“ONLY CONNECT”: A JOURNEY OF TEACHING HENRIK IBSEN’S A DOLL

HOUSE TO PLAY ANALYSIS STUDENTS

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This work examines the author’s experience in teaching A Doll House by Henrik Ibsen to students in the course Play Analysis, THEA 2440, at the University of North Texas in the Fall 2003 and Spring 2004 semesters. Descriptions of the preparations, presentations, student responses, and the author’s self-evaluations and observations are included. Included as appendices are a history of Henrik Ibsen to the beginning of his work on A Doll House, a description of Laura Kieler, the young woman on whose life Ibsen based the lead character, and an analysis outline form that the students completed for the play as a requirement for the class.
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INTRODUCTION

In the fall of 2003, I was given the opportunity to teach Henrik Ibsen’s *A Doll House* to students in a play analysis course offered at the University of North Texas through the Department of Dance and Theatre Arts. As a requirement for a special problems course I was taking under Dr. Andrew Harris, Visiting Professor at the University of North Texas in the Department of Dance and Theatre Arts and instructor for THEA 2440 Play Analysis, I prepared the lesson, presented the material, led the discussion, and graded the students’ assignments relating to the play. I taught before as a middle school drama instructor at Burkburnett Middle School in Burkburnett, Texas, so I felt that the task of teaching *A Doll House* to college students would be easy and painless, and they would glean knowledge from my experience in analysis of the play. However, this did not occur. I believe that I was the one who learned the most from the experience, and in the Spring of 2004, I had yet another opportunity to teach *A Doll House* to a new group of play analysis students. In the Spring 2004 semester, I was able to restructure my teaching method from the Fall 2003 based on my observations of those approaches that were effective and those that were not. This experience has been extremely beneficial in that I have become a more effective educator, applying the principles I have learned from “hands-on” training to my other teaching assignments.

In this prospectus, I share my methods of preparation for the lectures, the aspects of the actual lectures, highlights from student discussions, student responses, the grading process associated with the required written assignment,
and my reflections on the experience of teaching in the Fall 2003 semester. Next, I identify the positive and negative aspects of my involvement with the unit, and propose changes that might enhance the experience for both me as the instructor and the students enrolled in the course. Third, I recount my preparation for the unit for the Spring 2004 course, the actual lecture, student discussion, and written assignments. Finally, considering the two different teaching experiences, I evaluate the lessons I learned about my own teaching style and form conclusions about effective teaching strategies based on my journey.
PREPARATION:  FALL 2003

Upon learning that I would be teaching *A Doll House* to THEA 2440 Play Analysis, I was excited. After all, I had not been in front of a class in over a year, and I missed teaching. *A Doll House* is also among my favorite plays, and Ibsen among my favorite playwrights. I hoped my enthusiasm for the play and its author would inspire the students to carefully read and analyze the play, learn more about Ibsen, explore the social aspects of European culture in the late nineteenth century, and inquire about Laura Kieler, the acquaintance whose life Ibsen transformed into the character of Nora. With certainty and zeal, I set out to prepare my lesson.

As any good theatre scholar might say, reading the script is the best place to start. Having read the script several times over the course of seven years, I still believed that I should spend time with the script to refresh my mind and look for nuances that I may not have recognized in earlier readings. I had not previously read the translation by Michael Meyer in *Stages of Drama*, which the students would be reading, so I wanted to become familiar with that translation. I first noticed that the title of Meyer’s translation is *A Doll’s House* as opposed to *A Doll House*. I was familiar with the Rolf Fjelde translation, which uses the title *A Doll House*. I did not understand the difference between the two titles, so I consulted Rolf Fjelde’s *Henrik Ibsen The Complete Major Prose Plays*. Fjelde explains the difference, stating, "Aiming for such universality of reference, Ibsen titled his play *Et dukkehjem*—*A Doll House*, without the possessive ‘s. Tovald in his way is as humanly undeveloped, as much a doll, as Nora. It is the entire
house *(hjem, home)* which is on trial, the total complex of relationships, including husband, wife, children, servants, upstairs and downstairs, that is tested by the visitors that come and go, embodying aspects of the inescapable reality outside. No character is superfluous in the design, nor negligible in performance” (Fjelde in *Complete Prose Plays* 121). I felt that the difference in title was worth noting to the students when discussing the background of the play.

**Reading the Play**

I read the introduction to the play in the *Stages of Drama* text. The introduction briefly informs the reader of Ibsen’s career and mentions the financial hardships his family faced early in life. Next, the reader is told, “this body of plays quickly earned Ibsen the reputation of a fighting social realist,” the feminist interpretation is discussed briefly, and then a short description of the photographs of the play in performance follows. What I found missing was a discussion of what may have occupied Ibsen’s mind at the time of writing the play, including the plight of his friend Laura Kieler, upon whose life the play is partially based. There is also no mention of the play’s “well-made” structure, the alternate endings of the play that were demanded after the publication success of the play triggered the desire to mount it as a theatrical production, and most importantly, how the audience received the play after its original productions. The final aspect very important in light of the contemporary productions, one of which is referenced by the inclusion of photographs of two productions and a copy of Walter Kerr’s review of the 1971 production starring Claire Bloom.
Incidentally, the date mentioned in the introduction says 1981, an obvious error (Stages 533-535).

Because I found the introduction to be lacking in many ways, I consulted the introduction in The Harcourt Brace Anthology of Drama. After rereading this introduction, I found that more detail is given to Ibsen’s life and career, the “well-made” play structure, Laura Kieler and her influence, and the play’s early reception. However, since the students would read the play and introduction contained in Stages of Drama, I decided to incorporate information from the Harcourt-Brace anthology into my lecture to give the students a more satisfactory knowledge of Ibsen and his play. As appendices to this work, introductions from each anthology are included, a complete biography of Ibsen’s life to the point of his writing A Doll House, and the story of Laura Kieler as it relates to Ibsen and the play.

Although I personally believe that Rolf Fjelde’s translation of the play is superior to Michael Meyer’s, I respect Meyer’s work as an Ibsen scholar, and because his translation is the one included in the course’s required text, I decided to spend the rest of my preparation exclusively with that translation. However, when I needed clarification or a “second opinion,” I consulted Fjelde’s translation.

The first time I read the play during my preparation phase, I read the script simply for events. I wanted to make sure that I remembered the story correctly before I embarked on any other analysis. I was able to recall the events better
than I had anticipated, and upon finishing the first reading I wrote a short synopsis to refer to as needed.

Synopsis

The play opens on Christmas Eve with Nora decorating and preparing the house for the Christmas festivities. Nora and Torvald have a discussion about his promotion to bank manager and his increased salary. Mrs. Linde, a school friend from Nora’s youth and a recent widow, stops in for a visit. She asks Nora to ask Torvald if there might be a position at the bank for her. Commenting on Nora’s naivety, Mrs. Linde states that Nora knows nothing of real world suffering; however Nora defends herself by telling Mrs. Linde her secret. Seven years earlier, Nora took out a loan to cover expenses for herself, Torvald, and their infant son, Ivar, to travel to southern Italy in order to treat Torvald’s life-threatening illness. Torvald would have surely died because he would have never borrowed the money and made the journey. Because it was illegal for women to borrow money without their husbands’ consent and Nora felt she must act quickly to save her husband’s life, she forged her father’s signature on a loan to obtain the money. To pay off the loan, Nora began secretly saving money from her allowance from Torvald and performing odd jobs, such as copying.

Torvald agrees to grant Mrs. Linde a position at the bank. However, she would replace Krogstad, a man of questionable moral character and coincidently, from whom Nora borrowed the money. When Krogstad hears he is to be replaced, he discloses to Nora that he knows that she forged her father’s signature because the date on the note is a few days after her father’s death.
Threatening to expose Nora’s lie, Krogstad urges her to convince Torvald to keep him on at the bank. Disturbed by Krogstad’s threat, Nora attempts to convince Torvald to keep Krogstad, but Torvald refuses, citing Krogstad’s immoral character as reason to discharge him.

Mrs. Linde comes visiting again, and Nora asks her to help repair a Neapolitan fisher girl costume that Nora will wear to a costume ball that evening. Mrs. Linde realizes that something is bothering Nora, but the women hear Torvald coming, so they decide to discuss the matter later. Torvald tells Nora to practice her Tarantella dance that she is to perform that evening at the party. Dr. Rank, an ailing and wealthy friend of the Helmer’s, drops by to visit and speak with Nora. For a moment, Nora considers asking Dr. Rank for the money to pay off her loan, but when he confesses his love for her, she cannot bring herself to trouble him.

After his termination from the bank, Krogstad delivers a letter detailing Nora’s crime to the Helmer’s mailbox. In desperation, Nora tries to divert Torvald’s attention from the mailbox by pretending not to remember how to dance the Tarantella and begging Torvald to help her learn it again. She also asks him not to concern himself with the mail until the party is over. Torvald agrees.

Mrs. Linde and Nora have another opportunity to talk. Nora shows Mrs. Linde the letter in the mailbox, and tells Mrs. Linde that the letter cannot be retrieved because Torvald has the only key. Mrs. Linde assures Nora that Krogstad might be persuaded not to go through with his plan. Apparently,
Krogstad and Mrs. Linde were once in love, and she intends to speak to him about the situation.

While the Helmers are at the party, Mrs. Linde speaks to Krogstad. She explains to him that because they need each other and still share strong feelings for one another, they should marry. Overjoyed, Krogstad wishes to recall his letter but Mrs. Linde dissuades him from doing so, believing that Nora’s secret needs to be revealed for the two to have a real marriage based on understanding.

Nora and Torvald arrive home, and Torvald takes the letter and Dr. Rank’s calling card out of the mailbox. The calling card has a black ‘X’ on it, a sign that Dr. Rank has shut himself in his house to die. When Torvald reads Krogstad’s letter, he vehemently scorns Nora for ruining his reputation. He tells her she can stay in the house for the sake of appearances, but their marriage will never be the same. Just then, Krogstad delivers another letter promising not to tell anyone about the matter. At once, Torvald is relieved and overjoyed, and now expresses concern for Nora. He tells her he forgives her, but it is too late. Nora refuses to reconcile with Torvald because she realizes that Torvald does not know her, and therefore cannot love her for who she is but instead loves the idea of her as his doll. Consequently, she must live her own life to be a truly happy human being. Torvald begs Nora to stay, but she slams the door, leaving her husband, her children, and her past behind her.
Analysis

For the purposes of the play analysis course, the elements of plot, characters, and setting should be the major discussion points. I chose to discuss the play with the students as a “well-made” play, hoping that by examining the play’s structure, Ibsen’s specific choices would be clearer to the students and the play would appear to be less complicated.

In the Spring 2003 semester, Dr. Andrew Harris prepared a handout describing the elements of a “well-made” play. After looking over the handout, I decided that it would be helpful to the students to read it and discuss what defines a “well-made” play and then outline Ibsen’s play in this context. This would help the students understand the plot, Ibsen’s careful and thrifty use of dialogue, and why the final (obligatory) scene must take place. Using Harris’ handout (see appendix), I outlined the play according to the structural elements listed.

1. The plot is based on a secret known to the audience, but withheld from certain characters. In this case, Nora’s fraudulent loan is the secret that is kept from all the characters except Krogstad and Mrs. Linde.

2. The intensity of action and suspense steadily builds as characters introduce exposition and utilize devices such as entrances and exits, letters, etc. In this play, the appearance of Krogstad (as the villain), Dr. Ranks’ confession of love, the damning letter in the mailbox, and Nora’s feverish dancing, build the intensity to the climactic moment.
3. The hero’s fortunes depend on the conflict with the adversary. Nora’s fortune wanes and waxes due to Krogstad’s actions, specifically his blackmail, and then his retraction.

4. The obligatory scene, in which the central secret is revealed, simultaneously marks the lowest and highest points in the hero’s fortunes. When Nora’s secret is revealed to Torvald in Krogstad’s first letter, Torvald’s reaction brings Nora to her lowest point, surely solidifying her fears of losing her family and prompting her thoughts of suicide to save Torvald’s reputation. However, when the second letter arrives and it is evident that Torvald no longer fears a destroyed reputation and forgives Nora for her actions, Nora realizes the truth about her marriage and decides to leave to discover herself, no more desiring to exist as a doll or plaything for Torvald, which empowers Nora to assert herself in a manner previously unattainable to her.

5. The denouement must be logical and credible. In this play, the denouement begins directly after Nora announces her decision to leave. The final moment, Nora closing the door behind her, logically follows because Nora says she is leaving than does so. Some readers have misunderstandings when the final scene of the play, disbelieving that Nora could change so rapidly. However, by carefully reading the script and paying close attention to the clues Nora leaves, her transformation appears to be logical and credible. Nora’s secret eating of macaroons; her discussion with Mrs. Linde about the secret loan
and Nora’s pride in helping her husband and earning money, “like being a man”; her worry about being a morally unfit mother to her children; her conversation with the nurse, Anne-Marie, about raising children; her distracting Torvald with her Tarantella; her enjoying speaking with Dr. Rank because he speaks to her like an adult and listens to her opinions are all instances that support the assertive action Nora undertakes when she confronts Torvald leaves the house.

