



DBLN LITR/THTR 3321
The Playwright in Practice:
Writing for the Stage in 21st Century Ireland

CAPA DUBLIN PROGRAM

Course Description

Irish playwrights have contributed disproportionately to the output of English-language drama over the course of the 20th century, creating some of the most memorable dramatic literature of the last hundred years. With that in mind, this practical playwriting course will interrogate the tradition of theatrical writing in the Irish capital of Dublin at a time when that tradition is undergoing radical changes in terms of form, experimentation and the shifting role of the playwright in the process of theatre-making. Contemporary Dublin has undergone an unprecedented process of modernization rarely seen in the developed world, with the city becoming in just twenty years a multicultural, cosmopolitan space that is embracing provocative ways of seeing and creating work meant for theatrical performance. Questions about the playwright's relevancy in creating performance, how authorship of a play is determined, and the slipperiness of language are now at the heart of Irish theatre's drive to redefine itself. Challenged by a wide range of individual and group exercises, you will be exposed to a host of methodologies for writing and creating work for the stage specific to this unique moment in Irish theatrical history, and in the process gain an appreciation for the important role writers still play in making theatrical performance.

Course Aims

To familiarize the student with the range of skills required to write and present successful drama; to offer the opportunity to explore, discuss and present new dramatic work in a supportive environment; to enable the student to give and receive feedback on dramatic work in a useful way; to approach a range of texts and assignments with confidence; to engage with Ireland's vibrant traditions of cultural production; to write an original piece of short drama for the stage.

Requirements and Prerequisites

Students should have an interest in creative writing and dramatic writing in particular. Students must be prepared to share their work in sessions and to offer and receive supportive feedback.

Learning Outcomes

- a. The production of an extensive playwriting portfolio, including draft scenes of varied lengths, monologues between 500 and 1,000 words, a 'tiny play' of 600 words, and a twenty-minute one act play of approximately 4,000 words.
- b. The writing and completion of a logbook containing a detailed and in-depth analysis of an individual student's development over the duration of the course.
- c. The ability to articulate a familiarity with contemporary Irish writing for the stage, as well as the range of influences that drive dramatic writing in the 20th century and the first two decades of the 21st century Ireland.
- d. An in-depth understanding of the problematic relationship between the written text and theatrical performance as seen through the lens of contemporary Irish writing for the stage.

Developmental Outcomes

Students should demonstrate: responsibility & accountability, independence & interdependence, goal orientation, self-confidence, resilience, appreciation of differences. They will be able to communicate their ideas in both oral and written forms.

Class Methodology

Through a combination of low-stakes writing exercises, the reading and analysis of theoretical texts on playwriting, and writing and revising a final project in the form of a twenty minute one act play of approximately 4,000 words, the class will offer an opportunity to experiment with the process of playwriting in an Irish context. Additionally, you will, through various exercises both in and out of class, experiment with the fruitful tension that exists between the act of writing a playscript and the process of how that script might be staged in performance. You will also engage with rhetorical strategies underpinning various approaches to writing for the Irish stage by reading and analyzing various Irish plays that exemplify a wide range approaches to dramatic writing. The dramaturgical strategies employed by some of Ireland’s most influential playwrights, including Samuel Beckett, Brian Friel and Marina Carr will serve as a foundation for many of the writing exercises that are conducted. Writing exercises will involve working independently and collaboratively within groups. You will also be tasked with keeping and maintaining a logbook detailing and analyzing their artistic development during the course. Most importantly, you will have the unique opportunity to learn first-hand from Irish playwrights and theatre-makers from different stages of career-development, including the internationally acclaimed playwright Marina Carr. Assignments and exercises will include:

