WRI 335/THE 255: Playwriting Workshop

TTR 2:00pm – 3:30pm **** PH 110

Instructor: TJ Parker-Young, MFA, Adjunct Instructor
Email: parkertj@westminster.edu
Office Hours: T 1:00 – 1:45PM or by appointment *Subject to Change*

Required Texts: Backwards & Forwards, Ball, ISBN: 9780809311101

Course Description:
The Playwriting Workshop is aimed on developing the composition of short plays and monologues by student writers interested in the story telling that is found within live theatre. There is a distinction between that of film and television and understanding the medium and theatricality will be a focus of the class. Everything written in class is considered to be in-progress. Reworking and revision of these dramatic scripts is expected and encouraged. Also, there will be reading assignments given throughout the semester. The reading of these short plays is to contribute to your understanding of the format. Thoughtful conversation will take place about these plays and are expected to be read outside of class. Our general approach will be to read the assigned plays and textbook, to contribute thoughtful, constructive critiques of play drafts in every class, and maintain an energized, supportive atmosphere that will preserve a safe place for risk-taking, creative endeavor. Students will complete a portfolio of their new work, with two options for the portfolio creation. Near the end of the semester, we will coordinate a staged reading of your best work, using fellow Westminster students as the actors.

As part of the course, you are required to attend the performances of the Westminster mainstage productions, FEVER/DREAM – Feb. 28th to March 3rd and The Tragedy of Hamlet: Prince of Denmark – May 2nd to May 5th. You will write an essay about each production to talk about it from a writing perspective. Further information about these essays will be provided in class.

Course Objectives
The aim of the course is to get you comfortable with writing in a theatrical format. As a means of measuring this, a portfolio of your work will be created, including exercises we do in class, play ideas, monologues, scenes, and short plays. You should also keep track of any additional performances you see outside of the required Westminster productions. Also, include anything that you find inspiration in during the semester (news articles, music tracks, anecdotes, etc.) and anything that you used as a jumping off point for your pieces.
Portfolios:
There are two options for the makeup of your portfolio:

Option A – Exercises (best 5), 2 Monologues, 3 Ten-Minute Plays
Option B – Exercises (best 5), 2 Monologues, 1 Ten-Minute Play, 1 One-Act Play

Grading
Since grading creative work is, by its very nature, problematic, I will grade based on the revision process, your growth as a writer, and your willingness to try to make pieces that are bold, fresh, ambitious, and inspired by the things around you. Your final grade will reflect the following:

- Class participation
- Exercises
- Monologues
- Plays (drafts and final versions)
- Essays

Participation:
There will be different in class activities (both inside and outside of class) that will make up your participation points. These might be individual or small group activities, written work and/or discussions. When these chances present themselves, you will be made aware.

Attendance:
You are allowed two absences (excused or unexcused) before your final grade will be affected. For every absence thereafter, your final grade will be reduced by one degree of letter grade. If you are coming straight from another class and fear being tardy on a regular basis, please inform the instructor. There is an understand that things happen, and if you believe you must miss class, contact me via email ASAP. This policy is in place to ensure that everyone is participating. Workshops are only as good as the members who attend – key word being ATTEND.

Subject Matter:
Theatre is about depicting and exploring human experiences. I do not censor a writer’s desired topic or language. I will question if the elements of a script serve the overall purpose and arc of the story. That being said, I want you to explore the topics that interest you, that upset you, and that give you inspiration.

Notes on Essay Writing Assignments:
ALL written work MUST be typed, using 12pt, Times New Roman font, double-spaced, and with 1-inch margins, STAPLED.
- Double check your work for spelling and grammatical errors, and utilize the Writing Center.
- Please READ and RE-READ your work before turning it in.
- Emailed papers will NOT be accepted.
- Titles of plays, films, and other full-length works must be *italicized*.
- NO LATE WORK will be accepted. All assignments are due at the BEGINNING of class. (Both a hard copy and dropbox upload on D2L for plagiarism checks).
- I am available during my office hours and by appointment to help you with your written work.

**Schedule:**

Schedule:

*Subject to Change based on class progression of objectives*

Week 1 (1/15 & 1/17): CLASS WILL NOT MEET (Mr. TJ Out-Of-Town)

* Inspiration collection

Week 2 (1/22 & 1/24): Monologues

* Read Play #1 – found on D2L. Will discuss on 1/24

* Backwards and Forwards – pg. 7-24

Week 3 (1/29 & 1/31): Monologue Readings

* Play pitches due 1/31

* Backwards and Forwards – pg.25-35

Week 4 (2/5 & 2/7): 10 min play start

* Read Play #2. Discussion on 2/7

* Backwards and Forwards 37-46

Week 5 (2/12 & 2/14): 10 min play reading

* Backwards and Forwards – 47-67

Week 6 (2/19 & 2/21): 10 min play reading
* Read Play # 3. Discussion on 2/22
* Backwards and Forwards – 68-78

Week 7 (2/26 & 2/28): Continue Play reading
* See Fever Dream March 1-3

Week 8 (3/5 & 3/7) : Finish 10 min play readings & Discuss One Acts
* One Act Pitches

Week 9 (3/10 & 3/12): SPRING BREAK!

Week 10 (3/19 & 3/21): Inspiration Field Trip
* 3/19 class will meet in the Foster Art Gallery

Week 11 (3/26 & 2/28): First 10 pages of One acts
* Read play # 4. Discussion will be on 3/28

Week 12 (4/2 & 4/4): Continue One Act readings
* Backwards and Forwards – 79-84

Week 13 (4/9 & 4/11): Continue One Act readings
* Backwards and Forwards – 85-End

Week 14 (4/16 ): Group Re-Writes
* 4/18 – Easter Break!

* Pick pieces for staged readings

Week 16 (4/30 & 5/2) Prepare for staged readings
* Hamlet – 5/4 & 5/5

**Other important policies:**
Submission Format Policy: You may not submit a paper for a grade in this class that already has been (or will be) submitted for a grade in another course, unless you obtain the explicit written permission of me and the other instructor involved in advance.

Accessibility Statement: Westminster College actively strives for the full inclusion of all our students. Students with disabilities who require access solutions for environmental or curricular barriers should contact Faith Craig, Director of Disability Support Services, located in 414 Thompson-Clark Hall (724-946-7192, craigfa@westminster.edu). If you have a condition that qualifies you for reasonable accommodation under the ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act), you must have ADA documentation on file with the Student Affairs Office to receive that accommodation.

Safe Zone Statement: The professor considers this classroom to be a place where you will be treated with respect as a human being - regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, national origin, religious affiliation, sexual orientation, political beliefs, age, or ability. Additionally, diversity of thought is appreciated and encouraged, provided you can agree to disagree. It is the professor's expectation that ALL students consider the classroom a safe environment.

***By accepting this syllabus, you are indicating that you understand and accept all the professor’s policies listed herein.