

**Introduction to Theatre**  
DRAM 101  
Sec. 2193 AN  
Daily 7:30-8:30 (Rm. 1-0205)

Adam C. Sharp  
Office: I-209A  
Phone: (509) 533-7387  
e-mail: [asharp@scc.spokane.edu](mailto:asharp@scc.spokane.edu)

**Brief Course Description:**

This course covers dramatic forms and styles, historic developments of the theatre and contemporary theatre practices.

**Detailed Course Description:**

This is a general course designed to acquaint the student with a basic exposure and appreciation of various forms of theatre as an art form. The course covers major historical aspects of theatre such as important periods and written works; types of theatre; and the various jobs and duties within the theatre business. Some of the areas that are discussed include direction, script writing, introduction to technical theatre elements and performance theatre elements, as well as current theatrical practices. The course work includes theatre craft projects, attendance of live theatre performances and limited lab time.

**Required Texts:**

1. Each student is required to access the Stage Directions Website ([www.stage-directions.com](http://www.stage-directions.com)) and review the assigned articles. Each student is responsible for the material in the assigned articles.
2. Scenes and other handouts will also be passed out on a weekly basis. Each student must read and review the materials the day they are passed out.
3. Oliver Goldsmith. *She Stoops to Conquer*. Dover Thrift Editions. ISBN: 0-486-26867-5.
4. Kapek, Carl, *R.U.R.* Dover Thrift Editions. ISBN: 0-486-41926-6
5. Luigi Pirandello. *Six Characters In Search of an Author*. Dover Thrift Editions. ISBN: 0-486-29992-9

**Interesting Websites:**

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/557/01/> (for writing)

**Course Objectives:**

Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:

1. Successfully understand how to read a play.
2. Understand dramatic structure.
3. Identify the basic elements of theatre.
4. Identify the various forms of theatre and their meanings.
5. Define the differences between a play and a film.
6. Define the roles required for a theatrical performance.
7. Identify the basic elements of the various theatrical jobs and duties.
8. Evaluate a play and write a critique of the performance.
9. Evaluate a live production for important theatrical aspects such as character development, plot, scene, setting, and dramatic structure.
10. Identify various genres of theatre (drama, comedy, farce, musical theatre, and other performance types)

11. Recite areas of the basic history of theatre.

**Learning Tasks and Activities:**

In order to accomplish succeed in this course each student needs to:

1. Read carefully each assigned chapter in the texts.
2. Read critically and carefully any handout selection the instructor may give.
3. Engage actively in class discussion (attendance, therefore, is assumed).
4. Keep accurate notes on lectures and discussions.
5. Write all assigned papers and complete all assignments on time.
6. Document carefully when appropriate.

**Assessment of Outcomes:**

Student learning will be assessed and grades assigned in the following areas:

1. Responsibility: the ability to recognize, understand, and accept ownership for learning by self-assessing, demonstrating, and evaluating behaviors that support the learning situation.
2. Communications: the ability to create meaning between themselves and their audience: learn to listen, speak and write effectively using words, graphic, electronic media, computers, and quantified data.
3. Problem-solving: the ability to assess, evaluate, and apply information from a variety of sources in a variety of contexts.
4. Global Awareness: students will demonstrate an awareness and appraisal of the world: its scientific complexity, its social diversity, and its artistic variety.

**Statement About All Written Work:**

All written work must be in MLA (Modern Language Association) format in Times New Roman or New Courier, twelve (12) point font and stapled. While this is not an English class, your writing must be clear and accurate before the instructor will read your work. If you need assistance with writing the reports concerning what content needs to be included please ask the instructor. If you need assistance with writing the report please visit the Tutoring Center for assistance. If there are too many structural or grammatical errors the instructor will not accept, read or grade the work. The words 'you', 'I', 'we' or any form of 'get' may not be found in any of the written work, otherwise the grade for the written work will be lowered for each time one of those words appears in the work.

**Plagiarism:**

The following rules and definitions concerning plagiarism:

Definition: Plagiarism is using someone else's words or ideas without giving proper credit to the person who devised them. It includes any of the following:

1. Not citing the source for words or ideas which are not your own
2. Incorrect documentation into the body and the Works Cited Page
3. Carelessness or sloppiness in the research which results in faulty documentation

#### 4. Use of purchased or acquired papers

##### **Penalties for Cheating or Plagiarizing (WAC 132Q-4-061)**

If the instructor suspects or believes the student has cheated or plagiarized, he is authorized to fail the student unless that student can prove the authenticity of the paper. The burden of proof rests on the student. If the instructor is convinced that cheating or plagiarism has taken place, the student will be dropped with a failing grade in the course.

