

Department of English & Writing Studies

Twentieth-Century Drama
English 3556E (001)
Fall/Winter 2016-17

Instructor: Dr. Jo Devereux
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Location: Arts & Humanities Building 2R21

Date/Time: Tuesday 2:30pm-4:30pm,
Thursday 3:30pm-4:30pm

Antirequisite: English 2450E.

Prerequisites: At least 60% in 1.0 of English 1020E or 1022E or 1024E or 1035E or 1036E or both of English 1027F/G and 1028F/G or permission of the Department.

Course Description

This course examines the major forms and genres of twentieth-century dramatic literature through the study of a selection of plays. Attention will also be given to the history of the physical space of the theatre and its relation to dramatic forms. We will study the playwrights and their work in order to come to a better understanding of the body of plays under consideration through careful readings and performances of the texts at hand. This course is intensive and will demand your participation on a number of levels. Each week, lectures will be supplemented by student-driven performance, debate, and critique. These activities are mandatory and there will be room for all levels of comfort with public speaking and performance.

Objectives:

By the end of the course, successful students will be able to:

- Explore twentieth-century dramatic literature as performance;
- Discuss and debate points about the texts and performances in a creative and constructive forum;
- Explore your own interests whenever possible;
- Have fun! The class will be a supportive and encouraging environment in which to try out many ways of performing and interpreting drama.

Course Materials**Required Text:**

The Norton Anthology of Drama. 2nd ed. Ed. J. Ellen Gainor, Stanton B Garner, Jr., and Martin Puchner. *Volume 2: The Nineteenth Century to the Present*. New York: Norton, 2014. Print.

Plays to be studied:

First term:

Ibsen, *Hedda Gabler* (1891)
Wilde, *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895)
Chekhov, *The Cherry Orchard* (1904)
Shaw, *Pygmalion* (1913)
Glaspell, *Trifles* (1916)
Pirandello, *Six Characters in Search of an Author* (1921)
Brecht, *The Good Person of Setzuan* (1938-40)
O'Neill, *Long Day's Journey into Night* (1941)
Genet, *The Maids* (1947)
Williams, *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947)

Second term:

Beckett, *Waiting for Godot* (1953)
Miller, *Death of a Salesman* (1949)
Pinter, *Old Times* (1971)
Shepard, *Buried Child* (1978)
Thompson, *The Crackwalker* (1980)
Mamet, *Glengarry Glen Ross* (1983)
Hwang, *M. Butterfly* (1988)
Kushner, *Angels in America, Part 1* (1991)
Parks, *The America Play* (1994)
Albee, *The Goat* (2002)

Methods of Evaluation

Two essays, one in each term	15% and 30% (see below for details)
Performance and Participation	20% (see below for details)
Final Exam April 2017	35%

A student must receive a passing grade for both term work and the final examination in order to receive a passing grade for the course. This applies to all courses in all programs offered by the department. Students whose term and final exam grades average 50% or above, even though one of the two is a failure, shall receive a default grade of 48%. Please note: The department of English & Writing Studies does not release final grades. All undergraduate grade reports will be available online from the Office of the Registrar.

Students are fully responsible for looking at and being familiar with the information posted on the department website at <http://www.uwo.ca/english/undergraduate/info%20for%20students.html#grade>.

Essay Policy:

You should hand in your essays in class or place them in the English Department Essay Drop Box in the hallway of AHB, near the main English Department Office. ALWAYS KEEP A COPY OF YOUR ESSAY.

Late Essays will be penalized 1% per day.

Participation/Performance Work (20%)

In the first hour of each Tuesday's class, beginning in the first week of October, we will forgo the formalities of a traditional university lecture and get down to the business of performance. I will be dividing the class into four groups, and each week you, the students, will run our final hour.

Our performance hour will begin with a scene study presentation by the group designated, for that week, as THE COMPANY.

