

Department of English & Writing Studies

English 3666G (001)
American Drama: Home Sweet Home
Winter 2017

Class Location: Somerville House 3315

Class Time: Tuesday 11:30am-12:30pm, Thursday 11:30am-1:30pm

Professor: Alyssa MacLean

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Office Hours: Thursdays from 2-4pm
and by appointment

Contact information:

We will normally respond to emails within 48 hours. We are both happy to discuss your ideas anytime during office hours; if you can't come to campus, Prof. MacLean is also available by phone (her office number is at the top of the syllabus). If you can't attend our regular office hours please contact us and we can set up an appointment.

Antirequisite(s): English 2460F/G.

Prerequisite(s): 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. Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

Course Description

This course will focus on the idea of home in the United States. The living room is perhaps the most ubiquitous of settings in American drama, but it is a complex space, a battleground upon which larger conflicts in American culture are staged. Derived from the eighteenth-century parlor (a room that was named after the French word *parler*), the living room's purpose in the twentieth century was to receive guests and support the moral growth of the family by encouraging discussion and self-improvement. The living room's emergence as the center of the middle-class household in the nineteenth century happened at the same time that theatre became a popular form of middle-class entertainment in the United States.

Over the course of the semester, we will read plays, criticism, and theoretical readings that will help us consider such questions as: what conflicts are staged in the home in different periods of American history? How does the home define the concepts of work and leisure, male and female, old and new, poor and rich, foreign and domestic, public and private, comfort and danger? How are larger national or social ideologies (for example, the American dream or the concept of race) articulated through the home? How is the nation a home? Focusing on the home will also allow us to consider the intersection of different genres of American theatre, including the classic family drama (such as *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*), the comedy (*The Odd Couple*), and the musical (*Hamilton: The Revolution*).

Objectives:

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

- Identify key dramatic traditions and texts in the US noting their key literary characteristics, their historical period, their intellectual tradition, and their relation to each other;
- Insightfully and persuasively analyze dramatic texts, in both oral and written contexts, using appropriate textual evidence, literary and dramatic terms, scholarly criticism, theoretical concepts, historical contexts, and insights from class discussions;
- Collaborate with peers to produce short performances of the plays in the syllabus; communicate artistic choices and reflections to the class;
- Appreciate different scholarly approaches to the study of US drama, including readings by scholars in New Historicism, New Criticism, music, gender studies, and race studies
- Conduct specialized research using library databases;
- Read, summarize and cite secondary sources responsibly; use interpretations of scholarly sources to generate new readings of plays;
- Respond constructively to peer review, situate ideas within the context of an existing critical discussion, and develop an original, incisive, and unified argument in a longer research paper.

Course Materials

Required Course Materials:

Susan Glaspell *Trifles* (1916). ISBN 978-1502417947

Thornton Wilder *Our Town: A Play in Three Acts* (1938). ISBN 978-0060512637

Tennessee Williams, *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947). ISBN 978-0811216029

Arthur Miller, *Death of a Salesman* (1949). ISBN 978-0140481341

Lorraine Hansberry, *A Raisin in the Sun* (1959). ISBN 978-0679755333

Edward Albee, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (1962). ISBN 978-0451158710

Neil Simon, *The Odd Couple* (1965). ISBN 978-0573613319

Houston, *Tea* (1983). ISBN 978-0822221036

Bruce Norris, *Clybourne Park* (2010). ISBN 978-0865478688

Lin-Manuel Miranda, *Hamilton: The Revolution* (2016). ISBN 978-1455539741. Please also download the album and listen to the musical—we will be using both in class.

On reserve at Weldon (supplementary):

David Ball, *Backwards and Forwards: A Technical Manual for Reading Plays*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1983. (NB some copies of this text are available at the bookstore)

On reserve at the Film Library in the basement of AHB:

Trifles (Dir. Moran, 1976)

Our Town (Dir. Sam Wood, 1940)

Our Town (Dir. James Naughton, 2003)

A Streetcar Named Desire (Dir. Elia Kazan, 1951)

Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? (Dir. Mike Nichols, 1966)

Methods of Evaluation

The final mark for the course will be arrived at as follows:

Class participation and attendance	5%
Company assignment #1	10%
Company assignment #2	10%
Short essay (4-5 pages)	15%
Research paper (7-8 pages)	25%
Final exam (cumulative)	35%

A student must receive a passing mark for both term work and the final examination in order to receive a passing mark for the course. This applies to all courses in all programs offered by the department. Students whose term and final exam marks average 50% or above, even though one of the two is a failure, shall receive a default mark 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>.

