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Topics in Theater: Lab  
**(MFA Dancers-- 6/ 21-8/2 Saturdays Only 10-1)**  
**BA undergraduates begin 7/21**  
7/21-8/16, 2008  
Monday through Thursday 10-1pm  
KSE 508  
2-4 credits  
Open to undergraduate Advanced and Graduate Students upon request.

**PERFORMANCE (BROADLY CONSIDERED) LAB**  
**THEATER 490-801**

Course Description:

A lab, based in acting and directing techniques, considers performance broadly and includes all aspects of the traditional performing arts, film/digital media and visual art. The lab defines any place where a relationship between performer and audience exists, as a performance. Dispensing with conventional boundaries, students will explore, use compositional tools to develop common criteria for new work, be it solo performance, new plays, comedy, etc.

Lab participants will take part in several introductory creative exercises and then plan, develop, and /or perform new work of their own through the duration of the course. These new works may be self scripted, adapted from other courses, or new performance texts as developed by the artist. Theater artists seeking new plays will be guided toward new writers or other sources for materials.

Course Learning Outcomes:

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

1. Analyze and articulate classical ideas and contemporary compositional theory across conventional disciplinary or framework boundaries.
2. Apply classical and contemporary compositional ideas and theory as adventurous performance makers of their own new work.
3. Define and develop tools to critique and assess the lab participants' creative application of compositional ideas through weekly creative exercises.

The course is organized into a series of self- contained exercises each departing from and interrogating ideas from Aristotle's Poetics.

Required Reading:

Aristotle, on poetry and Style: (ed and Translated with introduction G.M.A Grebe)  
Isbn:0-87220-072-8, Hackett Indianapolis.

Grading Policy:

This is considered an advanced seminar course. Grading will reflect perfect attendance and class work, a well thought out, original and complete final project as agreed between professor and participant.

In the outline below the title of each exercise is followed by notations from Aristotle, which relate to the type of exercise. The Aristotle text is meant to illuminate issues brought into practice by the exercises themselves. As source for discussion and for argument.

**Exercise 1:**

**The Triangle: Text, Music and Movement:**

**Entrance (music) text exercise**

**How why what order.**

Art is imitation

- The means of imitation (color, shape, rhythm, melody, text)

Theater/Dance/Text (Literature)

- Manner (third person narrative vs. first person spoken text)

**Exercise 2:**

**Telling and Showing/ Narration and Action**

**Neutral Story with use of Architecture of Room as back story**

The Epic vs. the Tragedy

Epic:

Third person, regular meter, unlimited plot events, multiple stories and use of the supernatural

Tragedy:

First person, mixed meter, unity of time, no more plot events than are necessary, one story at a time

**Exercise 3: Time and broken Time**

**Add breaking of Frame or time**

Definition of the Tragedy

1. Unity of time
2. Moral worth of content
3. First person
4. Pathos
5. Language has rhythm, melody, and music
6. Addresses general truths about humanity

#### **Exercise 4: Flags (How character is represented, defined and exploded)**

**Add one prop that is a Flag and one that is a broken expectation**

##### Elements of the Tragedy

1. Plot
2. Character
3. Thought/ Idea
4. Dialogue
5. Music
6. Sets, costumes, lighting, etc.

#### **Exercise 5: Dramatic Action**

**“Come with me” (Picnic)**

##### Aspects of a Tragedy

1. Reversal: sudden change of events to their opposite
2. Recognition: sudden revelation or discovery of the truth
  - a. Signs emerging from the plot
  - b. Rediscovered memory
  - c. Inference
3. Suffering/transformation through experience

#### **Exercise 6: Types of Structure: It story different theater/logic or confound expectation:**

##### Types of Tragedy

- Complex (uses reversal and recognition)
- Simple (no reversal or recognition, inferior)
- Spectacle

#### **Exercise 7: The American Tragedy Comic Strip.**

##### Structure of a Tragedy

- Prologue
- Chorus enters (Entrance song)
- Episodes, followed by choral interludes
- Exodus

##### Excellence of Structure:

- Beginning, middle, end
- Length/Unity of plot as necessary; no excess (unity of plot)
- Action driven
- All plot developments should be probable or inevitable, and develop out of the dramatic actions
- Dramatic actions vs. presentation (although presentation should be well done also)
- Surprise -unexpected connections between unrelated elements/events
- Act in relation to the signified other
- Act with knowledge; act before it, or gain it through action or and decide not to act
- Complex plot, with simultaneous reversal and recognition
- Recognition emerging from the plot

- Economy of content
- Characters: worthy of interest, consistent, identifiable to viewer, the active character flaw, integral to plot.
- Catharsis

Exercise 8, 9, and 10: The final project:  
A short solo performance based on a short story

### C. University Policies

1. *Students with disabilities*. Verification of disability, class standards, the policy on the

Use of alternate materials and test accommodations can be found at the following:  
<http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/DSAD/SAC/SACltr.pdf>

2. *Religious observances*. Policies regarding accommodations for absences due to Religious observance are found at the following:

[http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/SecU/acad%2Badmin\\_policies/S1.5.htm](http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/SecU/acad%2Badmin_policies/S1.5.htm)

3. *Students called to active military duty*. Accommodations for absences due to call-up of

Reserves to active military duty should be noted.

<http://www3.uwm.edu/des/web/registration/militarycallup.cfm>

4. *Incompletes*. The conditions for awarding an incomplete to graduate and undergraduate

Students can be found at the following:

[http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/SecU/acad%2Badmin\\_policies/S31.pdf](http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/SecU/acad%2Badmin_policies/S31.pdf)

5. *Discriminatory conduct (such as sexual harassment)*. Definitions of discrimination. Harassment, abuse of power, and the reporting requirements of discriminatory conduct

Are found at the following:

[http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/SecU/acad%2Badmin\\_policies/S47.pdf](http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/SecU/acad%2Badmin_policies/S47.pdf)

6. *Academic misconduct*. Policies for addressing students cheating on exams or plagiarism

Can be found at the following:

<http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/OSL/DOS/conduct.html>

7. *Complaint procedures*. Students may direct complaints to the head of the academic Unit or department in which the complaint occurs. If the complaint allegedly violates a

Specific university policy, it may be directed to the head of the department or academic

Unit in which the complaint occurred or to the appropriate university office responsible

For enforcing the policy.

8. *Grade appeal procedures*. Procedures for student grade appeal appear at the following:

[http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/SecU/acad%2Badmin\\_policies/S28.htm](http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/SecU/acad%2Badmin_policies/S28.htm)

9. *Final examination policy.* Policies regarding final examinations can be found at the Following:  
[http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/SecU/acad%2Badmin\\_policies/S22.htm](http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/SecU/acad%2Badmin_policies/S22.htm)