It is important to realize and understand that every line of dialogue is supported by the action of the play. Every line propels the action, and Ibsen’s causality is made abundantly clear by the way the actions are linked together.

Play Analysis Form

After I had completed this step, I turned to the play analysis form (see appendix) that Dr. Harris and I had revised for the current semester. Dr. Harris developed the form to aid students in analyzing the play, understanding which elements are most important, and defining literary terms that are often used but not necessarily understood by play analysis students. The terms Dr. Harris has incorporated into this course are based on the work of Dr. Bernard Beckerman in his book *Dynamics of Drama*, and the work that Harris conducted with Beckerman while serving as Beckerman’s researcher on “New Models for Teaching Dramatic Literature and Theatre” (a project grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities). The incorporation of this form has been extremely beneficial for first time play analysis students, and the unique terminology, in conjunction with basic literary terms, allows students to look at a
play as a score for theatrical performance rather than a work in a generalized literature canon. The form can be a tool for the instructor as well, giving the instructor the opportunity to easily identify areas that are difficult for students to understand. I chose to use this form as a guide for my own analysis of the play as follows:

Title, Genre, Physical Setting

The form first addresses the broad elements of the play, such as the title and its significance, the genre of the play, and the play’s physical setting. As mentioned earlier, the issue of *A Doll House* versus *A Doll’s House* would be explained in this section of the form if one chooses to do so; however, because I addressed it earlier, it is not reexamined here. The title helps draw attention to the idea of looking into a dollhouse and witnessing the story of the doll characters, in addition to referring specifically to the Helmer’s marriage.

As far as the play’s genre, I would classify it as a drama or serious play. It cannot be deemed a tragedy; there is no tragic downfall for any of the characters. Nora feels empowered by her decision to leave and does not mourn the loss of her marriage, and even after the couple’s final confrontation, Torvald does not understand Nora’s need to leave. As she tells him, “You and I would have to change so much that…life together between us two could become a marriage” (*Stages* 565), it is obvious that there will not be a transformation for Torvald, and although one might be saddened by Torvald’s loss, it is not a tragedy.

The play’s physical setting is important because the “dollhouse” is the only logical locale for the play’s action. The time period is important and the
character’s national origin is of some significance, but not as important as the fact that the play is set at Christmas time, a time known for family togetherness and giving, and a time that is close to the New Year, which is when Torvald’s increased salary will begin. Ibsen undoubtedly chose Christmas time also for the emotional impact it would have on the audience, and to take advantage of the seasonal interest and increased sales of the script, which was scheduled for publication in December 1879 (Ferguson 241).

Next, there is a section for students to fill in the major points of the story, which I previously discussed.

Precipitating Context

According to the Dynamics of Drama, the precipitating context, a specialized term, “embraces all the relevant factors that govern the theatrical segment” (Beckerman Dynamics 45), which is essentially expository elements. The analysis form is concerned with the inciting event and the point of attack.

Following the plot, the students are asked to identify the inciting event, the event that incites the initial action of the play. In A Doll House, the inciting event is Torvald’s promotion in the bank. Because Torvald is promoted and plans to relieve Krogstad from his position, Krogstad suspecting the worst, approaches Nora in the hope that she can convince Torvald to allow Krogstad to stay on at the bank. Had Torvald not been promoted, Krogstad most likely would have allowed Nora to silently finish paying her debt and kept her secret from Torvald. Since Krogstad fears losing his job and wants desperately to earn respectability, he threatens Nora so she can help him retain his position.
The next element addressed is the point of attack, which I have described to students as the point (early, mid, or late) at which the playwright begins the plot of the play in relation to the story (plot here is differentiated from story). Having witnessed Harris’ previous discussions about point of attack in his play analysis courses, I knew that there would be varying responses to the question, due to the fact that some students still struggle with plot versus story. In my own notes, I jotted down that the point of attack in the story of the Helmer’s marriage, which is essentially what *A Doll House* is about, the point of attack is late. The couple has been married for eight years and each partner has been living an emotionally distant life from the other for the entirety of the marriage. It is only the last few days of the marriage that becomes privy to the audience. The play itself covers an extremely constricted period when compared to the entire story of the Helmers.

Characters

The next section of the play analysis form is concerned with the characters in the play. Students are first required to identify the main characters in the play and whether each character plays a leading or supporting role. That portion is fairly elementary. Most students would not have any trouble with the identification.

The character of Nora is the most crucial and controversial in *A Doll House*. She is a woman-child, a doll in her husband’s home. Growing up, she was also her father’s doll, a plaything that he dressed up and taught to mimic his beliefs. Because Nora passed directly from her father’s hands to Torvald’s, she
remained unaware for the duration of her marriage that she was not a wife to Torvald in the sense of a partner or friend, but rather as a doll, a child, a plaything, or an amusement. Without doubt, Torvald loves Nora, but he is blinded by his treatment of her and cannot view her as anything but the “object” of his affections. Nora herself enjoys being doted on and pampered by her husband, interacting with him in an innocent and flirtatious manner, much like a small child might smile and manipulate an adult to fulfill the child’s wishes.

However, Nora is not a child, but a woman, one who has three children of her own, and one who has unintentionally and unknowingly committed a crime, albeit to save her ill husband, but a very adult crime nonetheless. Nora’s justification for her action is just as simplistic as one that a child would provide. She forged a signature to obtain money to save her husband’s life. In other words, she did it for love. A very simple but powerful statement and one on which the entire play hinges. That Nora feels her work was “wonderful fun…almost like being a man” (Ibsen, *Prose Plays* 137), shows that Nora is not completely oblivious to the way in which her role in the household differs from her husband’s, i.e., the male figure possesses more power in that he controls the financial well-being of the family.

### Impelling Agent

The students are then asked which character acts as the impelling agent throughout most of the play. The impelling agent is “the character who attempts to effect change in others [and] continually impels the scene by exerting energy” (Beckerman, *New Models* 112). Obviously, Nora is the impelling agent throughout most of the play. It is her dynamic with the other characters that
guides the action of the play. Her stakes are the highest and she desperately fights to hold on to her way of life throughout the better part of the play.

Dramatic Activity

The next section of the form has historically been difficult for students. Having worked as a grader for Andrew Harris in the Spring of 2003, I was already prepared for the variety of responses, many of which are irrelevant to the question because the students do not understand the term dramatic activity. According to Beckerman, dramatic activity is not a “single entity” and it takes many forms, which I feel is one reason why students have trouble with the term (Beckerman Dynamics 32). Students confuse the word ‘dramatic’ and identify emotionally dramatic segments of a play as dramatic activities, which is not at all what is described by ‘dramatic activity.’ While working as a grader, I found that when I explained dramatic activity in terms of character tactics, a term that students were familiar with from acting classes, they seemed to understand better what is meant by ‘dramatic activity.’ Therefore, I explain dramatic activity as an action or series of actions that a character performs in order to solicit a desired response from the character to whom the actions are aimed, and further explained that these dramatic activities continually occur throughout the play, not only at moments of heightened emotion or climax. Knowing that the question calls for an example and any example that a student gives in which he can identify the activity (shaming, seducing, etc.) and what the desired effect is can be a valid response to the question, I chose to solicit student responses to the question during the discussion of the analytic form and use those responses to
clarify the concept of dramatic activity instead of providing examples before the students had a chance to respond. However, a few notes I made included questions such as, “What dramatic activity is Nora engaging in when the first letter arrives. Who is she trying to influence? What does she hope will happen as a result of her activity? Is she successful? Why?” and so forth.

The next question, which is a part of the section about dramatic activity, is: “Who makes the play happen? Why?” Again, this question throws some students, and I believe it is because they think too deeply about the story and not the plot. For instance, when I graded analysis forms for A Doll House in the Spring 2003 semester, the semester before I taught the play, many students responded that Krogstad made the play happen because he blackmails Nora. However, I believe it is Nora who makes the play happen. We witness Nora’s struggle to save her marriage throughout the play. Krogstad’s initial act of blackmail only serves as a catalyst that hastens the end of the Helmers’ marriage. Through her revelation, Nora understands that her marriage to Torvald cannot continue to exist as it is and she chooses to leave. It is important that students not forget that it was Nora who forged the loan signature; Krogstad just chooses to take advantage of the situation. Of greatest concern in a play analysis course should be what is happening inside the play. No matter how it is viewed, inside the play Nora is the character who propels the action of the play forward making her the character “who makes the play happen.”
Resistance (Antagonists)

The next section of the play analysis form asks what kind of resistance the other characters put forth. Resistance is the “impedance in the pursuit of the project (defined later)” (Beckerman *Dynamics* 47). In this section, one or more characters may be examined because in most instances there is more than one character impeding the central character’s attainment of his or her goal or project. Nora’s antagonists are Krogstad and Torvald. Krogstad puts forth resistance through his blackmailing efforts. Krogstad attempts to force Nora to either convince Torvald to preserve Krogstad’s position or confess her secret to her husband. When Krogstad delivers his first letter, he is putting forth the largest amount of resistance against Nora. She reacts by using all of her feminine power to convince Torvald not to open the mailbox until later. Torvald’s major resistance comes later in the play when he tries to forbid Nora from leaving the house and the marriage. However, Nora is no longer susceptible to Torvald’s powers of persuasion.

Character’s Energy

The central character’s energy is the focus of the next section of the form. Nora’s energy is active throughout the play. From the very beginning, we see a woman who essential does as she pleases with her eating of macaroons, running the household affairs on her allowance from Torvald, and her choice to work secretly to repay the loan she procured. Although she reacts to Krogstad’s pressure, she is actively and directly trying to control her situation. It is important that the audience is aware of Nora’s strength in these moments. Her resolve is
so very strong in the end that dismissing her other discreet actions throughout
the play can make her decision to leave questionable; because her
transformation is still debated by theatre scholars, noting the clues Ibsen
provides to his audience about Nora’s ability to hide her true self under the
appearances of a carefree and fragile woman is extremely important to the
acceptance of Nora as an adult making adult decisions in a calm manner at the
play’s close.

Project/Objective

The central character’s project/objective is addressed following the
discussion of the character’s energy. Beckerman defines project as “the
translation of the conditions of the precipitating context through activity toward a
future object…it is not an idea, but an image of the future that the performer
attempts to attain…the focus of body and mind together.” Beckerman developed
his term based on Jean-Paul Sartre’s term projet, of which Sartre says, “the
rudimentary behavior must be determined both in relation to the real and present
factors which condition [the behavior] and in relation to a certain object, still to
come, which is trying to bring them into being. That is what we call the project”
(Beckerman Dynamics 47). In this way, it is easy to define Nora’s project as
saving her husband and family from the shame and consequences stemming
from her forged loan, not simply hiding her secret. She is smart enough to
realize that her secret will be revealed and, in hoping that “the miracle” will
happen (Torvald would take the blame on himself), she begins to plan how she
will save her husband’s reputation by taking her own life, not allowing him to take
the blame for her actions. However, when Nora realizes that Torvald’s love for her is based on an image, and he does not love her enough to sacrifice his honor to save his wife (when she so easily sacrificed her honor to save his life), her project changes to being independent, prompting her to leave.

Structure

The students are asked to define the structure of the play as intensive or extensive. As discussed in class and in Dynamics of Drama, an intensive play is one that follows a linear plot structure that builds to one major climax and progressively follows the mounting of pressures upon the protagonist to the major climax during a defined period of time (Beckerman Dynamics 188). By this definition, A Doll House is definitely an intensive play. The play, written in the “well-made” play format discussed earlier, follows Nora as pressures mount upon her, and the story unfolds reaching the moment of climax found in the play’s obligatory scene.

