

**TH 554 Contemporary Theatre
(Drama from 1975)
RJ 204, Tues, Thur 9:30-10:45am**

**Instructor: Steve Burch, RJ 219
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Required Textbooks:

Living Theatre (LT): pgs 473-521

Course Reader (CR)

Theatre Communications Group (TCG), Dramatists Play Service (DPS), (Faber), (Applause)

Course Description and Objectives:

This survey is intended to provide the student with an overview of the ideas, the theatricality, and the aesthetics of contemporary drama. Since, by definition, contemporary is a vague concept and since drama is ever overlapping in the new directions it takes, your instructor has arbitrarily selected 1975 as the starting point of our review. The group of twenty-one plays we will read and study together have been subdivided into themes/topics that connect them to each other and to the contemporary world around them. They are not the last word in each subject, just particularly urgent voices to prod us into thinking about the form and the world.

As before, each student will select a number of plays from the list to present oral reports to the class. The format is listed below.

Attendance Policy:

Attendance is mandatory and is absolutely critical to your success in this course. This course has a collaborative nature and requires both your physical and your intellectual presence. Accordingly, if you miss more than three (3) classes, your final grade will be lowered thirty-three (33) points for each additional absence. This does not mean that you have three “freebies.” This means that you have three separate days in which to handle those inevitable days when you are sick or are otherwise unable to attend class. Use them judiciously. Likewise, habitual tardiness is not tolerated. Therefore, three tardies (3) will be equal to one (1) unexcused absence. Do the math. Finally, perfect attendance will be favorably considered. Besides, the classes will prove to be a joy and you wouldn’t want to miss them anyway.

Writing Assignments, Oral Reports, Reading Assignments:

Oral Presentations: Each class will have a student presenting a report on the play under discussion. The report will take 15-20 min. and will have among its topics, a biography of the author, the historical-social context of the original creation/production, how it was originally received (by audiences and critics), and a discussion of the play’s themes, style, and importance. You may choose to accompany your presentation with photos, art work, videos, power point presentations, live performances etc. These presentations will be accompanied by a handout of the information with a bibliography of sources to be given to all the students. You will get a chance to volunteer or be picked during the second week of classes and will begin in Week #3.

Additionally there will be a final presentation during the last two weeks of class. This will be a play from the Recommended List and each of you will sign up for a slot on those four class days. These presentations will run 15-20 mins. each.

Cookie Rule: If any presenter goes over twenty minutes (Final Presentation excepted.) they will be responsible for bringing in cookies for the class to enjoy at the next class period.

(Of course, if you know ahead of time that your work will go over, you may elect to bring them to your presentation.)

Performance Review: We will be attending three plays this semester and you will write a brief review of each, as per instructions for each. The plays are: *Holy Ghosts* (Romulus Linney) Oct. 4-9, Gallaway Theatre; *Assassins* (Stephen Sondheim, Jerome Weidman) Oct. 11-16, AB Theatre; *Something Cloudy, Something Clear* (Tennessee Williams) Nov. 29-Dec.4, AB Theatre.

Disability Rules: Should you require accommodation for a disability, please contact Disabilities Services at 348-4285. After initial arrangements are made, then contact me.

Academic Misconduct: Cheating or plagiarism will be severely penalized. Papers must be original work, written by you and you only for this class. Downloads from websites or adaptations from previous coursework are unacceptable. Consult the *Student Handbook*, which is available from Student Services, for a complete definition of academic misconduct.

Grading:

Grading will be based upon oral presentations, written outlines for these presentations, and class activity.

Oral reports: 100 points each	300
Bibliographies: 50 points each	150
Final Presentations: 300 points	300
Play reviews: 50 points each	150
Classroom: 100 points	100
Total	1000

Schedule (subject to change):

Thu, Aug. 25 Introductions

Play (1964) by Samuel Beckett**, 8 min.

Act One from *A Delicate Balance* (1966) by Edward Albee**, 45 min.

scene from *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* (1967) by Tom Stoppard *, 7 min.

Tues, Aug. 30:

scene from *The Homecoming* (1965) by Harold Pinter**, 15 min.

scene from *Betrayal* (1979) by Harold Pinter*, 27 min.

