THE SCHOOL FOR NEW LEARNING
DEPAUL UNIVERSITY

AI 249 “ALL THE CITY’S A STAGE”: THEATRE AND COMMUNITY IN CHICAGO

Faculty: Fred Wellisch
14 E. Jackson, #1510
312-362-8046
fwellisc@depaul.edu

Hours: Mondays, June 13th – July 11th, 5:45-9:00
No class, July 4th
Final written project due July 18th

Location: Lewis 1514

Competencies: A2X, Can create and/or perform a dramatic piece that illuminates issues of personal, social or community concern and reflect on the creative process you used.

A5, Can define and analyze a creative process.

Sources: “A Raisin in the Sun” by Lorraine Hansberry
“The Laramie Project” by the Tectonic Theatre Project,
Various handouts
The D2L course website, https://d2l.depaul.edu/d2l/home/515159

Useful websites:
http://www.chicagoplays.com/
http://www.theatreinchiicago.com/maps/mapTheatres.php
https://www.goldstar.com/chicago
http://www.hottix.org/

Course Description, Learning Outcomes:

Theatre is an ideal lens through which to view the human condition. Plays show us characters and situations drawn from everyday life and often force us to confront issues and challenges faced by families and communities much like our own. Best of all, they occur in real time, taking place before our eyes in theatres filled with viewers and citizens like us. There is no better place to experience the transformational power of theatre than Chicago. Perhaps more than any other American city, Chicago is rich in theatrical resources, containing several hundred theatre companies, many dedicated to telling the stories of the people who live here.

I have two major goals for this course. The first is to convince you that drama has the power to illuminate issues that affect our lives and the
communities where we live and that there are a great variety of theatrical forms and styles that can be used for that purpose. To accomplish this goal, we will read two plays dealing with communities in conflict: Lorraine Hansberry’s “A Raisin in the Sun,” set on the South Side in segregated post-World War II Chicago; and “The Laramie Project,” a piece by the Tectonic Theatre Company that held a mirror up to the city of Laramie, Wyoming in the wake of the 1998 murder of Matthew Shepard. We will also look at the remarkable work of a teenage theatre company in Albany Park dedicated to telling Chicago and the world the stories of its residents.

As part of this goal, you will be able to:

1. Identify and define the elements that comprise a dramatic piece, such as plot, character, setting and design.

2. Determine a playwright’s purpose in writing a play and analyze how the play’s elements are interrelated to achieve the playwright’s purpose.

3. Discuss, analyze and critique a dramatic piece of literature openly and critically and back up your assertions with evidence.

4. Describe how theatre can be used to dramatize issues of community and social significance.

5. Compare and contrast different types and styles of dramatic pieces.

Your culminating project for this goal will be to write a proposal for a dramatic piece you would like to see produced that illustrates important personal, family or community issues.

To satisfy the second goal, we will study the map of Chicago and locate theatre companies throughout the city, particularly ones whose mission it is to dramatize the issues facing their communities.

As part of this goal you will be able to:

1. Identify theatre companies throughout the city and describe their respective missions

2. Critique a play you have seen, taking into account the playwright’s purpose, the quality of the acting and other elements associated with any theatrical production.

Your culminating project for this goal will be an oral presentation for the class about the play you saw. You will summarize the story, critique the play and evaluate the elements of the production.

Assessment: Class participation and oral reports - 25%
Study questions and competency assignments - 25%
Final oral presentation on attending and critiquing a play – 25%
Final written proposal on using theatre to dramatize community issues – 25%

I will assess your work with quality, integrity, flexibility and empathy, as outlined in SNL’s Qualities and Principles for Assessing Learning.

This is a graded course. If you wish to take it for a Pass/Fail grade, you must notify me in writing by the end of the first week of class.

Grades on individual assignments and the final grade for the course will be based on the following grading scheme:
A, 95-100; A-, 91-94; B+, 88-90; B, 85-87; B-, 81-84; C+, 77-80; C, 73-76; C-, 69-72; D, 68 or below.

Five points will be deducted for every day an assignment is handed in late.