- *The ‘Bad Play’ exercise* – A playfully transgressive exercise that explores what elements make a play a play. You will be asked to write a ‘bad’ play, offering the opportunity to discuss and debate the subjective categories of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ in terms of writing for the stage.
- *Dialogues* – You will explore how to write brief dialogues – between two characters/voices through the introduction of dramatic conflict.
- *Monologues* – Using the prevalence of the ‘monologue play’ within contemporary Irish theatre tradition, you will embark on an exploration on how to generate compelling dramatic writing using a singular body, voice and perspective.
- *Tiny Plays* – Reacting to a perceived paucity of thematically large and ambitious Irish plays, Fishamble Theatre Company called for short 600 word plays about Ireland in 2011 with the idea that Ireland had become too fractured a nation to be summed up in one play. You will write their own ‘Tiny Play’ working from themes explored in the work of the Irish playwrights discussed in class.
- *Devising and writing in an ensemble* – Using models of theatre making that build around specific sites or through ensemble collaboration (such as Dublin theatre companies Corn Exchange and ANU), you will be tasked with creating a short piece of theatre that is then recorded as text.
- *Playwriting Logbook* – you will be asked to keep a logbook that details informal analyses of work they’ve read and seen, exercises they’ve participated in and their own individual development as writers.
- *One Act Play* – as a final project, you will be tasked with outlining, writing and revising a one act play, on subjects and themes of their own choosing, of approximately 20 minutes in length.

Field Components

CAPA provides the unique opportunity to learn about the city through direct, guided experience. Participation in field activities for this course is required. You will actively explore the Global City in which you are currently living. Furthermore, you will have the chance to collect useful information that will be an invaluable resource for the essays/papers/projects assigned in this course.

The assigned field component(s) are: TBC

Students are also strongly encouraged to participate in **co-curricular** program activities.

Assessment/Grading Policy

Descriptor	Alpha	UK	US	GPA
Excellent	A	75+	93+	4.0
	A-	70-74	90-92	3.7
Good	B+	66-69	87-89	3.3
	B	63-65	83-86	3.0
	B-	60-62	80-82	2.7
Average	C+	56-59	77-79	2.3
	C	53-55	73-76	2.0
Below Average / Poor	C-	50-52	70-72	1.7
	D+	46-49	67-69	1.3
	D	40-45	60-66	0.7
			1.0	
Fail	F	<40	<60	0

Grade Breakdown and Assessment of Learning Outcomes

Assessment Task	Grade %	Learning Outcomes	Due Date
-----------------	---------	-------------------	----------

Participation	20%	all	Weekly
Written Assignments	20%	a, c, d	TBC
Playwriting Logbook	20%	b, c, d	TBC
One Act Play (showcase draft)	30%	a, d	TBC
One Act Play (post-showcase rewrite/final draft)	10%	a, d	TBC

Assignments

Participation	20%
Written Assignments	20%
Playwriting Logbook	20%
One Act Play (showcase draft)	30%
One Act Play (post-showcase rewrite/final draft)	10%

Dress Code n/a

Course Materials

Required Readings:

Plays

- *Translations* by Brian Friel
- *Krapp's Last Tape* by Samuel Beckett
- *Footfalls* by Samuel Beckett
- *Conversations on a Homecoming* by Tom Murphy
- *By the Bog of Cats* by Marina Carr
- *Portia Coughlan* by Marina Carr
- *Tiny Plays*, by Fishamble Theatre Company
- *Terminus* by Mark O'Rowe

Theoretical texts

- *Three Uses of the Knife* by David Mamet
- *Impro* by Keith Johnstone
- *Into the Woods* by John Yorke
- *The Secret Life of Plays* by Steve Waters
- *That Was Us: Contemporary Irish Theatre and Performance* edited by Fintan Walsh
- *Theatre Talk: Voices of Irish Theatre Practitioners* edited by Lillian Chambers and Ger Fitzgibbon
- Unpublished interviews with contemporary Irish playwrights edited by Jesse Weaver

Weekly Course Schedule

May be subject to change

UNIT 1	
Topic	Introduction to course.

In class activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion of the basics of dramaturgy: character, structure and language • Discussion of the Irish playwriting tradition, 'literary' theatre. • In-class assignment: 'Bad Play' Exercise.
Readings	Read: <i>Translations</i> by Brian Friel; <i>Conversations on a Homecoming</i> by Tom Murphy.

