SM4110/SM5318 - Understanding Drama in Media  
(Topics in Contemporary Art / Topics in Media History & Theory)

Course Leader: Dr. CHAN Chit Man (Lester)  
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Description

“It is in our nature to dramatize.”
- David Mamet

Drama is a universal expression across media. This course establishes students’ essential understanding of the dramatic principles and structures that constitute good and effective drama. It is also a creative workshop to develop students’ potential in creating drama.

“…if any author boasted to me that he wrote a story without a previously thought out plan, but only on the basis of inspiration, I’d call him a madman.”
- Anton Chekhov

• This course explores the various genre structures of drama (tragedy, comedy, action, thriller...) in different media (film, TV, animation...).
• Students will develop concrete tools in the theory and practice of creative drama, especially in adaptation across media.
• Students who wish to sharpen their creative skills of short dramatic works will find this course particularly rewarding.

Schedule

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<th>Cls.</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Theory</th>
<th>Practice</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8/30</td>
<td>(SCM orientation week)</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>9/6</td>
<td>Theories of drama</td>
<td>Story-telling games</td>
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<td>Aristotle’s Poetics</td>
<td>Play, fun &amp; drama</td>
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<td>Introduction to dramatic structure</td>
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<td>Classical tragedy</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>9/13</td>
<td>3-act structure &amp; beyond</td>
<td>Inspiration &amp; brainstorming</td>
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<td>Domestic tragedy &amp; drama</td>
<td>Story-telling in action</td>
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<td>Sense of identity:</td>
<td>Assignment 1 announcement</td>
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<td>Character, motivation, obstacle</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>9/20</td>
<td>Comedy 1</td>
<td>Observation, imitation &amp; memory</td>
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<td>Sense of movement:</td>
<td>Creative journal</td>
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<td>Plot &amp; action</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>9/27</td>
<td>Comedy 2</td>
<td>Imagination &amp; improvisation</td>
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<td>Light comedy vs. high comedy</td>
<td>Assignment 1 due</td>
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<td>Sense of reassurance:</td>
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<td>Development, climax, reversal</td>
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<td>Empathy, sympathy, catharsis</td>
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<td>10/4</td>
<td>Action, cop/gangster &amp; kungfu movie</td>
<td>Improvisation &amp; devising theatre</td>
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<td>Dramatic devices &amp; styles 1:</td>
<td>Assignment 2 announcement</td>
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<td>Chinese dramatic trad. &amp; aesthetics</td>
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<td>Warrior novel</td>
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### Teaching Method

Format of class will include lectures, workshops and tutorials. Lectures will include:
- Screening of film, TV drama, animation & other materials;
- Discussion of dramatic principles and theories; and
- Presentation of study reports and projects.

Students need to take notes during screenings. They should bring to class a small light torch, pen and paper.

Workshops will employ games and play techniques to develop students’ dramatic creativity. Students should wear loose and comfortable outfit.

Tutorials will be dedicated to individual meetings with students on their projects. Students are welcome to discuss with the Course Leader after class through email or face-to-face by appointment.

* Practicing writer / director from industry will be invited as guest speaker from time to time!

### Assignment & Project

There will be two written assignments and one final project.

- **Assignment 1 (individual) –**
  Structural analysis of an assigned film; details to be announced.

- **Assignment 2 (group) –**
  Group research report of one genre film / television drama. Each group usually comprises 2 persons, and in no case more than 3. Students will have a choice of topics; details will be announced in class.

- **Final Project –**
Students will work individually or form group to create a short drama subject to approval by the Course Leader. The project can be in written or other forms. If written, it will be a dramatic script demonstrating the students’ good command of dramatic structure. Creative projects in other media may include, for example, comics / cartoons, re-editing and / or shooting of a short video. Format and details will be duly announced in class.

**Assessment**

There is NO examination in this course.

Assessment will base on coursework and class performance in accordance to the following criteria:

- **Attendance** 15%
- **Class performance** 15%
- **Assignment 1** 10%
- **Assignment 2** 20%
- **Final project** 40%

Students should participate actively in class discussions and workshops. This constitutes their class performance scores.