First Offense: Automatic failure of the paper or test and possible failure of the course.

Second Offense: Automatic failure of the course.

##### **A Statement About Electronic Devices:**

The student may not use cell phones, mp3 players, laptops or other communication or entertainment devices during class time. While some students may choose to take notes with their computers, the policy of this class is to take handwritten notes during class. No computer may be on during class time. If the student is using such a device he/she will be asked to leave the class and will receive a failing grade for the day. If the student continues to use such devices he/she will be given a grade of 'F' for the class and will not be able to return to the class.

##### **A Student May Not Eat In Class:**

Please be sure to use the time before and/or after class for nourishment. If the student is found eating or drinking (other than water) in class he/she will be asked to put it away or throw it away. If the student refuses, then he/she will be asked to leave and will receive a failing grade for the day. If the student continues to choose to eat or drink (other than water) during class then he/she will be given a grade of 'F' for the class and will not be able to return to the class.

##### **A Student May Not Deface College Property:**

The desks and other materials in the classroom must be treated with care. Do not write directly on the desk, move desks from their original position or any other arrangements or cause any damage to any of the materials in the classroom. Any student who does not follow these rules will receive an 'F' for the day, will need to write an apology and, if the treatment continues, then he/she will be asked to permanently leave the class.

##### **Withdrawal Policy:**

Please make sure to know the last day to withdraw from class. If the student does not withdraw by the deadline then he/she is given the grade of 'F'. No Z grade is possible.

##### **Disabilities Statement:**

In accordance with the mandates of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973-Subpart E and the Americans with Disabilities Act, accommodations for otherwise qualified students with a disability(s) will be considered after receiving a student's request. The student will need to register with the Disability Support Services (DSS) office and provide appropriate documentation of the disability. Once the student has established a file and the disability(s) has been verified by DSS, then the facts of each situation will be thoroughly analyzed and reviewed to determine appropriate reasonable accommodations for classroom, laboratory or clinical settings. Accommodations that would compromise patient care, or fundamentally alter the essential nature of a program or activity are not considered to be reasonable.

A student who is denied an accommodation has the right to request a review of the determination through the defined grievance process available at each institution.

*Procedures for student grievance are outlined in the SCC Student Handbook and in the SCC Center for Students with Disabilities Student Handbook.*

**Assessment:**

**Act or Review (10 Total/10pts. each = 100pts.)**

There will be ten scenes passed out throughout the quarter (one each week). A few of the students may volunteer each week to do a stage reading of the material on the Friday of that week. *The Act Characterizations or Act Review is due the Monday after the scenes have been presented.* **Act Characterization Questions** for those who acted in the scene (This must be a typed, MLA formatted paragraph) The students who are doing the stage reading will answer the **Act Characterization Questions** while those who do not do the stage reading will answer the **Review the Act Questions.** **The Act is due the Monday after the scenes have been presented (unless Monday is a holiday then they will be due the next class meeting).**

The student has the choice whether to (A.) **Act Characterizations** or (B.) **Review the Act:**

**(A.) Act Characterizations**

If the student has chosen to act then he/she will be given a scene that he/she will act out for the rest of the class. He/she will not need to memorize the material, but will need to review and present the material clearly and accurately. The points will be given based on the students' basic ability to understand the scene and present it for the other students. The student will be asked to write a one-paragraph characterization of his/her character using the questions below.

Before presenting the scene please state: 1. the name of the play, 2. each person states his/her character in the scene, 3. setting, and 4. the themes in the scene.

1. Discuss your character's personality. (Happy, sad, angry, or any other important emotions illustrated in the scene.)
2. What is his/her goal in the scene?
3. What is the scene about?

**(B.) Review the Act**

The student will respond to a type of theatre illustrated by the actors who are performing the scene. The students who observe the performance must use the material we have discussed to evaluate the material. The student will not evaluate the actors, only the material presented and how it illustrates the specific type of theatre that we are discussing. The student will be asked to write a one-page review of the scene using on the questions below.

Before presenting the scene please state: 1. the name of the play, 2. each person states his/her character in the scene, 3. setting, and 4. the themes in the scene.

1. Discuss what happened in the scene.
2. What is the tone and theme of the scene?
3. Discuss how it is written compared to how it is played.
4. How does the scene illustrate a type of theatre?