Crux, Most Intense Moment (Climax)

The obligatory scene is the next topic of discussion in the play analysis form. The question reads, “Is there an obligatory scene (big scene) at the end of the play, or what happens in the play’s final scene?” I answered this question earlier with my comments about the “well-made” play format followed by A Doll House and the existence of its obligatory scene. However, a few other related questions follow. The first asks if there is a reversal of fortune. I would have to answer that Nora’s fortune changes twice; first, when Torvald denounces her after he receives the first letter, and second, when she decides to pursue an
independent lifestyle following Torvald’s response to Krogstad’s second letter. Torvald’s fortune changes when he is left without his wife. Krogstad and Mrs. Linde become romantically linked again which changes the fortunes of both of these characters for the better. Lastly, Dr. Rank, unfortunately, faces his death and chooses to do so alone. The second question asks students to identify a major turning point in the action of the play. The major turning point comes directly after Torvald reads the second letter (addressed to Mrs. Helmer, but Torvald forbids her to have it) and declares, “I’m saved. Nora, I’m saved!” to which Nora replies, “And I?” and Torvald says, “You too, of course” (Ibsen Prose Plays 188). It is in this small exchange that Nora completely understands how concerned Torvald really is with his reputation, placing his honor above his love for his wife and his marriage. Although Nora begins to realize Torvald’s true feelings when he berates her after reading the first letter, her feelings are solidified following the second. When Torvald no longer fears the loss of his good standing in the community, he turns his concern to Nora; however, it is too late. Nora now sees that she will only be a secondary concern of Torvald’s, like a child’s toy that is cherish only when it is playtime. The third question asks if this turning point is foreshadowed in the developing action of the play. The audience is aware of the distance in the marriage from the beginning when Nora lies to Torvald about eating the macaroons; Torvald directly states his opinions about morally corrupt people having a bad influence on children which is exemplified in Dr. Rank’s suffering a congenital disorder stemming from his father’s loose ways; yet Nora delights in her secret employment because she
feels that working is fun, “like being a man,” but she also comments upon hearing that Mrs. Linde is a widow without family, “How free you must feel-“ (Ibsen Prose Plays 133); Nora’s comments that she can talk to Dr. Rank about anything (once he is gone, she has no one to engage in intelligent conversation); and the list goes on and on. The next question asks about the playwright’s use of dramatic irony. The answer to this question is no. Ibsen carefully crafted his play so that the audience can view the unraveling of the Helmer’s marriage based on miscommunication, deception, and mistrust; and though the play is “well-made” in that the audience knows a secret that will be revealed in time to other characters, the existence of the unknown secret is not dramatic irony. Torvald is the only character unaware of the secret. However, it is ironic that Mrs. Linde believes that Nora’s secret must be found out to strengthen the Helmer’s marriage, but the airing of the secret actually leads to the dissolution of the marriage. Mrs. Linde feels that marriage should be based on open and honest communication and a mutual need for one another, which is why she wants Torvald to know Nora’s secret. The final question concerned with the climax of the play asks if there is recognition. There is for Nora because the play is based on Nora’s final recognition of the state of her marriage, her personality, and her feelings about truth, duty, and personhood. There is not recognition for Torvald. He does not understand why Nora is leaving even though she clearly explains her reasons. Torvald delivers the play’s last line, “The greatest miracle--?” indicating not only his disbelief, but also his confusion.
Denouement (Falling Action)

The impression the play left on the student is the only concern in this section of the play analysis form, which is acceptable especially with *A Doll House* because of the very short denouement in the play. This is completely about student reaction, and I wanted to use this section to ignite discussion about the play to determine to what level students comprehend the play. As an undergraduate student, I was involved in many discussions of *A Doll House*, some of them intelligent and well articulated, others heated and demonstrating an obvious lack of reading comprehension on the part of students, so I was eagerly anticipating the discussion that would occur through prompting students to share their impressions about the play.

Outside the Play but Relevant

This section inquires if there are any real world historical events or persons that significantly influenced the playwright’s crafting of the script, and how important the audience’s set of beliefs and views are to the play. Ibsen’s relationship with Laura Kieler should definitely be mentioned in this section. The *audience set* refers to the specific beliefs or expectations an audience may bring into the theatre while experiencing the performance. For example, the audiences from the late nineteenth century that attended performances of *A Doll House* undoubtedly were of a different audience set than the audiences of today witnessing the play. The social and moral concerns of the previous time were different than today, especially on the subject of motherhood and family duty. With greater strides having been made in the social sphere, today’s audiences
are more easily accepting of the play, although the play is still a very powerful and moving work.

Spectacle or what the audience sees, the physical production

This section is concerned with the technical elements of the production, asking how important these elements are to the basic understanding of the play, and if there are any special requirements. The Helmer’s living space should reflect the furnishings and decorations afforded by a middle-class family at Christmas time. The play is very realistic, so it follows that the technical production be realistic in style as well.

Language and Imagery, or what the audience hears

This section of the form is very important to the understanding of this play. In this section, students are asked to identify the literary elements of the play. First, the students are asked if the play is in prose, verse, or dialect. This play is written in prose, and this is significant because Ibsen had written his earlier successful plays in verse. However, he began to believe that drama should provoke the audience and the drama should be a reflection of the society, hence he changed his style to prose to create a realistic world for his characters (Gosse 136).

Next is the identification of motifs, images, metaphors, and symbols. Here is a sampling of the major literary devices at work in A Doll House. Starting at the beginning, the title conjures images of dolls as inanimate playthings, beautiful but without feelings, and a dollhouse that is frozen in time with its delicate, ornate
furniture, and its residents incapable of movement unless manipulated by an outside force. The setting of Christmas brings images of family togetherness, peace, and purity, as well as gifts, toys, presents that can cause debt through spending too much money for these things. When Nora gives the porter an extra large tip, we see that she is already free with money. Then she eats her macaroons and hides the evidence, the first secret we see that Nora keeps from Torvald in the play. Torvald's use of pet names for Nora begins immediately. He calls her his skylark, songbird, squirrel, and others, all of which produce images of small, delicate, cute, lively animals. "Money!" Nora exclaims when Torvald presents her with a little extra for Christmas time. Nora's fascination with, and desire for, money is set from the beginning as well as Torvald's concern with spending and distaste for borrowing. Torvald mentions Nora's spending to be a hereditary trait that she received from her father. In Nora's discussion with Mrs. Linde, we learn that Nora equates work and money with happiness and freedom. She also recognizes her husband's need to feel powerful in taking care of his family's financial needs. Torvald repeatedly reminds Nora how dangerous liars and morally corrupt people are, especially when he speaks of Krogstad. Dr. Rank embodies the results of a parent of questionable moral character on his children and the idea of the sins of the father being punished through his children. Nora's dancing of the Tarantella, a dance that enacts the death of a person bitten by a tarantula, reinforces the idea that she is dancing for her life, and she is because her life will never be the same when Torvald reads Krogstad's letter. Mrs. Linde and Krogstad's discovery of love and the basis of
their new relationship together stand in stark contrast to the type of marriage that the Helmers have had.

Modes and Style

This section is concerned with the style of presentation, such as realism, naturalism, absurdism, etc. *A Doll House* is definitely realism. The mode refers to theatrical activity and conventions. The use of the letters is a theatrical convention used primarily in “well-made” plays such as *A Doll House*.

Thought or Meaning

Here, the identification of a specific message or theme is mentioned. For this play, the thought or meaning could be stated as duty to oneself above all duties and equality for all human beings should be the goal of society.

Unifying Action

This section asks students if there is an overall action that holds the play together. Nora’s journey of self discovery is the overall action in that we see Nora desperately try to keep her marriage intact by hiding her secret from Torvald, to reevaluating her life and deciding that her desire for happiness could be fulfilled only when she becomes “a human being.”

Evaluation

This section is subjective, inquiring about what the student thinks could update the play, if the student would ever direct this play, and an explanation of the student’s responses. Again, I chose not to make notes about this section.
because I wanted the student response to open a discussion based on their opinions, not what I, as the instructor, personally think.

After I completed my notes using the play analysis form, I began to prepare my presentation. I would have two class periods to present the play, so I decided that during the first class meeting, I would introduce Ibsen and the play, discuss the events of the play, introduce the “well-made” play format and explain the obligatory scene, and then begin to discuss the questions in the play analysis form. During the second class meeting, I would finish the discussion of the form, show film clips of the play’s final scene from videos of A Doll House, one starring Julie Harris and the other starring Jane Fonda with a discussion following the clips, and then the students who were assigned to present a group project on the play could present their work.
PRESENTATION AND RESPONSE: FALL 2003

I had the opportunity to present my lesson to two sections of THEA 2440 Play Analysis on Tuesday, September 23. Each class was a little different; the students in the first class were less likely to offer comments than the second class, so I knew that I would have to ask more questions and solicit more comments from the first group than the second. I began in the first session by providing a little background about the play and Henrik Ibsen. Most of my information was simple and taken from the introductions to *A Doll House* in the aforementioned anthologies; however, I did supplement the lecture with some of the research I conducted on Ibsen’s life (see appendix). I included questions in the lecture to encourage students to recall what they read in the introduction to the play. Students correctly identified that Ibsen was a Norwegian by birth, lived in the nineteenth century, and is considered the father of modern drama because his prose plays were realistic dramas concerning social issues. Although the responses to the very basic and general information came easily, questions about Ibsen’s early and late career, his relationship with Laura Kieler, his young friend on whom the character of Nora is based, and social environment about which Ibsen wrote, were not so easily answered by the majority of the students. Either the students did not read the introduction to the play (very likely) or they did not retain much the information they read (also likely, but not as likely as the previous hypothesis). A little disappointed, I filled in some of the missing pieces about Ibsen’s plays and Laura Kieler. Then I moved on to the events contained in the script.
I began with general questions about the title and the setting of the play. Most of the students were able to answer these questions without much prompting. As I moved into elements of the plot and character identification, the responses became more and more vague, and I found myself reciting the events of the story without encouraging the students to answer my questions. After I realized what I was doing, I tried to stop myself from simply providing facts to the students and began asking more interpretive questions such as, “Why did Nora react the way she did to the sight of the first letter in the mailbox?” I found the students responded more eagerly to these sorts of questions.

As the time drew to a close, I handed out photocopies of Dr. Harris’ “well-made” play elements and projected the handout on an overhead projector. As a class, we discussed each element and the students were able to identify the aspects of the play that corresponded with each element on the list of characteristics of the “well-made” play. I was much more encouraged, and ended the class by informing the students of the group project presentation for the next class meeting and of the video clips we would watch. I also reminded the students to bring their analytic exercise form to the next class because we would discuss the responses on the form and the students would hand them in for a grade. I started to prepare myself for the second session of the afternoon.

The second session of the day went much more smoothly. The class is smaller in size and in a smaller classroom, both of which facilitate discussion (Section 01 had twenty-nine students and Section 02 had twenty students). I began my lesson much the same way. I did introduce the aspects of the “well-
made” play early in the class meeting this time. It would be easier to discuss the play in terms of its “well-made” structure, and the students would understand the “well-made” play elements and their pertinence to *A Doll House* a little better if that information was introduced with the play. I was correct because the students asked more questions about the “well-made” play and seemed more interested in it than the students in the first section. It was obvious that the students in section 02 either read the play more carefully than those in section 01, or they were familiar with it from other courses. Regardless, the section 02 students were able to provide background information about Ibsen when asked, and I did not have to prompt the students to communicate the plot elements or characters, nor did I have to correct misinformation. Because the learning was accelerated in the second class, we were able to discuss the social aspects of the play in more depth. I was surprised to hear the number of students who felt that Nora was weak, ignorant, happy to depend on men, and flirtatious beyond an acceptable level with Dr. Rank. They felt that Nora would probably return to the home the next day because she did not truly want to change, she was just being fickle as she had been in the past. There were also a few students that felt so strongly against Nora leaving her children that they could not look past that aspect to evaluate the rest of the play. However, the majority of the students saw Nora’s transition as plausible and recognized the play as socially rebellious for its time. I enjoyed that this group of students would interact with one another during the discussions, debating each other’s points, while still being respectful in the classroom setting. I was able to simply mediate the discussion and ask
questions to continue the discussion of the play and the social issues. This class also had time to read aloud portions of the play’s final scene for discussion. We discussed not only the scene as obligatory and climactic, but we also discussed the miracle of which Nora speaks, and the play’s thematic elements of communication and trust in an ideal marriage. The time went by quickly, and I felt very energetic and hopeful about the next class meetings.

Before the classes met again on Thursday, September 25, I watched two film versions of *A Doll’s House*, one starring Julie Harris and Christopher Plummer, and the other starring Jane Fonda and David Warner. Julie Harris’s Nora was quite different from Jane Fonda’s. Ms. Harris portrayed Nora as a frightened, fragile creature who finally makes a strong and clear decision to leave her husband to change her life. This Nora was emotional but determined, and the audience could simultaneously see the pain and relief on Julie Harris’ face. On the other hand, Jane Fonda’s Nora was very stoic in comparison to Julie Harris’s Nora. Ms. Fonda’s Nora seemed very wise and sure of herself, a completely different person than the childlike Nora from the rest of the play. Jane Fonda almost seemed to hate Torvald, and her decision to leave seemed cold and calculated. Also, Fonda and Warner shared no chemistry. Warner’s Torvald was quite concerned with Nora’s leaving, but his emotions were very hard to discern because it seemed that Warner was not sure what emotion to play in the final scene. In contrast, Plummer’s Torvald remained sure of himself, and even as Nora leaves, he does not appear to understand or accept why. I feel that this Torvald had no ability to change even if he wanted to change, which is Nora’s
argument for leaving. I sincerely think that the Harris-Plummer film is much better than the Fonda-Warner film for the portrayal’s of the Helmers. Julie Harris found all of the nuances Ibsen created in the character of Nora that allow the audience to see that Nora is actually a strong-willed, loving woman whose choice to leave is a reasonable choice for her character. Plummer portrays a Torvald who is a good man but unable to see the problems in his marriage. He loves Nora as a child and treats her as such, not as a woman who will stand by his side and support him in his times of stress. In the Fonda-Warner film, it is difficult to understand why these two incompatible people would ever marry because there is little chemistry between the two actors.

