

TH 557: American Drama Seminar, Fall 2014

3 hrs, 3.0 credits

sburch@as.ua.edu

Tu,Th 2-3:15 pm

Professor Steven Burch

RJ 138; 348-0343

Office Hours: Tues: 11:30-1pm
or by Appt.

Required readings:

+Burch, Steven, ed. *Course Reader*

*Wilmeth, Don B. *Staging the Nation: Plays from the American Theater 1787-1909*
(Bedford)

#Wilson, Edwin and Goldfarb, Alvin: *Living Theatre*, 3rd Edition

Baker, Annie: *Circle Mirror Transformation*

Blessing, Lee: *Thief River*

Hansberry, Lorraine: *A Raisin in the Sun*

Havoc, June: *Marathon '33*

Hellman, Lillian: *The Little Foxes*

Letts, Tracy: *August: Osage County*

Miller, Arthur: *Death of a Salesman*

Norris, Bruce: *Clybourne Park*

Odets, Clifford: *Waiting for Lefty*

O'Neill, Eugene: *Long Day's Journey Into Night*

Williams, Tennessee: *A Streetcar Named Desire*

Course Description and Learning Objectives:

This course is to introduce American drama, its history and literature for a fuller, more substantive study to theatre graduate students. The course is intended to provide the student with a greater critical awareness of the historical, social, and political contexts of the creation and growth of this very American art. The course is also structured to enhance the graduate student's scholarship and pedagogical skills as each student will be responsible for several presentations and research projects throughout the semester.

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.

Oral Reports, Writing Assignments, Reading Assignments:

Oral Presentations: Each class will have a student presenting a report on the play under discussion. Each student will have a total of six (6). The report will take 15-20 min. and will have among its topics:

- a. biography of the author,
- b. the historical-social context of the original creation/production,
- c. how it was originally received (by audiences and critics), and
- d. a discussion of the play's themes, style, and importance.
- e. Each presentation will include a discussion in class of why this play is an "American" play.

You may choose to accompany your presentation with photos, art work, videos, power point presentations, staged readings, 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 week of class. This will be a play and an artist from the Recommended Lists (attached) and each of you will sign up for a slot on those four class days. These presentations will run 20-30 mins. each.

Cookie Rule: If any presenter goes over fifteen 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.)

Written Performance Reviews: We will be attending four plays this semester and you will write a brief review of each, as per instructions for each. The plays are: *Lend Me a Tenor* (Ken Ludwig), Gallaway Theatre; *Twelfth Night* (William Shakespeare), Gallaway Theatre; *Merrily We Roll Along* (Stephen Sondheim, George Furth), AB Theatre; *The Dining Room* (A.R. Gurney), Allen Bales 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: 50 points each	300
Bibliographies: 15 points each	90
Final Presentations: 300 points	300
Play reviews: 50 points each	200

Classroom:	110 points	110
Total		1000

Schedule (Subject to Change):

Part One: Carving Out an American Identity: Race, Ethnicity, Class

#1 Aug. 26-28 (Vaudeville)

+ Abbott, Bud and Costello, Lou: *Who's on First?*

VIDEO: *Vaudeville* (60 mins.) or *The Honeymooners* (20 mins.)

#2 Sept. 2-4 (18th and 19th Century)

Wilson, Goldfarb: "Theatre in the Nineteenth Century," 318-352; "African American Theatre," 393-395

+Munford, Robert: *The Candidates* (1770, 1798)

+Warren, Mercy Otis: *The Motley Assembly* (1779)

+ *The Minstrel Show*

*Aiken, George: *Uncle Tom's Cabin*

#3 Sept. 9-11 (Early Class Consciousness)

*Tyler, Royall, *The Contrast* (1787)

*Mowatt, Anna Cora: *Fashion* (1848)

*Boucicault, Dion: *The Poor of New York* (1857)

VIDEO: *Gangs of New York* (excerpt)

#4 Sept. 18 (African-American life, 20th century)

+Grimke, Angelina: *Rachel* (1916)

#5 Sept. 23-25

Hansberry, Lorraine: *A Raisin in the Sun* (1959)

Norris, Bruce: *Clybourne Park*

VIDEO: *Negro Ensemble Company* (55 mins.)