- It will be the Company's job to stage a scene based on one from that week's play, and to take up roles such as actors, director, dramaturge, and designers. The scenes you perform will be "poor" theatre in the best sense of the word: not a formal, heavily rehearsed performance, although you are free to bring props and costumes as you choose. Your primary task will be to work together to select a specific approach to the scene/play, and then be prepared to defend and explore your choices in class. This "thought work" is *the most important* component of your presentation!
- Those who aren't acting or directing in any given week must contribute behind the scenes, by helping to imagine potential visions for the scene, by imagining a design (be prepared to explain and discuss it!), or by applying dramaturgical (that is, critical, close-reading) skills to the text and then offering options to the actors and/or director.
- I would like each of you to try different roles over the course of the term: if you are shy, challenge yourself to try acting once; if you're a raging extrovert, challenge yourself to pull back a bit and let the quieter members of your group shine.
- The Company will need to read ahead, and agree on a scene (or scenes) to perform in advance of their scheduled Tuesdays. You need not clear your scene selection with me in advance, but please choose something that will take approximately 10 minutes to perform.
- Be prepared to meet outside of class for an hour or two, at least a couple of times, before each performance, and establish an informal email discussion list among yourselves in order to hammer out your basic choices and ensure everyone knows their jobs.
- Coordinating your schedules will *not* be easy. In fact, it's part of the challenge. But your groups are large because performance cannot happen with just a couple of people: theatre is made in the messy coordination between different personalities with different schedules and different needs. Do your best to accommodate everyone, to get to know one another, and to support one another; by the end of the term, you'll be glad these people are your colleagues; they may even be your friends!
- After each performance, and a short break, the Company will be asked to get back on stage and participate in a question-and-answer period. Each member of the Company should try to contribute something during the Q&A, especially those whose work has been primarily behind the scenes. This is the time for you to explore in depth, with your colleagues, the terrific thought work that has gone into your presentation!
- The final part of the class will involve a post-performance "talk-back" or discussion.
- When the week's performance is over, the Company will take their break while the rest of us get into our designated groups. You will be given 10-15 minutes in your group to discuss the performance you've just seen, and to prepare two or three good challenging questions about the Company's performance choices.
- In order to ensure that your group's discussion runs smoothly, each of you will need to take some notes during the Company's performance, bring those notes with you to your group's "huddle," and be prepared to talk about them.
- NOTE that the questions you develop must delve below the surface of what the Company is doing. Colleague-critics are reviewers with a difference: your task is to explore what worked and what didn't, to probe the critical effects of the Company's

choices, to offer alternative readings, and to examine how others in the class received the performance (it's a good idea to address some questions to your fellow audience members as well!). One important proviso: colleague criticism is designed to be helpful and respectful, not hurtful and derogatory.

- We hope to get a lively discussion going, and will bounce from group to group until either our time or your notes are exhausted. Support a strong, engaged class discussion!

Assessment:

- Your group work is the core component of your participation grade; you will be judged on the amount of effort you put into the work—NOT on your acting skills—and on your willingness to push yourself in new directions, beyond your comfort zone. Note that you need not play a major role in each presentation: balance your commitments to the group work as needed, but ensure that you are contributing helpfully in some way each time your group is The Company, and that you challenge yourself to contribute during your group's discussions.
- Attendance. One of the keys to doing well at this assignment is attending regularly; the other key is being engaged when you attend. Each time you miss a performance during which your group is The Company without prior leave you will lose 5/20 marks. Attendance will be taken. Even if your group is not performing, your attendance is still required and appreciated. Each time you miss an "ordinary" Tuesday without prior leave, you will lose 1/20 marks.

Essay 1: Write on ONE play from Term 1, using one of the topics listed below.

Length: 1500-2000 words

Format: MLA for undergraduate research essays

Worth: 15%

Due: Tues. Dec 6, 2016

Choose ONE of the following broad topics (**which you must narrow down very specifically to construct a clear argument**):

- beginnings and endings
- family
- important props
- settings (temporal and/or geographical) and use of theatrical space
- power, control, dominance (servants and masters)
- realism versus anti-realism
- word play
- gender
- metatheatricality and/or performance matters
- challenges to conventional morality and/or ideology
- voice and gesture
- history

Do some preliminary research on this topic with reference to the play you are exploring. **Narrow and focus your topic. Be as specific as possible.**

Be sure to book an appointment to speak to the professor and/or the TA well in advance of the due date in order to talk about your ideas and plans for each essay.