Women: Within-Without

Thurs., Sept. 1

Franz Xaver Kroetz (*Request Concert*) 1975 (**CR**)

Tues. Sept. 6

Maria Irene Fornes (*Fefu and Her Friends*) 1977 (**CR**) **Steve**

Thurs., Sept. 8

Caryl Churchill (*Cloud Nine*) 1979 (**TCG**) **Ruth**

Tues., Sept. 13

Franca Rame (*Medea*) 1981 (**CR**) **Crista**

Thurs., Sept. 15

Jane Martin (*Keely and Du*) 1993 (**CR**) **Kim**

Tues., Sept. 20

Donald Margolies, (*Collected Stories*)* 1998 (**DPS**) **Steve**

Thurs. Sept. 22

Collected Stories, **video**

Gay/Lesbian (re)Positioning

Tues. Sept. 27

Holly Hughes (*Well of Horniness*) 1984 (**CR**) **Kenmichael**

Thurs. Sept. 29

Michel Tremblay (*Manon/Sandra*) 1989 (**CR**) **Kim**

Tues. Oct. 4

Tony Kushner (*Angels in America*)* 1993 (**TCG**) **Steve**

Thurs. Oct. 6

Angels in America, **video**

Tues. Oct. 11

Diana Son (*Stop Kiss*) 2000 (**DPS**) **Kenmichael**

Men Without Women/Men Against Women

Thurs. Oct. 13

David Mamet (*Oleanna*)* 1993 (**DPS**) **Steve**

Tues. Oct. 18

Oleanna, **video**

Thurs. Oct. 20

Yasmina Reza (*Art*) 1996 (**DPS**) **Joylene**

Tues. Oct. 25

Rebecca Gilman (*Boy Gets Girl*) 2000 (**Faber**) **Christa**

Thurs. Oct. 27

Bryony Lavory (*Frozen*) 2003 (**DPS**) **Ruth**

The New British Violence

Thurs. Nov. 3

Sarah Kane (*Phaedra's Love*) 1996 (**CR**) **Ruth**

Tues. Nov. 8

Martin McDonagh (*Beauty Queen of Leenane*) 1997 (**DPS**) **Joylene**

Political Survival/Disruption

Thurs. Nov. 10

Athol Fugard (*A Lesson from Aloes*) 1981 (**CR**) **Kim**

Tues. Nov. 15

Joshua Sobol, (*Ghetto*) 1989 (**CR**) **Crista**

(Re)Newed Musical Forms

Thurs. Nov. 17

Stephen Sondheim and James Lapine (*Sunday in the Park with George*)* 1995 (**Applause**)
Steve, video

Tues. Nov. 22

Jonathan Larson (*Rent*) 1993 (**CR**) **Kenmichael**

Tues. Nov. 29

Greg Kotis (*Urinetown*) 2002 (**Faber**) **Joylene**

Thanksgiving Break Nov. 23-27

RJ 204:

Thurs. Dec. 1 Final Presentations #1 and #2

Tues. Dec. 6 Final Presentations #3

Thurs. Dec. 8 Final Presentations #4

Videos to Accompany the Texts (*) Own; () Gorgas Library**

*Sphinxes Without Secrets: Feminist Performance Artists** 1991

*Collected Stories**

*Oleanna**

*Angels in America**

*Sunday in the Park With George**

Other Important Contemporary Playwrights, Plays

Edward Albee, *The Goat, or Who is Sylvia? Three Tall Women*

Jon Robin Baitz, *Three Hotels, The Substance of Fire*

Sebastien Barry, *The Steward of Christendom*

Lee Blessing, *Down the Road, Eleemosynary, Cobb, Thief River*

Eric Bogosian *Suburbia, Talk Radio*

Carlyle Brown, *The African Company Presents Richard III*

Marina Carr, *Portia Coughlin, By the Bog of Cats*

Pearl Cleange *Blues for an Alabama Sky*

Helen Edmondson, *The Clearing, Anna Karenina*

Dario Fo *Accidental Death of an Anarchist, We Won't Pay! We Won't Pay!*

Brian Friel, *Freedom of the City, The Faith Healer, Dancing at Lughnasa*

Athol Fugard, *The Blood Knot, Master Harold . . . and the boys, Road to Mecca*

Janusz Glowacki, *Cinders, Hunting Cockroaches, Antigone in New York*

John Guare, *House of Blue Leaves, Chaucer in Rome, Six Degrees of Separation*

Stephen Adly Guirgis *Jesus Hopped the A Train, Our Lady of 121st Street*

Peter Handke, *Kaspar, Offending the Audience*

Vaclav Havel, *Largo Desolato*

Moises Kauffman, *The Laramie Project*

Thomas Kilroy, *The Secret Fall of Constance Wilde, Double Cross, Talbot's Box*

Franz Kroetz, *Farmyard*

Tony Kushner, *A Bright Room Called Day, Homebody/Kabul, Caroline or Change*

Charles Ludlam, *Bluebeard, The Mystery of Irma Vep, Camille*

Martin McDonagh, *The Cripple of Inishmaan*

, *The Pillowman*

Frank MacGuinness, *Observe the Sons of Ulster Marching to the Somme, Mutabilities*

Ellen MacLaughlin, *Iphigenia and Other Daughters*

Terence McNally, *Lips Together, Teeth Apart, Frankie and Johnny in the Claire de Lune*

Emily Mann, *Execution of Justice, Still Life*

Patrick Marber, *Closer*

Donald Margulies, *The Model Apartment, Sight Unseen, Dinner With Friends*

Yukio Mishima, *Madame DeSade*

Heiner Muller, *Hamletmachine, Medeas*

Marsha Norman, *'Night, Mother, Getting' Out*

Eric Overmeyer, *On the Verge*

Oyamo, *I Am a Man*

Harold Pinter, *No Man's Land, Ashes to Ashes, Moonlight, Mountain Language, Old Times, The Homecoming, The Birthday Party*

Franca Rame, *The Rape*
Mark Ravenhill *Shopping and Fucking*
Ntozake Shange, *for colored girls who have considered suicide when the rainbow is enuf*
John Patrick Shanley, *Savage in Limbo, Italian-American Reconciliation, Doubt*
Wallace Shawn, *Marie and Bruce, Aunt Dan and Lemon, The Designated Mourner*
Sam Shepard, *Cowboy Mouth, Tooth of Crime, Fool For Love, Buried Child*
Claudia Sher, *Dirty Blonde, Blown Sideways Through Life*
Anna Deavere Smith, *Fires in the Mirror*
Wole Soyinka, *Death and the King's Horseman, The Bacchae*
Tom Stoppard, *Arcadia, Travesties, Jumpers*
Paula Vogel, *Hot and Throbbing, How I Learned to Drive, The Baltimore Waltz*
Michael Weller, *The Ballad of Soapy Smith, Moonchildren*
August Wilson, *Joe Turner's Come and Gone, Fences*
George C. Wolfe, *The Colored Museum, Jelly's Last Jam*
Doug Wright, *I Am My Own Wife, The Stonewater Rapture*

Critical Writings on Theatre (All available at Gorgas)

Jonas Barish: *The Anti-Theatrical Prejudice*
Roland Barthes: *Image, Music, Text*
Catherine Belsey: *Subject of Tragedy: Identity and Difference in Renaissance Drama*
Herbert Blau: *The Audience*
Augusto Boal, *Theatre of the Oppressed*
Peter Brook, *The Empty Space*
Judith Butler: *Bodies That Matter*
Marvin Carlson: *Performance; The Haunted Stage*
Teresa de Lauretis: *Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema*
Jill Dolan: *Feminist Spectator as Critic*
Jonathan Dollimore: *Political Shakespeare*
Mark Fortier: *Theory/Theatre*
Michel Foucault: *History of Sexuality*
Stephen Greenblatt: *Practicing New Historicism; Learning to Curse: Essays in Early Modern Culture*
Lisa Jardine: *Reading Shakespeare Historically*
Jan Kott: *Shakespeare Our Contemporary*
Peggy Phelan: *Unmarked*
Janelle Reinelt: *After Brecht*
Joseph Roach: *The Player's Passion*
Edward Said, *Orientalism*
Richard Schechner: *By Means of Performance*
David Wiles: *Tragedy in Athens: Performance Space and Theatrical Meaning*
Phillip Zarilli: *Acting (Re)Considered*