

**LIT 3041: All Joking Aside: The Art and Craft of Comedy, Mr. Homan, spring, 2015, meeting Tuesdays periods 5-6, Thursdays period 6**

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Tuesday, Jan. 6: orientation, Pinter's *The Lover* and *Last to Go*, the skit "Bernie and Max"

Thursday, Jan. 8: *Check, Please*: **1.** Scene 1 (pp. 303-305); **2.** Scene 2: (pp. 305-311); **3.** Scene 3 (pp. 310-311); **4.** Scene 4 (pp. 311-313);

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Tuesday, Jan. 13: *Check, Please*: **5.** Scene 6 (pp. 313-315); **6.** Scene 7 (pp. 315-317); **7.** Scene 9 (pp. 317-320); **8.** Scene 10 (pp. 321-324); **9.** Scene 11 (pp. 325-329); **10.** Scene 12 (pp. 329-331); Scene 13 (pp. 331-333).

Thursday, Jan. 15: *Miss You*: **11.** Woman: Sorry, hold on (p. 9)-Woman 2: (*She hangs up*) (p. 11); **12.** Man 2: Hello? (p. 11)-Woman: I won't (p. 13).

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Tuesday, Jan. 20: *Your Mother's Butt*: **13.** Psychologist: So nothing in (p. 18)-Client: sense of humor (p. 19); **14.** Psychologist: Shoes seen to (p. 20)-Client: Oh, God, I'm sorry! (p. 22); **15.** Psychologist: How are you feeling? (p. 22)-Psychologist: This is really good (p. 24); **16.** Client: And I'm thinking (p. 24)-Psychologist: what would you say? (p. 27); **17.** Client: Get out of my face (p. 27)-Client: buying those shoes (p. 29).

Thursday, Jan. 22: *Poodles*: **18.** Tom Finnegan: I knew (p. 49)-giant poodle guy (p. 50); That was the day I (p. 50)-Ha, ha, ha (p. 52); **19.** Well, I came home (p. 53)-please leave the room (p. 54);

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Tuesday, Jan. 27: *Poodles*: **20.** I wonder if we (p. 54)-this is your life (p. 55); *Ties That Bind*: **22.** Are you ready, Krispinsky (p. 60)-Ultimate escape (p. 63); *Mistaken Identity*: **23.** Steve: So I know (p. 67)-Steve: I wanted you to like me (p. 69); **24.** Steve: And I'm sure I've seen (p. 69)-Steve: I am very nice (p. 71).

Thursday, Jan. 29: *Mistaken Identity*: **25.** Kali: Steve, why did you want? (p. 71)-Steve: just tell the truth (p. 73); **26.** Kali: I can't say, Mum (p. 73)- Kali: Let's just get some desert (p. 75).

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Tuesday, Feb. 3: *Outsourced*: **27.** Max: I mind (p. 82)-Max: You are a person (p. 84); **28.** Max: So you *are* a *real* woman (p. 85)-Sonali: and zero-zero-cents (p. 87); *Post-Its*: **29.** [can read from actual post-its] Actor: Had an early meeting (p. 119)-Actress: pick it up (p. 122); **30.** Actress: I can't take this anymore (p. 122)-Actor: We need milk (p. 126)

Thursday, Feb. 5: *Wanda's Visit*: **31.** Jim: Our lives had been (p. 129)-Jim: it must be Wanda (p. 132); **32.** [with a volunteer for Jim] Wanda: (With longing) Jim! (p. 132)-Jim: go in the living room (p. 134); **33.** [with volunteer for Marsha] Wanda: Oh, I love this room (p. 134)-Marsha: if it would help you (p. 136).

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Tuesday, Feb. 10: *Wanda's Visit*: **34.** [with volunteer for Marsha] Wanda: Well it all started (p. 137)-Wanda: Preferably with vodka (p. 139); **35.** [with volunteer for Marsha] Wanda: She really is a jewel (p. 139)-Marsh: Could I have the salt, please? (p. 141); **36.** [with volunteer for Marsha] Wanda: ... and I said (p. 142)-Marsha: I see your point (p. 144); **37.** [with volunteer for Jim] Wanda: So then I thought (p. 144)-Marsha: Good night (p. 146); **38.** [with a volunteer for Jim] Wanda: Oh, is this your bedroom? (p. 147)-Wanda: Good night (p. 149).