I decided to show the classes the final scene from both films so that the students would have the opportunity to see some of the play performed, and to use the film clips as a springboard to discussion of the characters in the play. However, I decided to have the group of students assigned the play for a presentation present their work to the class at the beginning of the session to make sure that they had plenty of time and the students would have time to respond to their classmates’ work.

The group consisted of three young men, one in the role of dramaturg, one in the role of the designer, and the third in the role of director. The dramaturg informed the class of Ibsen’s biography and past productions of A Doll House. His report was not as thorough as I would have liked; however, he did mention most of the highlights. The designer spoke next, and presented rough color sketches of costumes. There obviously was no research done in the time
period and the clothes were a hodge-podge of styles from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries for the women, and the nineteenth and twentieth centuries for the men. The elements he mentioned for the set design (there was not a sketch) were almost word for word the description found at the beginning of the translation in the *Stages of Drama* anthology. He was a strong speaker and was able to defend most of his choices, so he had done some thinking about the assignment. He was probably unaware that I have quite a bit of experience in costuming or he would not have tried to bowl me over with his renderings. Last, the director presented. He explained that the group wanted to set the play in Norway at Christmastime in the late nineteenth century because he felt the play made the most sense to the audience to set the play during this time period. His casting choices were interesting. He had a handful of candidates for Nora including Nicole Kidman and Ashley Judd; Harrison Ford and Kevin Spacey, the usual suspects, both had opportunity to portray Torvald; and perhaps the most interesting and maybe best casting, was a young Kathy Bates for Mrs. Linde. All in all, the group project was passable, if not plausible, but I praised them on some of the choices they made such as leaving the play in its original setting. The class was reluctant to comment on the presentation, and after a little coaxing, it was obvious that none of the students wanted to comment, so I moved on to the next item on the lesson plan, which was the analytic exercise form.

I asked the students to look at their forms during the discussion and hand them in at the end of the class time. I also told them that we would not cover
every question on the form, but we would definitely discuss sections that were unclear to the students. The first discrepancy was about the inciting event. Only a few students recognized Torvald’s promotion as the inciting event. Many responded that Krogstad’s blackmail attempt was the inciting event, and others thought that Nora’s procurement of her loan was inciting. However, when I explained why Torvald’s promotion at the bank was the most logical choice, the students understood why, and a few of them looked as if a “light bulb went off in their heads.” The students had some differences of opinion about which of the characters “makes the play happen.” A few felt that Krogstad must make the play happen because he blackmails Nora, but most of the students identified Nora as the main character at the root of all of the action, so there was not as much discussion about this point. For the most part, the students were willing to volunteer their answers for discussion, and most spoke intelligently about the play. I was quite pleased.

Because the class would soon be drawing to a close, I segued into the film clips. I showed the Harris-Plummer clip followed by the Fonda-Warner clip. After we had seen both clips, I asked the students what they thought about the two versions. I was surprised to find that the majority of the students felt that Jane Fonda was a more believable Nora than Julie Harris; however, everyone agreed that Christopher Plummer was the better Torvald. I asked why the students felt that Jane Fonda’s Nora was better and they said because she was not emotional (not crying), did not speak in a childlike voice, she was resolute about her decision to leave, and she commanded the scene. I responded that Tovald’s
eruption of anger would be enough to upset anyone, let alone his wife, and that leaving one’s family would be a very upsetting decision to make. I also encouraged the students to watch the entire video outside of class to follow Julie Harris’ portrayal of Nora throughout the entire film. Doubtful that any of the students would do so and aware that the class time was almost up, I asked the students to hand in their analytic forms and thanked them for that day’s work in class.

The second session was more lively, as to be expected from the experience of Tuesday’s class meeting. Because the class was very small, there was not a group project assigned for A Doll House, so I decided to begin this class with the video clips. As before, I showed the Harris-Plummer video first followed by the Fonda-Warner video. Although some of the students preferred Jane Fonda’s Nora, majority of the class agreed that Julie Harris and Christopher Plummer’s interpretations were superior. This group was eager to discuss some of the reasons for the differences, for example, the time period in which each film was made (1959 and 1980, respectively), and Jane Fonda’s penchant for social and political causes, in this case, the liberation of women.

After I brought the discussion of the video clips to a close (due to time constraints), I asked about the analytic forms. The students indicated that they did not have any questions relating to the analytic forms, so I asked them about the inciting event, the impelling agent, and the obligatory scene. I was quite pleased to hear such intelligent and comprehensive answers. However, I was surprised that very few students completed the analytic exercise to hand in for a
grade. The students were required to hand in a total of six analytic exercises over the plays that were assigned in class over the course of the semester. I thought that many of the students would choose to complete a form on *A Doll House* because it is one of the more simple plays included in the reading list to analyze. In the few minutes that remained in class, the students began discussing the audience reactions to the play when it premiered and compared those reactions to modern audience reactions. The students found that in many ways the reactions are different, but some of the feelings are the same, especially when it comes to a woman leaving her children.

The next step in my journey of teaching was to evaluate the student responses contained in the analytic forms. Having finished the classroom discussion and knowing that the next focus was on *Miss Julie* by August Strindberg, I needed to be very clear in my criticism of the student responses. However, I was very delighted to read so many good analysis forms. Although the students should have completed the forms prior to the first classroom discussion of a play, I think that many of the students completed their forms after the first class meeting on *A Doll House* because the responses were clearer and better articulated than the oral responses I received during the discussions on the first day of presentation. I did not call for the analytic exercises on the first day, an oversight on my part, so it is likely that several of the students completed the forms later. In a way, this may have been more constructive for the students because the discussion may have helped to direct the students to make better choices in their analyses. I did discover most of the problems in the responses
in the section on “Language and Imagery.” It seems that the students were unfamiliar or unsure of what the terms *motifs, images, metaphors,* and *symbols* mean. However, they did identify these important elements: money, macaroons, Christmas time, the letters, the dance, and Torvald’s pet names for Nora. The students just did not categorize these elements well according to the individual literary devices.
Overall, I enjoyed my experience teaching *A Doll House* in the fall of 2003. I believe that I did a satisfactory job in presenting the play, encouraging open discussion and answering student questions, and graded the analytic forms in a fair and constructive manner. I find that my strengths in teaching are listening to the students, conveying a calm and kind manner to put the students at ease in the classroom, and making smooth transitions between topics. Some of my weaknesses are keeping the students engaged, dropping some points in discussions, staying on the specific topic of presentation (I sometimes wander with comments or responses and need to keep myself focused on statement or question at hand), speaking clearly and distinctly, covering the material too quickly, and reading student body language as an indicator of student comprehension (I find that students will nod their heads to indicate that they understand a point or blankly stare when asked if there are any questions, but their body language sometimes indicates that the students really do not understand but are too embarrassed to ask a question, in which case I should ask more prompting questions to find out what the problems are and how to clarify the points of discussion).

I was really fascinated with the opinions of Nora as a weak character in these groups of modern students. I began to wonder if there is some sort of feminist backlash or apathy causing this feeling. However, there were no certain indicators to solidify this theory, nor did I have another opportunity to discuss this with the students. I also found that the students performed better on their
analytic forms after an initial discussion of the play. Granted, there is always a possibility of students completing the form during class as the responses are discussed, but that is a possibility in any course. Just a friendly reminder of the academic integrity policy located in the syllabus and a watchful eye could curb some of those problems. I also think that a list of terms and definitions would be helpful for the students to reference when completing the analytic form, especially since some of the terms are new and specific to Beckerman's *Dynamics of Drama*.

When the Fall 2003 semester ended, I had the opportunity to revise the Play Analysis syllabus with Dr. Harris. Over the winter break, we met several times and revised the reading list and schedule (see appendix for revised syllabus). We felt that by grouping the plays into units instead of addressing them chronologically that analysis of the plays might be easier for the students. Play analysis is a skill that increases through practice, and by grouping plays into categories such as realistic, social commentary, absurdist, comedies, tragedies, and so forth, allows the students to make connections and comparisons between similar works much more easily. There was also a very real concern for me in revising the schedule. We scheduled *A Doll House* very early in the semester so that I could teach the unit and record my observations for this prospectus. That change made some differences between the experiences of each semester.
Much of the preparation for the Spring 2004 semester was the same as that for the Fall 2003 semester. I used all of the same materials from before; however, I tweaked my presentation a little. Before I would teach again, I decided to consult a few books on the subject of teaching to glean any advice from the teaching veteran authors.

Dr. Jill Dolan’s *Geographies of Learning* was quite helpful. Her “Ten Commandments for Teaching” really helped me focus on my task. I tried to incorporate her ideas into my work in the classroom, not only for my task in Play Analysis, but also for my new position as Teaching Fellow for Theatre Aesthetics.

Jill Dolan’s “Ten Commandments” for Teaching:

1. Teach to the highest common denominator. Students will rise to the occasion. Learning should be hard.
2. Teach for questions, not for answers. Focus on the gaps, the omissions, the whys, the maybes, but always take a stand around the knowledge you share or discover.
3. Teach to unsettle, not to create a safe space. Learning should be dangerous, because ideas and what they can do have real meanings and real effects.
4. Teach to learn something. Never teach the exact same syllabus twice, but always look for different readings, new input. Learn in front of your students, as you teach.
5. Believe that good writing is fundamental to learning anything and insist that students do it well.

6. Believe that students have a lot to teach one another. The teacher isn’t the only one in the classroom with something important to say.

7. Believe that humanities/arts classrooms should be about learning the skills of analysis, about how to ask questions more than about transmitting correct readings of canonical texts.

8. Believe in embodied learning and teaching. Everyone’s body should be on the line in the classroom, even if no one leaves their chair.

9. Be responsible to your own authority and power as a teacher. I give the grades, so I have to be as organized, committed, and well prepared as I expect the students to be.

10. Believe in a classroom in which pleasure circulates freely: as desire, as humor, as intellectual inquiry, as the passionate commitment to ideas, theories, and practices (Dolan 144-145).

I read Jill Dolan’s “commandments” carefully, and identified areas that I could improve. All are important, but numbers 1, 2, 4, 6, and 9 really struck a chord with me. I realized that many times I would not recognize that my students are very intelligent and actually want to be challenged as much as possible. Secondly, instead of asking questions, listening for responses, and using the students’ comments as a springboard for a new idea to explore, I would often focus on the student whose answer was closest to what I was “looking for,” and then I would move on, instead of ruminating on the other responses to
find out why those responses surfaced in the discussion. Next, I really identified with “teaching to learn something.” I have been a student in classrooms with a syllabus that was written before I was even born, and the teaching style reflected that. In those classes, I never felt challenged or that my ideas might seem fresh, or for that matter, even considered as a possible solution to the task at hand. I never want to be that sort of teacher. I find teaching challenging, fun, rewarding, and unpredictable, so I want to continually search for ways to make the material new and challenging for myself and for the students. Dr. Dolan’s sixth commandment reminded my much of the second in that I need to focus on what the students are saying to one another and use those statements as new ways to look at the subject. I also need not be afraid to encourage students to take note of another student’s response. Just because it did not come from my mouth does not mean it is not important. The ninth commandment is an area where I can constantly improve. Although I am more organized than most people with whom I am acquainted, I can always find new ways to be better prepared and more efficient at the task of teaching. Whether it is staying abreast of new information in my field or developing a new assignment for the classroom, I recognize ways to fill the gap in careful preparation of my lessons.

Another book that I consulted was *The First Days of School* by Harry and Rosemary Wong. This book was given to me when I began teaching middle school theatre. Although the book is geared for teachers from kindergarten though high school, many of the principles can be applied to the college
This book is a wonderful asset to anyone working as an educator. When I was in the middle school classroom, I focused more on classroom management and lesson mastery. As an educator at an institution of higher learning, I want to increase my skills in lesson mastery. This book outlines many effective ways to help students achieve and master the material, such as designing lessons to help students reach mastery, scheduling adequate time for instruction, focusing on the instructor achievement, meaning that the instructor is successful only when the students are successful, and understanding that learning only occurs when the student is engaged (Wong 197-205).

After I examined these two books, I set about restructuring how I would present the material and outlined my plan:

1. Present the play by first discussing Ibsen’s background.
2. Talk about Laura Kieler and the social conditions for European women during the nineteenth century.
3. Introduce the “well-made” play structure.
4. Engage the students in a discussion of the story and significant elements of the play, including characters, literary devices, and the obligatory scene.
5. Discuss the play analysis form and specifically address all of the questions on the form.
6. View the video clips and discuss.
7. Have the student presenters present their group project over the play.
8. Call for the analytic exercise forms.