Timetable (tentative):

You are expected to have completed the assigned reading prior to the first class in which a work is being discussed. Readings are subject to change. Please bring hard copies of assigned readings to class. (Norton) = Find reading in Norton anthology. (OWL) = Find reading on course website.

Please note that readings may be modified with consent of the class, but they will not vary significantly in page length if they are changed.

Thurs. Jan 5:	Introductions.
Tues Jan 10:	Glaspell, <i>Trifles</i> Download the following article on JSTOR: Ben-Zvi, Linda. "Murder, She Wrote": The Genesis of Susan Glaspell's 'Trifles.'" <i>Theatre Journal</i> 44.2 (1992): 141-162.
Thurs Jan 12:	Glaspell, <i>Trifles</i> Wilder, <i>Our Town</i>
Tues Jan 17:	Wilder, <i>Our Town</i> Download this essay on the MLA database: Klaver, Elizabeth. "The Cemetery as Public Space: <i>Spoon River Anthology</i> and Act 3 of <i>Our Town</i> ." <i>Genre</i> 48.1 (2015): 99-118.
Thurs Jan 19:	Finish up with <i>Our Town</i> if necessary Miller, <i>Death of a Salesman</i> Download the following articles on OWL: Richard Parker, "America the Beautiful," from <i>The Myth of the Middle Class</i> Erik Erikson, "Reflections on the American Identity," from <i>Childhood and Society</i> John Cawelti, "Dream or Rat Race Success in the Twentieth Century," from <i>Apostles of the Self-Made Man</i> Erving Goffman on the dream as self-delusion, in <i>Frame Analysis</i> (111-16)
Tues Jan 24:	Miller, <i>Death of a Salesman</i>
Thurs Jan 26:	Miller, <i>Death of a Salesman</i> Company 1 presents on <i>Death of a Salesman</i>

Tues Jan 31:	Company 2 presents on <i>Our Town</i>
Thurs Feb 2:	Company 3 presents on <i>Trifles</i> Williams, <i>A Streetcar Named Desire</i>
Tues Feb 7:	<i>A Streetcar Named Desire</i>
Thurs Feb 9:	Company 4 presents on <i>A Streetcar Named Desire</i> Hansberry, <i>A Raisin in the Sun</i>
Mandatory class visit to <i>A Raisin in the Sun</i> at the Palace Theatre on Saturday Feb. 11 at 8 pm; tickets are 15\$ plus tax, payable to Prof. MacLean. If you can't see this production on this day you must arrange to go to an alternate performance on another night. <i>A Raisin in the Sun</i> is showing Feb 9, Feb 10-12, and Feb 15-19.	
Tues Feb 14:	<i>A Raisin in the Sun</i> SHORT ESSAY DUE
Thurs. Feb 16:	<i>A Raisin in the Sun</i> Download the following essay on the MLA database: Bernstein, Robin. "Inventing a Fishbowl: White Supremacy and the Critical Reception of Lorraine Hansberry's <i>A Raisin in the Sun</i> ". <i>Modern Drama</i> 42.1 (1999): 16-27.
Tues Feb 21:	No class: reading week
Thurs Feb 23:	No class: reading week
Tues Feb 28:	Albee, <i>Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?</i> Download the following book chapter from OWL: Zwagerman, Sean. "Generally Unhappy: The Deconstruction of Speech Acts and <i>Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf.</i> " From <i>Wit's End: Women's Humour as Performative and Rhetorical Strategy</i> .
Thurs Mar 2:	<i>Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?</i> Company 2 presents on <i>Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?</i>
Tues Mar 7:	Simon, <i>The Odd Couple</i>
Thurs Mar 9:	<i>The Odd Couple</i> Critical reading TBA Company 3 presents on <i>The Odd Couple</i>
Tues Mar 14:	Houston, <i>Tea</i>
Thurs Mar 16:	Houston, <i>Tea</i> Company 1 presents on <i>Tea</i>
Tues Mar 21:	Bruce Norris, <i>Clybourne Park</i>
Thurs Mar 23:	<i>Clybourne Park</i> Research paper draft exchange
Tues Mar 28:	Company 4 presents on <i>Clybourne Park</i> (choose between this day and Apr. 6)
Thurs Mar 30:	Miranda, <i>Hamilton</i> . Please read the script and listen to a download of the musical. Available on iTunes. RESEARCH PAPER DUE
Tues Apr 4:	<i>Hamilton</i> Download the following essay on JSTOR: Murray Forman, "'Represent': Race, Space and Place in Rap Music," <i>Popular Music</i> 19.1 (2000): 65-90. Another critical reading TBA
Thurs Apr 6:	<i>Hamilton</i> Company 4 presents on <i>Hamilton</i> (choose between this date and Mar. 28)
Apr 9-30	Exam period; exam date TBA