UNIT 2	
Topic	Function of language in theatre; status, power, wants, needs.
In class activity	In-class assignment: rough dialogue, distilling character from language.
Readings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assignment: write down dialogue overheard in everyday life. • Read: <i>Faith Healer</i> by Brian Friel; <i>Impro</i> by Keith Johnstone (selections)

UNIT 3	
Topic	Workshop on language
In class activity	Structure and character led by guest playwright Marina Carr
Readings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read <i>That Was Us</i> (selections) • Read <i>Theatre Talk</i> (selections)

UNIT 4	
Topic	Relationship between language, character, perspectives.
In class activity	Read aloud dialogue assignments, discuss use of language in them.
Readings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assignment: character profiles. • Read: <i>Three Uses of the Knife</i> by David Mamet; <i>Into the Woods</i> by John Yorke (selections)

UNIT 5	
Topic	Discussion of differing approaches to structure.
In class activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The performance of 'tenses' (past/present/future) in activating drama in monologues. • In-class assignment: fleshing out character biographies.
Readings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assignment: A Tiny Monologue Play. • Read: <i>Krapp's Last Tape, Footfalls</i> by Samuel Beckett.

UNIT 6	
Topic	Workshop
In class activity	Led by guest director Jim Culleton, artistic director of Fishamble Theatre Company, Ireland's new play company.
Readings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read: Fishamble's <i>Tiny Plays</i> (selections) • Read: <i>By the Bog of Cats</i> by Marina Carr.

UNIT 7	
Topic	Share tiny monologue plays
In class activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion: what is dramatic conflict? How does it arise? • In-class assignment: first lines exercise.
Readings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assignment: Tiny Play first draft. • Read: <i>Portia Coughlan</i> by Marina Carr.

UNIT 8	
Topic	The challenges and necessities of rewriting.
In class activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing Tiny Plays, feedback; discussion of exposition, inciting incident, rising action, climax, denouement. • In-class assignment: individual check-in on first stirrings of one act play.

Readings	Assignment: observations of space and proximity on dialogue, physical relationships.
UNIT 9	
Topic	Workshop of the role of the writer and text in devising (guest lecturer TBD)
In class activity	
Readings	Assignment: final draft of Tiny Play.
UNIT 10	
Topic	Sharing of Tiny Plays.
In class activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working definition of devising. • In-class assignment: devising/collaborative writing exercise.
Readings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assignment: rough outline of one act. • Read <i>Terminus</i> by Mark O'Rowe
UNIT 11	
Topic	Discuss <i>Terminus</i> : the city of Dublin transfigured and theatricalized by language and image.
In class activity	Workshop on writing space: how the cityscape can be explored to generate text. Field trip: explore various sites in city centre Dublin to use as prompts for writing in terms of tone, rhythm and setting.
Readings	
UNIT 12	
Topic	Workshop on the role of the dramaturg (guest lecturers TBD)
In class activity	
Readings	Assignment: first draft of one acts.
UNIT 13	
Topic	Sharing extracts from one acts; feedback on character, use of language.
In class activity	In-class assignment: individual check-in on first drafts of one act.
Readings	Assignment: second draft of one act.
UNIT 14	
Topic	Showcase of one act plays for fellow students and staff. Debrief on writing process during the course.
In class activity	
Readings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final draft of one acts due. • Playwriting logbooks due.

Attendance, Participation & Student Responsibilities

Attendance: CAPA has a mandatory attendance policy. Attendance is taken at the beginning of every class. Unless otherwise expressed by your instructor, the first time a student has an unexcused absence for a class, their grade will not be impacted. The second time a student has an unexcused absence in that class, it will result in a 3 percent reduction of the final grade (for example: an A- [92] will become an B+ [89]). The student will be placed on academic probation at this time. Three unexcused absences per class will result in failure of the course. A pattern of three absences in more than one course will result in dismissal from the program.

