

ENGLISH 216/AMERICAN STUDIES 275M:  
MODERN AMERICAN DRAMA  
Fall Semester 2020

Robert Myers  
[rm33@aub.edu.lb](mailto:rm33@aub.edu.lb)  
Professor of English  
Director, Theater Initiative  
Director, Center for American Studies and Research (CASAR)  
Virtual Office Hours: To be announced  
For immediate important contact only: +1-646-288-4917 (Whats App)

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

In this course we will examine various plays written by American authors in the 20<sup>th</sup> 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*.

**Requirements**

**Assigned readings must be completed before class, and you must have the text we are reading when the class meets. (THIS IS AN ABSOLUTE REQUIREMENT OF THE COURSE).** For some texts, you will have a written assignment, generally a critical analysis of the text we will read or view, which will be 300-350 words long. You must send the version to me BEFORE class meets and have a copy available of your assignment when we meet. All critical analyses must be typed, double-spaced, and at the top you must type your name, the date the entry was written and the pages and title of the text you are writing about. **YOU MUST GIVE YOUR ANALYSIS A TITLE, AND THE TITLE MUST INDICATE HOW THE FORM OF THE TEXT WE ARE READING MANIFESTS PARTICULAR SUBJECT MATTER.** Late critical analyses (ones that I do not receive before class on the date due) will receive half credit. Your entries should not be general, impressionistic responses (i.e. "I liked this novel. I thought it was good."). You should choose one passage or scene (NO MORE THAN 5 PAGES, OR 5 MINUTES OF FILM) in the reading, citing specific lines in the text, analyze the formal techniques employed in detail and write about how these formal elements manifest particular themes and subject matter. You should also mention how these forms and the thematic elements they express relate to the entire novel, film, story or text and to the other novels and texts we have read and films we have viewed. **\*\*DO NOT TURN IN PLOT SUMMARIES, CHARACTER ANALYSIS OR OTHER MATERIAL CULLED FROM WEBSITES AS YOUR CRITICAL ANALYSIS.\*\* IF YOU DO, YOU WILL RECEIVE A ZERO FOR THAT ASSIGNMENT.** Not only does such copying undermine one of the main aspects of the course, plagiarism is a

very serious violation and will be dealt with according to university regulations. ONE FOCUS IN THIS CLASS IS ON CLOSE READINGS OF SPECIFIC PASSAGES, FORMAL ELEMENTS OF WRITING, THEATER AND FILM—E.G. FIGURES OF SPEECH, SENTENCE STRUCTURE, DIALOGUE, IDIOM ETC.—AND HOW THEY RELATE TO THE THEMATIC MATERIAL: GENDER, RACE, CLASS, WAR, ECONOMIC DEPRESSION, HISTORICAL EVENTS IN AMERICAN HISTORY, ETC. You should write your analyses in formal English (avoid colloquial terms and incorrect constructions such as “mom and dad,” “really weird,” “stresses on this part,” etc.) You will be graded for spelling and punctuation, so be certain that your work is properly punctuated, and all words are properly spelled (do not confuse, for example, “its” and “it’s,” or “their,” “there,” and “they’re”). You will have a mid-term exam, group presentations and an individual final essay on one the play you and your group present. Class attendance is required, and you must be focused exclusively on this class during our class sessions. **DO NOT TEXT, CHECK SOCIAL MEDIA, MULTI-TASK OR ENGAGE IN OTHER ACTIVITIES DURING OUR CLASS MEETINGS.** 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 each time you miss the class unless there is an emergency. If there is an emergency, write a note to my e-mail explaining the nature of the emergency. **ALL ASSIGNMENTS MUST BE TURNED IN ON TIME.** Your grade will derive from the following formula: class attendance and participation (15%), group presentations (25%), critical analyses (20%), mid-term (20%), final essay (20%).

### Learning Outcomes

1. Students will learn to analyze complex literary, cinematic and dramatic texts.
2. Students will learn narrative techniques such as point-of-view, methods of presenting dialogue and the use of a variety of rhetorical devices in descriptive language. They will also learn cinematic and dramatic language.
3. Students will learn figures of speech such as metaphor, simile, symbol, oxymoron, paradox and various of their functions in narrative writing. They will also analyze how these figures of speech are utilized in dramatic writing.
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 novels and other literary texts, dramatic texts and films.
6. Students will learn to write interpretive analyses of literary texts and to construct a comparative essay.
7. Students will learn about the culture of the U.S. in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup>-century through the study of a number of the most significant canonical American novels, films and other texts of the period.