Thursday, Feb. 12: *Wanda's Visit*: **39.** Marsha: You know, she doesn't snore (p. 149)-Jim: Don't be mad (p. 151); **40.** [with a volunteer for Marsha] Wanda: Is that life our there? (p. 151)-Wanda: have any bubble bath? (p. 153); **41.** [need volunteer for Waiter and Marsha] Wanda: This is such a pretty restaurant (p. 154)-Marsha: she's insane? (p. 157); **42.** [with actor playing Jim playing Waiter at the top of the scene] Jim: Could we just finish dinner, please? (p. 160)-Jim: Right (p. 161)

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Tuesday, Feb. 17: *The Valerie of Now*: **43.** [two actors dividing up the monologue] Oh, hi, Monica (p. 168)-*I will never forget* (p. 169); **44.** *The Statue of Bolivar*: Jemma: That shit'll kill ya (p. 195)-Jemma: Nice to meet you, Elizabeth (p. 197); **45.** Elizabeth: Excuse me? (p. 197)-Elizabeth: I hate your dad (p. 200); **46.** Jemma: Welcome to my life (p. 200)-Elizabeth: Fourteen, Jeez (p. 202); **47.** Jemma: I won't ask (p. 202)-Jemma: Yeah. Nothing (p. 204).

Thursday, Feb. 19: *Surprise*: **48.** Whitney: So you know I'm going to dump you? (p. 221)-Peter: You missed (p. 224); **49.** *The Zig-Zag Woman*: Older Man: Could I ask you (p. 244)-The Zig-Zag Woman: Thank you (p. 246); **50.** [with two actors dividing up lines of Middle Man, and no need for Zig-Zag Woman] Oh, yeah, but I (p. 248)-told it was olive oil (p. 250)

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Tuesday, February 24: *The Way of All Fish*: **51.** Ms. Asquith: You know (p. 261)-Ms. Asquith: these things happen (p. 264); **52.** Miss Riverton: Tomorrow night (p. 264)Ms. Asquith: Lovely (p. 267); **53.** Ms. Asquith: How did you develop (p. 268)-Miss Riverton: Jane ... Joan. (p. 270); **54.** [speech divided between two actors] Miss Riverton: But you can be (p. 274)-no special ability (p. 276).

Thursday, Feb. 26: *The Way of All Flesh*: **55.** Miss Riverton: You know, this was just (p. 278)-Miss Riverton: (I got so strong (p. 280); **56.** Miss Riverton: Here's to a whole (p. 281)-Miss Riverton: I don't know what you're talking about (p. 284); **57.** Miss Riverton: No, it doesn't (p. 286)-Ms. Asquith: the reason I stay in shape (p. 287).

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[Spring Break, Feb. 28-March 7]

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Tuesday, March 10: Pinter's *The Black and White*.

Thursday, March 12: *There Shall Be No Bottom*: **58.** Joe: Ahem ... bing-bong (p. 291)-Jeff: Ahh! (p. 293); **59.** Jeff: Really, Inspector! (p. 294)-Jane: pearls on women? (p. 295); **60.** [with volunteer to play Jane] Jeff: Fanny, you're no longer (p. 295)-Jeff: Good cover (p. 297).

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Tuesday, March 17: *2B (Or Not 2B)*: **61.** Franny: AHH! (p. 351)-Franny: tp marinate poultry? (p. 355); **62.** Franny; Okay, get out! (p. 355)-Franny: Amelia Earhart? (p. 358); **63.** Bee: I don't want to rush you (p. 358)-Bee: Touch it (p. 360).

Thursday, March 19: *2B (Or Not 2B)*: **64.** Franny: Oh. Oh. It's—it's nice (p. 360)-Franny: let's fly (p. 362); **65.** *Forty to Life*: Paul: HEY! (p. 377)-Susie: What the hell (p. 379)

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Tuesday, March 24: *Streak*: **66.** Cesare: So, How are you, Jerry? (p. 405)-Cesare: He ain't that good (p. 408); **67.** Jerry: Just wair (p. 408)-Jerry: You're serious. (p. 410); **68.** Jerry: The devil (p. 411)-Cesare: pronounced my name right. (p. 414).

