AND OTHER GENRE FICTION IN THEATRE | 4 quarter hours (Undergraduate)**

Science Fiction, Horror, Fantasy, and Superhero as genres of fiction are prevalent in popular culture and successful (almost saturated) in Film, Television, Prose Literature, Graphic Novels, and other forms of storytelling media. Why, then, are they underrepresented in the world of the theatre? And why are the few more well-known examples of these genres in theatre so often unsuccessful, commercially and critically? How can these genres translate to the stage successfully? Which technical characteristics of the theatre and of the theatrical language of storytelling are advantages and disadvantages for bringing these genres to life, as opposed to the other media in which they are more prevalent and successful? This course will attempt to answer these questions by examining extant theatrical works of "genre" fiction and their financial successes and critical receptions. We will also examine critically-acclaimed pieces of "genre" fiction in other media to determine why those pieces were successful and how to translate that success to the stage.

## **ACT 215 | PLAYS ABOUT SPORTS | 4 quarter hours (Undergraduate)**

There is a curious relationship between sports and theatre; that is to say, the inherent theatricality of sports and the inherent athleticism of theatre. A significant component in this relationship is the concept of performance and what that entails. We speak of high-performance cars and trucks, we applaud and then discuss, blog, and tweet (sometimes to an extraordinary degree) the performances of both athletes and actors, we talk about academic performance, we see performing seals, dolphins, and whales at Shedd Aquarium, a member of the clergy performs a wedding ceremony, and the list continues. A highly contested term, performance is bound to the team role as it relates to sports, theatre, and everyday life. What is your role on the team? What role were you cast in? What is your role in the company? The team role is aligned with function and also with the context in which the "role is played. More than anything perhaps, both sports and theatre deal with highly charged relationships. In the plays that we will examine in the course, it is the sport itself that serves as both the context of and trigger for the relationships that are created, strengthened, weakened, or in the worst-case scenarios, totally shattered.

## **ACT 216 | SCREEN TO STAGE | 4 quarter hours (Undergraduate)**

There is a long and storied tradition of adapting plays to film. Glengarry Glen Ross, Chicago, A Few Good Men, Harvey, Romeo + Juliet - the list goes on and on. More recently, however, there has been a continuing trend in the opposite direction: major works of theatre, particularly Broadway musicals, are adaptations of films. This course will examine this trend from several angles. We will discuss some of the reasons for this trend, we will discuss the challenges inherent in translating work written for film to the techniques of the stage, and we will compare and contrast artistic, critical, and financial successes and failures of plays adapted from films.

## **ACT 217 | THE ART OF STORYTELLING | 4 quarter hours (Undergraduate)**

Storytelling is one of our oldest art forms. By exploring stories in performance and writing, students acquire the tools necessary to sculpt and perform their own stories. Then, students discover how storytelling can be used in multiple applications - from marketing to change management to human resources to diversity training. Through discussion, projects, and viewing live and recorded performance, students understand the art and building blocks of good storytelling. Studying different forms will illuminate the connection between content and form. Stories have the power to change people and this class explores how and why.

## **ACT 223 | INTRODUCTION TO IMPROVISATION | 4 quarter hours (Undergraduate)**

Improvisation for the theatre was originally developed as a means of bringing diverse populations of people together in a creative, non-competitive, environment. Improvisation for performance was developed by The Compass Players and The Second City and has influenced generations of theatre artists from Alan Arkin to Tina Fey. The essentials of improvisation, however, remain applicable to everyone. In this course, sessions will include theatre games, ensemble building exercises, and scene structures. We will explore how the practice of improvisation creates opportunities for connection, creativity, and spontaneity. This class is for anyone who wants to enhance their abilities to act and interact with others.

**ACT 241 | ARE WE STILL FABULOUS?: QUEER IDENTITY IN CONTEMPORARY DRAMA | 4 quarter hours**  
(Undergraduate)

Born out of ACT UP and the AIDS militant movement of the late 1980s and early 1990s, Queer Nation concerned itself with the issue of gay and lesbian enfranchisement and power. They created the battle cry, "We're here, we're queer, we're fabulous, get used to it," thereby granting the gay community ownership of the word "fabulous." Fabulousness not only became a new manifesto for queer politics and camp, but also became synonymous with irony, tragic history, defiance, gender-fuck, glitter, and drama. Currently, young playwrights have shifted the visor of gay drama from overtly political dramas to stories of identity and love. In replacing direct political messages with more personal appeals for social progress, is contemporary gay drama still fabulous? By interpreting and analyzing the most current queer plays, reading critical and reflective essays, and through discussion, students in the course will decide for themselves if "fabulous" is a thing of the past or stronger than ever in the present.

**ACT 242 | STAGE DIRECTION FOR NON-MAJORS | 4 quarter hours**  
(Undergraduate)

This course is designed to introduce students to the director's craft. The focus is on the director's relationship to text through the analysis of playscripts and the use of that analysis to plan an interpretation of a play. Analysis will come from a variety of perspectives—personal, psychological, social, and historical. In addition to preparing and presenting their projects, students will attend performances and write papers in response. The class combines lecture, discussion, group exercises, and in-class activities.

**ACT 244 | DRAMATIC WRITING FOR NON-MAJORS | 4 quarter hours**  
(Undergraduate)

This course is designed as an introduction to the process of playwriting. The emphasis is on the exploration of a range of techniques and tools available to the playwright. Through the completion and discussion of a series of writing exercises, the class will examine the various elements of playwriting. Particular attention will be paid to the connections between form and meaning. Work for the course will include weekly exercises, written responses to plays in production, and the presentation of projects. Instructional methods will include lecture, discussion, group exercises, and in-class activities. The final project of the class will be the completion of a draft of a 10-minute play.