Essay 2: Compare and contrast TWO plays from either or both terms, using one of the topics listed above.

Length: 2500-3000 words

Format: MLA for undergraduate research essays

Worth: 30%

Due: Thurs. April 6, 2017

As with the first-term essay, choose ONE of the broad topics listed above (**which you must narrow down very specifically to construct a clear argument**).

Again: do some preliminary research on this topic with reference to the plays you are exploring. **You may write more than once on the same topic (for example, family), but make sure you cover ONE play in Essay 1 and TWO different plays from your Essay 1 play in Essay 2.**

NB: As in Term 1, meet at least ONCE with the professor and/or the TA to discuss your paper well before the due date.

Timetable:

Sept 8—Introduction to the course, aims and objectives, general business

Sept 13-15—1890s I: Ibsen, *Hedda Gabler* (1891)

Sept 20-22—1890s II: Wilde, *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895)

Sept 27—Early 20thC: Chekhov, *The Cherry Orchard* (1904)

NB: Instructor away at a conference on Thursday Sept 29. No Class.

Oct 4-6—1910s I: Shaw, *Pygmalion* (1913) **Group 1 = The Company**

Oct 11-13—1910s II: Glaspell, *Trifles* (1916) **Group 2 = The Company**

Oct 18-20—1920s: Pirandello, *Six Characters in Search of an Author* (1921) **Group 3 = The Company**

Oct 25—1930s: Brecht, *The Good Person of Setzuan* (1938-40) **Group 4 = The Company**

Oct 27—Fall Study Break: No Class.

Nov 1-3—1940s I: O'Neill, *Long Day's Journey into Night* (1941)

Nov 8-10—1940s II: Genet, *The Maids* (1947) **Group 1 = The Company**

Nov 15-17—1940s III: Williams, *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947) **Group 2 = The Company**

Nov 22-24—1940s IV: Miller, *Death of a Salesman* (1949) **Group 3 = The Company**

Nov 29-Dec 1—1950s: Beckett, *Waiting for Godot* (1953) **Group 4 = The Company**

Dec 6—**ESSAY 1 DUE Tues Dec 6**

Second Term Schedule

Jan 10-12—Discuss Essay 1 and do workshop on Essay 2

Jan 17-19—1970s I: Pinter, *Old Times* (1971)

Jan 24-26—1970s II: Shepard, *Buried Child* (1978) **Group 1 = The Company**

Jan 31-Feb 2—1980s I: Thompson, *The Crackwalker* (1980) **Group 2 = The Company**

Feb 7-9—1980s II: Mamet, *Glengarry Glen Ross* (1983) **Group 3 = The Company**

Feb 14-16—1980s III: Wilson, *Fences* (1985) **Group 4 = The Company**

Feb 21-23—READING WEEK

Feb 28-Mar 2—1980s IV: Hwang, *M. Butterfly* (1988)

Mar 7-9—1990s I: Kushner, *Angels in America, Part 1* (1991) **Group 1 = The Company**

Mar 14-16—1990s II: Stoppard, *Arcadia* (1993) **Group 2 = The Company**

Mar 21-23—1990s III: Parks, *The America Play* (1994) **Group 3 = The Company**

Mar 28-30—2000s: Albee, *The Goat* (2002) **Group 4 = The Company**

Apr 4-6—Review for exam; **ESSAY 2 DUE Thurs Apr 6**

Accommodation

Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments worth 10% or more of their final grade must apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Academic accommodation cannot be granted by the instructor or department. Documentation shall be submitted, as soon as possible, to the Office of the Dean of the student's Faculty of registration, together with a request for relief specifying the nature of the accommodation being requested. The UWO Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness and further information regarding this policy can be found at http://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf.

Downloadable Student Medical Certificate (SMC):

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf

Academic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

Plagiarism:

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea or passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence.

Plagiarism Checking:

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com <http://www.turnitin.com>.

Support Services

Registrarial Services <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>

Student Support Services <https://student.uwo.ca/psp/heprdweb/?cmd=login>

Services provided by the USC <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

Student Development Centre <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/>

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to MentalHealth@Western: <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.