After I outlined my plan, I realized that it was almost identical to the sequence of events from the previous semester. However, I thought it was a fairly effective plan and I would continue with it.
Dr. Harris informed me that there was only one section of Play Analysis this semester, and due to the small class size, only twenty students, there was not a group project assigned to A Doll House. Honestly, I felt some relief that I would be speaking to a smaller class, and I would not have to evaluate a student project. I came prepared with my textbook, notes, and even a tape recorder to capture the teaching experience and review the events, to the first class meeting on Tuesday, February 3. As the class began, I introduced myself and explained to the students that I was presenting A Doll House to them as part of my research on my master’s thesis. Then I jumped right into my presentation. I began speaking about Ibsen and the play, and I asked several questions. However, I did not receive many responses and those I did receive were vague and irrelevant. Sensing that the students had not read the play, I asked them how many had read the play for today’s class meeting. No one responded. I momentarily panicked, but Dr. Harris said, “Why don’t you use this time to discuss the feminism issue?” Brilliant. So, I asked the students questions about feminism in art and theatre, images of women, and about the social climate during Ibsen’s writing of A Doll House. To my surprise and relief, the students were eager to discuss these points. We talked about minorities in theatre, theatre’s social impact, and even recent films with strong female characters, such as Mona Lisa Smile and the Oscar nominated film, The Hours. The students were very talkative and receptive. As the class time drew to a close, I urged the students to read the play for the next class and write down their initial reactions.
to the play as soon as they had finished reading the play’s last lines. Then I asked them to think about the play, and write down the react after they had some time to analyze the play. Lastly, I encouraged the students to complete the play analysis form for Thursday’s class meeting.

As Dr. Harris and I left, I felt that although the time was not used speaking directly about the play, the discussion was good in that the students’ were now interested in reading the play that caused such a stir one hundred twenty-five years ago.

Attendance was up during the next class meeting, and I was happy to have more opinions in the room. I began the class by calling for the responses to the play. Only three students handed in written responses and I was a bit disappointed. I decided to show the video clips from the films of A Doll House. This group of students almost unanimously agreed that the Harris-Plummer version was a more powerful performance. They did not identify with Jane Fonda’s Nora or David Warner’s Torvald.

Next, I asked for the analytic exercise forms. Three students completed forms, and I was very disappointed, but the students were quick to inform me that they had not discussed the analytic form exercise. It had not occurred to me that by moving A Doll House to the beginning of the semester that the students would not have had an opportunity to learn about the requirements of the analytic form. Dr. Harris assured the students that he would introduce the form to them during the next class meeting and explain how to respond to the questions on the form.
After the film and analytic discussion, several students wanted to share their reactions to the play with the class, despite not completing the assignment. Most students were initially shocked that Nora left Torvald, but after that emotion wore off, they were impressed with Nora and applauded her decision to leave. They also felt that the play was well written and still speaks to today’s audiences. Nevertheless, a few students stood in staunch disagreement. This group of about three students, two of which were young men, completely disagreed with Nora leaving her family. They sided with Torvald that Nora’s sacred duties to her marriage and family were more important than her desire to leave, and these students were very concerned with the impact Nora’s leaving would have on her children. This started a very lively debate between the students about women’s rights and what constitutes an unfit mother. By the end of the class time, we had not discussed the literary elements of the play, and I was worried that the students were not learning what they needed to about play analysis. Before I could even ask, Dr. Harris offered to allow me an extra class period to discuss the play. I was relieved, and I asked him if I could bring the film *The Hours* to the class to show the students a clip in which a character played by Julianne Moore explains why she left her husband and young children. He agreed that it would be a helpful tool for those students struggling with Ibsen’s concepts of human liberation and duty to self.

At the beginning of the third class meeting on Tuesday, February 10, Dr. Harris explained the play analysis form to the class. He talked them through the appropriate responses to the questions using *A Doll House* as the example play.
I could see on the students’ faces that they understood the importance of the form and that they viewed it not as an assignment as much as a tool for play analysis. The students were eager to respond to Dr. Harris’ questions concerning the form (Dr. Harris told me later that more students handed in a completed form during the next class meeting). When Dr. Harris finished with his portion of the lecture, I showed the video clip from *The Hours*. Several students had seen the movie, but a good portion had not, so I do not know how effectively the clip clarified a woman’s choice to leave her family and how painful that decision would be to make. Of course, after showing the clip, the same discussion from Thursday’s class began. Even after the class was over, many students were still discussing women and family.

Dr. Harris and I agreed that I would not grade the analytic forms handed in by the students because of the confusion the students felt, but I would have photocopies of the completed forms. I was able to observe the student responses on the forms, and I found that the responses were very similar to the responses in the fall of 2003.
SELF-EVALUATION AND OBSERVATIONS: SPRING 2004

The experience in the spring was much more productive and information than the experience in the fall. I was better prepared in the spring, partly because I had the experience in the fall so teaching did not seem so new, and I had goal in mind. In the fall, I treated the act of teaching as informing the students about Ibsen’s play and the method of analyzing it. After reading the Dolan and Wong books and realizing that informing is not how I should focus my energy, I could identify my goal as providing the students with the opportunity to discover the most effective ways of analyzing a play for them. By redirecting my focus from the completion of the analysis form to guiding students to view the play in an analytic manner with the goal of understanding how the play works, I opened my mind to different ways of achieving my goal. For example, I found that the discussion of the social issues prevalent in the play before discussing the play itself actually resulted in intelligent and well-thought responses from the students. Also, by discussing the play and not the analysis form, the students mastered the concepts addressed on the form without becoming bogged down in the terminology on the form. I also think that the video clips are a good addition to the presentation because the students are very visual learners. By commenting on the film, they can translate their comments into comments about the play and its characters. When I asked the students why they preferred Julie Harris’s performance to Jane Fonda’s, they had to analyze the character of Nora to formulate their responses.
I believe that my teaching improved in the spring, but I still need to work on certain areas, such as organization, keeping the students engaged, outlining my goal in advance to presenting the material, and listening to the complete thought that a student provides before agreeing or disagreeing. Also on that note, I need to remember that it is not so important that I agree or disagree with a student response, it is more important that I understand how the student arrived at that thought.

I am learning that teaching is an art and a service. I believe that it is my job as an educator to serve the students, to help them by providing them with tools to explore the world, and to support them in their endeavors to discover new information and formulate new opinions. What wonderful work.
APPENDIX A

“WELL-MADE” PLAY AND OBLIGATORY SCENE HANDOUTS
The “Well-Made” Play
(*pièce bein faite*)

Structural Elements:
1.) a plot based on a secret known to the audience but withheld from certain characters (who have long been engaged in a battle of wits) until its revelation (or the direct consequence thereof) in the climactic scene serves to unmask a fraudulent character and restore to good fortune the suffering hero, with whom the audience has been made to sympathize
2.) a pattern of increasingly intense action and suspense, prepared by exposition (this pattern assisted by contrived entrances and exits, letters, and other devices)
3.) a series of ups and downs in the hero’s fortunes, caused by his conflict with an adversary
4.) the counterpunch of *peripeteia* and obligatory scene (big scene or *scène à faire*), making respectively, the lowest and the highest point in the hero’s adventures, and brought about by the disclosure of secrets to the opposing side
5.) a central misunderstanding or **quiproquo**, made obvious to the spectator but withheld from the participants
6.) a logical and credible *dénouement*
7.) the reproduction of the overall action in the individual acts.

*Peripeteia* the greatest in a series of mishaps suffered by the hero.

**Quiproquo** (Latin quid pro quo) literally, “something for something”; two or more characters interpret a word or, by extension, a situation in different ways, all the time assuming that their interpretations are the same. Frequently, this device is used in comedies.
The Obligatory Scene (scène à faire)

The scene the audience expects and ardently desires.

1.) Logical: it may be necessitated by the inherent logic of the theme.

2.) Dramatic: it may be demanded by the manifest exigencies of specifically dramatic effect.

3.) Structural: the author himself may have rendered it obligatory by seeming unmistakably to lead up to it.

4.) Psychological: it may be required in order to justify some modification of character or alteration of will, too important to be taken for granted.

5.) Historic: it may be imposed by history or legend.
APPENDIX B

PLAY ANALYSIS FORM
Play Analysis Form for Analytic Exercises

Name: __________________________________________________ Sec: ______

1) Title of the Play:

2) Significance of the title? (What does it refer to?)

Genre

3) Genre of play: comedy or tragedy, musical, or other?

Physical Setting

4) Where is the play set?
   
   a) Place?
   
   b) Time?

Plot

5) Plot Summary

Precipitating Context/Material that comes forth in exposition (rising action)

6) Is there an inciting event? What is it? Explain.
a) Point of attack? Explain.

**Characters**

7) The Main Characters list: Place an “L” next to leading roles an “S” next to supporting roles

   a) Name of male roles:

   b) Name of female roles:

**Impelling Agent (protagonist)**

8) Which of the main characters acts as the *Impelling Agent* for most of the play? Why?

**Dramatic Activity**

9) Looking at a segment of the dramatic action, identify an important *dramatic activity* initiated by the leading character(s). What is the activity, and what is the character trying to accomplish with that activity?

   a) **Who** makes the play happen? Why?

**Resistance (antagonists)**

10) What kind of resistance do the other characters put forth? How and why?
**Character's Energy**

11) Central character's energy: *Active* or *Reactive* (adjusting to, registering other's actions) Explain.

   a) Is this action direct or indirect? Explain.

**Project/Objective**

12) What is the central character's project/objective?

   a) Is it constant or altered? How so?

**Structure**

13) Structure of the play by type: *Intensive* or *Extensive*? Explain.

**Crux, most intense moment (Climax)**

14) Is there an *obligatory* scene (big scene) at the end of the play, or what happens in the play's final scene?

   a) Is there a reversal of fortune (explain)?

   b) Is there a turning point in the play's action? What is it?

   c) Is this foreshadowed in the developing action of the play? How?
d) Does the playwright make use of dramatic irony? How?

e) Is there recognition (explain)?

**Denouement (Falling Action)**

15) Impression left by the play?

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**Outside the play but relevant**

16) Is the play concerned with a specific historical event or set of circumstances? Explain.

17) Is the audience set (or point of view) important to the way the play works? Explain.

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**Spectacle or what the audience sees, the physical production**

18) How important is the set, costumes, and lighting to the basic understanding of the play?

(Mention any special requirement the play requires.)

**Language and Imagery, or what the audience hears**

19) Language: Is the play in verse, prose, or dialect? Is this significant? Explain.

20) Significant repeated elements:

   a) Motifs

   b) Images
c) Metaphors

d) Symbols

**Modes and Style**

21) Style of presentation:

   a) artificial, realism, naturalism, absurdism, etc.

22) Mode, specifically theatrical activity and/or theatrical conventions (For instance, is disguise, eavesdropping, or soliloquy a significant element in this play?) What?

**Thought or Meaning: what the audience thinks about, or memorial impact**

23) Does the playwright have a specific message (theme of the play) and if so, what is it in a few concise words?

**Unifying Action: what is the audience's experience of the journey of the play**

24) Is there an overall action that holds the play together? What is it?

**Evaluation**

25) Has this play withstood the test of time?

   a) What might need to be done to make the play more relevant to a contemporary audience?

   b) If you were a producing director, would you mount this play in your theatre? Why or why not?
APPENDIX C

BIOGRAPHY OF HENRIK IBSEN PRIOR TO A DOLL HOUSE
AND HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH LAURA KIELER
Henrik Ibsen was a playwright like no other. Through his plays, such as *The League of Youth* (1869), *The Pillars of Society* (1877), *A Doll’s House* (1879), *Ghosts* (1881), and *An Enemy of the People* (1882), Ibsen ushered in a new, contemporary, and reasonable way to address social conditions using a medium typically used for entertainment in the late 19th century. Perhaps if he had not been so beloved by his fellow Norwegians because of his romantic stylizations of national myth and history in his early plays such as *Brand* (1866) and *Peer Gynt* (1867), Ibsen’s radical use of the theatre to enlighten his audience of a future season of social change may have ended his career and silenced his voice as a popular playwright. However, humans flock to witness anything controversial, and audiences did not want to miss Ibsen’s shocking dramas.

Henrik Johan Ibsen was born on March 20, 1828, in a coastal town called Skein in Norway to Knud and Marichen Altenburg Ibsen. Knud Ibsen was a merchant shopkeeper and schnapps distiller who married Marichen in 1825. The couple had six children; however, the oldest child, born in 1826, died three weeks after Henrik was born, making Henrik the eldest brother to the other four siblings to follow (Ferguson 3). Henrik’s early years were serene. His parents were comfortably wealthy and happy; his father married to a petite, raven-haired beauty, the mother of his three young children and a passionate theatre lover. However, in the middle of 1834, financial troubles for the family began. The schnapps distillery was closed by authorities, and throughout the next couple of years, Knud was forced to sell everything to support his family, now grown to six members (Meyer 13). Following this financial disintegration, the family moved to
the summer estate, bought by Knud in 1833, in Venstøp, stopping just short of declaring bankruptcy, an unthinkable disgrace (Ferguson 6).

