

Sample Syllabi For Semester and Quarter Structures: Using *Playwriting with Purpose* In Your Classroom

Prepared by author Jacqueline Goldfinger

Reminder for instructors, where to order the plays listed in this book are in Appendix F.

*The ISBN# for ordering *Playwriting with Purpose* in paperback is: 978-1-032-00381-8.*

All page numbers referenced below refer to the paperback edition.

16 Week Class (Semester Structure)

Reading and Writing Exercises that Build to Writing a Short Play

- **Note for instructors: The below syllabus is to use with students who are only doing the reading and writing exercises then writing a short play.**
- **More on how to use this book if you want your students to write a full-length play at the end of this document.**

- Note for Students: Always bring your out-of-class writing assignments to class as we will be using them as jumping off points for in-class work. Always bring *Playwriting with Purpose* and the script(s) that we are discussing that day to class.
- Major Grades in the Class: Final exam on texts and plays read, Full draft of a short play (at least 10 pages in length, following the formatting guidelines which I will give you)
- Week One
 - Introductions
 - What is a Play? (as opposed to screenplay, TV script, novel, etc.)
 - Read Forward, Introduction, and Prologue of *Playwriting with Purpose* together
 - Give context about class and both macro and micro view of what will be expected of them
 - HOMEWORK: Read Chapter 1, Read Appendix B, Do Exercise 1 (page 4-5)
- Week Two
 - Discuss Chapter 1 and Appendix B
 - Use Exercise 1 as a jumping off point for Exercises 2 & 3
 - Share monologues with class and discuss
 - HOMEWORK: Read _____ (select one of the recommended plays on page 13-14), Write a short (200-300 word) paragraph listing one short piece of dialogue which you think exemplifies good writing and why
- Week Three
 - Discuss play and good dialogue short exercises
 - Discuss examples of Electric Dialogue and Silent moments in the play
 - Have the students brainstorm and share moments in their own lives where silent action and/or moments told them more than words
 - HOMEWORK: Read Chapter 2, Do Exercise 1 and 2 (page 17-20)
- Week Four
 - Share something you learned from exercises 1 and 2
 - Read scenes aloud from one of the plays listed on page 24-25 and discuss
 - If time, do exercise 3 (page 23-24)
 - HOMEWORK: Read Chapter 3, Read _____ (select one of the recommended plays on page 32-33), Use previous writing exercises as a jumping off point for Exercise 1 (page 27-28)
- Week Five
 - Discuss environment and idea as it relates to the play read
 - Choose one “environment” option in Exercise 3 and write a scene in 20 minutes
 - Break down into small groups to share and discuss scenes
 - HOMEWORK: Read Chapter 4, Read _____ (select one of the recommended plays on page 53)

- Week Six
 - Discuss Chapter 4 and play read
 - Do and share exercise 1 (page 41) then read the paragraphs aloud (with the names of the characters remove, i.e., instead of saying “Snow White” just say “main character” etc) and see if the class can guess which fairy tale the paragraph is based on simply on the details of structural elements
 - HOMEWORK: Read Chapter 5, Do Exercises 1 (page 54-55) and 2 (page 55-56)
- Week Seven
 - Discuss Chapter 5
 - Share and discuss portions of writing exercises
 - Read scenes from plays listed on page 56 and discuss their structures
 - HOMEWORK: Read Chapter 6, Do Exercise 1 (page 58-59) or the Alternative Exercise (page 60) depending upon which process speaks to you, Read _____ (select one of the recommended plays on page 63)
- Week Eight
 - Discuss Chapter 6 and play read
 - Use Exercise 1 and/or the Alternative Exercise as a jumping off point to do Exercise 2, now share and discuss
 - HOMEWORK: Read Chapter 7, Read _____ (select one of the recommended plays on page 66-67), Write a short (200-300 word) paragraph listing the Aristotelian element which you most want to explore in future writing exercises and why
- Week Nine
 - Discuss Chapter 7
 - Share and discuss the element each student is most interested in exploring
 - Have them do Exercise 1 in Chapter 7 with that element in-mind, then split into small groups and share
 - HOMEWORK: Read Chapter 8
- Week Ten
 - Read aloud one of the plays listed on page 72
 - Discuss with students what structure or organizing idea is used and why
 - HOMEWORK: Read Chapter 9, do Exercise 1, Read _____ (select one of the recommended plays on page 76)
- Week Eleven
 - Discuss Chapter 9 and play read
 - Re-read specific scenes from that play aloud
 - Have students think, write, and then share the theatrical moment of what was read aloud that impacted them the most
 - Discuss why, sometimes, the most theatrical plays are the most difficult to read on the page, because they are meant to be performative not literary in nature
 - Discuss how to think about work that is supposed to be more performative than literary so that you don't dismiss a piece of theatrical writing because everything you need to know is not, specifically, noted on the page
 - HOMEWORK: Take a break this week, catch-up on any assignments/reading which you did not complete, we will continue to use the earlier work as jumping off points for future assignments
- Week Twelve
 - Let's return to Chapter 4 and review the differences between a full-length play and a short play
 - We will be writing a short play over the next couple of weeks. In class now, we are going to begin planning for our writing. Look over your notes and exercises from earlier in the semester. If you already have a character(s)/situation(s) which you know you want to write about in your short play, then do the Sloutline Exercise on page 52 then revise it. If you don't know what you wish to write about then do the Short Play Exercises on page 47-50 and select the play idea you wish to write afterwards.
 - HOMEWORK: Read Chapter 10, Do Exercises 1-3 (page 78-81) based on the idea and characters of your short play idea
- Week Thirteen
 - Discuss your play idea(s) and character(s) as well as what you learned through doing the writing exercises in Chapter 10

