Spring 1-15-1997

ENG 4300-003: Senior Seminar

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In examining Contemporary American Theater this semester, we will concentrate on the range and styles of theater since the off-off-Broadway movement transformed the American stage in the 1960s. One of the course goals is to familiarize you with significant authors and plays of the contemporary American theater. However, the more important goal is to make you confident and comfortable with analyzing various styles of drama and various approaches to the theater. Hopefully by the end of this course, you will have developed skills in interpreting and understanding many different kinds of theatrical experiences.

Texts: Edward Albee's *Zoo Story* and *American Dream*
Maria Irene Fornes's *Fefu and Her Friends*
Arthur Kopit's *Indians*
David Mamet's *American Buffalo*
Clinton F. Oliver (ed.) *Contemporary Black Drama*
David Rabe's *The Vietnam Plays*, vol. 1
Ntozake Shange's *Three Pieces*
Sam Shepard's *Sam Shepard: Seven Plays*
Jean Claude van Itallie's *America Hurrah!*
George C. Wolfe's *The Colored Museum*

Reserve readings indicated by **

Requirements: one 8-10 page research paper (30%)
reading journal (30%)
final exam (20%)
presentation and class participation (20%)

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. The journal writing should help you further prepare for class discussion. Keep in mind that you will need to re-read most of these plays in order to master them.

**Attendance policy:** This is a senior level course. I expect professional behavior from each of you, which means attending class whenever we meet. KEEP IN MIND THAT PART OF YOUR GRADE IS BASED ON CLASS PARTICIPATION. Absences will necessarily affect this grade since you cannot participate if you are not in class.

**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 journal and the 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 at all if it is over a full week late, unless extreme conditions merit it (and I reserve the right to determine what qualifies as extreme). 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.

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

Please make an appointment to see me any time you have questions about the course or your standing in it, or if you need help regarding class discussion or any assignments.

SCHEDULE OF ASSIGNMENTS
January
14: Intro to the course
16: 20th century American drama
21: Albee's *Zoo Story and the American Dream* (1959/61)
23: Albee, cont'd
28: Jones/Baraka *Dutchman* (1964) (in Oliver)
30: Ward's *Day of Absence* (in Oliver)

February
4: Kennedy's *Funnyhouse of a Negro* (1964) (in Oliver)
6: Kennedy, cont'd
11: van Itallie's *America Hurrah!* (1966)
13: van Itallie, cont'd
18: Kopit's *Indians* (1968/69)
20: Kopit, cont'd
25: Discussion of Performance Art (JOURNALS DUE)
27: **Early plays by Shepard (on reserve)**

March
4: Shepard, cont'd
11: Shepard, cont'd
13: Shepard, cont'd
18: Spring Break
20: Spring Break
25: Rabe’s *Sticks and Bones* (1971)
27: Rabe, cont’d

April
1: Mamet’s *American Buffalo* (1975)
3: Mamet cont’d

8: Fornes’s *Fefu and her Friends* (1978)
10: Fornes, cont’d (FIRST DUE DATE FOR RESEARCH PAPERS)

15: Shange’s *Spell #7* (1979)
17: Shange, cont’d

24: Wolfe, cont’d

29: Spalding Gray’s *Swimming to Cambodia*, on film, (1985)
May 1: Gray, cont’d (SECOND DUE DATE FOR RESEARCH PAPERS)

Final Exam: May 5, 12:30-2:30