### NOTICE

AUB strives to make learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience academic barriers

due to a disability (including mental health, chronic or temporary medical conditions), please inform me immediately so that we can privately discuss options. In order to help establish reasonable accommodations and facilitate a smooth accommodations process, you are encouraged to contact the Accessible Education Office: [accessibility@aub.edu.lb](mailto:accessibility@aub.edu.lb); +961-1-350000, x3246; West Hall, 314.

### **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 20<sup>th</sup>-century through the study of a number of the most significant canonical American plays of the period.

### **Academic Integrity**

<http://www.aub.edu.lb/pnp/generaluniversitypolicies/Documents/StudentCodeConduct/StudentCodeConduct.pdf>, in particular section 1.1, which concerns academic misconduct including cheating, plagiarism, in-class disruption, and dishonesty. Please be aware that misconduct is vigorously prosecuted and that AUB has a zero tolerance policy. Course policy is that **credible evidence of cheating will result in course failure.**

### **Accessibility**

AUB strives to make learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience academic barriers due to a disability (including mental health, chronic or temporary medical conditions), please inform me immediately so that we can privately discuss options. In order to help establish reasonable accommodations and facilitate a smooth accommodations process, you are encouraged to contact the Accessible Education Office: [accessibility@aub.edu.lb](mailto:accessibility@aub.edu.lb); +961-1-350000, x3246; West Hall, 314.

### **Non-Discrimination**

AUB is committed to facilitating a campus free of all forms of discrimination including sex/gender-based harassment prohibited by Title IX. The University's non-discrimination policy applies to, and protects, all students, faculty, and staff. If you think you have

experienced discrimination or harassment, including sexual misconduct, we encourage you to tell someone promptly. If you speak to a faculty or staff member about an issue such as harassment, sexual violence, or discrimination, the information will be kept as private as possible, however, faculty and designated staff are required to bring it to the attention of the University's Title IX Coordinator. Faculty can refer you to fully confidential resources, and you can find information and contacts at [www.aub.edu.lb/titleix](http://www.aub.edu.lb/titleix). To report an incident, contact the University's Title IX Coordinator Trudi Hodges at 01-350000 ext. 2514, or [titleix@aub.edu.lb](mailto:titleix@aub.edu.lb). An anonymous report may be submitted online via EthicsPoint at [www.aub.ethicspoint.com](http://www.aub.ethicspoint.com)

### **SCHEDULE**

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

Sept 8	Introduction to course
Sept 10	<i>Trifles</i>
Sept 15	<i>The Glass Menagerie</i> (Scenes I-IV) <b>(ANALYSIS DUE)</b>
Sept 17	<i>The Glass Menagerie</i> (Scenes V-VII)
Sept 22	<i>Death of a Salesman</i> (Act One)
Sept 27	<i>Death of a Salesman</i> (Act Two)
Sept 29	<i>A Streetcar Named Desire</i> (Scene 1-5) <b>(ANALYSIS DUE)</b>
Oct 1	<i>A Streetcar Named Desire</i> (Scene 6-END) (Film)
Oct 6	<i>Long Day's Journey</i> (Acts 1 and 2) <b>(ANALYSIS DUE)</b>
Oct 8	<i>Long Day's Journey</i> (Acts 3 and 4)
Oct 13	<i>Raisin in the Sun</i> (Act One)
Oct 15	<i>Raisin in the Sun</i> (Act Two) (Film) <b>(ANALYSIS DUE)</b>
Oct 20	<b>MID-TERM IN-CLASS EXAM</b>
Oct 22	<i>Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf</i> (Act One)
Oct 27	<i>Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf</i> (Acts 2 & 3) (Film)
Oct 29	<b>NO CLASS</b>
Nov 3	<i>Joe Turner's Come and Gone</i> (pages 1-54)
Nov 5	<i>Joe Turner</i> pages 55-135 <b>(ANALYSIS DUE)</b>
Nov 10	<i>True West</i> (Scenes 1-4)
Nov 12	<i>True West</i> (Scenes 5-9) (Film excerpts)
Nov 17	<i>Execution of Justice</i> (Act One) <b>(ANALYSIS DUE)</b>
Nov 19	<i>Execution of Justice</i> (Act Two)
Nov 24	PRESENTATIONS
Nov 26	PRESENTATIONS
Dec 1	PRESENTATIONS
	<b>FINAL PAPER DUE DECEMBER 8. (NO EXTENSIONS GIVEN)</b>

All texts available on Moodle.