

ALRI Course 133
THE EDUCATED AUDIENCE: Informed Appreciation of Local Theatre Productions
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getting the most from this class

My philosophy as a theatre artist and a teacher of theatre is that the experience of live performance is enriched when audiences are equipped with knowledge about the history and style of the plays being performed and the techniques being used.

My philosophy as a teacher is that my job is to help people see things in new ways, and to help them learn how to figure out the things they want to know.

This class is designed to build from both of these philosophies. To get the most from it, it may be helpful for you to know the following:

– I am assuming that most if not all of you have been to the theatre frequently, and that you are generally familiar with how plays and performances work.

– I am assuming that most if not all of you are well-practiced readers, and that you are generally familiar with concepts such as character, circumstance, plot, rising action, climax, etc.

Please do not hesitate to let me know if at any time you want a refresher on these ideas or anything related to them that I cover too quickly in this course.

– I use a discussion-based teaching style. Although I will provide “mini-lectures” or handouts, in general, I expect that you will do as much talking in this course as I will. Please expect me to ask you questions, probably more than you will ask me.

– I expect to pursue the relevant topics that you are interested in learning about, rather than strictly following my own suggested topics.

– I have attempted to choose a range of styles and topics to broaden our understanding of theatre, and so I expect that at least one of the things we read, see, or talk about will be unfamiliar, challenging, or possibly even distasteful to some of us.

– I expect each participant to commit to my “golden rule of criticism,” which is:

First, go to where the work is.

In other words, you are free to dislike, disagree with, or be generally negative about anything we read or see, but in order to level a complaint in class you must first demonstrate that you have understood what a particular work or artist was trying to do or say and how it was trying to do or say it.

Here's an example:

“I hate the offensive language in this play. I don't want to dress up and go to the theatre to hear people curse at me all night.”

versus

“I understand that this playwright was trying to recreate the way that working-class men in Philadelphia talk, and that he might even have been trying to make some audience members uncomfortable, but the amount of cursing in this play is so excessive that I think it pushes away some audience members who really should be getting the overall message about class difference.”