

Las Positas College
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Course Outline for THEA 11

STAGE TO SCREEN

Effective: Fall 2008

I. CATALOG DESCRIPTION:

THEA 11 — STAGE TO SCREEN — 3.00 units

Major plays which subsequently have been made into films. Analysis of each playscript augmented by a viewing and analysis of the film adaptation. Major areas of concentration may vary from semester to semester.

2.50 Units Lecture 0.50 Units Lab

Grading Methods:

Letter Grade

Discipline:

Family: Theater Humanities

	<u>MIN</u>
Lecture Hours:	45.00
Lab Hours:	27.00
Total Hours:	72.00

II. NUMBER OF TIMES COURSE MAY BE TAKEN FOR CREDIT: 1

III. PREREQUISITE AND/OR ADVISORY SKILLS:

IV. MEASURABLE OBJECTIVES:

Upon completion of this course, the student should be able to:

- A. List and describe the elements of dramatic art;
- B. Compare and contrast the expression of these elements in live theater and film
 - 1. Differences in the creative process
 - 2. Differences in the final product;
- C. Define important terms in the creation of plays and films;
- D. Identify important movements and developments in theater and film history;
- E. Critically evaluate and compare a written play with its film adaptation
 - 1. Script/screenplay/language
 - 2. Blocking/staging/filming techniques
 - 3. Design and visual elements
 - 4. Characterizations
 - 5. Theme/purpose;
- F. Write a critical review and a compare/contrast essay of a film adaptation;
- G. Imagine, create and communicate a plan for adapting a written play to a film format;
- H. Demonstrate an appreciation for quality theater and film.

V. CONTENT:

- A. Elements of dramatic art
 - 1. Plot/dramatic action
 - a. Linear/climactic
 - b. Episodic
 - 2. Character and acting
 - a. Elements of characterization
 - b. Basic elements of acting
 - c. Acting for the stage
 - d. Acting for the camera
 - 3. Theme/idea - including purposes of dramatic art
 - a. Entertainment
 - b. Reflection of society and human behavior
 - c. Venue for celebration and community
 - d. Instrument for social criticism and change
 - 4. Spectacle
 - a. Basic elements of scenery, lighting, costumes and properties
 - b. Blocking and choreography for the stage
 - c. Blocking for film, including camera positioning and editing
 - 5. Language

- a. Language of the script
 - b. Language in presentation by actors
- 6. Sound and music
 - a. In theater
 - b. In film
- B. Basic vocabulary of both mediums
 - 1. Examples:
 - a. Theater: proscenium, thrust, round, black box, environmental staging
 - b. Film: over the shoulder, point of view, establishing shot
- C. Brief overview of the history of theater and film
- D. Study of plays which have been adapted to the screen (at least four)
 - 1. Background of the playwright and the original production
 - 2. Analysis of the play in terms of the elements of dramatic art listed above
 - 3. If at all possible, viewing a production of the play on stage either live or through video
 - 4. Background of the screen adaptation – personnel, cast, setting, public response
 - 5. Viewing the film adaptation
 - 6. Comparing and contrasting the stage and film adaptations
 - a. Script and dialogue
 - 1. Cuts
 - 2. Additions
 - 3. Changes
 - b. Setting and visual elements
 - 1. “Opening up” of the play
 - 2. Time and place
 - 3. Set, costume, lighting props
 - 4. Editing and cinematography
 - c. Character interpretations
 - d. Themes and ideas
 - e. Sound and music
 - 7. Choice of plays/films to be studied can be
 - a. Wide ranging to reflect a variety of plays/films such as Shakespeare’s Hamlet, Tom Stoppard’s Amadeus, Neil Simon’s Brighton Beach Memoirs;
 - b. Focused on a particular period, theme or playwright such as film adaptations of Shakespeare’s plays, including various film adaptations of the same play – King Lear, Ran, 100 Acres;
 - c. A combination of a and b.

VI. METHODS OF INSTRUCTION:

- A. **Lecture** -
- B. Class and small group discussion
- C. In-class acted out readings of scenes from plays
- D. Stage to film adaptation project – adapting a play to film
 - 1. Research and creative process
 - 2. Written outline
 - 3. In-class verbal presentation
- E. Reading assignments
 - 1. Plays being studied
 - 2. Timelines of theater and film history
 - 3. Model critical reviews and comparison papers
- F. Attendance at live performances of plays studied
- G. In-class viewing of films

VII. TYPICAL ASSIGNMENTS:

- A. Read and be prepared to discuss in class Aaron Sorkin’s stage script for A Few Good Men.
- B. Read either The Real Inspector Hound, Trifles or The Unseen Hand play scripts. Create a “pitch” for an assumed producer that describes how you would transfer that stage script to the screen. Include elements like changes to the script, degree of “opening up” of the setting, casting criteria, theme and purpose. Create an outline for the presentation. Then, present this to the class in a ten minute spoken “pitch.”
- C. Write a five page compare-and-contrast paper of the stage and screen versions of Amadeus.

VIII. EVALUATION:

A. **Methods**

- 1. Quizzes
- 2. Research Projects
- 3. Papers
- 4. Class Participation
- 5. Other:
 - a. Methods
 - 1. Quiz on film and theater terms and concepts. Sample questions: Define the terms: cinematography, genre, Dutch angle, montage.
 - 2. Quizzes on plays to be read, Sample question: Which of the six elements of drama from Aristotle’s Poetics seems most prominent in this play? Justify your response with specific examples from the text
 - 3. Critical reviews of films/plays
 - 4. Compare-and-contrast papers on plays to film
 - 5. Participation in class discussions
 - 6. Research, planning and presentation of stage to film project

B. **Frequency**

- 1. Frequency
 - a. One quiz on film and theater terms
 - b. Quizzes on content of play to be read given on the day reading assignment is due
 - c. A review or paper for each film viewed

IX. TYPICAL TEXTS:

- 1. Shaffer, Peter *Amadeus*, Samuel French, n.d., 0.
- 2. Shakespeare, William Ed Barbara Mowat *King Lear*, Simon, 2005.
- 3. Sorkin, Aaron *A Few Good Men*, Samuel French, Inc, 1990.
- 4. Handouts on theater/film supplied by instructor
 - 1. History
 - 2. Terminology
- 5. Sample critical reviews and comparison papers

X. OTHER MATERIALS REQUIRED OF STUDENTS:

- A. Ticket(s) for live plays to be attended