### Attendance and Participation (30pts.)

Each student will need to attend class, participate in discussions, and participate in group work and complete required work for the full duration of each class meeting. I do not distribute the PowerPoint presentations. If the student is absent, then he/she must schedule a time to meet with me outside of class and/or learn what was discussed in class from another student in the class. If the student is five minutes or more late he/she will not be allowed in class unless he/she has made arrangements with the instructor prior to the specific day of class. If the student misses more than three class meetings he/she will lose five points. **More than five absences are grounds for failure.** If the student believes that any absence is an excused absence please speak to the instructor as soon as possible to deduce if the absence is excusable.

### Mid-term (20pts.)

The mid-term exam will be on the material we discussed in class. This in-class exam will be about various elements of film that we have discussed as well as readings from the written and electronic material required for the course. **You must take the Mid-term to in order to pass the class.**

### Theatre Elements Reviews (10 Total /12 pts. each = 120pts.)

There will be a total of ten theatrical elements that are discussed and reviewed. Each review is worth twelve points. The student will need to prepare an MLA formatted one-page document based on the material we have discussed in class. The student will receive 10 points for writing the work and two points for participating in a group discussion about the work the day in which the work is due. **The Theatre Elements Reviews are due on Fridays (unless the day is a holiday, then the review will be due the next class meeting).**

### Performance Report (10pts.)

Each student must write a two-page critique on the current Spokane Community College theatrical production. The student will use the material that we have discussed in class to evaluate the production. The performance report questions are included at end of the syllabus. **This report is due one week after the close of the performance.**

### Final (40pts)

The final will be in two parts. The first part will be Scantron (883-E). The second part will include a scene shown in class for which the students will evaluate based on the material that has been discussed in class.

### **Totals:**

Act Characterizations or Act Review = 100pts.

Participation = 30pts.

Mid-term = 20pts.

Theatre Elements Reviews = 120pts.

Performance Report = 10pts.

Final = 40pts.

Total = 320 pts.

---

### **Grades:**

A

4.0 = 320-313

3.9 = 312-307

3.8 = 306-300

A-

3.7 = 299-294  
3.6 = 293-291  
3.5 = 290-284

B+

3.4 = 283-278  
3.3 = 277-272  
3.2 = 271-265

B

3.1 = 264-259  
3.0 = 258-256  
2.9 = 255-252

B-

2.8 = 251-249  
2.7 = 248-246  
2.6 = 245-243

C+

2.5 = 242-240  
2.4 = 239-236  
2.3 = 235-233

C

2.2 = 232-230  
2.1 = 229-227  
2.0 = 226-224

C-

1.9 = 223-220  
1.8 = 219-217  
1.7 = 216-214

D+

1.6 = 213-211  
1.5 = 210-208  
1.4 = 207-204

D

1.3 = 203-201  
1.2 = 200-198  
1.1 = 197-195

D-

1.0 = 196-192  
.9 = 191-188  
.8 = 187-185

F

.7 = 186-184

**Missed Work and No Make-Up Work:**

There is no make-up work. The student must make arrangements to turn any work in before the due date if he/she is unable to turn it in at the assigned day and time. If the student cannot attend the class day in which the document is due then he/she must submit the work through e-mail. (**This can only be done with one work only.**) Then, when the student returns he/she must turn in a hard copy of the work. The instructor will not print the work and it is the student's responsibility to hand in a completed and printed MLA formatted document. All work is counted in the overall grading.

### **Extra Credit**

There are two possibilities for extra credit. One: The student can volunteer to help with the current play at Spokane Community College. Make sure to ask the instructor for more details. Two: The student can view a local theatrical production and write a thorough critique on the performance. The student must write in MLA format and must cover the main elements of theatre. The critique will be graded between a 1-5 points depending thoroughness of the work, how well it is written and the critique of various aspects of the overall performance. *All extra credit must be turned in one week before finals.*

### **Expectations:**

*For each class each student needs to...*

1. Be punctual and attend every class, except in extreme emergencies.
2. Have the appropriate supplies (paper, text books, writing tools, and other supplies).
3. Have read the assigned material and be prepared to discuss the readings.
4. Listen attentively and participate through class discussions and group lessons.
5. Respect everyone's point of views and ideas.
6. Choose to learn as much as possible and show a positive attitude about the material while in class.
7. Develop positive learning habits throughout the class.