Thursday, March 26: *Rosa's Eulogy*: **69**. So he just tossed her (p. 419)-Sorry, Lord. Sorry (p. 421); experiment with "I never saw a purple cow, / I never hope to see one. / But I can tell you anyhow / I'd rather see than be one."

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Tuesday, March 31: *Chocolate*: **70**. Detective: So you have no (p. 423)-Detective: A parrot? (p. 423); **71**. Mrs. Colby: Yes, we were playing (p. 426)-Detective: Chocolate? (p. 428); **72**. Mrs. Coley: Yes, we had a box (p. 428)-Detective: we'll be in touch (p. 430).

Thursday, April 2: *The Blueberry Hill Accord*: **73**. Hannah: I'm not signing anything. (p. 452)-Hannah: I can date Tommy now (p. 455); **74**. Hannah: Once we sign this (p. 456)-Lindsay: trashed beyond reason (p. 460).

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Tuesday, April 7: *Please Have a Seat and Someone Will Be with You Shortly*: **75**. David: Sue? (p. 481)-David: All very formal (p. 483); **76**. David: Actually, I'm not entirely (p. 484)-Sue: Well, that explains much (p. 486); **77**. David: I'm doing much better (p. 486)-David: could say goodbye (p. 488); **78**. Sue: I imagined you were a carpenter (p. 488)-Sue: Hello (p. 491).

Thursday, April 9: Stoppard, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*: **79**. p. 11 (Head)-p. 15 (with light); **80**. p. 18 (Another curious)-p. 21 (they come); **81**. p. 39 (You made)-p. 41 (no practice).

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Tuesday, April 14: Stoppard, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*: **82**. p. 56- (I think)-p. 59 (Draught, yes); **83**. p. 59 (In that)-p. 61 (Double bluff); **84**. p. 69 (What did)-p. 71 (to death)

Thursday, April 16: Stoppard, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*: **85**. p. 85 (That must)-p. 88 (be violent); **86**. p. 97 (Are you)-p. 99 (to sleep).

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Tuesday, April 21: Stoppard, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*: **87**. p. 100 (Well, shall)-p. 102 (from instinct); **88**. p. 107 (Now that)-p. 110 (making conversation); **89**. final speeches of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.

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## Notes:

1. Each student chooses and works with a scene partner during the semester. Scene assignments will be made at the first and second class meeting. Scene work must be performed on the day assigned since the scene work is the “text” of that day’s class; scene work cannot be rescheduled. Scene work must be off-book.

If one of the scene partners cannot make it on the day the scene is due, I will take his or her part, giving some compensation to the actor who does perform since that actor will be working with someone “new.” The partner who was unable to perform must do the scene later in my office, during office hours, with my taking the role of his or her partner. That actor must also hand in, at the time of the office performance, a ten-page paper on an assigned topic (on the play in question), as well as the 2-3 page paper (see #2 below) normally written about the actor’s experience rehearsing the scene with a partner. The grade for scene work will be the average of the performance, the short paper, and the ten-page paper.

2. At the time of your performance with your scene partner, hand in (please *do not* send it by e-mail!) a 2-3-page paper, where you discuss your experience during rehearsals. Not just an account, the paper should be an assessment of what you learned, what “discoveries” you made, the way the scene evolved during rehearsals. The paper should be specific, rooted in the script, and should be geared to the dialogue as it evolves in the scene. General points should always be grounded in these specifics.

I’d also like you, for each of your five papers, based on your scene work with your acting partner, to include two ideas or items from a chapter of the attached manuscript copy of the book *All Joking Aside: The Art and Craft of Comedy*, which I have written with my former student, now a popular New York director and actor, Brian Rhinehart. He teaches and works at New York’s Actors Studio. *All Joking Aside* is, in essence, a manual for actors, especially actors in comedies. I would like you, for your first paper, to include two ideas, items, points from Chapter 1 of the book, making sure your references to that chapter includes two or more specific quotes of phrases in the manuscript; something from chapter 2 for your second paper, something from chapter 3 for your third paper, and so on. And would you put these sections with references to the chapters in **Bold**, not simply so I can check to make sure you’ve read the chapter and included material from it, but—more important--to see how the book—I hope--was of use to you, or gave you some perspective on your own work as an actor in comedy. (You might also want to read the introduction and Chapter 6, “Playing the Jokes in Shakespeare,” and Chapter 7, “Why We Laugh.”) Again, this is manuscript copy and so please excuse typos and stylistic lapses—we are still working on it.