**ACT 250 | AMERICAN FUNNY: STAGE COMEDY FROM GROUCHO MARX TO TINA FEY | 4 quarter hours**  
(Undergraduate)

We're a funny people. We like to watch people be funny. AMERICAN FUNNY is a survey course that looks at American comedy in theatre from the early 20th century to the present day. We view performances of plays on video, read and write about American plays and playwrights, and discuss what is special about going to the theatre. We explore a historical progression of comedy, different types of comedy, the development of the American Comic Hero, and how comedy brings us together as theatregoers and as Americans.

**ACT 251 | STAGE TO SCREEN: CINEMATIC TRANSLATIONS OF THE DRAMATIC CANON | 4 quarter hours**  
(Undergraduate)

It is almost always the case that audiences are introduced to the dramatic canon with cinematic translations of the great plays, rather than actual productions. In this course we will examine what elements theatre and film share as well as what elements one or the other medium possesses exclusively if any. What is lost or, indeed gained in cinematic translation? What is the notion of theatricality? What cannot be translated to the film? What societal elements come into play when translating a play for the screen? Socio-political and historical milieu of the original plays will be examined as well as those of the screenplays.

**ACT 253 | THEME PARK THEATRE | 4 quarter hours**  
(Undergraduate)

Theme parks have become contemporary equivalents of the ancient Greek theatre festivals - places where the citizenry gather to revisit the myths and history of the community. While much has been written about theme parks from the perspective of cultural studies, urban planning, and commerce, little attention has been paid to their function as performance or theatre. In this class we will attempt to develop criteria for evaluating theme park attractions as works of art. How do theme parks fulfill or challenge traditional definitions of theatre? What is the relationship between audience and performer? Can/should theme parks aspire to do more than entertain? How are stories told physically and architecturally? How have theme parks influenced theatre and other art forms?.

**ACT 255 | ANGELS, PUNKS AND RAGING QUEENS: THE ECLECTIC QUILT OF AIDS DRAMA | 4 quarter hours**  
(Undergraduate)

Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) has left an indelible mark on both the history and culture of the world. While fear and loss can paralyze, they can also mobilize. In addition to destroying generations of artists, AIDS has become what some call "the great unifier," giving voice to a new generation of theatre artists. But what are these voices? Cries for social change? Political rants? Stories of remembrance? Lessons to educate? All of the above? What does AIDS mean when it appears onstage in a performance? By interpreting and analyzing plays from both national and global AIDS perspectives, reading critical and reflective essays, and through discussion, students in the course will discover how the ritual of theatre has been used to create the eclectic quilt of voices that is AIDS drama.

**ACT 257 | WRITING LOCALLY, THINKING GLOBALLY: INTERNATIONAL THEATRE FOR YOUNG AUDIENCES DRAMATIC LITERATURE | 4 quarter hours**  
(Undergraduate)

While writing and performing for their local communities, various international artists have made a global impact on the field of theatre for young audiences. This course is an investigation of the principles, procedures, and practices of theatre for young audiences playwrights and artists worldwide. Through analysis of readings, lectures, workshops, and discussions students will explore the skills and aesthetic techniques that theatre creators from around the globe use to communicate with their audiences. By examining historical, theoretical, and artistic intercontinental connections, students will hopefully gain further appreciation and understanding of the contemporary, global theatre for young audiences (TYA) field.

**ACT 290 | ACTING AND PERFORMANCE | 4 quarter hours**  
(Undergraduate)

Students work on basic performance skills through individual and group exercises in acting, voice and speech and movement. Can be taken by non-Theatre School students.

**ACT 300 | MESSFEST | 4 quarter hours****(Undergraduate)**

Students will learn and practice the skills needed to create and produce a 40-show comedy festival at a professional Chicago venue. Using a choose-your-own-adventure co-learning format, students can participate in everything from writing, performing, directing, production skills, design, house and stage management, marketing, and more. The course culminates in a one-week takeover of The Annoyance Theater in Chicago, where students will collaborate to run the theater and produce MessFest. Students must plan to participate in the festival January.

**ACT 301 | MODERN DANCE | 4 quarter hours****(Undergraduate)**

This artistic dance course will focus on technique, individual and group improvisation, choreography, the art of making dances and how to view dance in performance. Designed for all levels of experience, the class will give attention to body awareness and alignment, physical strength and flexibility, expressive and creative movement in the modern dance style to a variety of musical accompaniment.

**ACT 302 | MODERN DANCE II | 4 quarter hours****(Undergraduate)**

This course is a continuation from Modern Dance for Non-Majors. The course focuses on technique, individual and group improvisation, partnering, principles of choreography, the art of making dances, and the skill of motivating feedback. Learning how to view and critique dance in performance, students will attend a selected dance concert to review. Class will include more advanced experiences with body awareness and alignment, physical strength and flexibility, expressive and original movement in the modern dance style to live percussion accompaniment. Students with previous training who haven't taken PRF 301/ Modern Dance I may contact the instructor for permission to enroll in Modern Dance II.

**ACT 380 | ADVANCED ACTING AND PERFORMANCE | 4 quarter hours****(Undergraduate)**

This course is a continuation of PRF 290 and will allow students who have completed the introductory course further exploration in performance by applying basic acting skills to the presentation of short plays and scenes from modern dramatic literature.

**PRF 290 is a prerequisite for this class.**

**ACT 500 | VOICE AND DICTION:FOR BROADCAST AND COMMUNICATION | 4 quarter hours****(Graduate)**

This course provides specific and constructive instruction on how students can improve their diction and voice quality. It is especially aimed at students who wish to pursue careers involving some form of voice work - for example, theatre and broadcast journalism students. The course will focus on improving vocal clarity and sound, through group meetings and individual coaching. This course is only open to Journalism majors who have completed the prerequisite of JOUR 330.