**Assignment Schedule**

**Part One: What is Theatre?**

**Week One: What is Theatre & Basic Concepts**

Monday/Tuesday

Introductions. What is theatre? Discuss the elements of performance. Types of theatre: children, community, educational, regional and professional. Types of productions: individual acting, music, and spectacle. Compare and Contrast: Theatre and Film. Understanding the basic elements of a performance. **Stage Directions Website: *Everyone Into the Theatre* by Michael S. Eddy and *Speaking of Old Poetry Using a Contemporary Language* by Michael S. Eddy**

Wednesday/Thursday

The Stage: types of stage spaces and performance styles. Understanding the roles of the theatres and elements of theatrical productions. Learning about the various types of duties for a theatre production. **Stage Directions Website: *Confrontational Projection* by Hideaki Tsutsui *Balance in a Curved Square* by Michael S. Eddy and *Water Works* by Lisa Mulcahy**

Friday

**Theatre Elements Review 1: Discuss the Stage and Audience for a production you have seen. (Due Friday)**

1. What is the stage type?
2. Did the performers use the full stage space for the production?
3. What are some of the theatre jobs you can see as you enter the theatre and watch the performance?
4. What are some of the theatre jobs you cannot see, and which may be in the program, for the performance?
5. What made the performance enjoyable or not enjoyable? Why or why not?

**Act Review 1: “Fog” by Eugene O’Neill Drama) (Act Characterization or Review the Act Questions Due Monday)**

---

**Week Two: The Many Types of Theatre & The Actor in the Scene**

Monday/Tuesday

The three main elements of theatre: acting, directing, and producing. Capturing the desired effect. Deciding on the type of production. Understanding how to read a play and play terms. Elements of Theatre based on Aristotle’s “Poetics.” **Read: Selection from “Poetics”**

Wednesday/Thursday

Understanding the two basic dramatic structures. Types of plays: drama, comedy, tragicomedy. Learning the various genres of theatre. **Stage Directions Website: *Setting Roots for a Malleable Form* by Bret Love and *Pittsburgh Quantum and the Art of Found Theatre* by Kevin M. Mitchell**



Friday

**Theatre Elements Review 2: Observe people and watch people's body positions and postures and what they reveal about them (Due Friday)**

1. What are some of the body positions you observed and how are emotions revealed through those positions?
2. Who is in charge of the conversation? What about the person's position shows that he/she is in charge.
3. Discuss individual's distance from one another and how it changes during a conversation.
4. Interact with the people. How did you influence the mood or tone of the situation through your movements?

**Act Review 2: *The Murder Room* by Jack Sharkey (Farce) (Act Characterization or Review the Act Due Monday)**

---

**Week Three: A Note or More About Musical Theatre**

Monday/Tuesday

Theatre and music: musical theatre, opera, cabaret, and melodrama. The relationship of sound and stage: music and sound effects in theatre. Adaptations of musicals and the influence of stage musicals to film and film to stage musicals. **Stage Directions Website: *The Art of Juggling* by Bryan Reesman and [www.mtishows.com](http://www.mtishows.com)**

Wednesday/Thursday

Theatre of change: culture and diversity. Understanding the dramatic storytelling and various cultures and environments. Theatre is fluid: continuously changing. **Stage Directions Website: *The Abuses of Musical Theatre* by David Koteles, *Singing Secrets of Musical Theatre* Kevin M. Mitchell and *Reviving Ragtime* by Bryan Reesman** (Time permitting, viewing *Into the Woods*)

Friday

**Theatre Elements Review 3: Discuss a type of Musical Theatre you've seen (ex: full musical, rock concert, or music performance) (Due Friday)**

1. What is the title and author? What is the mood and atmosphere?
2. How did the performer use singing and talking in his/her performance?
3. What did the scene look like? What did the performer wear and how did it help the performance?
4. How do the song(s) help to tell the story?

**Act Review 3: *Guys and Dolls* Book by Jo Swerling and Abe Burrows based on the story and characters by Damon Runyon (Musical) (Act Characterization or Review the Act Due Monday)**

---

**Week Four: Political Theatre & Other Greats**

Monday/Tuesday

Important historical works: Political plays, social plays, personal plays, and overall human condition. Revealing the continued importance of political theatre. **Read: *R.U.R.* by Karl Kapek**

Wednesday/Thursday

Important Plays and how they relate to society. The great plays to know from various times. Why are they important?

Friday

**Theatre Elements Review 4: Discuss a political or current event that would work as a play (Due Friday)**

1. What is the political or current event and how would it work as a play or production?
2. How would the play or production explore the human rights struggles?
3. Why would the play or production be relevant to everyone?
4. Discuss two characters that would represent both sides of the political argument.

