ENG 3606-001: Modern Drama

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This course offers a survey of modern drama from the late 19th century to the present. Since we will be covering over a century of drama, the plays we read are selected as representative of major movements, theories of performance, and styles that have shaped drama throughout the modern age in Europe, Britain, and America. The goal of this course is to provide intellectual background to make you more conversant with some of the major works and theatrical movements of this century, as well as to enable you to read and view modern drama more profitably on your own.

Texts: Modern and Contemporary Drama, eds. Gilbert, et. al.
Nine Plays of the Modern Theatre, ed. Clurman (NP)

Requirements: Class attendance and participation
mid-term and final exam
five informal response papers, 2-3 pages each
one 7-8 page research paper
Each play must be read in entirety before the first class meeting devoted to that play so that you may come to class prepared for discussion. As you read, jot down notes for yourself to bring to class--notes that will remind you of interesting points you saw or of questions you had. Keep in mind that you will need to re-read most of these plays in order to master them. The writing assignments should help you to prepare for class, as well as give you practice for writing about drama.

Attendance policy: You are allowed five (5) unexcused absences with no questions asked. However, "excused" absences must be cleared with me before they occur, or (if due to sudden illness or emergency) as soon after as is reasonably possible. I will not retroactively cancel my record of absences if you have not taken the responsibility to promptly inform me of their cause. After seven (7) absences, your final grade drops a letter. After 12 absences (which constitutes six weeks of the course), you will receive an F for the course unless an incomplete is merited. Why? This course is not an independent study, so your attendance and participation are required in order for you to earn a passing grade. In addition, missing class will result in confusion for you, usually leading to poor performance on tests and on papers.

Note: My "allowing" some absences with no penalty does not mean I condone absences. I expect that you will use your absences sparingly and wisely. Keep in mind regardless of absences, you are responsible for keeping up with due dates, and any changes that I may announce in the syllabus.

Further note: Arriving late and/or leaving early, in addition to interrupting class time for your classmates, will lead to your being marked absent. Attend class on time, in entirety, or not at all.

Other policies: The short writings, and formal research paper must be handed in on the dates due. Late work is severely frowned upon and will result in a lowered grade. I generally will not accept an assignment late unless prior arrangements have been made with me for just cause. Your
best bet is to organize your time carefully and to contact me BEFORE the due date if you are having problems regarding the assignment.

Please make an appointment to see me any time you have questions or need help regarding class discussion or any assignments.

Schedule of Assignments

Aug. 25: Introduction to course
27: Discussion of writing assignments; Semiotics of drama
29: Introduction to Realism and to Ibsen

Realism
Sept. 1: Labor day, class canceled
3: A Doll House by Henrik Ibsen
5: Ibsen, cont’d

8: The Cherry Orchard by Anton Chekhov
10: Chekhov, cont’d
12: Chekhov, cont’d

Poetic Theater
15: The House of Bernado Alba by Fredrico Garcia Lorca
17: Lorca, cont’d
19: Lorca, cont’d

Theater as Politics
22: The Caucasian Chalk Circle by Bertolt Brecht (NP)
24: Brecht, cont’d
26: Brecht, cont’d

Existentialism and the Theater of the Absurd
29: Waiting for Godot by Samuel Beckett (NP)
Oct. 1: Beckett, cont’d
3: Beckett, cont’d

6: Rhinoceros by Eugene Ionesco (NP)
8: Ionesco, cont’d
10: Ionesco, cont’d

13: Mid-term exam
American Drama after World War II
15: Intro to American Drama, Assignment of research paper
17: Cat on a Hot Tin Roof by Tennessee Williams
20: Williams, cont'd
22: Williams, cont'd
24: Dutchman by LeRoi Jones (Amiri Baraka)

27: Jones/Baraka, cont’d
29: Spell #7 by Ntozake Shange
31: Shange, cont’d

Nov. 3: Shange, cont’d
5: Fool For Love by Sam Shepard
7: Shepard, cont’d

10: Shepard, cont’d
12: Shepard, cont’d
14: Library day

British Drama after World War II
17: The Birthday Party by Harold Pinter (NP)
19: Pinter, cont’d
21: Pinter, cont’d

24: Thanksgiving Break
26: Thanksgiving Break
28: Thanksgiving Break

Dec. 1: Top Girls by Caryl Churchill
3: Churchill, cont’d
5: Churchill, cont’d

8: Our Country’s Good by Timberlake Wertenbaker, Research paper due
10: Wertenbaker, cont’d
12: Wertenbaker, cont’d

Dec. 15-19, exams

Informal papers: 30%
Research paper: 30%
Mid-term: 20%
Final exam: 20%