Overview of Course Assignments

Attendance:

Attendance is expected in this class, and if you want to do well, you need to come to class regularly. If there is a reason why you are not attending class, please come and speak to me about it. The process for requesting academic accommodation on medical or other grounds is described in the "Accommodations" section near the end of this syllabus.

Students anticipating an absence for a major religious holiday are responsible for notifying the instructor in writing of anticipated absences due to their observance of such holidays as soon as possible, and no later than one week before a test or two weeks before a major exam. Information regarding dates of major religious holidays may be obtained through departmental, Deans' and Faculty advising Offices.

Participation:

This class depends upon regular and active participation from all students: this involves reading the course texts carefully before class, **bringing texts to class**, preparing questions for class discussion, listening actively, and responding thoughtfully to other students. You must bring your assigned text to class (please print out documents distributed via OWL). Good decorum and civil behavior is expected from all students at all times. In this class we will often be discussing difficult or sensitive topics. Please be collegial and understanding towards your peers.

Your participation mark is designed to measure your attendance, participation, and evidence of consistent preparation and active learning. Unannounced in-class participation assignments may be given over the course of the year. They will vary in format but will require brief responses to questions about the assigned reading. These assignments cannot be made up; students seeking academic accommodation will have the mark for that day's assignment excluded from their total. We will also take attendance during presentation days and we will make a special note of excellent contributions to class discussion during those days. Failure to come to class, and failure to come to class prepared enough to ask a question or participate in a discussion, will negatively affect your participation grade.

Essays:

There are 2 essays due for this class: one short essay (4-5 pages) and a final research paper (7-8 pages) which will require a draft exchange. Papers in English should be written in MLA format. Further details of these papers will be announced later in the course. I encourage you to discuss your papers with me in office hours as you work on them. On the day the essay is due, please submit a hard copy of your essay in class and upload a copy of it to Turnitin.com via OWL.

Late policy for written assignments:

Over the course of the term, every student in this course may elect to take 1 grace day on written papers, no questions asked. After this grace day is used up, the penalty for late papers will be 5% per day. I do not accept papers that are more than two weeks late unless they have been granted an accommodation by Academic Counselling. I do not give extensions for computer/backup/email or printer problems (this is what your grace day is for).

How to submit a paper late:

If you are submitting a paper late, you must upload it to OWL (which functions as the official timestamp) and put an identical copy in the essay drop box outside the English department in AHB 2G02. Both copies must arrive on the same day. Late penalties will be applied for each day of the week, including weekends and holidays.

Company Performances:

This assignment is modelled after ones designed by Kim Solga and Jo Devereux in Theatre Studies. In some classes, 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 with roughly eight students each. In select weeks you, the students, will run an hour of class.

Our performance hour will begin with a scene study presentation by the group designated, for that week, as THE COMPANY. Each Company will be required to do two presentations over the course of the term.

- It will be the Company's job to stage a scene based on one from that week's play, and to take up such roles 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 explain 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.
- We 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.
- 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 to 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, in which your classmates will be able to prepare challenging questions about the Company's performance choices.

More details on this assignment will be provided in a handout in the first days of class.

Exam:

This course will have a final exam. Students must pass both term work and the final examination in order to pass the course. Students who fail the final examination (regardless of their term mark) automatically fail the course.

Electronics in the classroom:

Please be respectful with your use of electronics in the classroom by turning off your cellphone (unless you're responsible for a dependent or you're dealing with a family emergency; if this is so, alert me before class begins). I encourage you to close laptops when not taking notes. If your computer becomes a distraction in class I will ask you to leave it at home.

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

For further types of academic accommodation including accommodation for students with disabilities, students in reserve forces, students observing religious holidays, please see <http://www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/2015/pg111.html>. If you have a documented disability that requires academic accommodations, please see the SSD to arrange for a formal request for accommodation and inform me as soon as possible. We can then discuss the best solution.

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

Wellness Centre: www.wec.uwo.ca

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/>

Office of the Ombudsperson: www.westernu.ca/ombuds

If you need help: 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.