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ENG 2011G-001: Literature, Self, and the World: Drama

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Eng 2011: Literature, Self, and the World: Drama

fall 2010 / Section 001

Dr. Chris Wixson

syllabus

[The study of literature can provide us with] a clue to how we live, how we have been living, how we have been led to imagine ourselves, how our language has trapped as well as liberated us. *Adrienne Rich*

course philosophy

This course surveys dramatic literature with the aims of sharpening appreciation for the art form and using great plays as an opportunity to engage cultural, existential, and personal issues. Our primary focus will be on the nature of love and desire—thus, we will analyze a variety of plays that explore gender politics, sexuality, marriage, the family, and romance. The selection of primary texts will be wide-ranging to represent a number of different dramatic forms and perspectives, from the "greats" of earlier periods (Shakespeare, Henrik Ibsen, and Lorraine Hansberry) to contemporary writers like August Wilson and Patrick Marber. The course approaches these plays as both literary *and* theatrical texts, discussing not only their political, historical, and modern implications but also their potential for acting, directorial, and technical choices. Toward that end, we will also be analyzing videotaped productions as well as live performances where possible.

Generally speaking, the first half of the course will focus on British drama while the second will focus on American drama. The complexity of these plays in terms of language, style, and thematics makes this course both reading and thinking intensive. It has a demanding assignment schedule that necessitates time and planning in order to pass this course. Since 2011 involves a fair amount of writing, we will spend some time in class talking about the organization and construction of strong interpretive arguments. The format of each class will be relatively fluid, changing with regard to the material, my ideas, and your interests. The first meeting on each text will be an informal lecture while the remaining meetings will rely primarily on discussion. As such, this course should **focus** primarily on **you**, your questions, and impressions. Remember this is not MY class but ours, understood as an ongoing conversation. As such, enrollment necessitates a commitment to class discussion (beyond merely showing up) and courageous consideration of ideas about art, interpretation, writing, culture, existence, and desire. Finally, 2011 is a *writing-intensive* course, from which you may submit the critical essay for inclusion in your university-required portfolios. Please let me know if you wish to discuss this requirement and its procedure.

Learning Outcomes

1. To write expository and persuasive papers in which paragraphs, sentences, and words develop a central idea that responds to reading of drama.
2. To read drama expressing a wide range of cultural perspectives and values and to think critically and write analytically about them.
3. To engage in reading and writing experiences about literature so as to establish a foundation for continued social, cultural, intellectual, and aesthetic discovery and appreciation.

course texts

Drama, Classical to Contemporary, eds. Coldewey / Streitberger

Eight Plays, Henrik Ibsen

The Little Foxes, Lillian Hellman

Translations, Brian Friel (e-reserve – password: _____)

Closer, Patrick Marber

Four Plays, Tennessee Williams

Three Plays, Noel Coward

contact information

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Office Hours:

assignments

*Short pieces of writing (2-3 pages) called “seed papers” in which you pose a productive question which relates to the inquiry issues of the course about the text and then attempt to answer it. You may be asked to present as part of your contribution to class discussion each of your papers. However, you will be required to write four seed essays total:

- *The first (due 8/26) must analyze the relationship between the two characters based on the language Shakespeare chooses in the opening lines
- *one of the other three must address issues of scenography/symbolism
- *one of the other three must deal with issues of character
- *one of the other three must discuss the playwright's thematic point

*A critical paper (4-6 pages). Writing and topic guidelines will be handed out in advance.

*Active, Engaged Participation in Discussion -- defined as TALKING productively.

*Midterm and Final Exam

*A performance essay.

This November 14-18, the EIU theater department is doing a production of Brian Friel's *Translations*. Attend this production and, in a 2-3 page paper, carefully analyze the play in terms of how it represents issues of gender or desire. Make sure to make connections to plays we have discussed already in class and to argue with evidence for the playwright's thematic point on one of these issues. Turn it in with your critical paper on November 20th.

Parkland College is doing a production of Tennessee Williams' *The Glass Menagerie* October 27-30/November 4-6 at 7:30 with a 3:00 matinee on November 7th.

final grades

Your final grade in the course will be determined by your performance on the following assignments:

Four Seed Papers	20%
Critical Paper	20%
Midterm Exam	20%
Final Exam	20%
Performance Requirement	10%
In-class Writings/ Quizzes / Active Participation	10%

****You must complete all written assignments and exams to complete the course. Failure to complete any one of the components represents incomplete work for the semester and anyone with incomplete work will not receive a passing grade for the course.**

attendance

Mandatory.

I expect you to be in class awake and prepared every Tuesday and Thursday morning. In other words, arrive on time with your reading/writing assignment completed, prepared to participate in discussion. Because so much in this course relies upon in-class work, absences and habitual lateness will adversely affect your course performance. Attendance will be taken at each class session – you are allowed **two** unexcused absences before your grade is negatively affected. After two, each unexcused absence will lower your participation grade by a letter. **More than four unexcused absences will result in a “0” for participation. More than six unexcused absences will result in a grade of no credit for the course. Habitual lateness (beyond once) will also affect your grade negatively since it is disruptive and disrespectful.** Please notify me by email if there is unexpected illness or an emergency that causes you to miss class. Do not get in touch asking “for the assignment” or a “rundown of what you missed.” My responsibilities as an instructor lie with the students who do come to class. Excused absences are accompanied by appropriate legal or medical documentation. Any unexcused absence will seriously undermine your success in this course.

class participation

Mandatory.

