

**THAR 274-401 2020C: Dramaturgy**  
**Cary Mazer**

**Course Description:** *This course will be taught remotely in Fall 2020, with synchronous meetings (on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 10:30 AM Eastern Time) and some asynchronous activities.*

This course examines the functions and methods of the dramaturg—the person in the theatrical process who advises the artistic collaborators on (among other things) new play development, the structure of the script, the playwright’s biography and other writings, the play’s first production and its subsequent production history, and the historical and regional details of the period depicted in the plays action. We study the history of the dramaturg in the American theatre and discuss contemporary issues relating to the dramaturg’s contribution to the theatrical production (including the legal debates about the dramaturg’s contribution to the creation of *Rent*). And, in creative teams, the class will create dramaturgical portfolios for a season of imaginary (and, potentially, a few actual) theatrical productions.

Level: Open to all undergraduates.

Class Structure for Fall 2020:

Activities for the course include: discussions of concepts and issues; a demonstration of research resources (by a Penn librarian); presentations of team research assignments; weekly reports on plays being considered for a hypothetical theatre season; presentation and discussion of research assignments for the first of the plays selected for the season (usually a play by Shakespeare), including cutting the text, charting staging possibilities; researching and illustrating production history; etc.; deliberations over the selection of plays; a discussion of new-play dramaturgy by one of the nation’s leading practitioners; presentations of exemplary samples of different ways of communicating to the audience (program notes, lobby displays, press releases, education packets, artist blogs, websites, press materials); and, in the final few weeks of the course, the distribution of research tasks and the assignment of the different components of the final project: a portfolio of dramaturgical materials for the five plays selected for the hypothetical season. Students are often engaged in two or more of these activities in any given week.

Given this range of activities:

- This course will be taught remotely, with synchronous meetings (on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 10:30 AM Eastern Time) and some asynchronous activities.
- Synchronous Sessions:

Classes involving discussions, presentations, and special guests should, ideally, be attended by students synchronously. That said, every class session will be recorded, and students who occasionally cannot attend synchronously can arrange for a teammate to present their research reports or their play reports, and can read or view the other reports as they are posted on Canvas, and/or view the class session asynchronously.

- Asynchronous Activities:

Much of the team- and full-class discussions regarding play-selection, dividing up research tasks, and assigning the different components of the final project will be done via social media platforms of the students' choosing, in the students' own time (as they have been in past, pre-pandemic, iterations of the course).

#### Outline of Assignments & Assessments

- Assessments will be made on the basis of the students' execution of the almost continual series of reports and presentations, and the execution of their contributions to the final group assignment.
- The final grade is based on:
  - 80% reports and assignments.
  - 20% participation (though students who occasionally can only attend a class session asynchronously will not be penalized).

#### Required books, equipment or special items to engage in class:

All of the assigned readings are on Canvas. Of the several dozen plays that each student will read for the play-selection process, most are available from on-line sources, from MS supplied by professional dramaturgs and dramaturgy professors consulted through the listserv of the Literary Managers and Dramaturgs of the Americas (LMDA), through the New Play Exchange website (NPX), and occasionally from the playwrights themselves.