

Contemporary Drama
English 379L
Class Unique Number: 35065

Spring 2010
PAR 105
Mondays and Wednesdays, 5:00-6:30

Instructor: David Kornhaber
Office: Parlin 22
Email: david.kornhaber@mail.utexas.edu
Office phone: 512-471-8712

Office Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays 7:15 – 8:15pm

I. Description

This course presents an introduction to the major playwrights and themes of contemporary drama in the English-speaking world, focusing primarily on the United States and England. Beginning with a consideration of the origins of contemporary drama in the theatrical revolutions of the late 1950s to 1970s, the course moves on to an examination of some of the major plays and playwrights of the last thirty years organized around three recurrent areas of concern: re-adaptations and revisions of classical themes and techniques; reflections on and reconsiderations of issues of modern identity, both personal and national; and epic re-stagings of history to current political ends. Works will be considered as examples of dramatic literature in dialogue with their dramatic predecessors and contemporaries and as documents of contemporary theatrical culture, influenced and often determined by the institutional structures of New York's Broadway and Off-Broadway or London's West End and Fringe production arrangements.

II. Course Requirements:

1. Class attendance and participation policy:
 - a. Attend all scheduled classes and arrive on time
 - **Missed Classes:** In the event you must miss a class, you can do so on 3 instances without it affecting your final grade. These 3 missed classes do not need to be excused, but please let me know of your absence as far in advance as possible. Beyond these 3 classes, all absences must be excused. Reasons for excused absences include illness (with doctor's note), team sports or approved activities, and family emergencies. Any unexcused absences beyond the allowed 3 missed classes will lower your final class grade by 1/3 of a letter.
 - **Religious Holy Days:** By UT Austin policy, you must notify me of your pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, I will give you an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

2. Course Readings/Materials:
 - a. Please refer to the end of this syllabus for a full list of required course readings
 - b. Additional readings and materials may also be provided by the instructor in the form of handouts or electronic attachments throughout the course

3. Assignments, Assessment, and Evaluation
 - a. Term papers and other assignments are due at the start of class on the dates listed in the Tentative Course Schedule unless otherwise rescheduled by the instructor
 - b. Unless arrangements for an extension are made in advance with the instructor, late papers or assignments will be marked down 1/3 of a letter for every class period they are late
 - c. All assignments and due dates listed are subject to change with notice from the instructor to better suit class development and progression

III. Grading Procedures:

Grades will be based on:

- (a) Class Participation / Reading Quizzes 15%
- (b) Short essay #1 (5 pages) 25%
- (c) Short essay #2 (5 pages) 25%
- (d) Long essay (8-10 pages) 35%

Participation will be evaluated based on periodic reading quizzes and frequency of engagement in the classroom discussion. Engagement does not, however, mean verbal expression for its own sake. Active listening and responding to peers are critical components of classroom engagement. There is no particular quota for discussion contributions; rather the expectation is that all students will be continuously engaged in listening and responding to one another's thoughts and opinions.

A list of potential topics for short and long essays will be distributed by the instructor prior to the due date for each assignment. Students are welcome to develop their own paper topics for any of the assigned essays but must receive approval from the instructor for their topic prior to beginning the paper. Papers will be evaluated not only on the quality of the ideas and supporting analysis presented but also on the effectiveness of the organization and communication of those ideas. More specific expectations will be discussed in class at the time that paper topics are distributed. Any student with questions regarding paper expectations should speak individually with the instructor prior to beginning the paper.

For each of the short papers, students will be assigned a revision partner; partners will exchange papers with one another prior to the submission date and provide peer feedback for each other. In addition, students will be able to select one of the two short papers to revise for a new grade based on instructor feedback and direction, if they so choose.

IV. Other University Notices and Policies

University of Texas Honor Code

The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the university is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community.

Documented Disability Statement

Any student with a documented disability who requires academic accommodations should contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at (512) 471-6259 (voice) or 1-866-329-3986 (video phone). Faculty are not required to provide accommodations without an official accommodation letter from SSD.

- Please notify me as quickly as possible if the material being presented in class is not accessible (e.g., instructional videos need captioning, course packets are not readable for proper alternative text conversion, etc.).
- Please notify me as early in the semester as possible if disability-related accommodations for field trips are required. Advanced notice will permit the arrangement of accommodations on the given day (e.g., transportation, site accessibility, etc.).
- Contact Services for Students with Disabilities at 471-6259 (voice) or 1-866-329-3986 (video phone) or reference SSD's website for more disability-related information:
http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/for_cstudents.php

V. Tentative Course Schedule:

This syllabus represents my current plans and objectives. As we go through the semester, those plans may need to change to enhance the class learning opportunity. Such changes, communicated clearly, are not unusual and should be expected.