Final grades below C- will not satisfy competence and students will have to repeat any competencies they fail in future courses or other ways.

College and University Policies:

This course includes and adheres to the following college and university policies:

Academic Integrity Policy (UGRAD)

Incomplete Policy, if you wish to request an Incomplete in this course, you must submit an Incomplete Contract to me no later than Monday, July 4th. The Contract can be found on the forms page of the SNL website, http://snl.depaul.edu/student-resources/undergraduate-resources/Pages/forms.aspx.

Course Withdrawal Timelines and Grade/Fee Consequences

Accommodations Based on the Impact of a Disability

Protection of Human Research Participants

College and University Resources:

University Center for Writing-based Learning
Instructor Bio: Fred A. Wellisch has been a resident faculty member at SNL since has taught Foundations, Research Seminar, Critical Thinking, The Death Penalty: A Multidisciplinary Approach, Race and Identity in American Theater, and From Page to Stage: Bringing Characters to Life. Before coming to DePaul, he practiced criminal law at the Office of the Cook County Public Defender and in private practice. He has a B.A. (1969) and M.A.(1973) from the University of Chicago and a J.D. (1984) from the John Marshall Law School. He is also a professional actor and director, having worked at Steppenwolf, A Red Orchid, Apple Tree, Strawdog, Eclipse and Lyric Opera of Chicago.

COURSE CALENDAR, DUE DATES AND DELIVERABLES

Pre-class assignment: Come to the first class session prepared to tell us a bit about yourself. Make sure to include the following items:

1) the communities you live in or belong to (think about “community” broadly. It could be your neighborhood but it could also be a group or institution to which you belong or indeed the entire city);
2) the issues you feel are important to those communities;
3) how much you know about and how often you attend Chicago theatre; and
4) what sorts of plays or stories you like to see or read.

June 13th: A “Feast” for the Eyes and Ears. Viewing, Writing About and Discussing “Feast.” Introductions and overview of syllabus and course requirements. The richness and diversity of Chicago theatre. A few examples. Theatre websites and other resources.

Homework: 1. Read “A Raisin in the Sun” and the supplementary materials to the play. Write answers to the study questions. Due June 20th
2. Investigate the websites of three theatre companies. Be prepared to report your findings to the class. Include the following in your report:
a. Where they are located
b. Their mission
c. What sorts of plays or other theatrical performances they put on
d. Whether you would be interested in seeing one of their productions. Due June 20th


Homework: 1. Read “The Laramie Project” and supplementary materials. Write answers to the study questions. Due June 27th
2. Prepare an oral report in which you identify a community to which you belong, an issue or challenge faced by that community, and the way you would illustrate that challenge using the medium of theatre. Be prepared to answer questions posed by your classmates. Due June 27th
June 27\textsuperscript{th}: A Broken City. Discussion of “The Laramie Project.” Oral presentations on community and theatre.

**Homework:** 1. Competence-specific assignments – topics to be distributed in class. *Due July 4\textsuperscript{th}*
2. Attend a play at a local theatre of your choice. Take notes and gather any materials, including programs, about the play, the playwright and the performance. Extra credit if you attend a talk back, interview an actor in the play or even the director or artistic director. *Oral Report due July 11\textsuperscript{th}*

July 4\textsuperscript{th}: No class. Competence-specific assignments due.

July 11\textsuperscript{th}: It’s Your Turn. Oral presentations on your Chicago theatre experiences. Beer and pizza?

**Homework:** Final project. Using the feedback you have received from your classmates as well as the variety of theatrical forms you have seen and read, write a two-to-three page proposal in which you discuss:
1. A community issue of concern to you;
2. How you would present this concern on-stage;
3. The theatrical form or style you would give your piece;
4. The research you would do to bring it to life;
5. Whom you might cast in the parts;
6. Where you might hold performances; and
7. Any production values you think might be important to make your point. *Due July 18\textsuperscript{th}*

July 18\textsuperscript{th}. No class. Final projects due.

**SYLLABUS SUBJECT TO CHANGE**