Not much is known about Ibsen’s early education, but by the time he was thirteen years of age, he was attending the Scheel House, a school managed by two theology students, and learning German, Latin, history and religion. While a student at Scheel House, Ibsen wrote an essay describing a dream he had in which an angel entices Henrik to follow him to hell, sharing with Henrik a vision of the realities of life: “See here for yourself, all is vanity” (Ferguson 10). Ibsen’s sister Hedvig remembered him to be an unsociable and unhappy child who isolated himself from the family (Gosse 6). This assertion is not surprising considering Ibsen’s proclivity for macabre dreams. After the family’s move back to Skein and Henrik’s confirmation in 1843, Ibsen left for the harbor town of Grimstad, just shy of his sixteenth birthday, to work as an apothecary’s apprentice (Ferguson 11, 12).

Henrik was employed by a man named Jens Arup Reimann, and lived in the family’s home, a small, two story building housing the Reimann’s large family, two maids, and the dispensary itself, which was located on the ground floor. Ibsen shared a room with Reimann’s three elder sons, and it was his job to handle all of the late-night calls to the shop. Because of the living situation, Ibsen felt he was never alone, quite different from someone who isolated himself from his family while living with them (Ferguson 13). During his precious moments of free time, Henrik would go out and paint landscapes. He also found the time to have an affair with one of the maids living in the Reimann home. Her
name was Else Sophie Jensdatter Birkedalen, and she was ten years older than Ibsen. She came from a family that also experienced downfall, and she and Ibsen became close because of this shared experience. However, Else Sophie left the Reimann’s to return to her parents’ home after she became pregnant with Ibsen’s child. The baby boy, Hans Jacob Henriksen, was born October 9, 1846. Although Ibsen claimed paternity and financially supported the child as long as stipulated in the law, he never spoke of his son or Else Sophie (Ferguson 15-16).

Due to financial mishandlings and alcoholism, Reimann was forced to sell his business at auction. Lars Nielsen, who had apprenticed under Reimann years earlier, purchased the business in March 1847. Nielsen relocated the apothecary to a more desirable area of town in Østregata. Henrik finished the first stage of his apprenticeship, passed his examination, earned the title of ‘qualified assistant’, and earned a pay raise. The new dispensary had a room behind it that Ibsen shared with his new employer, with whom he stayed for the next three years (Ferguson 17).

With the betterment of his financial situation through Nielsen, Ibsen began to study Latin in order to pursue his studies in medicine. The previously solitary Ibsen made some friends in Østregata, Christopher Due and Ole Schulerud. The three shared literary tastes, but Ibsen developed considerably radical political views. He shared sympathies with the French who overthrew their king and declared themselves a republic because the people of Norway were under the rule of the Swedish king who employed a Norwegian cabinet. Soon all of Europe would experience some sort of political upheaval. Ibsen declared himself a
republican and dismissed the notion of God as his revolutionary spirit began to rise. He began to write poems reflecting the politically volatile events and his interest in Norse mythology and history, and he wrote sonnets to King Oscar of Sweden and Norway. He also became enraptured with Sallust’s *Catiline* (Meyer 40-41).

Having written poems and essays before, Ibsen wrote his first verse drama *Catiline*, in 1849. Basing his work on Sallust’s *Catiline*, Ibsen wrote his three-act play quickly, soaking up the political unrest of the time and pouring it into his work. After the work was finished, Ibsen’s friend, Christopher Due, made an accurate copy of the play, and his other friend, Ole Schulerud, took the play with him on his journey to Christiania, to continue his study of law. Schulerud presented the play to the Christiania Theatre, the only theatre in the city, but it was refused. Although about thirty published copies of the play were sold, it received little attention. However, Ibsen continued to write, and in the spring of 1850, he decided to move to Christiania (Meyer 23-24).

Upon arriving in Christiania, the twenty-two year-old Ibsen, found lodging with his friend, Ole Schulerud, and a young man named Theodor Abildgaard whose revolutionary political ideas found their way into his journalistic work. The three men lived together in a house owned by Mother Sæther, who was probably Schulerud’s aunt. Ibsen wanted to attend university, so he enrolled in Heltberg’s private crammer in order to prepare for the university’s entrance exam (Gosse 43). Having only been in Christiania a very short while, Ibsen learned that *Catiline* was reviewed again in the *Christiania Postem*, where the reviewer
believed that, although the play was hardly a success, it ‘reveals an unmistakable talent.’ By this time, Ibsen had already finished a revision of his play, *The Normans*, which he had written before leaving for Christiania. This new play was titled *The Warrior’s Barrow* (or, *The Burial Mound*), and it appealed to Christiania Theatre because of its national romanticism. The play opened on September 26, 1850 and was only performed twice more (Ferguson 35).

In January of 1851, the first issue of the magazine *Manden* (which would only survive a year) was published. It was the creation of Ibsen, Schulerud, Abildgaard, and another friend, Paul Botten Hansen. The magazine was modeled after the Danish magazine *The Corsair*, a literary and political publication. Ibsen served as *Mandan’s* poet and theatre reviewer. He was also elected to edit the student’s magazine *Samfunnssbladet*. He ignored his duties at the student magazine, but used his drama critic privileges to attend all the city’s theatre events, which he reviewed, very constructively, in *Manden*. Ibsen began to question why there was a lack of Norwegian works for the stage (Meyer 69).

While politics and poetry busied Ibsen, a seemingly unfortunate turn of events changed his course. In the summer of 1850, Henrik missed a child support payment to Else Sophie Birkedalen. He missed another in early January 1851, leading to his arrest in June 1851 for delinquency of payment. He was sentenced to labor at Akershus Prison in order to repay his debt. However, the Norwegian violinist, Ole Bull, arrived in Christiania at approximately the same time as Ibsen’s imprisonment. Bull was there to raise money in order to fund a Norwegian national theatre in the city of Bergen, employing only Norwegian
theatre professionals and performing new Norwegian works with classic pieces from other countries. Bull financed Ibsen’s release and repayment, and Ibsen helped coordinate and write material for a fundraising performance. Ibsen so impressed Bull that he offered Ibsen a position as playwright in residence at the theatre in Bergen. Ibsen accepted and relocated to Bergen in the autumn of 1851 (Ferguson 42, 43).

Although he was ‘assisting the theatre’ mostly through writing prologues for pieces by established writers, Ibsen’s role at the Norwegian theatre in Bergen involved bestowing his knowledge on the other inexperienced theatre participants. Ibsen had no formal experience with theatre, and what little he did know came from his days in Christiania. Ole Bull left for America shortly after the theatre at Bergen’s launching (his utopian experiment called ‘Oleana’ would later end in failure, but would inspire aspects of Peer Gynt) (Meyer 88). It soon became evident that Ibsen did not possess an extensive knowledge of the craft, and the theatre committee arranged for Ibsen to travel through Denmark and Germany to observe theatre practices in those countries, including all aspects of production. In reality, Ibsen was to direct every element of production from the artistic to the technical at the theatre in Bergen, and pass along his expertise to the other members of the theatre (Ferguson 46).

For the first time in his life, on April 15, 1852, Ibsen traveled outside the Norwegian border. A young married couple, Johannes and Louise Brun, who would later become premier actors in Norway, accompanied him. The group first visited Denmark, and was invited by the director of the Copenhagen Royal
Theatre, Johan Ludvig Heiberg, to attend evening performances at the theatre. Ibsen learned much about the craft through exposure during the six weeks he and the Bruns spent in Copenhagen. He witnessed his first Shakespearean performances, observed the workings of stage machinery, and even took a few dancing lessons (Meyer 91, 94).

Ibsen left Copenhagen without the Bruns (who traveled back to Norway) destined for Dresden, Germany in early June 1852. He was unable to secure free tickets to the theatre, but he was able to study the performance styles of two premier actors. He studied stage craft and learned a bit about costuming, and spent much of his time in the art museums. After about a month in Dresden, Ibsen returned to Norway (Meyer 97, 98).

With his return to Bergen came a change in title and a pay raise for Ibsen. He worked in tandem with a senior director who was responsible for character development and research, while Ibsen was responsible for blocking and technical elements. Although frustrated with the lack of professionalism in the theatre, Ibsen nevertheless kept detailed notes for each production. Often Ibsen and the senior director, Herman Laadding, who held authority over Ibsen, disagreed, so much in fact, that Ibsen challenged Laadding to duel. Laadding declined (Ferguson 51, 52).

Ibsen was not extremely prolific during his years in Bergen. He adapted two of his previous works and wrote three original works: St. John’s Night, Lady Inger of Österaad, and The Feast at Solhoug. St. John’s Night opened in January, 1853, but because it was not very successful, closed after a second
performance. Ibsen refused to allow this play to be printed during his lifetime (it was printed in 1909) because he called the play “a miserable thing which is not really by my hand.” Ibsen did collaborate with a young student named Theodor Bernhoft, but Bernhoft became occupied with other things and ended the collaboration (Meyer 98, 99). After St. John’s Night, Ibsen staged a rewritten version of The Warrior’s Barrow. Again, the production only managed two performances, but the consensus among the reviewers was the piece had made significant improvement, and the play was printed in the local newspaper. His next play, Lady Inger of Österaad, was a romantic drama that showed promise for Ibsen. However, the negative public reception for it deemed it a failure (Meyer 117).

Ibsen finally made a hit with The Feast at Solhaug, which opened January 2, 1856. It traveled with the company around Norway and was even performed for Louis Napoleon, Emperor of France, when he visited Norway, and despite the quickness with which the performance was organized the guest of honor was quite impressed (Ferguson 59, 60).

Ibsen took interest in the matters of his own heart during 1856. His affair with the young Rikke Holst had ended and he met Miss Susannah Daae Thoresen through Susannah’s stepmother, Magdalene Thoresen who worked at the Bergen theatre, translating French plays. Mrs. Thoresen was a close friend of Henrik’s and orchestrated the introduction. Henrik and Susannah quickly fell in love. He wooed her with poetry, and the two were engaged to marry within a month of meeting (Ferguson 63, 64). They courted for the next year while Ibsen
worked on his last contractual play for the Bergen theatre, *Olaf Liljekrans*, which opened January 2, 1857 (Ferguson 60). However, their marriage would have to wait a short while because Henrik was headed for Christiania in the summer of 1857, accepting an offer to work as director for the Norwegian Theatre (Gosse 71-73).

When Ibsen arrived in Christiania to fill the position of artistic director of the Norwegian Theatre at Möllergaten, it soon became obvious that his task was to produce ‘national drama’ despite the fact that there was still a large Danish presence in the theatre from the actors and directors to the material performed. Ibsen existed meagerly, first lodging with his friend Ole Schulerud, later finding residence at two other locations during the year. During his time away from the theatre, Ibsen worked on his play in progress, *The Vikings at Helgeland*. He returned to Bergen the summer of 1858 and married his betrothed, Susannah, on June 18. The couple resided in Christiania. Susannah gave birth to the couple’s only child, Sigurd, on December 23, 1859 (Ferguson 68).

Ibsen proposed *The Vikings of Helgeland* to the Christiania Theatre, which accepted the play for production. Ibsen was concerned that the actors at the Norwegian theatre lack the skill necessary to perform his tragedy. However, the Danish-operated theatre wished to postpone the production citing the financial stress of producing an original. Ibsen was outraged and attacked the theatre in the newspaper. He stated that newly established Norwegian Theatre only produced Norwegian plays, but lacked the classically trained Danish actors that the Christiania Theatre possessed, causing a large schism between the theatres.
He wrote, “The time has come when the peace of our theatrical world must and shall be broken. Either we must have a Norwegian Theatre which understands, and has the power to work for, our national artistic interests, or we must pledge our allegiance to our so-called principal theatre, we must all stream towards its doors even when it regales us thrice weekly with translations scrabbled together from the four corners of the earth…And yet, the time has come when a worthwhile national theatre could be established. If the Danish Theatre with its foreign tendencies and anti-nationalism did not block the path, one could from the best Norwegian talent at the three theatres [including Bergen] create a company which would realize the dream of a national theatre, a theatre which would work hand in hand with our blossoming literature.” A response came in the form of a personal attack on Ibsen, calling him a “small time poet,” and resulted in an ongoing newspaper debate. Ibsen’s friend and fellow writer, Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson, defended Ibsen’s work, and The Vikings of Helgeland was published in April 1857. The play received mixed reviews, but the overall response was positive (Meyer 155-156). Deciding not to wait for the experience of the Christiania Theatre, Ibsen staged his play at his Norwegian Theatre. It opened to a full house (people were even turned away) on November 24, 1858. The production was a huge success (Meyer 159-160).