Part Two: The Family as America: Dysfunctional or Surviving?

#6 Sept. 30-Oct. 7 (classic American family tragedies)

VIDEO: excerpts from

O'Neill, Eugene: *Long Day's Journey Into Night* (1940)

Miller, Arthur: *Death of a Salesman* (1949)

Albee, Edward: *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (1962)

+Hellman, Lillian: *Little Foxes* (1940)

Letts, Tracy: *August: Osage County* (2008)

#8 Oct. 14-16 (American feminist theatre)

+Terry, Megan: *Calm Down, Mother*

+Hughes, Holly: *World Without End*

VIDEO: Hughes: *World Without End* (excerpt)

VIDEO: *Sphinxes Without Secrets: Feminist Performance Art* (1990, excerpt)

Oct. 21-23 No Class

#9 Oct. 28-30 (Non-traditional families)

Baker, Annie: *Circle Mirror Transformation* (2009)

Blessing, Lee: *Thief River* (2000) [DPS]

+Shepard, Sam & Smith, Patti: *Cowboy Mouth* (1971)

Part Three: The American Community

#10 Nov. 4-6 (the Great Depression and the communities for survival)

+ Asch, Sholom : *God of Vengeance* (1907)

Odets, Clifford: *Waiting for Lefty* (1935)[DPS]

Havoc, June: *Marathon '33* (1965)[DPS]

VIDEO: *They Shoot Horses, Don't They?* (excerpt)

#11 Nov. 11-13 (courtship 1950s style)

+Swerling, Jo, Burrows, Abe and Loesser, Frank: *Guys and Dolls* (1950)

Laurent, Arthur: *West Side Story*

VIDEO: *Guys and Dolls, West Side Story* (excerpts)

#12 & #13 Nov. 18-25 (post 60s experimental theatre, Vietnam, performance art)

+Valdez, Luis: *Los Vendidos*

VIDEO: *The Serpent* (70 min.)

#Wilson, Goldfarb: "Theatre from 1945-1975," 450-454, 459-470; "Contemporary Theatre in U.S.," 475-504; "Performance Art," 517-520.

14 & 15 Dec. 2-4

Final Oral Reports (from attached lists)

Recommended readings: History, Commentary

Clurman, Harold: *The Fervent Years*

Flanagan, Hallie: *Arena*

Houseman, John: *Run-Through*

Hughes, Holly: *Clit-Notes*

Lahr, John: *Notes on a Cowardly Lion*

Moy, James: *Marginal Sights*

Oppenheimer, George: *The Passionate Playgoer*

Senelick, Laurence: *The Age and Stage of George L. Fox*

Young, Stark: *The Theatre*

Recommended readings: Plays

Albee, Edward: *The Zoo Story, A Delicate Balance, Three Tall Women, The Goat or Who is Sylvia?*

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

Baker, Annie: *The Vermont Plays, The Flick*

Baraka, Amiri: *Slave, The Toilet*

Blessing, Lee: *Down the Road, A Walk in the Woods, Oldtimer's Game, Eleemosynary, Patient A*

Boucicault, Dion: *The Octoroon*

Cleage, Pearl: *Blues of an Alabama Sky*

Durang, Christopher: *Marriage of Bette and Boo, Laughing Wild, Baby with the Bathwater*

Fuller, Charles: *Zooman and the Sign, A Soldier's Play*

Garson, Barbara: *MacBird!*

Gilman, Rebecca: *Boy Gets Girl*

Glaspell, Susan: *Allison's Room*

Hecht, Ben and MacArthur, Charles: *The Front Page*

Hellmann, Lilian: *The Children's Hour, Another Part of the Forest*

Inge, William: *Come Back Little Sheba, Dark at the Top of the Stairs*

Kushner, Tony: *A Bright Room Called Day, Angels in America, Part One: Millennium Approaches*

Lapine, James and Sondheim, Stephen: *Passion, Into the Woods*

Laurent, Arthur: *Gypsy*

Letts, Tracy: *Superior Donuts, Man from Nebraska*

Lowell, Robert: *Benito Cereno*

Ludlam, Charles: *Bluebeard, Camille*

Mamet, David: *Sexual Perversities in Chicago, American Buffalo, Glengarry Glen Ross*

