

TH354-30 Playwriting

24/25

Department

SCAPVC - Theatre and Performance Studies

Level

Undergraduate Level 3

Module leader

Credit value

30

Module duration

20 weeks

Assessment

100% coursework

Study location

University of Warwick main campus, Coventry

Description

Introductory description

Taking place over two terms, Playwriting will introduce students to multiple different creative strategies and processes that can be embedded within a range of textual forms. This module is composed of practical workshops and interactive seminars, through which students will develop creative skills in playwriting, while also sharpening their critical and evaluative skills by exploring the techniques employed by notable practitioners on the contemporary stage. In the Autumn term, students will explore different constituent elements of the text including character, dialogue, form and structure. These will be interrogated via group discussion and dissection of critically acclaimed plays, and will be complemented by exercises and activities which will help students apply these techniques to their own writing practice. In the Spring term, as students work towards producing a full-length play, they will be invited to share your work-in-progress with the wider group through opportunities including pitches, live readings and staged mini-performances.

Module aims

The goal of this module is to introduce students to different dramaturgical approaches and creative processes embodied in a range of textual forms—from traditional dramatic writing to performance scenarios. The main purposes of the module are to enable students to develop their practical and creative skills in playwriting and also their critical skills in exploring the strategies and processes involved in their own work and that of notable practitioners.

The module aims to expose students to different techniques and strategies of the playwriting craft,

while at the same time encouraging them to toy with “dramaturgical rules” in search for their individual voices as writers.

The module will assist students in:

- producing a playwriting portfolio, that will include both short exercise pieces and the final project—a fully developed play or performance scenario;
- exploring collective writing
- examining critical concepts and practice in playwriting and performance writing;
- understanding through practice and discussion the specific aspects involved in the creative process of writing for stage;
- conceptualising the student’s own practice as playwrights in relation to other playwrights’ works and creative approaches.

Outline syllabus

This is an indicative module outline only to give an indication of the sort of topics that may be covered. Actual sessions held may differ.

Playtexts:

- Churchill, Caryl. *A Number*. London: Nick Hern Books (2002)
- Churchill, Caryl. *Escaped Alone*. London: Nick Hern Books (2016)
- Kirkwood, Lucy. *The Children*. London: Nick Hern Books (2016)
- Lee-Jones, Jasmine. *seven methods of killing kylie jenner*. London: Methuen (2019)
- McDowall, Alistair. *Pomona*. London: Methuen (2014)
- McDowall, Alistair. *X*. London: Methuen (2016)
- Payne, Nick. *Elegy*. London: Faber and Faber (2016)
- Thompson, Selina. *Salt*. London: Faber and Faber (2018)
- Zeldin, Alexander. *LOVE*. London: Methuen (2016)

Supporting material:

- Edgar, David. *How Plays Work*. London: Methuen (2021)
- Foxon, Chris and George Turvey. *Being a Playwright*. London: Nick Hern Books (2018)
- Jeffreys, Stephen. *Playwriting*. London: Nick Hern Books (2019)
- Rebellato, Dan. *Playwriting: A Backstage Guide*. London: Methuen (2023)

Please note: this an indicative list. Selected texts may change.

Learning outcomes

By the end of the module, students should be able to:

- Understand the specific nature of writing for theatre and performance and to demonstrate a practical and critical knowledge of playwriting
- Demonstrate critical and creative skills in the reading, imitation and generation of dramatic texts and performance scenarios
- Explain generic and formal dramaturgical conventions
- Show skill in the practice of writing for stage; offer critical feedback of each other's work
- Demonstrate capacity to analyse and critically examine diverse forms of playwriting
- Adapt and transfer the creative and critical skills involved in writing to a variety of creative

endeavours and environments

- Demonstrate knowledge of specific playwriting concepts including genre, form, structure, action, character, dialogue, and space

Subject specific skills

By undertaking this module, students will develop skills that will enable them to understand the specific nature of writing for theatre and to demonstrate a practical and critical knowledge of playwriting in terms of subject and medium, selection of material, dramaturgical techniques and strategies, genre and form, constituent aspects of dramatic text including structure, action, character, dialogue, and space, as well as knowledge of representative examples by notable playwrights/ performance writers.

Transferable skills

These skills are transferable to other forms of creative practices (e.g. devising, solo performance) as well as for writing in other media and formats (script writing, writing for digital media, gaming, applied drama).

Study

Study time

Type	Required
Seminars	18 sessions of 3 hours (18%)
External visits	2 sessions of 3 hours (2%)
Private study	130 hours (43%)
Assessment	110 hours (37%)
Total	300 hours

Private study description

During private study, students will be reading and critically reflecting on chosen playtexts. They will also be producing creative work including responses to chosen playtexts and the development of a full-length play.

Costs

No further costs have been identified for this module.

Assessment

You must pass all assessment components to pass the module.

Assessment group A

	Weighting	Study time
Portfolio	40%	40 hours
Portfolio of short scripts and critical reflections developed through the Autumn term		
Full-length play	60%	70 hours
Students will write a full length play		

Feedback on assessment

Use of standard departmental feedback form for assessment as well as a 15 minute individual tutorial session with students to discuss feedback

Oral feedback will be available on individual exam performance.

Availability

Courses

This module is Optional for:

- Year 4 of UENA-QW35 Undergraduate English and Theatre Studies with Intercalated Year
- UTHA-W421 Undergraduate Theatre and Performance Studies
 - Year 3 of W421 Theatre and Performance Studies
 - Year 3 of W421 Theatre and Performance Studies

This module is Option list B for:

- Year 3 of UTHA-QW34 Undergraduate English and Theatre Studies

This module is Option list C for:

- UTHA-W421 Undergraduate Theatre and Performance Studies
 - Year 3 of W421 Theatre and Performance Studies
 - Year 3 of W421 Theatre and Performance Studies
- Year 4 of UTHA-W422 Undergraduate Theatre and Performance Studies (with Intercalated Year)