Date	Main Topic(s)	Work to do at home Readings – to be completed before class	Assignments
W 1/20	Introduction		
Unit 1: Origins of Contemporary Drama			
Week 1: England's Angry Young Men: John Osborne and Harold Pinter			
M 1/25	<i>Look Back in Anger</i>	Read <i>Look Back in Anger</i>	
W 1/27	<i>The Birthday Party</i>	Read <i>The Birthday Party</i>	
Week 2: New Voices in the Canon: Adrienne Kennedy and Leroi Jones			
M 2/1	<i>Funnyhouse of a Negro</i>	Read <i>Funnyhouse of a Negro</i>	
W 2/3	<i>The Dutchman</i>	Read <i>The Dutchman</i>	
Week 3: America's Angry Young Men: David Mamet and Sam Shepard			
M 2/8	<i>Glengarry, Glen Ross</i>	Read <i>Glengarry, Glen Ross*</i>	
W 2/10	<i>Buried Child</i>	Read <i>Buried Child*</i>	
Unit 2: Contemporary Re-Adaptations and Revisions			
Week 4: Reimagining Classical Drama: Sarah Kane and Chuck Mee			
M 2/15	<i>Phaedra in Love</i>	Read <i>Phaedra in Love</i>	
W 2/17	<i>Agamemnon 2.0</i>	Read <i>Agamemnon 2.0</i> (available online)	
Week 5: Reimagining National Stories: Derek Walcott and Edward Bond			
M 2/22	<i>Odyssey: A Stage Version</i>	Read <i>Odyssey: A Stage Version</i>	
W 2/24	<i>Lear</i>	Read <i>Lear</i>	Short Paper #1 Due
Week 6: Reappropriating Classical Technique: Paula Vogel and Sarah Ruhl			
M 3/1	<i>How I Learned to Drive</i>	Read <i>How I Learned to Drive</i>	
W 3/3	<i>Passion Play</i>	Read <i>Passion Play</i>	
Unit 3: Contemporary Reflections on Identity			
Week 7: Questions of Race in America: August Wilson and Suzan Lori Parks			
M 3/8	<i>Fences</i>	Read <i>Fences*</i>	
W 3/10	<i>The America Play</i>	Read <i>The America Play*</i>	
M 3/15	Spring Break – No Class		
W 3/17	Spring Break – No Class		
Week 8: Questions of Gender and Sexuality: David Henry Hwang and Maria Irene Fornes			
M 3/22	<i>M. Butterfly</i>	Read <i>M. Butterfly*</i>	
M 3/24	<i>Mud</i>	Read <i>Mud*</i>	
Week 9: Questions of Family: Tracy Letts and Edward Albee			
M 3/29	<i>August: Osage County</i>	Read <i>August: Osage County</i>	
W 3/31	<i>The Goat, or Who is Sylvia?</i>	Read <i>The Goat, or Who is Sylvia?*</i>	
Week 10: Questions of Postcolonial Identity: Athol Fugard and Wole Soyinka			
M 4/5	<i>Master Harold... And the Boys</i>	Read <i>Master Harold and the Boys*</i>	Short Paper #2 Due

Date	Main Topic(s)	Work to do at home Readings – to be completed before class	Assignments
W 4/7	<i>Death and the King's Horsemen</i>	Read <i>Death and the King's Horsemen</i> *	
Unit 4: Contemporary Epics			
Week 11: The American Epic: Tony Kushner			
M 4/12	<i>Angels in America</i>	Read <i>Angels in America</i> *	
W 4/14	<i>Angels in America</i>	---	
Week 12: The Intellectual Epic: Tom Stoppard			
M 4/19	<i>The Coast of Utopia</i>	Read <i>The Coast of Utopia</i>	
W 4/21	<i>The Coast of Utopia</i>	---	
Week 13: The Documentary Epic: David Hare			
M 4/26	<i>Stuff Happens</i>	Read <i>Stuff Happens</i>	
Week 14: The Experimental Epic: Caryl Churchill and Robert Wilson			
W 4/28	<i>The Skriker</i>	Read <i>The Skriker</i>	
M 5/3	<i>Einstein on the Beach</i>	Read supplemental materials – to be provided by instructor	
W 5/5	Retrospective		
F 5/14	---	---	Long Paper Due

Note: Readings marked with an asterisk () are in the Norton Anthology of Drama*

Required Books

All books are available at the University Co-Op

Author	Title	Publisher	©/ Ed.
1. John Osborne	Look Back in Anger	Penguin Group (USA)	1982
2. Harold Pinter	The Birthday Party and The Room	Grove/Atlantic, Inc.	1994
3. Adrienne Kennedy	The Adrienne Kennedy Reader	University of Minnesota Press	2001
4. Leroi Jones	Dutchman and The Slave	HarperCollins Publishers	1971
5. J. Ellen Gainor, Stanton B. Garner, Jr., and Martin Puchner (eds)	The Norton Anthology of Drama, Volume 2	W.W. Norton & Company	2008
6. Sarah Kane	Sarah Kane: Complete Plays	A&C Black Publishers, Ltd.	2003
7. Derek Walcott	The Odyssey: A Stage Version	Farrar, Straus and Giroux	1993
8. Edward Bond	Plays: Two -- Edward Bond	A&C Black Publishers, Ltd.	2003
9. Paula Vogel	The Mammary Plays: How I Learned to Drive and the Mineola Twins	Theatre Communications Group	1997
10. Sarah Ruhl	The Clean House and Other Plays	Theatre Communications Group	2005
11. Tracy Letts	August: Osage County	Theatre Communications Group	2008
12. David Hare	Stuff Happens	Faber and Faber	2005
13. Caryl Churchill	The Skriker	Theatre Communications Group	1994
14. Tom Stoppard	The Coast of Utopia: A Trilogy: Voyage/Shipwreck/Salvage	Grove/Atlantic, Inc.	2007