

ENGLISH 216: DRAMA
Modern American Drama
Fall Semester 2012
Tues/Thurs 9:30-10:45
Fisk Hall 339

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Office Hrs: To Be Announced

Course Description

In this course we will examine various plays written by American authors in the 20th century. We will begin with canonical works from the first half of the century such as *The Glass Menagerie*, *Death of a Salesman* and *Long Day's Journey Into Night*. We will also read more recent works such as *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* and *True West* that employ techniques from the European avant-garde and the theatre of the absurd. In addition to analyzing the various forms and idioms that modern American playwrights have used, we will also focus on theatrical representations and critiques of American mythologies and themes related to ethnicity, gender, class and sexuality in *Execution of Justice*, *Raisin in the Sun*, *True West* and *Joe Turner's Come and Gone*.

Assigned readings must be completed before every class. You are required to turn in a response to the THURSDAY reading EVERY THURSDAY (approximately 250-300 words minimum). **ENTRIES MUST BE TYPED, HAVE YOUR NAME, THE DATE YOU WROTE THE ENTRY, THE IDENTITY OF THE BRIEF PASSAGE YOU ARE WRITING ABOUT AND A TITLE IDENTIFYING WHICH FORMAL ELEMENTS YOU ARE WRITING ABOUT** (for example, "Light and Music in Scene 3 of *The Glass Menagerie*" or "The Use of Props in Act Two of *Death of a Salesman*"). Entries should not be general, impressionistic responses (i.e. "I liked this play. I thought it was good," summaries of the plot or simplistic explanations of the meanings of the plays culled from websites). You should pick a particular one-to three-page passage in the reading, **citing specific lines in the text**. Analyze them in detail, focusing on how the formal elements (language, light, music, costume, gesture, position of characters on the stage etc.) manifest the subject matter and themes of the passage (e.g. consumerism, racism, love for a sibling, etc). You should also write about how the passage you have selected relates to the themes and formal elements of the entire play and to other plays we have read. ANYONE PLAGIARIZING FROM WEBSITES, BOOKS OR OTHER WORKS AND ANYONE WHO PRESENTS WORK AS THEIR OWN THAT THEY DID NOT WRITE WILL RECEIVE A ZERO FOR THE ASSIGNMENT AND WILL HAVE THE BEHAVIOR REPORTED TO THE APPROPRIATE UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE. **LATE JOURNALS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED**. There may be brief quizzes on Tuesdays or Thursdays, which will also be counted as

journal grades. (You can drop your lowest journal or quiz grade). **YOU MUST COME TO CLASS HAVING READ THE ASSIGNMENT.** You will have one mid-term exam, one group presentation and a final essay based on your presentation topic. Class attendance is required; the roll will be taken at the beginning of each class, so please arrive on time. You are allowed two absences total, for any reason you choose. No excuse is required or desired. If you miss class more than two times, your grade will be lowered accordingly. **PLEASE TURN OFF YOUR PHONE AND ALL OTHER DEVICES BEFORE CLASS BEGINS. DO NOT USE YOUR CELL PHONES, SMART PHONES OR COMPUTERS FOR ANY PURPOSE WHATSOEVER IN THIS CLASS. THEY SHOULD BE TURNED OFF AND PLACED OUT OF SIGHT AT ALL TIMES. ANYONE USING ANY OF THESE DEVICES DURING CLASS WILL BE ASKED TO LEAVE THE CLASS.** All assignments must be turned in on time. If you make an effort, read the plays before class and write your own assignments, even if they are not superior, you are likely to receive, at minimum, a decent grade. Your grade will derive from the following formula: class attendance and participation (20%), journal (20%), mid-term (20%), presentation (20%), final essay (20%).

Learning Outcomes

1. Students will learn to analyze complex theatrical texts as blueprints for performance.
2. Students will learn about how playwrights employ stylized language in theatrical texts.
3. Students will learn about formal elements used in theatrical texts such as lighting, sound, costume, stage design, music and gesture.
4. Students will substantially enhance their writing skills in English by improving their punctuation, spelling, syntax and construction of paragraphs.
5. Students will improve their ability to clearly articulate complex ideas about plays and other literary texts.
6. Students will learn to write interpretive analyses of theatrical texts and to construct a comparative essay.
7. Students will learn about the culture of the U.S. in the 20th-century through the study of a number of the most significant canonical American plays of the period.

PLEASE NOTE THAT THE FOLLOWING READING AND ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE:

Sept 18	Introduction to course
Sept 20	<i>Trifles</i>
Sept 25	<i>The Glass Menagerie</i> (Scenes I-IV)
Sept 27	<i>The Glass Menagerie</i> (Scenes V-VII)
October 2	<i>Death of a Salesman</i> (Act One)
October 4	<i>Death of a Salesman</i> (Act Two)
October 9	<i>A Streetcar Named Desire</i> (Scene 1-5)
October 11	<i>A Streetcar Named Desire</i> (Scene 6-END)
October 16	<i>A Streetcar Named Desire</i> (Film)
October 18	<i>Long Day's Journey Into Night</i>
October 23	<i>Long Day's Journey Into Night</i>
October 25	<i>Long Day's Journey Into Night</i> (Film)
October 30	MID-TERM IN-CLASS EXAM
November 1	<i>Raisin in the Sun</i> (Act One)
November 6	<i>Raisin in the Sun</i> (Act Two)
November 8	<i>Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf</i> (Act One)
November 13	<i>Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf</i> (Acts 2 & 3)
November 15	HOLIDAY
November 20	<i>Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf</i> (Film)
November 22	HOLIDAY
November 27	<i>Joe Turner's Come and Gone</i> (pages 1-54)
November 29	<i>Joe Turner's Come and Gone</i> (pages 55-101)
December 4	<i>Joe Turner's Come and Gone</i> (pages 102-135)
December 6	<i>True West</i> (Scenes 1-4)
December 11	<i>True West</i> (Scenes 5-9)
December 13	<i>Execution of Justice</i> (Acts One and Two)
December 18	PRESENTATIONS
December 20	PRESENTATIONS
January 3	PRESENTATIONS FINAL PAPER DUE (NO EXTENSIONS WILL BE GIVEN)

True West, by Sam Shepard, is in the book *Seven Plays*, by Sam Shepard, at the AUB bookstore. Copies of all other plays can be obtained at 9Ind Riad on Makhoul Street. 9Ind Riad is just off Makhoul Street. Walk out of AUB main gate, turn right, take your first left on Jeanne D'Arc, take your first left onto Makhoul. Walk past Blue Note and the pet store, which are on your right, walk down the hill halfway and take the street to your right. 9Ind Riad is in one of the first two buildings to your left. Ask for Riad. I will provide you with his phone number.