**Act Review 4: Scene from *R.U.R.* by Carl Kapek. (Political Play) (Act Characterization or Review the Act Questions Due Monday)**

---

**Part Two: Behind the Scenes**

**Week Five: The Design of the Show**

Monday/ Tuesday

Stage design: the backbone to a production. Look and mood of design and staging. The general ideas of lighting, set design, sound effects, music, make-up and costuming. Set design and the look of the show. Varying styles and period plays. Scenery: sets and props. Understanding the use of specific set pieces for example, what are flats? What is the use of props? **Stage Directions Website: *It's the Way That You Use It* by Kevin M. Mitchell and *Backdrop Basics* by Erik Viker**

Wednesday

Lighting: the illumination of a scene. Knowing effective lighting techniques. Lighting with outdoor vs. indoor performances. Understanding the mood in a scene. **Stage Directions Website: *Opera Holland Park Illuminated with HSL* by Breanne Goerge and *Painting with Fixtures* by Marshall Bissett.**

Thursday

**Theatre Elements Review 5: Go to a store and discuss a Store Set Design (Due Friday)**

1. What about the store would attract customers? Discuss some of the scents, images and textures that entice customers to stay in the stores.
2. What is the lighting design for the store? Does it or does it not enhance the shopping experience? Why or why not?
3. Is the merchandise placed in an appealing fashion? Can it be improved?
4. What about the design or the store creates a unique shopping experience?

**Act Review 5: *Betrayal* by Harold Pinter (Modern Drama) (Act Characterization or Review the Act Questions Due Friday)**

Friday

**Mid-term**

---

## Week Six: The Clothes Make the Man or Woman and The Sounds of Theatre

### Monday/Tuesday

Understanding the use of Costuming and make-up. Costumes for period pieces and for modern shows. How costume develops a character. Make-up: from subtle shades to creature feature, the evolution of make-up in theatre. Learning the difference of make-up in film vs. theatre. **Stage Directions Website: *Secrets of a Makeup Master* by Bryan Reesman, *The Magic's in the Makeup* by Lisa Mulcahy and *Costumed Drama* by Tim Cusack. Read: *She Stoops to Conquer* by Oliver Goldsmith**

### Wednesday/Thursday

How do sound effects enhance a production? Understanding the power of sound and how it helps a performance. Learning the basics of sound design. What is music and what is sound design? **Stage Directions Website: *Armored for Sound* by Bryan Reesman and *Immersive Art* by Michael S. Eddy**

### Friday

#### **Theatre Elements Review 6: Observe how someone is dressed (Due Friday)**

1. Describe what the person is wearing. How do they move in the clothing? What does the clothing reveal about the person's personality?
2. Is the clothing uncomfortable or comfortable? Can the person easily move in the clothing without feeling uncomfortable?
3. What type of material is the clothing made from? How does it look in different lighting?
4. What type of character in a play would wear the clothing?

**Act Review 6: *She Stoops to Conquer* by Oliver Goldsmith (Classic Comedy) (Act Characterization or Reviews the Act Questions Due Monday)**

---

## **Part Three: Reaching to the Past, the Journey to the Future**

### **Week Seven: Classics and Folklore**

#### Monday/Tuesday

Theatre history. Understanding the elements of a play and how it affects an audience. Changing plays and meaning. Comparing the elements of theatre and modern use of theatre. Adapting older plays into modern plays.

#### Wednesday/Thursday

Continuing the discussion of cultural theatre. Examples of important Medieval Theatre and Eastern Theatre. How cultural theatre shapes our daily lives.

#### Friday

#### **Theatre Elements Review 7: Watch a Ritual (Due Friday)**

1. Discuss a cultural event or ritual in which you participated or observed.
2. What is the story that is told in the cultural event or ritual? Who are the characters? What is the purpose for the cultural event or ritual?
3. Are there similar cultural events or rituals in other cultures that compare to the one that you are discussing?
4. What is the design and costumes used for the ritual or event?

