

Department of English & Writing Studies

American Drama: Home Sweet Home
English 3490G (001)
Winter 2021

Instructor: Prof. Alyssa MacLean
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University College 4429 (but I will primarily
be working from home in 2020-21)
Office Hours: TBA

Course Day/Time: Tuesdays 10:30-11:30,
Thursdays 10:30-12:30

Delivery Type: synchronous online class
held on Zoom

Antirequisites: English 2460F/G.

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.

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 and periods of American theatre, including the realist play (*Trifles*), the family drama (such as *A Raisin in the Sun* and the bitterly dark *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*), and the musical (Lin-Manuel Miranda's *In The Heights*).

Course delivery

As of June 2020, this course is being designed to be held as a synchronous online course, possibly with some asynchronous elements. The Tuesday and Thursday classes will be held during class time on Zoom and may be offered as recorded asynchronous sessions for those who **occasionally** miss a class. However, this is not designed to be a completely asynchronous class, so please ensure you can attend our class times. Attendance will be monitored and makeup participation homework may be assigned for those who occasionally cannot attend our live class. If you have questions about the course delivery format, please contact me and I will do my best to address your concerns.

If physical distancing rules permit, we may be able to attend a showing of *In The Heights* at the Grand Theatre in London in late March. However, attendance at the live play will not be a requirement and students who are interested in this course do not have to be on-site at Western. Tickets for the play will cost roughly \$50.

On potential changes in plans: I want to thank all prospective students in advance for your patience as my ideas for course delivery evolve in response to new information that we acquire over the summer and fall. I will do my best to limit any changes in the plans above, and I'll only make them when I feel they are necessary for safety reasons or that they will make a significant improvement to the learning environment of the course. In the event that The Grand cancels its 2021 season, we will be studying Miranda's *Hamilton* instead (The Grand is expecting to make an announcement about its 2021 season by July 2020).

Learning Objectives:

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

- Identify dramatic traditions and texts in the US noting their key literary characteristics, their historical period, their intellectual tradition, and their relation to each other
- 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
- Appreciate different scholarly approaches to the study of US drama, including readings by scholars in New Historicism, New Criticism, 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 (Tentative)

Susan Glaspell *Trifles* (1916).
Thornton Wilder *Our Town: A Play in Three Acts* (1938).
Tennessee Williams, *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947).
Arthur Miller, *Death of a Salesman* (1949).
Lorraine Hansberry, *A Raisin in the Sun* (1959).
Edward Albee, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (1962).
Houston, *Tea* (1983).
Bruce Norris, *Clybourne Park* (2010).
Lin-Manuel Miranda, *In The Heights* (2005).

Methods of Evaluation

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

Class participation	5%
Reading quizzes	5%
Focus group assignment	15%
Short essay (5-6 pages)	20%
Research paper (8-10 pages)	30%
Final exam (cumulative)	25%

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 [https://www.uwo.ca/english/undergraduate/Student Information.html](https://www.uwo.ca/english/undergraduate/Student%20Information.html).

Academic Consideration for Missed Work

Students who are temporarily unable to meet academic requirements (e.g. attending lectures or labs, writing tests or midterm exams, completing and submitting assignments, participating in presentations) may submit a self-reported absence form online (available on your Student Center) provided that the absence is 48 hours or less and the other conditions specified in the Senate policy are met. Students can self-report only two absences per academic year. See policy here:

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/Academic_Consideration_for_absences.pdf.

Students whose absences are expected to last longer than 48 hours, or where the other conditions detailed in the policy are not met (e.g., work is worth more than 30% of the final grade, the student has already used 2 self-reported absences, the absence is during the final exam period), may receive academic consideration by submitting a Student Medical Certificate (for illness) or other appropriate documentation (for compassionate grounds) to Academic Counselling. Academic accommodation cannot be granted by the instructor or department. The Student Medical Certificate is available online at https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf.

All students pursuing academic consideration, regardless of type, must contact their instructors no less than 24 hours following the end of the period of absence to clarify how they will be expected to fulfill the academic responsibilities missed during their absence. Students are reminded that they should consider carefully the implications of postponing tests or midterm exams or delaying submission of work, and are encouraged to make appropriate decisions based on their specific circumstances.

Students who have conditions for which academic accommodation is appropriate, such as disabilities or ongoing or chronic health conditions, should work with Accessible Education Services to determine appropriate forms of accommodation.

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>.

All instances of plagiarism will be reported to the Chair of Undergraduate Studies. Proven cases of plagiarism will result in a grade of zero for the assignment. Subsequent offences will result in failure for the course.

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.