

Outward from the middle of the maze: selected plays of Tom Stoppard

A first-year tutorial
Grinnell College
Fall semester, 2002

Summary

In this tutorial, we'll read some of Tom Stoppard's intricate, witty, and allusive plays -- principally, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are dead*, *Jumpers*, *Arcadia*, and *Indian ink* -- for pleasure and enlightenment. Through close reading, patient research, sharp discussion, and thoughtful writing, we'll examine Stoppard's dramatic arguments and assess his ideas.

Since Stoppard's interests are diverse, ranging from landscape gardening to the second law of thermodynamics and from surrealist art to the philosophy of linguistic analysis, participants should be prepared to encounter many subjects and to ignore the boundaries between academic disciplines as we explore his plays.

Textbooks

The plays

Stoppard, Tom. *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are dead*. New York: Grove Press, 1976.

Stoppard, Tom. *Jumpers*. New York: Grove Press, 1974.

Stoppard, Tom. *Arcadia*. London: Faber and Faber, 1995.

Stoppard, Tom. *Indian ink*. London: Faber and Faber, 1995.

For reference

Fulwiler, Toby, and Hayakawa, Alan R. *The college writer's reference*, second edition. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1999.

About the First-year Tutorial

Hunter, Judy. "[Attention must be paid!](#)" Grinnell College, March 12, 2001

<<http://www.grinnell.edu/writinglab/CitationGuides/achondiscuss.html>>.

[For further study](#)

Requirements

- Intelligent and well-informed participation in class discussions and tutorial meetings. This requirement entails some others: attending each meeting of the class, getting enough sleep the night before, reading the assigned texts beforehand, looking up words, names and references that you don't understand, thinking about the texts, making connections, and writing down notes and questions.
- Clear, accurate, and cogent [notes and essays](#) on assigned topics. I expect to assign about twelve of these, ranging in length from two hundred to fifteen hundred words.
- An [exercise](#) on paraphrase and citation, based on Judy Hunter's essay, cited above.
- There will be no final examination in this course.

The instructor

[John David Stone](#)

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Office hours: Mondays, 9 a.m. to 11 a.m.; Wednesdays, 1:15 to 3:15 p.m.; Thursdays, 10 a.m. to 12 m.; and by appointment.

Course outline and schedule

After our introductory meeting during New Student Days, the tutorial is scheduled to meet from 8 to 10 a.m. on Tuesdays and Thursdays. I propose to use some of those scheduled meeting times for sessions of the entire class; during others, I'll meet with you individually or in small groups. The schedule below gives the details.

We'll meet as a class in Science 2413, a classroom on the upper floor of the southeast wing of the Science Building. Small-group meetings will be in my office, Science 2418.

[August 25, 1 p.m.. Introductions. Stoppard's plays and liberal education. Truth and humanity.](#)

[August 29. *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are dead*: First reading.](#)

[September 3. Small-group meetings.](#)

September 5. *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are dead*: Identity and limited perspectives.

September 10. Small-group meetings.

September 12. On research and writing.

September 17. *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are dead*: Death and absurdity.

September 19. Small-group meetings.

September 24. *Jumpers*: First reading.

September 26. Small-group meetings.

October 1. *Jumpers*: Calculated ambiguity.

October 3. Small-group meetings.

October 8. *Jumpers*: Religion and ethics.

October 10. Small-group meetings.

October 15. *Arcadia*: First reading.

October 17. Small-group meetings.

October 29. *Arcadia*: Literary history: the roles of fact, speculation, and intuition.

October 31. *Arcadia*: Recursive algorithms; empirical mathematics.

November 5. Small-group meetings.

November 7. *Arcadia*: Science and art.

November 12. Small-group meetings.

November 14. *Indian ink*: First reading.

November 19. Small-group meetings.

November 21. *Indian ink*: India and England.

November 26. Small-group meetings.

December 3. *Indian ink*: Poetry; language and emotion.

December 5. Small-group meetings.

December 10. Stoppard's other plays.

December 12. Reality and human knowledge: outward from the middle of the maze.

[The title of this course](#)

This document is available on the World Wide Web as

<http://www.cs.grinnell.edu/~stone/courses/stoppard/>

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