

Fall 8-15-2008

ENG 2011G-002: Literature, Self and the World: Drama

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ENGLISH 2011G – LITERATURE, SELF AND THE WORLD: DRAMA

Fall 2008 / Section 002
 TR 11:00-12:15
 Coleman Hall 3170

Dr. Chris Wixson
 Coleman Hall 3871
 Office Hours: TBA
 (Or by appointment)

Required Textbooks: *Drama, Classical to Contemporary*, eds. Coldewey / Streitberger
Eight Plays, Henrik Ibsen
The Little Foxes, Lillian Hellman
The Zoo Story, Edward Albee
Closer, Patrick Marber

Course Philosophy

[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

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 Tennessee Williams) 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.

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-centered* 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 Policies

Attendance

I expect you to be in class awake and prepared every Tuesday and Thursday. 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, frequent absences and habitual lateness will adversely affect your course performance. Thus, your regular attendance is expected; be advised that exams and paper topics will draw heavily from material discussed in class. Attendance will be taken at each class meeting. **More than two unexcused absences will result in your term grade being lowered by a third for each session missed beyond two.** Excused absences are accompanied by appropriate legal or medical documentation. Since coming late or leaving early is extremely disruptive, habitual lateness will also negatively affect your term grade. 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.

****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.**

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.

Plagiarism

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 Judicial Affairs Office.

Class Participation

You should come to class prepared to talk about the reading for that day. Each class session will be a mixture of informal lecture and discussion; thus, your own questions and comments about the plays are essential to the success of the course. You will also need to have completed the assigned reading and (when noted) your typed "seed paper." Reading quizzes will happen relatively frequently to ensure the quality of our discussions.

Email

You should get into the habit of checking your email daily. There will be a class list on which I will post changes in assignments (if they arise), course-related announcements, and ideas which expand upon what happens in class. This list is also a great way for all of us to interact outside of class; that is to say, if you have a question or query (dramatic in nature), the miracle of technology offers us a way to discuss and address it.

Conferences

I am regularly available to meet with you during my scheduled office hours or by appointment. To make an appointment, speak to me after class or contact me via email.

Shorter Written 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 will be asked to present as part of your contribution to class discussion each of your papers. However, you will be required to write **three** seed essays total:

*The first (due 8/28) must analyze the relationship between the two characters based on the language Shakespeare chooses in the opening lines

**one* of the other two must address issues of scenography/symbolism

**one* of the other two must deal with issues of character

Other assignments:

*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

**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.

Extra Credit: This November 14-18, the EIU theater department is doing a production of one of Greek playwright Euripides' most famous plays, *Medea*. Attend this production and, in a 2-3 page paper, carefully analyze the play in terms of how it represents issues of gender, family, 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.

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

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|---|-----|
| Three Seed Papers | 15% |
| Critical Paper | 25% |
| Midterm Exam | 20% |
| Final Exam | 20% |
| In-class Writings/ Quizzes / Active Participation | 20% |

Schedule of Assignments

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 | 26 | Introductory Comments |
| | 28 | Dramatic Language(s) / Reading Drama / "Trifles" pp. 5-11 First nineteen lines of <u>A Midsummer Night's Dream</u> / Seed Paper Due |
| September | 2 | Shakespeare's <u>A Midsummer Night's Dream</u> Act 1 / Seed Paper A-D |
| | 4 | <u>A Midsummer Night's Dream</u> Act 2 / Seed Paper E-H |
| | 9 | <u>A Midsummer Night's Dream</u> Acts 3 / Seed Paper I-M |
| | 11 | <u>A Midsummer Night's Dream</u> Act 4 / Seed Paper N-R |
| | 16 | <u>A Midsummer Night's Dream</u> Act 5 / Seed Paper S-Z |
| | 18 | <u>Dream</u> (video) |
| | 23 | Ibsen's <u>A Doll's House</u> Acts 1-2 / Seed Paper A-D |
| October | 25 | <u>A Doll's House</u> 3 |
| | 30 | Hellman's <u>The Little Foxes</u> / Seed Paper E-H |
| | 2 | <u>Foxes</u> |
| | 7 | <u>Foxes</u> |
| | 9 | Midterm Exam |
| | 14 | Williams' <u>Cat on a Hot Tin Roof</u> / Seed Paper I-M |
| | 16 | <u>Cat</u> |

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|----------|----|---|
| | 21 | Hansberry's <u>A Raisin in the Sun</u> / Seed Paper N-R |
| | 23 | <u>Raisin</u> |
| | 28 | Wilson's <u>The Piano Lesson</u> / Seed Paper S-Z |
| | 30 | <u>Piano Lesson</u> |
| November | 4 | Albee's "The Zoo Story" |
| | 6 | <u>Closer</u> |
| | 11 | <u>Closer</u> |
| | 13 | <u>Closer</u> |
| | 18 | <u>Closer</u> |
| | 20 | Critical Paper Due |

THANKSGIVING BREAK

| | | |
|----------|----|-----------------------------------|
| December | 2 | Beckett short works (handout) |
| | 4 | Beckett short works (handout) |
| | 9 | Final Exam Preparation |
| | 11 | Final Exam Preparation and Review |

****Final exam date: Wednesday, December 17th 10:15-12:15**

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*