Excused Absences: Absences are only excused for medical reasons, for a family emergency or for a religious holiday. To request an excused absence, students must contact the Academic Director ahead of time and provide evidence (e.g. a doctor's note) of the reason for their absence, otherwise the absence will not be excused. Even if the student knows the absence will not be excused, the student should still contact CAPA to inform CAPA they will not be in class.

In addition to contacting the Academic Director, it is the responsibility of the student to contact their instructor and make up any missed assignments.

Class Participation: Students are expected to participate actively and critically in class discussions, and the participation portion of the class will be graded accordingly. Students must read assignments BEFORE the class, and come in on time. Participation is a vital part of your grade: students are expected to participate orally in seminars and in online forums and discussions in a critical and evaluative manner; to interact with the faculty and fellow students with respect and tolerance; and to actively engage in discussion. Derogatory or inflammatory comments about the cultures, perspectives or attitudes of others in the class will not be tolerated.

Any student who feels they may need an accommodation based on the impact of a physical, psychological, medical, or learning disability should contact the instructor and/or the director of academic affairs privately to discuss your specific needs.

Academic Integrity: A high level of responsibility and academic honesty is expected. Because the value of an academic course depends upon the absolute integrity of the work done by the student, it is imperative that a student demonstrates a high standard of individual honor in his or her scholastic work and class behavior. Plagiarism, self-plagiarism and cheating can result in dismissal from the program.

Self-plagiarism, copying an assignment entirely or partially to submit to a different class in an attempt to receive credit twice for one piece of work is unacceptable and considered cheating by duplication. Students risk receiving an "O" for any assignments in which they have duplicated their own work.

All substantial writing assignments (typically anything worth 20% or more of the final course grade) will be run through the plagiarism checking software Turnitin when submitted via CANVAS. See CAPA's Academic Standards and Policies for more information and resources on plagiarism.

Sexual Misconduct, Required Reporting, and Title IX: CAPA The Global Education Network is committed to encouraging a safe and healthy environment at our seven CAPA centers. This commitment includes the understanding of, and applicable adherence to, the guidelines outlined in Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. Title IX necessitates that US universities provide equity in all educational programs and activities without sex discrimination.

CAPA understands the implications of Title IX compliance for our institutional partners and thus endeavors to support this compliance as a vital aspect of partnership. The safety and security of all students during a program is a matter of crucial importance to CAPA. To facilitate this, CAPA encourages students to openly disclose any and all information that is Title IX relevant so that CAPA staff can provide support and connect students with appropriate resources. Because students may not understand the implications of Title IX abroad, CAPA will work to advise students about the resources available through Title IX and explain the importance of compliance in Title IX reporting. CAPA will work to build student confidence in CAPA's status as a mandated reporter by outlining the advantage of disclosure for the student, reassuring them that any information disclosed will not be used in an inappropriate manner, and stressing that individuals will only be informed on a need-to-know basis.

Use of electronic equipment in class: All devices such as laptops, i-pods, i-pads, netbooks, notebooks and tablets, smartphones, cell phones, etc. are **NOT** allowed unless you have express permission from the faculty or you have been instructed to do so. If you require an accommodation to use any type of electronic equipment, inform the Associate Director of Academic Affairs at the beginning of Term.

Use of Electronic Translators: In Language courses students are NOT allowed to use electronic translators for writing texts in the target language: those submitting compositions and texts of whatever kind translated in such a fashion will receive a final F grade for the course.

Late Submission: Late submission of papers, projects, journal entries, pieces of homework and portfolios is only permitted with prior approval. A request for an extension must be made to the relevant faculty member no later than two days prior to the due date. Late submission without prior approval will result in a 3 percent per day deduction of the final grade. In either case, work cannot be submitted after feedback has been provided to the rest of the class on the relevant assessment or one week after the due date whichever comes first, after which point a grade of "O" will be given for the assessment.

Behaviour during Examinations: During examinations, you must do your own work. Unless specifically instructed by the lecturer or instructor, talking during an exam is not permitted, nor may you compare papers, copy from others, or collaborate in any way. Any failure to abide by examination rules will result in failure of the exam, and may lead to failure of the course and disciplinary action.

