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ENG 2011G-004: Literature, the Self, and the World

Chris Wixson
Eastern Illinois University

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

Fall 2003 / Section 004
 MWF 1-1:50 PM
 Coleman Hall 3170

Dr. Chris Wixson
 Coleman Hall 3015
 Office Hours: 8-10:00 MW
 (Or by appointment)

Required Textbooks: *Drama, Classical to Contemporary*, eds. Coldewey / Streitberger
Closer, Patrick Marber
Fool for Love, Sam Shepard
The Blue Room, David Hare
Private Lives, Noel Coward

Required Supplies: A notebook and a folder for notes, handouts, and in-class work

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 aim of introducing you to a variety of theatrical forms and experiences. 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 (Oscar Wilde, William Shakespeare, and Tennessee Williams) to contemporary writers like Patrick Marber, August Wilson, and Harold Pinter. 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 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, whenever 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, relying heavily on discussion as well as the occasional brief lecture. 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 will be submitting essays 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 Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. In other words, arrive on time with your reading/writing assignment completed, prepared to participate in discussion. If you are not an early afternoon person, it is important to realize that now. 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 three unexcused absences will result in your term grade being lowered by a third for each session missed beyond three.** 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. As mentioned above, 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.

Grade Breakdown

2 Papers	40%	Final Exam	20%
Seed Papers/Quizzes:	20%	Participation (email/class)	20%

****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.**

Short 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. Since the purpose of these papers are for stimulating class discussion, late seed papers cannot be accepted. You will be asked to present and conduct class discussion with your question once during the semester. However, you will be required to write **three** seed essays total:

**one* must address issues of symbolism in props, sets, and/or costumes

**one* must explore issues of character and characterization

**one* must deal with specific language in a specific passage

*Reading quizzes to ensure the quality of our class discussions.

Other Assignments

- *Two critical papers (4 pages) that focus on a particular issue that has provoked, challenged, or disturbed your thinking during the course and can be generated from seed papers. Writing guidelines will be handed out in advance.
- *Active, Engaged Participation in Discussion --- defined as TALKING productively.
- *Final Exam

Extra Credit Opportunities:

There are two designated places on the syllabus to turn in an extra credit seed paper. In addition, writing a review of one of the many local theatrical opportunities announced in class also counts as extra credit. More details will be provided as we move forward in the term.

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.

*** "Anthology" refers to reading in the Drama: Classical to Contemporary book

August	25	Introductory Comments
	27	"Love" Response Due
	29	Dramatic Language(s) / Reading Drama Anthology pp. 1-16 ("Trifles")
September	1	NO CLASS – HAPPY LABOR DAY!
	3	First two scenes of <u>The Blue Room</u>
	5	<u>The Blue Room</u>
	8	<u>The Blue Room</u>
	10	<u>The Blue Room</u>
	12	First 19 Lines of <u>A Midsummer Night's Dream</u> / Writing About Drama Anthology pp. 206-11

Unit One: Love and Family Affairs

15	<u>A Midsummer Night's Dream</u> Act One / Seed Paper Due A-C
17	<u>A Midsummer Night's Dream</u> Act Two / Seed Paper Due D-F
19	<u>A Midsummer Night's Dream</u> Act Three / Seed Paper Due H-L
22	<u>A Midsummer Night's Dream</u> Act Four / Seed Paper Due M-O
24	<u>A Midsummer Night's Dream</u> Act Five / Seed Paper Due G, P-Z

	26	<u>A Midsummer Night's Dream</u> (video)
October	29	<u>Cat on a Hot Tin Roof</u> / Seed Paper Due D-F
	1	<u>Cat</u> / Seed Paper Due A-C
	3	<u>Cat</u> / Seed Paper Due H-L
	6	<u>The Piano Lesson</u> / Seed Paper Due G, P-Z
	8	<u>The Piano Lesson</u> / Seed Paper Due M-O
	10	<u>The Piano Lesson</u> (video)
	13	<u>The Piano Lesson</u> (video)
	15	Paper #1 Due
	17	NO CLASS – HAPPY FALL BREAK!

Unit Two: “Plotless Plays for Purpose People”: Love in the Modern World

	20	<u>Private Lives</u> Act One
	22	<u>Private Lives</u> Act Two / Seed Paper Due A-C
	24	<u>Private Lives</u> Act Three
	27	<u>The Importance of Being Earnest</u> Act One / Seed Paper Due D-F
		Anthology 543-4
	29	<u>Earnest</u> Act Two
	31	<u>Earnest</u> Act Three
November	3	Film Version of <u>Earnest</u>
	5	Film Version of <u>Earnest</u>
	7	TBA
	10	<u>Closer</u> Act One / Seed Paper Due G, P-Z
	12	<u>Closer</u> Act Two
	14	<u>Closer</u>
	17	Beckett short works (handout) / Extra Credit Seed Paper
	19	Beckett short works (handout) / Extra Credit Seed Paper
	21	Paper #2 Due

THANKSGIVING BREAK

December	1	<u>Fool for Love</u> / Seed Paper Due H-L
	3	<u>Fool for Love</u>
	5	“The Dumb Waiter” / Seed Paper Due M-O
	8	“The Dumb Waiter”
	10	Final Exam Preparation
	12	Final Exam Review

****Final exam date TBA.**