Harrington
21M.604 Fall 2005
Assignment, Week 2

1. Write a brief scene—5 to 10 pages—in which one character has enough motivation to make a real effort to achieve his or her goal (i.e. get what they want), whereas the other character, equally motivated, creates ever obstacle he or she can to prevent that goal from being achieved. Both characters use whatever tactics the situation allows. The goals, motivations, obstacles and tactics should be consistent with what you know about the characters, their relationship, the setting, the time period, etc.
2. Re-write the scene and add a 3rd character. The 3rd character can be an acquaintance, a total stranger, an intimate. A willing or unwilling participant in the conflict (this would create additional tensions). How does the confrontation change when a 3rd person is present? How does the 3rd person react? Respond? Do either or both original characters use the 3rd character as an obstacle? A tactic?

Some notes:
When you are beginning your play:
Start on the most crucial day.
Why today? Why now?
Up the stakes as high as you can.
How can you stack the deck against your characters?
Make it difficult for them to get what they want.
How can you put them in a place where they MUST act?

As you look at and analyze your scenes, ask:
Are characters distinct?
Does each character have their own voice, rhythms, speech patterns, verbal idiosyncrasies?
Does each character have its own compelling wants, needs, dreams, conflicts, senses of urgency?

Think about:
Where characters must overcome obstacles to get what they want?
Where do their dreams and fears come into conflict?
What is your character doing in the next five minutes to get what s/he wants?

URGENCY is the prime factor in a scene.
If a scene isn't working, look at it and determine if anything urgent is going on.
Urgency is a form of tension that drives the play forward.
A need, a dream, a yearning that's INTENSE.
Every art form has to have a form of tension.