**Act Review 7: “Lazy Jack” Traditional Story Retold by Adam C. Sharp (An English Folktale (Characterization or Review Questions Due Monday)**

---

**Week Eight: Abstracts of Theatre & Dinner’s Served**

Monday/Tuesday

Abstract Theatre? What is it? Understanding the core purpose for Experimental Theatre as Expression. Understanding Social Meaning in Experimental Theatre. How is it used? Why is it used? **Read: *Six Characters in Search of an Author* by Luigi Pirandello**

Wednesday/Thursday

Continuing the discussion of experimental theatre. Viewing examples of experimental theatre. Dinner Theatre. What is the evolution and the creation of the wonderful world of Dinner Theatre. Learning the types of Dinner Theatre. Those involved in it. **Stage Directions Website: *Dinner and a Show* by John Crawford**

Friday

**Elements Theatre Review 8: Observe a show that is different than a play (ex: stand-up comedy, abstract performance, variety show) (Due Friday)**

1. What is different about the show than a normal play?
2. What is different with the performance’s relationship with the audience compared to a normal play?
3. How is the story told differently compared to a normal play?
4. What keeps you interested in the performance since it is not one story that is told?

**Act Review 8: Scene from *Six Characters in Search of an Author* by Luigi Pirandello (Theatre of the Absurd) (Act Characterization or Review the Act Questions Due Monday)**

---

**Week Nine: Children’s Theatre and PR: The Goal of Any Production is to ‘Be Seen’**

Monday/Tuesday

Understanding examples combining the theatrical elements. From the creation as an idea, writing the play, submitting the play and hiring the director. Conceiving the production. Children’s theatre: another creature all together. There is a differences of children’s’ productions and children’s theatre. **Stage Directions Website: *The Never-ending Quest* by Kevin M. Mitchell and *Theatre Fundraising Today* by Kevin M. Mitchell.**

Tuesday/Wednesday

Watching like a critic. Observing the full-spectrum of a production. Deciding on the purpose of the production. Knowing the important Public Relations and promotion materials. The elements of staging a production: stage plays, concert performance, and mixed performances. Review the purpose for a production and preparation. Beginnings of stage management: theatre is a business.

Friday

**Theatre Elements Review 9: Show a promotional tool and how it is used. Is it effective? (Due Friday)**

1. Describe the material you have chosen.
2. What makes the material effective in influencing an audience?

3. Is the material geared towards a particular age group (target audience)? What about the material would interest the particular age group?
4. Overall, is the particular form of promotional material effective in increasing audience interest?

**Act Review 9: *Hospitality Suite* by Roger Rueff (Review the Act Questions Due Monday)**

---

**Week Ten: Play Viewings**

**Theatre Elements Review 10: Discuss your favorite scene shown this quarter  
(Due Friday)**

1. Why did you enjoy this particular scene the most?
2. Discuss the dialogue and how it was effective within the scene.
3. How did the scene express the human condition?
4. Could actors at any level perform the scene?

**Act Review 10: Watch: *Dinner With Friends* by Donald Margulies (Based on his play  
(Review the Act Questions Due Monday)**

**Week Eleven: Presentations**

**Follow-up**

**Final:**

---

**Performance Report Questions**

*Due no more than one week of the performance.*

1. Discuss the basics about the performance (Author, Director, Performers, Company, and Date of the show and other important information.)
2. Discuss the design of the show. (ex: set, costume, lighting, sound, music)
3. Discuss the story and purpose of the show. (Ex: morals, ethics questions, themes found in the production.)
4. What genre (comedy, drama, science fiction, fantasy, political theatre, or a combination of various genres) is the production and what reveals the genre?
5. What does the production reveal about the human condition, what it means to be human?

Ian Celluloid

Professor Sharp

HUM 141

12 January 2009

### The Genius of Cutthroat Island

The fantastical history of pirates and cinema has always been balanced with some successes and many failures. The critical and box office success list of pirate films is short and includes very few films. One film which reveals the fanciful nature which is romanticized throughout pirate mythology and still is faithful to the true nature and practices of pirates is *Cutthroat Island* (1995).

Before *Cutthroat Island* there was Errol Flynn who created the wonderful “swashbuckling” characters such as Peter Blood in *Captain Blood* (1935), and Geoffrey Thorpe in *The Sea Hawk* (1940), which both met with critical and financial success. But, some films which were produced after *Cutthroat Island* such as the recent *Pirates of the Caribbean* trilogy (*Curse of the Black Pearl* (2003), *Dead Man’s Chest* (2006) and *At World’s End* (2007), lead to great financial success, but met with negative criticism from many critics. Anthony Lane describes *Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man’s Chest* (2006) as having a “ new plot [which] has all the appeal of a seaweed sandwich, being dark, salty, and indigestible” (“Men at Sea” [www.newyorker.com](http://www.newyorker.com)).