See below for some more detailed comments about what makes a “good paper.”

3. At the next class meeting after your performance, your paper will be returned--with two grades. One is for your acting, the other for the paper. If the two grades are 5 or less points apart, you will be given the higher grade; if they are more than 5 points apart, you will be given the average of the two. The grading scale is: F--anything 59 or below; D--60-66, D+--67-69; C- --70-72, C--73-76, C+--77-79; B- --80-82, B--83-86, B+--87-89; A- --90-92, A--93-100.

Note that the student who has missed the scheduled scene and thereby performs in my office, will write two papers (see #1 above), and receives a grade averaging both papers and the scene work.

4. Attendance is required at every class meeting, and will be taken by the “stage manger” (a student who has volunteered for this position) during the class. Each student is allowed 2 excused absences. Excuses must be made at least one day ahead of time by Professor Homan, preferably by e-mail: [shakes@ufl.edu](mailto:shakes@ufl.edu). Excuses made the day of the absence, let alone after the fact, cannot be accepted. In very, *very* rare cases a student can be excused for more than two class meetings, but this must also be approved ahead of time. For each unexcused absence, the student’s grade will be lowered by a letter. Please note there are no exceptions to this. If you miss a class without being excused, the stage manager will e-mail you about this later in the same day.

5. Books: *Laugh Lines: Short Comic Plays*, Eric Lane and Nina Shengold, eds.; Stoppard, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* and *Arcadia*.

6. Office hour is Thursday, second period (8:30-9:25 AM) in 4109 Turlington Hall.

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### **Some Suggestions for Writing Papers on Scene Work:**

1. Try to work as closely with the dialogue, the actual script as possible, and back up every general point with reference to the script.
2. Go through the entire scene, most often in sequence, both the dialogue and what gestures and movement you chose.
3. Don’t just say what happens or what is said, and don’t just explicate or “translate” the words and lines. Rather, discuss the script in terms of: a. your actor’s choices; b. the character’s object (what he or she is after), and c. the character’s subtext (what the character is thinking and saying to himself or herself beneath the dialogue).
4. Don’t spend time setting up the paper, talking about how and where you met, chatting about topics not immediately linked to the script—get right to the scene in question.
5. Your “text” is ultimately not the script itself, not even the playwright’s words, but your actor’s/director’s take on the script and on your character as he or she exists in the script.
6. Have some sense of the larger play, and of the character’s role in that larger play, but make sure you don’t jump too far from your specific scene. The largest part of your paper should be spent on your particular scene.
7. Be sure that one paragraph follows logically from the preceding one; and make sure

there are segues not only between paragraphs but between sections of the individual paragraph—and, for that matter, segues from one sentence to the next.

8. You can be informal as you want, and can use the first person—but observe all the rules of good writing, from spelling to punctuation, from clear word choice to correct grammar.

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**Pinter, *The Lover***

RICHARD (*amiably*). Is your lover coming today?

SARAH. Mmnn.

RICHARD. What time?

SARAH. Three.

RICHARD. Will you be going out ... or staying in?

SARAH. Oh ... I think we'll stay in.

RICHARD. I thought you wanted to go to that exhibition.

SARAH. I did, yes ... but I think I'd prefer to stay in with him today.

RICHARD, Mmn-hmmm. Well, I must be off.

*(He goes to the hall and puts on his bowler hat.)*

RICHARD. Will he be staying long do you think?

SARAH. Mmmnnn ...

RICHARD. About ... six, then.

SARAH. Yes.

RICHARD. Have a pleasant afternoon.

SARAH. Mmnn.

RICHARD. Bye-bye.

SARAH. Bye.

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**Harold Pinter, *LAST TO GO***

*A coffee stall. A BARMAN and an old NEWSPAPER SELLER. The BARMAN leans on his counter, the OLD MAN stands with tea.*

*Silence.*

MAN: You was a bit busier earlier.

BARMAN: Ah.

MAN: Round about ten.

BARMAN: Ten, was it?

MAN: About then.