Things for Ibsen did not remain so bright. He would not write another play until 1862, and the theatre’s financial situation remained bleak. Audiences flocked to other theatres, especially to Bank Pladsen. The theatre was also undergoing renovations, and Ibsen blamed the financial losses incurred through
lack of ticket sales on these reasons; however, Ibsen’s interest in the theatre appeared to be on the decline, perhaps accounting for much of the situation. The Norwegian Theatre proposed a merger with the theatre at Bank Pladsen, but was refused. The Norwegian Theatre declared bankruptcy, and by June 1, 1862, everyone working for the theatre was no longer employed (Ferguson 81-82).

Obviously, the period of 1857 to 1862 was a very difficult one for Ibsen. He did not write any plays until the end of this period, and the Norwegian Theatre’s downward spiral undoubtedly discouraged Ibsen. Just a few weeks after the closing of the theatre, Ibsen disembarked on a journey north to research Norwegian folklore. He was granted a small stipend from the Akademiske Kollegium to help with the travel expenses. He returned in August, supporting his family through his earnings for articles published in local papers. On December 31, 1862, his play *Love’s Comedy* appeared in *Illustreret Nyhedsblad*, earning a small, but respectable sum of money (Meyer 196, 198).

January 1, 1863, Ibsen began work as a literary advisor to the Christiania Theatre, which recently decided to “go Norwegian,” ousting the Danish presence and employing many of the people associated with the defunct Norwegian Theatre. The part-time position enabled to Ibsen to stave off his creditors for a while longer, although the family’s financial situation remained bleak. He was able to renew his grant from Akademiske Kollegium (though he did not use the money for travel); however, the sum was reduced. He even appealed to the king, but his request for funds to support his “literary activity” was denied, perhaps (although highly unlikely) due to the fact that a member of the granting
board was extremely critical of *Love’ Comedy* (consistent of the majority opinion), even stating that “the man who could have written such a play deserved not a grant but a thrashing” (Meyer 202-203). In the fall of 1863, Ibsen’s next play, *The Pretenders* was published, and Ibsen received a small sum for his work. The play opened on January 17, 1864, at the Christiania Theatre, under the author’s direction, which was also Ibsen’s last directorial engagement (Ferguson 96).

In the spring of 1864, Ibsen left his native Norway to travel through Europe, having been granted a stipend to study art and literature abroad. He had become disenchanted with his own country, possibly due to his financial hardships and the stream of negative criticism he received. His wife and son were to stay in Copenhagen with Magdalene Thoresen (Susannah’s father died three days before her wedding to Ibsen), while he journeyed on to Italy. In the fall of 1864, the family was reunited in Rome, where they lived for the next four years (Meyer 214-215).

Ibsen spent much of his early time in Italy enjoying the relaxed atmosphere, which was conducive to his work. Perhaps he needed a change of pace as well as a change of scenery. He wrote to his friend Bjørnson: “Often I lie half the day out between the excavations on the Via Latina or on the old Via Appia, and though it is an idleness yet I do not think it can be called time-wasting” (Ferguson 112). It was during this period that Ibsen began formulating his epic drama, *Brand*. In another letter to Bjørnson, Ibsen writes of *Brand*, stating, “...I started working on something new which is making such progress as
no other work of mine has ever done...It is a dramatic poem, of serious content; contemporary theme; five acts in rhymed verse...” (Meyer 238).

*Brand* was the first major turning point in Ibsen’s writing, perhaps because he was no longer inhibited by considerations of stage performance. He understood that his play was perhaps not meant for the stage as he wrote to Bjørnson, “I don't think the theatre could stage my play—if I were on the board I would have to vote against it...it's dramatic all right; but whether it is performable on other grounds you must judge yourself...” (Meyer 239). After the play was published on March 15, 1866, in Copenhagen, it took Europe, especially the Scandinavian world by storm. Ibsen stood as a revolutionary by presenting this work championing the individual as master of his own conscience, which appealed to critics and the public alike (Meyer 247). But perhaps as equal importance to Ibsen was the fact that with *Brand’s* popularity came some financial relief, with a lifetime grant from the Norwegian government to subsidize his work, another to subsidize his travels, and royalties from the sales of the play (Ferguson 117, 118).

In January of 1867, Ibsen began work on what is arguably his greatest work, *Peer Gynt* (Ferguson 126). Ibsen wrote, “After *Brand, Peer Gynt* just seemed to follow by itself.” The two title characters are very different, but in a sense, coexist as two sides of the same argument. With all of Brand’s seriousness, Peer Gynt replies with a light irresponsibility. Gynt’s mystic world adds to his adventurous search for self, which contrasts Brand as a tragic prophet. *Peer Gynt* was published on November 14, 1867, before Ibsen’s move
to Dresden, Germany, in 1868 (Bryan, xxvi). Another critical and public success, Ibsen’s place as a literary figure was firmly established.

While in Dresden, Ibsen worked on his next play, *The League of Youth*, which was, according to Ibsen, “written for the theatre, and completely realistic, a product of the heavy German air.” His son, Sigurd, attended a nearby school, and Susannah looked after the family. Ibsen applied for another travel grant from the Norwegian government to travel to Sweden to continue his research. His grant request was approved, and he was also invited to Stockholm to participate in a Scandinavian language conference. The Norwegian government granted him yet another honor. The King requested that he represent Norway at the opening of the Suez Canal in Egypt (Ferguson 143, 144).

Although Ibsen would spend a productive and inspiring summer in Sweden, the beginning of the time was marked by the passing of his mother on June 3. He had not seen her since his trip to Skien in 1850, even though his siblings had urged him to visit when she fell ill. Several months later, Ibsen responded to the news, writing to his sister Hedvig, and explained that his schedule and recently bestowed honors kept him from returning during the family’s dark time (Ferguson 145).

*The League of Youth* was published September 30, 1869 in Copenhagen. Only the day before, Ibsen left Stockholm and returned to Dresden. *The League of Youth* became Ibsen’s most popular play in Norway until the turn of the century. It was the first of his works to be written in local color; it was a five-act comedy that utilized colloquial dialogue (Meyer 295-296). Critics were divided.
Critic Georg Brandes felt that, “[the drama] very wittily parodies the aspirations of a younger generation, without at the same time showing their justification…Ibsen’s pessimism has suppressed all sympathy. The only worthy representation of the younger generation in his play is Fjeldbo, a perfectly passive nature…he is a doctor…he can be used to personify the ideals of the age” (Brandes 73). Interestingly, Brandes also felt that the character of Selma, a young beauty, was underdeveloped. He wrote several years later, “Selma…is the first sketch of Nora. I remarked in a first criticism of The League of Youth that this character of Selma had not sufficient scope, and that Ibsen ought to write an entirely new play for it. This he did in A Doll’s House” (Brandes 76). Erik Bøgh, a critic and playwright, held a different opinion from Brandes’. He heralded The League of Youth, “like all Ibsen’s plays, and outstandingly powerful and fertile work, so original that it must in most respects be called unique in its genre.” However, Ibsen remained unaware of his reviews until weeks after their publication for he was on his way to Egypt and the Suez Canal (Meyer 299).

Ibsen traveled in Egypt until December of 1869 and then returned to Dresden. During 1870, Ibsen was transitory, spending some time in Copenhagen and returning to Dresden in the fall of the year, chiefly to avoid conflict between France and Germany, returning when Germany had satisfactorily subdued the French (Gosse 119-121). Early in 1871, Ibsen set out collecting his poetry for publication as a collected work. The volume was published on May 3, 1871, containing fifty-five poems, one of which voiced his
deep love and respect for his wife, and another, ‘Burnt Boats,’ about his native Norway (Ferguson 167, 169-170).

Once the volume of poetry had been published, Ibsen could not, nor did he want to, delay his work on what would become his colossal _Emperor and Galilean_. The play, ten acts in all written in two parts, was published October 16, 1873 (Ferguson 172, 175). Ibsen wrote of his work, “This has been a Herculean labor for me; not the work itself, that has gone easily, but the pain it has cost me to live myself freshly and vividly into so distant and alien an age” (Meyer 369). Ibsen considered this epic his masterpiece, and although many critics received the play positively, they disagree with him. In the fashion of _Brand_ and _Peer Gynt_, _Emperor and Galilean_ is better suited for reading not staging. It is an epic that depicts the historical period 351 to 363 A.D., following the rise of Emperor Julian, who, by his rejection of Christianity actual impassions its cause (Meyer 377-379). This play, although epic, was written in prose, and marked the end of his poetic writing, making it a pivotal moment in Ibsen’s career. Although his critic and friend, Edmund Gosse, felt a loss for the end of Ibsen’s poetic style, it was Gosse’s remarks that tuned Ibsen’s new style. Ibsen wrote to Gosse, “The illusion I wanted to produce is that of reality. I wished to produce the impression on the reader that what he was reading was something that had really happened. If I had employed verse, I would have counteracted my own intention, and prevented the accomplishment of the task I had set myself…We are no longer living in the age of Shakespeare…My new drama is no tragedy in the ancient acceptation; what I desired to depict were human beings, and therefore I would
not let them talk in ‘the language of the gods’” (Gosse 136). In April of 1875, after having tamed the beast of *Emperor and Galilean*, Ibsen and his family moved to Munich, where they would live for the next four years.

Ibsen arrived in modernity when he embarked on what could be considered the second period of his writing career with his play, *The Pillars of Society*. Ibsen stated that this play would ‘deal with several of the most pressing problems of the moment,’ (Ferguson 199), and it did. The play concerns itself with a wealthy ship owner, Bernick, who has built his fortune through a loveless marriage and shady, often illegal, business deals. When his brother-in-law vows to expose the lies, Bernick send him on a ship doomed to sink; however, Bernick’s own son has stowed away aboard. Although the far-fetched ending prevents the ship from sailing and prompts Bernick to confess his wrongdoing, the play intended to expose similar misdeeds among Norwegian society. The play undoubtedly sprang from Ibsen’s memories of Grimstad, where he witnessed less than exemplary business transactions involving his employer, Reimann, and the consequences stemming from Reimann’s choices. The play also addressed the rights of women and the practice of knowingly sending out ships badly rotted and in disrepair, known as ‘floating coffins.’

*The Pillars of Society* was not by any means the first play to expose social issues, but it was the first to do so well. German writer Paul Schlenther (who, along with Otto Brahm, would found the Freie Bühne a few years later) was awakened by the play. He wrote, “Our young eyes were opened to the false tinsel of the theatre that was being offered to us. We thrilled with joy…Until then,
Ibsen had been but an empty name to us. It was this play that taught us to love him, a love that lasted for life. I can testify on behalf of many of my generation that under the influence of this example of modern realism there was implanted in us, at that formative age, an orientation of taste which was to be decisive for the whole of our lives” (Meyer 433-435). Ibsen, whose father passed away just days before the October 11, 1877 publication of The Pillars of Society, had firmly established himself as a writer of social import. Not much more than a year later, Ibsen would publish one of his most famous and controversial social plays, A Doll’s House (Bryan xxvii).

Laura Kieler

In the spring of 1870, a young woman of about twenty years of age, Laura Petersen, published a volume titled, Brand’s Daughters, a sort of sequel to Ibsen’s Brand. The work focused on the issue of women’s rights, and the author sent a copy to Ibsen. He wrote her back, acknowledged her talent, and said, “The main thing is to be true and faithful to one’s self. It is not a question of willing to go in this direction or that, but of willing what one absolutely must, because one is oneself and cannot do otherwise. The rest is only lies” (Meyer 320-321). This statement is significant in that Ibsen himself followed it in his own writing, particularly from that point onward. However, for Laura, it would prove to be a bit more challenging.

In the summer of 1871, Laura visited Dresden and the Ibsen family. She befriended Ibsen and his wife Suzannah. She and Ibsen became close enough that he began calling her his “skylark,” and he became a mentor for her writing.
She visited the Ibsens periodically throughout the next few years, but her visit in 1876 was more business related than social.

Laura married a man named Victor Kieler, a Danish school teacher. Early in their marriage he contracted tuberculosis, and his doctors warned the Kielers that if Victor did not relocate to a warmer climate for a period of time, he would die. To save her husband’s life, Laura took out a loan to cover the expenses for a trip to Italy. The trip successfully restored Victor’s health. On the way home, the Kielers stopped by Munich to visit the Ibsens. While there, Laura confided in Suzannah the truth about the trip’s funding, obviously worried about how she had obtained the money. Early in 1878, Laura sent Suzannah a letter and a manuscript for a novel. The frantic letter urged Suzannah to convince Ibsen to have his publisher publish the novel because Laura could not repay her loan and was desperate for the money. Suzannah gave Ibsen the letter and the manuscript, but Ibsen refused to have the novel published because he felt it was a rush job and not comparable to her level of talent in her previous works. He wrote to Laura advising her to tell her husband the truth, believing that Victor would help his wife settle the matter. At this point Ibsen was already considering writing a play similar to *The Pillars of Society*, based on Laura Kieler’s situation.