- By the end of the class, every student will know the character and story which they will write for their short play.
- HOMEWORK: Write, at least, the first 5 pages of your short play
- Week Fourteen
 - Read and discusses pages of short plays
 - HOMEWORK: Write your play
- Week Fifteen
 - Read and discusses pages of short plays
 - HOMEWORK: Finish the first draft of your short play
- Week Sixteen
 - Turn in your short play
 - Ask questions about play exam
 - Discuss topics in Chapters 11-12 and Appendix A
 - HOMEWORK: Study for play exam
- Exam Deadline
 - Take final exam on plays and *Playwriting with Purpose*

Extra Credit Due on Last Day of Class:

-Read one of the plays listed in the book that are not the official syllabus and write a five-page exploration of that play through one or more of the craft elements which we studied (for example, write about the importance of environment in *The Children's Hour* scene-by-scene)

-Do the Genre Exercise on page 29-30, Do the Characterization Exercise on page 44-45, and select 3 more writing prompts from Appendix C to complete; these must total at least 12 pages in length

10 Week Class (Quarter Structure)

Reading and Writing Exercises that Build to Writing a Short Play

- **Note for instructors: The below syllabus is to use with students who are only doing the reading and writing exercises then writing a short play.**
- **More on how to use this book if you want your students to write a full-length play at the end of this document.**
- Note for Students: Always bring your out-of-class writing assignments to class as we will be using them as jumping off points for in-class work. Always bring *Playwriting with Purpose* and the script(s) that we are discussing that day to class.
- Major Grades in the Class: Final test on all texts read, Full draft of a short play (at least 10 pages in length, following the formatting guidelines which I will give you)
- Week One
 - Introductions
 - What is a Play? (as opposed to screenplay, TV script, novel, etc.)
 - Read Forward, Introduction, and Prologue of *Playwriting with Purpose* together
 - Give context about class and both macro and micro view of what will be expected of them
 - HOMEWORK: Read Chapter 1, Read Appendix B, Do Exercise 1 (page 4-5)
- Week Two
 - Discuss Chapter 1 and Appendix B
 - Use Exercise 1 as a jumping off point for Exercises 2 & 3
 - Share monologues with class and discuss
 - HOMEWORK: Read _____ (select one of the recommended plays on page 13-14), Read Chapter 2, Do Exercise 1 and 2 (page 17-20)
- Week Three
 - Discuss reading
 - Have the students brainstorm and share moments in their own lives where silent action and/or moments told them more than words
 - HOMEWORK: Read Chapter 3, Read _____ (select one of the recommended plays on page 32-33), Do Exercise 1 (page 27-28)

- Week Four
 - Share something you learned from Exercise 1
 - Discuss information in Chapter 4
 - Do Exercise 1 and share
 - HOMEWORK: Read Chapter 4, Do the Short Play Exercise (page 47-50)
- Week Five
 - Discuss short play ideas
 - By the end of the class, every student will know the character and story which they will write for their short play.
 - HOMEWORK: Do the Sloutline Exercise (page 52), Read _____ (select one of the recommended plays on page 53)
- Week Six
 - Discuss topics in Chapters 5-7
 - If there's time left in class, give it to the students to begin writing their short plays quietly
 - HOMEWORK: Continue writing your short play, Read Chapters 8-10
- Week Seven
 - Read aloud and discuss one of the non-Well Made Plays listed on 72
 - Discuss with students what structure or organizing idea is used and why
 - Discuss why, sometimes, the most theatrical plays are the most difficult to read on the page, because they are meant to be performative not literary in nature
 - Discuss how to think about work that is supposed to be more performative than literary so that you don't dismiss a piece of theatrical writing because everything you need to know is not, specifically, noted on the page
 - HOMEWORK: Finish writing a draft of your short play
- Week Eight
 - Share and discuss short play pages
 - HOMEWORK: Write and Revise, Read Chapters 11-12
- Week Nine
 - Share and discuss short play pages
 - HOMEWORK: Write and Revise
- Week Ten
 - Test on plays and *Playwriting with Purpose*
 - Share and discuss short play pages
 - HOMEWORK: Write and Revise
- Exam Deadline
 - Your short play is due

Extra Credit Due on Last Day of Class:

-Read one of the plays listed in the book that are not the official syllabus and write a five-page exploration of that play through one or more of the craft elements which we studied (for example, write about the importance of environment in *The Children's Hour* scene-by-scene)

-Do the Genre Exercise on page 29-30, Do the Characterization Exercise on page 44-45, and select 3 more writing prompts from Appendix C to complete; these must total at least 12 pages in length

A Note on Writing Full-Length Plays

Attempting to do all of the writing exercises in this book plus writing a full-length play in one quarter or semester is not recommended by author. She has found that it is too much information for the students to both process and practice. This book works best if the students read and do the exercises in the book one semester (which can include writing a one-act play) and then write their full length plays in the next semester or quarter.

Or, if you use this book as a refresher for more advanced students and have them simply read it all over a week or two, and then have them begin writing their full length plays.