*Pause.*

I passed by here about then.

BARMAN: Oh yes?

MAN: I noticed you were doing a bit of trade.

*Pause.*

BARMAN: Yes, trade was very brisk here about ten.

MAN: Yes, I noticed.

*Pause.*

I sold my last one about then. Yes. About nine forty-five.

BARMAN: Sold your last then, did you?

MAN: Yes, my last "Evening News" it was. Went about twenty to ten.

*Pause.*

BARMAN: "Evening News", was it?

MAN: Yes.

*Pause.*

Sometimes it's the "Star" is the last to go.

BARMAN: Ah.

MAN: Or the . . . whatisname.

BARMAN: "Standard".

MAN: Yes.

*Pause.*

All I had left tonight was the "Evening News".

*Pause.*

BARMAN: Then that went, did it?

MAN: Yes.

*Pause.*

Like a shot.

*Pause.*

BARMAN: You didn't have any left, eh?

MAN: No. Not after I sold that one.

*Pause.*

BARMAN: It was after that you must have come by here then, was it?

MAN: Yes, I come by here after that, see, after I packed up.

BARMAN: You didn't stop here though, did you?

MAN: When?

BARMAN: I mean, you didn't stop here and have a cup of tea then, did you?

MAN: What, about ten?

BARMAN: Yes.

MAN: No, I went up to Victoria.

BARMAN: No, I thought I didn't see you.

MAN: I had to go up to Victoria.

*Pause.*

BARMAN: Yes, trade was very brisk here about then.

*Pause.*

MAN: I went to see if I could get hold of George.

BARMAN: Who?

MAN: George.

*Pause.*

BARMAN: George who?

MAN: George . . . whatsisname.

BARMAN: Oh.

*Pause.*

Did you get hold of him?

MAN: No. No, I couldn't get hold of him. I couldn't locate him.

BARMAN: He's not about much now, is he?

*Pause.*

MAN: When did you last see him then?

BARMAN: Oh, I haven't seen him for years.

MAN: No, nor me.

*Pause.*

BARMAN: Used to suffer very bad from arthritis.

MAN: Arthritis?

BARMAN: Yes.

MAN: He never suffered from arthritis.

BARMAN: Suffered very bad.

*Pause.*

MAN: Not when I knew him.

*Pause.*

BARMAN: I think he must have left the area.

*Pause.*

MAN: Yes, it was the "Evening News" was the last to go tonight.

BARMAN: Not always the last though, is it, though?

MAN: No. Oh no. I mean sometimes it's the "News". Other times it's one of the others. No way of telling beforehand. Until you've got your last one left, of course. Then you can tell which one it's going to be.

BARMAN: Yes.

*Pause.*

MAN: Oh yes.

*Pause.*

I think he must have left the area.

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**“Bernie and Max”**

Imagine two old Jewish men meeting on Collins Avenue in Miami Beach:

**Max:** So, you took the little lady to the Fontainebleau for your anniversary dinner?

**Bernie:** Oy-- cost me a week's salary.

**Max:** How did it go?

**Bernie:** Let me tell you, let me tell you. Everything's going perfectly. My Selma dresses to the nines, wears her lowest low-cut dress. I sit across from her, can't take my eyes off of her. Fifty years, Max, fifty years. So, the waiter brings the bread. Delicious. Then the salad. The dressing you could die for. And then the waiter brings the soup. “Special from the chef,” he says. Two big steaming bowls of matzo-ball soup, the finest I've ever tasted. Even better than my mother's--God rest her soul! And then—Let me tell you, let me tell you.

**Max:** And then?

**Bernie:** Then, suddenly, my wife, my dear wife of fifty years, cries out. “Bernie, Bernie, I'm dying. Oy, the pain. Bernie, I love you.” she says, “Bernie tell the children I love them.” I try to speak, but she continues, “and kiss each of the grandchildren for me. Tell them I love....” “Again, I try to speak, but she can't hear me. “Bernie she says, Bernie, I know I'm having a heart attack. I only wish we had fifty more of those wonderful years we shared together, Bernie, I....”

“She slumps over, clutching at her chest.

**Max:** What did you do?

**Bernie:** What could I do? I looked her in the eye and said, sit up Selma, the left one's just fallen into the soup.