Late assignments and projects will be deducted 10% per working-day unless prior approval is granted (e.g. if an assignment’s original score is 20, it will be reduced to 16 if late for 2 days…etc.).

**Reference**

**On Dramatic Structure & Theory:**
4. 亞里士多德（著）、陳中梅（譯）。詩學，北京：商務印書館。2002年。
9. 孫立軍、馬華。影視動畫影片分析。北京：中國宇航出版社，2003年。

**On Dramatic Theory & Writing:**
2. 理查德·A·布魯姆（著）、徐璞（譯）。電視與銀幕寫作：從創意到簽約，第一版，北京：華夏出版社，2003年。
5. FIELD, Syd（著）、曾西素（譯）。實用電影編劇技巧。台北：遠流，1993年。
8. 顏純鉉、夏振鈞。影視劇本。福州：海峽文藝出版社，1992年。
On Adaptation:
6. 索（著）、黃美惠（譯）·新伊索寓言。台北：聯經，2000。
8. 張宗偉。中外交換名著的翻譯改編。北京：廣播電視出版社，2002。

Additionally, the following, films, TV dramas, animations, scripts and plays will be screened or discussed in class:

Tragedy / Drama:
- Oedipus Rex, Hamlet, Battleship Potemkin, Casablanca, High Noon.
- Deer Hunter, Amadeus, Gladiator.
- Boat People (投奔怒海), Farewell China (愛在別離的季節).

Physical & Light Comedy:
- Modern Times, The Private Eyes (半斤八兩), Chicken & Duck Talk (雞同鴨講), King of Comedy (喜劇之王), Shaolin Soccer (少林足球).
- Wedding Banquet (喜宴), East Drink Man Woman (飲食男女), Summer Snow (女人四十).

Love & Romance:
- All About Ah Long (阿郎的故事), Yan Zhi Kou (胭脂扣), A Chinese Ghost Story (倩女幽魂), C’est la Vie, Mon Cheri (禽不甚情).
- Les Amants du Pont-Neuf (The Lovers on the Bridge), The Ghost.

Action / Cop / Gangster:
- A Better Tomorrow (英雄本色), Running Out of Time (暗戰), Expected the Unexpected (非常突然), Infernal Affairs (無間道).
- Godfather, Pulp Fiction.

Kungfu / Warrior:
- Ru Lai Shen Zhang (如來神掌), Dragon Inn (龍門客棧), Fist of Fury (精武門), The Legend of Drunken Master (醉拳), Once Upon in China (笑劍江湖：東方不敗), Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon (臥虎藏龍).
- Seven Samurai (七武士).

Thriller / Suspense / Horror:
- Psycho, The Exorcist, Jaws, Alien, Shining, Silence of the Lamb, Sixth Sense.
- Three (三更), Rasen (午夜凶騰).

Science Fiction:
- Star Trek, 2001 Space Odyssey, Blade Runner.
- Close Encounters of the Third Kind, E.T.

Children Movie / Animation:
- Beethoven, Home Alone.
- Lion King, Toy Story, Hua Mu Lan.
- Sen to Chihiro Kamikakushi (千與千尋), A Chinese Ghost Story (小倩).
Short Film / Half-Hour TV Drama:
- Wall of Glass (玻璃墙).
- After Hours, A Fine Line.

One-Hour TV Drama Series / Soap Opera:
- 徐遇安（監製）。霓虹物語。香港：無線電視，1994。
- 張黎（總導演）。走向共和。北京：中國國際電視總公司，2003。
- 藍色生死戀。香港：亞洲影帶出版社，2001。
- 蕭建剛（監製）。我和春天有個約會。香港：亞洲電視，1995。

Adaptation:
- Love in a Fallen City (傾城之戀): novel, film.
- A Chinese Ghost Story: classical literature, film (倩女幽魂), animation (小倩).
- I Have a Date with Spring (我和春天有個約會): stage, film, TV series.
- The Umbrella Story (人間有情): stage, film.
- The Mad Phoenix (南海十三郎): stage, film.

Further references will be recommended in class.