Think of our meetings as potluck conversations and activities; everyone simply must contribute. Participation in a senior seminar means careful, full preparation of the reading, frequent contributions to discussions, risk-taking in writing and thinking. You should come to each session armed with observations, opinions, questions, and insights, ready to take an active part in the ongoing dialogue about the course materials. In addition to your required short papers, what else you bring to share need not be written out but should refer to specific passages in the reading as the basis for formulating a broader discussion topic or questions. Reading quizzes will happen relatively frequently to ensure the quality of our discussions.

late papers

These are no fun for me to keep track of and only put you further behind. For each day beyond the scheduled due date, late papers will be penalized a third of a letter grade. **After a week, I will no longer accept the paper, and it becomes a “0.”** Again, if you become ill or the victim of emergency circumstances, please email me as soon as possible and stay in touch.

cell phone and computer use

You may bring your computer to class with you, assuming that you use it in a scholarly and responsible fashion. This means that you will only have applications and windows related to the current discussion open. **You may not check** email, news, or box scores, surf the web, use chat applications, play games, or otherwise distract yourself and those around you from the class conversation with your computer.

You are likewise expected to use cell phones in a responsible manner: **turn them off when you come in to class**. If you have an emergency for which you must be available, you must discuss it with me beforehand and keep your phone on vibrate. **Under no conditions are you allowed to** text message, take pictures or video (illegal in class), play games, or use the cell phone in any other manner during class. The nature of our scholarly endeavor together necessitates mutual respect and dedicated attention during the too short time we have to discuss these texts. Violating any of these policies will result in your participation grade being lowered by a full letter grade for each violation.

academic integrity

Any paper with your name on it signifies that you are the author—that the wording and major ideas are yours, with exceptions indicated by either quotation marks and/or citations. Plagiarism is the unacknowledged use (appropriation and/or imitation) of others' materials (words and ideas). We will discuss how to avoid it. Evidence of plagiarism will result in one or more of the following: a failing grade for the assignment, an F in the course, and a report filed with the Student Standards Office.

special needs and situations

If you have a *documented* disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the Office of Disability Services (581-6583) as soon as possible.

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course calendar

** THIS SCHEDULE MAY CHANGE AT ANY TIME ACCORDING TO THE NEEDS AND DEMANDS OF THE CLASS. MAKE SURE YOU ALWAYS BRING IT WITH YOU FOR MODIFICATION.

August	24	Introductory Comments
	26	Dramatic Language(s) / Reading Drama / "Trifles" pp. 5-11 First nineteen lines of <u>A Midsummer Night's Dream</u> / Seed Paper Due
	31	Shakespeare's <u>A Midsummer Night's Dream</u> Act 1 / Seed Paper A-D
September	2	<u>A Midsummer Night's Dream</u> Act 2 / Seed Paper E-H
	7	<u>A Midsummer Night's Dream</u> Act 3 / Seed Paper I-M
	9	<u>A Midsummer Night's Dream</u> Act 4 / Seed Paper N-R
	14	<u>A Midsummer Night's Dream</u> Act 5 / Seed Paper S-Z
	16	<u>Dream</u> (video)
	21	Ibsen's <u>A Doll's House</u> Acts 1-2 / Seed Paper A-D
	23	<u>A Doll's House</u> 3
	28	Coward's <u>Private Lives</u> / Seed Paper E-M
October	30	<u>Private Lives</u>
	5	<u>Private Lives</u>
	7	Midterm Exam
	12	Hellman's <u>The Little Foxes</u> / Seed Paper N-R
	14	<u>Foxes</u>
	19	Williams' <u>Glass Menagerie</u> / Seed Paper S-Z
	21	<u>Glass Menagerie</u>

	26	Hansberry's <u>A Raisin in the Sun</u> / Seed Paper A-D
	28	<u>Raisin</u>
November	2	Mandatory Conferences
	4	Mandatory Conferences
	9	Wilson's <u>The Piano Lesson</u> / Seed Paper E-M
	11	<u>Piano Lesson</u>
	16	<u>Piano Lesson</u>
	18	Critical Paper Due
		Beckett short works (handout)

THANKSGIVING BREAK

	30	Marber's <u>Closer</u>
December	2	<u>Closer</u> / Seed Paper N-R
	7	<u>Closer</u> / Seed Paper S-Z
	9	<u>Closer</u>
		Final Exam Preparation and Review

**Final exam date:

A Midsummer Night's Dream I.i.1-19

Theseus: Now, fair Hippolyta, our nuptial hour
Draws on apace. Four happy days bring in
Another moon; but, O, methinks, how slow
This old moon wanes! She *lingers* my desires, 4
Like to a *stepdame* or a *dowager* 5
Long withering out a young man's revenue.

Hippolyta: Four days will quickly *steep* themselves in night, 7
Four nights will quickly dream away the time;
And then the moon, like to a silver bow
New bent in heaven, shall behold the night
Of our solemnities.

Theseus: Go, Philostrate,
Stir up the Athenian youth to merriments,
Awake the pert and nimble spirit of mirth,
Turn melancholy forth to funerals;
The pale *companion* is not for our *pomp*. 15
Hippolyta, I wooed thee *with my sword* 16
And won thy love doing thee injuries;
But I will wed thee in another key,
With pomp, with *triumph*, and with reveling. 19

4: postpones, delays fulfillment of

5: stepmother/ widow

7: plunge

15: fellow/ ceremonial magnificence

16: military engagement against the Amazons when Hippolyta was taken captive

19: public festivity