Margolies, Donald: *The Model Apartment, Found a Peanut, Dinner With Friends*

McLure, Michael: *The Beard*

Miller, Arthur: *A View From the Bridge, The Price, The Crucible, Incident at Vichy*

Nelson, Anne: *The Guys*

Norman, Marsha: *Getting Out*

Nottage, Lynn: *Ruined*

Odets, Clifford: *Awake and Sing, Golden Boy*

O'Neill, Eugene: *Desire Under the Elms, The Hairy Ape, Strange Interlude, Ah, Wilderness!, Hughie, The Iceman Cometh, A Moon for the Misbegotten, A Touch of the Poet*

Parks, Suzan-Lori, *Topdog/Underdog, 365 Days*

Rabe, David: *Sticks and Bones*

Ribman, Ronald: *Journey of the Fifth Horse, A Ceremony of Innocence, Cold Storage*

Ruhl, Sarah: *The Clean House, Eurydice, Passion Play*

Shanley, John Patrick: *Savage in Limbo, Italian-American Reconciliation, Doubt*

Shawn, Wallace: *The Hotel Play, Marie and Bruce, Aunt Dan and Lemon*

Shear, Claudia: *Dirty Blonde, Blown Sideways Through Life*

Shepard, Sam: *Tooth of Crime, Angel City, The Unseen Hand, Curse of the Starving Class, Buried Child*

Simon, Neil: *The Sunshine Boys*
 Son, Diana: *Stop Kiss*
 Van Italie, Jean-Claude: *America Hurrah*
 Wilder, Thornton: *Our Town, The Skin of Our Teeth*
 Williams, Tennessee: *Glass Menagerie, Night of the Iguana, 27 Wagons Full of Cotton, Camino Real, The Rose Tattoo, Talk to Me Like the Rain and I'll Listen*
 Wilson, August: *Fences, Joe Turner's Come and Gone*
 Wilson, Lanford: *Lemon Sky, Balm in Gilead, Serenading Louie, This is the Rill Speaking, The Rimers of Eldritch, The Fifth of July*
 Wright, Doug: *Stonewater Rapture, I Am My Own Wife*

Performers and other luminaries (20th Century):*

Marlon Brando	Ruth Draper	Jacob Adler
Montgomery Clift	Barbara Cook	Lillian Gish
James Dean	Judy Garland	Florence Eldridge
Julie Harris	Fayard and Harold Nicholas	Philip Seymour Hoffman
Maureen Stapleton	Jason Robards, Jr.	Bert Williams
John Barrymore	Geraldine Page	Eddie Cantor
Bette Davis	Amanda Plummer	Lee J. Cobb
Tallulah Bankhead	Laurie Metcalf	Zero Mostel
Fredric March	John Malkovitch	Mildred Dunnock
Paul Robeson	Charlotte Cushman	Arthur Kennedy
Dorothy Dandridge	Ruth Chatterton	Walter Huston
Ruby Dee	Buster Keaton	Mary Martin
Ossie Davis	Bill Irwin	Ethel Merman
Diana Sands	Lily Tomlin	Bernadette Peters
Alfred Drake	Richard Pryor	Anne Bancroft
Lynn Fontanne	Henry Fonda	Marx Brothers
Alfred Lunt	George C. Scott	Brian Dennehy
Patricia Collinge	Hal Holbrook	Charles Gilpin
Ellen Burstyn	Canada Lee	Uta Hagen
Robert DiNiro	Meryl Streep	Elaine Stritch
Al Pacino	Charles S. Dutton	Mako
James Earl Jones	Andre Braugher	Gypsy Rose Lee
Cicely Tyson	Linda Hunt	Paul Muni
Pauline Lord	Ethel Waters	Ethel Barrymore
Fred and Adele Astaire	Diane Venora	Joseph Jefferson
Burgess Meredith	Mandy Patinkin	Randy Danson
Laurette Taylor	Katherine Cornell	Martha Plimpton
Orson Welles	Cherry Jones	Eva LaGallienne
Richard Thomas	Blythe Danner	Barbara Harris
Donna Murphy	John Raitt	Jackie "Moms" Mabley
Laura Linney	Gene Kelly	Audra McDonald
Ellen Stewart	Joe Cino	Al Carmines

*Apologies if any of the above are actually from Canada.