Upon receiving Ibsen’s response, Laura Kieler forged a check to repay her loan. The forgery was detected, Victor Kieler denounced his wife and committed her to a mental institution. He also retained custody of the couple’s young children (one a newborn infant) declaring that Laura was an unfit mother. Victor alerted the Ibsens of the events in a short note. After one month, Laura was
released from asylum, and Victor agreed to take her back only after she pleaded with him (Meyer 433-435).

As one would expect, Ibsen was terribly bothered by Laura’s plight. He began creating his play based on her story. He did change some details; for example, Laura, a working writer, becomes Nora, a housewife, who takes on copying work. Victor Kieler, an overbearing, harsh husband, becomes Torvald Helmer, more possessive than cruel. Perhaps the biggest difference, and Ibsen’s way of trying to change the past, is that Nora leaves her husband to seek out her own way, whereas Laura, unfortunately, begged her husband to take her back (Templeton 137).
APPENDIX D

THEA 2440 PLAY ANALYSIS SYLLABUS (REVISED FOR SPRING 2004)
In this class, we will ask such questions as: What is theatre? How do we analyze a play? What is the purpose of the plot structure, characterization, language, and stage directions, and how do these elements vary from play to play? We will consider genre classifications and discuss the nature of tragedy and comedy.

We begin with the premise that the script is a score for live performance. The purpose of our analysis as theatre professionals -- actors, directors, designers, playwrights, producers, and scholars -- is to be able to read scripts so that we are able to present them to audiences. We seek to discover what the playwright has dramatized and how we can best realize his or her work on stage clearly, powerfully and imaginatively.

Texts

- Aristotle’s *Poetics* (in the bookstore and on reserve in Willis)
- Edward Albee’s *The Zoo Story and American Dream*, NY: Viking.
- Joan Torres’ *Better Half Dead*, NY: Samuel French
- Andrew Harris’ adaptation of Moliere’s *Tartuffe* : *Tar Tuff*

Most of the titles are on reserve in Willis Library and available in the Theatre Department’s Holland Library located on the 2nd Floor of RTFP across from the Theatre Department’s Main Office.

Class Schedule (texts should be read by the date indicated)

Tues, 1/13  Introduction. What is drama? What is theatre? Why do we analyze plays? How do we analyze plays? What terms do we use?

Thurs, 1/15  *The Zoo Story* by Edward Albee assignment-terms

Tues, 1/20  *The Zoo Story* (cont’d), *Oedipus Rex* by Sophocles

Thurs, 1/22  *Oedipus* and Aristotle’s *Poetics* assignment-diagram and Quiz

Tues, 1/27  Shakespearean tragedy: *Macbeth* assignment-concept

Thurs, 1/29  *Macbeth* adaptations and variations Quiz and Group Presentation

Tues, 2/3  Realism  *A Doll’s House*  by Henrik Ibsen
Thurs, 2/5  *A Doll’s House* in performance

Tues, 2/10  *Oleanna* by David Mamet

Thurs, 2/12  *Oleanna* in performance. Group Presentation

Tues, 2/17  Expressionism and Naturalism *Miss Julie* by August Strindberg

Thurs, 2/19  *Miss Julie* in performance. Quiz and Group Presentation

Tues, 2/24  Georg Büchner’s *Woyzeck*

Thurs, 2/26  *Woyzeck* (cont)

See the University’s production of *Woyzeck* February 27, 28, and 29

Tues, 3/2  Review of UNT’s production of *Woyzeck* due. Discuss midterm exam

Thurs, 3/4  MIDTERM EXAM (You should have two analytic exercises turned in at this point)

Tues, 3/9  Comedy of Manners *Tartuffe* by Moliere

Thurs, 3/11  *Tartuffe* and adaptations. Harris’s *Tar-Tuff* Group Presentation

Spring Break!

Tues, 3/23  *The Importance of Being Earnest* by Oscar Wilde

Thurs, 3/25  *The Importance of Being Earnest* (cont’d) Group Presentation

*Tartuffe* and adaptations. Harris’s *Tar-Tuff* Group Presentation

Tues, 3/30  Chekhov’s *The Cherry Orchard* (cont’d) Group Presentation

Thurs 4/1  Joan Torres’ *Better Half Dead* (a comedy thriller) Quiz and Group Presentation

Tues, 4/6  Expressionism, Absurdism, and Epic Theatre *Death of A Salesman* by Arthur Miller

Thurs, 4/8  *Broadway Theatre* chapter, *Death of A Salesman* the role of the designer. Quiz and Group Presentation

Tues, 4/13  *Endgame* by Samuel Beckett
Thurs, 4/15  *Endgame* (cont’d), *Life of Galileo* by Bertolt Brecht. Group Presentation

See the University’s production of *A Little Night Music* April 15-18 and 23-25

Tues, 4/20  No class. Dr. Harris out of town.

Thurs, 4/22  Brecht’s *Life of Galileo* (cont’d). Quiz and Group Presentation

Tues, 4/27  Tony Kushner’s *Angels in America: The Millennium Approaches* (All analytic exercises must be turned in at this point) Review of *A Little Night Music* due.

Thurs, 4/29  *Angel’s* (cont’d) Review for final exam

**FINAL EXAM**

Thurs, May 6  1:30-3:30 pm

**GRADING**

Quiz and Assignment Average - 100 points
6 analytic exercises - 300 points (Each exercise is worth 50 points)
3-person group project (director, designer, dramaturg) --- 200 points
Reviews - 100 points
Midterm Exam -100 points
Final Exam – 200 points

900-1000 points: A range
800-899 points: B range
700-799 points: C range
600-699 points: D range
below 600 points: F

**ATTENDANCE IS REQUIRED IN THIS COURSE.** You are allowed
4 absences without penalty. After that, 3 points will be subtracted from your course total for every absence. There are no excused absences, nor can any be made up, so don’t squander your allowed 4.

A student who reaches 5 absences by the twelfth class day will be dropped from the course for nonattendance.

Lateness policy: If you are more than 5 minutes late to class, do not walk into the classroom. You are absent. If possible, I will have the door closed at that time. When you see a closed door, do not enter. Late arrivals are rude and disruptive, and, therefore, they are banned.
Leaving class early will also count as an official absence. Leaving early is also disruptive and is grounds for administrative withdrawal from the class.

Students are also banned from leaving and returning during class, except for emergencies.

Cell phones and pagers must be off during class. Violators may be asked to leave, and will lose credit for attendance.

Because of the high demand for this course, students who miss the first class without consent of the instructor are liable to be dropped from the course so that other students may be added.

Policy on grades of “Incomplete”: A grade of “Incomplete” for the course will be given only if

a) the student is passing the course; and
b) the only missing work is the 6th exercise; and
c) the reason it is missing is extended illness or extended family emergency;
d) the student requests the incomplete in writing.

Important: The incomplete must be made up within the next semester.

Make a copy of any assignment before you turn it in to me. Also, keep all graded work I hand back to you until the end of the semester.

If you need help, please talk to me! Please inform me of any difficulties you may be having. I will be available during office hours and, if necessary, will make special arrangements.

This syllabus is not a contract. The instructor may change requirements, change the class schedule and change the due dates as he deems appropriate.

Analytic exercises: A form will be provided that should be filled in completely

No extensions are possible for these assignments because we will use them in class. They must be brought to the beginning of the first class for which a given play is assigned. To receive credit, both you and your analytic exercise must be present in class. You cannot give it to somebody else to turn in. You must do six of these assignments out of a possible 12, beginning with Macbeth.

If you hand in more than six, I shall count only your best six and omit the lowest grade (or grades). The more you do, the better you will get at doing them. Please don’t put them off. If you decide you’re going to do only the last six, I can almost guarantee that circumstances will prevent you. You will undoubtedly have some emergency toward the semester’s end that will keep you from class but you will want to turn in the exercise for that class anyway because you’re behind—
remember that you can’t. And if you do only six, I won’t be able to drop your low grades.

Class discussion is important. You are required to read all the plays, coming to class with the text, ready for discussion, even if you are skipping the written assignment.

The purpose of the course is to teach you how to analyze a play so that you will be able to work, communicate, and produce in the theatre. We always encourage library research, but we want to hear from you. Our purpose is to develop interpretive skills rather than to gather facts (or the conclusions of others). Any information you transmit from another source, such as a previous course or your own reading, must be footnoted. All the work you do in this course must be entirely your own, with the exception of occasional footnoted references to sources, as mentioned above. Plagiarism or collaboration with another student in any of your assignments (except the Group Projects where you will be working as part of a specific group) will result in your receiving no credit for the assignment. There is no way to make up such an assignment.

The Group Projects

Let’s pretend we are the Board of Directors of University Theatre. As the Executive Producers of this organization, we are asking you this important question: Should We Produce this Play? Why or Why Not?

To get an informed answer to these questions: we need three expert opinions. We will form a series of 3-person groups. Please give me your names along with the name of a play on the syllabus on which you want to work. Do this by January 20th. All assigned plays are eligible except Oedipus. Also pick an alternate title. Failure to pick an alternate will not help you get your choice.

If you don’t know other students in the class, I will find partners for you.

Each group should prepare a 12 minute presentation on the play. One student should assume the role of director, another of designer in two areas (sets, costumes, lights, sound), and the third should be the dramaturg (explained below).

The presentation will be given on the date on the syllabus that says Group Presentation for that play. If you are absent on that day without an acceptable excuse, you will get no credit for the project.

The dramaturg is the research person. She or he should learn about the style of the play’s original production, something about the play’s production history, and find out what some scholars or critics have written. (My book Broadway Theatre is an example of this kind of an approach applied to Broadway plays of the last seventy years.) Biographical information about the playwright should not dominate the presentation. (Confine your research to a reasonable limit—you are not writing a 10-page paper.) The dramaturg should present these findings to the
director and designer to aid them in their decisions. He or she will also present the findings to the class. Therefore, there will be three separate but related presentations, each 4 minutes in length. At the conclusion of the presentation, we want a summation as to whether this play should or should not be included in the next University Theatre season.

Based on your opinions of the play, the analytic exercises, information provided by the dramaturg, and creative collaboration within the group, you the director or designer should describe your approach to staging the play. What effect do you want to have on the audience? What do you want them to get from seeing your production? What aspect of the play do you want to illuminate? What mood, tone or style do you want to create? What “look” do you want? Do you want the audience to laugh, weep, think, sit in stunned silence, or run screaming out the door? If you were the director, how would you cast the leading roles? Why?

This is a group project; therefore, you need to have at least one meeting with all group members present to ensure that the group’s vision of the play is united and the presentation reflects decisions made within the group. If you strongly oppose a decision, write about it in your report.

At the time the presentation is given, your written reports are due. Each report is an individual statement reflecting the journey you took to arrive at your conclusions about the play. This portion will be graded individually, so don’t be afraid to discuss your opinions. Included in the report should be any sources you used for research, descriptions of your designs (designer), your concept, character sketches and appropriated actors (director) and why and how you came to the decisions.

Each written report should be typed, double-spaced, 12 point font (Arial or Times) and 3 to 5 pages in length.

Course-related Academic Adjustments in Compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act

The UNT Department of Dance and Theatre Arts does not discriminate on the basis of disability in the recruitment and admission of students. THEA 2440 is a lecture-participation course that requires the reading of scripts at home and in UNT facilities, the composition and typing of exercises, the presentation of a group project and the taking of a written examination. The student has the responsibility of informing the instructor of any disabling condition that will affect his or her completion of the course assignments. It is the policy of the Department of Dance and Theatre Arts to make reasonable accommodations to help such a student perform well in the department’s courses.

Terms we will use in play analysis
The purpose of terminology is to clarify your response to a play. Terminology is not an end in itself. It is not unusual to find theatre professionals and scholars
using the same terms in different ways. Over time the theatre changes and terms become dates or applied in a way that obscures precisely what they were intended to clarify. My approach is based upon the work of Bernard Beckerman in his *Dynamics of Drama*. For several years, I worked with the late Dr. Beckerman as his researcher under the auspices of the National Endowment for the Humanities, “New Models for Teaching Dramatic Literature and Theatre.” The terms that follow will be discussed as the course progresses. My hope is that they enliven and enhance the experience of the play.

Terms:
Dramatic segment (beat)
Dramatic activity
Presentational and Representational
Climactic (intensive) and Episodic (extensive)
Conflict external (active energy) and internal (reactive energy)
Root action (spine)
Audience set
Point of attack
Plot vs. Story (fable)
Plot terms:
   a) Inciting incident (precipitating context)
   b) Exposition
   c) Rising action
   d) Turning point
   e) Climax (most intense moment)
   f) Falling action (denouement)
Foreshadowing
Dramatic Irony
Recognition Scenes
Messenger Scenes
Protagonist (impelling agent) and Antagonist (resistance)
Objective (Project) Super objective
Gap
What’s at stake?
Who makes the scene happen?
Empathy (empathetic parallelism) esthetic distance
Pity and/or Fear
Catharsis
Figure/Ground Relationship
BIBLIOGRAPHY


