

TH 458/558. ENG 500, WS 310/510: Modern American Feminist Theatre, 3.0 credit hours

Spring 2013, T,Th 2-3:15pm, RJ 204

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Required Texts:

Burch, ed. *Course Reader* [CR]

Victoria Sullivan and James Hatch, eds., *Plays By and About Women* [PBAW]

Lorraine Hansberry, *A Raisin in the Sun*

Anna Deavere Smith, *Twilight Los Angeles*

Eve Ensler, *The Vagina Monologues*

Sarah Ruhl, *In the Next Room, or the Vibrator Play*

Prerequisites:

TH 120, TH 220, or Permission by Instructor

Course Description:

This course is intended as a survey of twentieth-century American feminist drama and critical thought. Through a chronological lens we may view its growth from a definition of exclusion within a patriarchy, to inclusion within that same patriarchy, to newer definitions of segregation and engagement within class, racial and sexual orientation lines. This will be achieved through the readings and discussions of several play texts, critical essays, and the viewing of a handful of video performances and documentaries. Each student will be required to research one of the plays on the syllabus and to present in class an oral description and critical evaluation of this extra play and its themes (roughly 10-15 minutes). A written report will accompany the presentation, along with a bibliography that will be distributed to the entire class. There will be three Round Table Discussions conducted by each of three groups determined at the beginning of the semester. At the midpoint of the semester, there will be a choice given to the undergraduates in the class: a final exam consisting of identifications and essay questions or a research paper (details to be handed out). Graduate students will have the choice of a research paper or something performative.

Objectives/Learner-Centered Outcomes:

- a. To engage the student with familiar texts and provoke re-evaluations of material and cultural orthodoxies in gender identities throughout the last century (readings and viewings).
- b. To analyze and translate unfamiliar ideas into current critical theory (written papers).

c. To locate the historical precedents to our ways of thinking about gendered identity (oral presentations).

Attendance Policy:

Attendance is Mandatory. Growth in the course is predicated on your presence and your contributing to all discussions. Anything less is detrimental to you and your classmates. Accordingly, each student is allowed a maximum of up to three unexcused absences. These are not “freebies” and do not treat them as such. Use them wisely. After that maximum is reached, each subsequent unexcused absence will remove 33 points from your course total. Tardiness is likewise unacceptable. It is understood that there may be occasions. But three tardies will be counted as one unexcused absence.

Missed course work and exams:

There may be times when a student might have a legitimate excuse for missing an exam or a deadline for a paper. Whenever possible, you must make arrangements with your instructor beforehand. But an unexcused absence will not allow the student to make up any exam missed. As in all cases, talk to your instructor.

Grading:

Oral Presentation:	200 points
Written Report/Bibliography	150 points
Round Table Discussion	150 points
Final Exam/Paper/Performance	350 points
Class Participation	150 points
Total	1000 points

Academic Misconduct Policy:

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.

Disability Access Statement:

“To request disability accommodations, please contact the Office of Disability Services (348-4285). After initial arrangements are made with that office, contact your professor.”

Syllabus Outline:

Week:

#1: Introductions, Housekeeping, History, The Male Gaze, Time-Traveling

Videos: Alice Guy (*Algie the Miner*, 13 min.), Lois Weber (*How Men Propose*, 6 min.), *Burlesk Babies* (7 mins.)

Gayle Austin, "Feminist Theories: Paying Attention to Women" [CR]

Alice Guy-Blanche, Lois Weber [CR]

#2: Pre-Suffrage America

Alice Gerstenberg, *Overtones* [PBAW]

Susan Glaspell, *Trifles; Suppressed Desires* [CR]

Linda Ben-Zvi, "Murder She Wrote: The Genesis of Susan Glaspell's *Trifles*" [CR]

Jeanie Forte, "Realism, Narrative, and the Feminist Playwright" [CR]

Nellie Bly, *Calamity Jane* [CR]

#3: Liberation in the Jazz Age?

Sophie Treadwell, *Machinal* [CR]

Ginger Strand, "Treadwell's Neologism: *Machinal*" [CR]

Women Without Men, Part One

Lillian Hellman, *The Children's Hour* [PBAW]

Video: *The Children's Hour*

Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" [CR]

Gayle Austin, "Feminist Film Theory: Man as Bearer of the Look" [CR]

The Children's Hour, film critique Bright Lights Film Journal *handout

#4: Princesses, Bitches, and Courtesans: Part One

Claire Booth Luce, *The Women* [PBAW]

Video: *The Women* (1939)

Video: *Roman Holiday*

Video: *Gigi*

Anna May Wong [CR]

#5: Round Table #1: Princesses, Male gaze, history

#6: The African American Matriarch

Lorraine Hansberry, *A Raisin in the Sun**

Video: *A Raisin in the Sun*

Margaret Wilkinson, "A Raisin in the Sun: Anniversary of an American Classic" [CR]

Alice Childress, *Wine in the Wilderness* [PBAW]

#7: Journeys into Self: Part One

- On reserve at Gorgas Library (Simone de Beauvoir, Betty Friedan, Andrea Dworkin, Kate Millett, Anne Sexton)

Round Table #2: Second and Third Wave Feminism

#8: Journeys into Self: Part Two, "Forms and Formula"

Megan Terry, *Calm Down Mother* [PBAW]

Maria Irene Fornes, *Fefu and her Friends* [CR]

Maria Irene Fornes, "Interview" [CR]

#9: Communities in Crisis

Anna Deavere Smith, *Twilight Los Angeles*

Video: *Twilight Los Angeles*

Sandra L. Richards, "Caught in the Act of Social Definition" [CR]

#10: Performance Art and Suppression from the Right, Women Without Men: Part Two

1970s Lesbian Feminism [CR]

Holly Hughes, *World Without End*

Kate Davy, "From Lady Dick to Ladylike" [CR]

Jeanie Forte, "Women's Performance Art: Feminism and Postmodernism" [CR]

Beebo Brinker [CR]

Video: *Sphinxes Without Secrets* (55 mins.)

#11: WOW and Postmodernism

Betty Bourne, Peggy Shaw, Lois Weaver, *Belle Reprieve* [CR]

Jill Dolan, "Practicing Cultural Disruption" [CR]

Sue-Ellen Case, "From Split Subject to Split Britches" [CR]

Sarah Ruehl, *In the Next Room, or the Vibrator Play*

#12: Back to the Body

Eve Ensler, *The Vagina Monologues*

Video: *Vagina Monologues*

Madeline Gage, *Most Massive Woman Wins* [CR]

Kate Bornstein, *Hidden : A Gender* [CR]

#13: Round Table #3: Definitions

#14: Wrap up

Final Exam (essays and identifications) or Research Paper: Wednesday May 1st, 8-10:30am

Some Other Plays by Playwrights of the Course:

Susan Glaspell: *Alison's House*

Lillian Hellman: *The Little Foxes, Toys in the Attic*

Lorraine Hansberry: *The Sign in Sidney Brustein's Window*

Megan Terry: *Approaching Simone, Viet Rock, Ex Miss Copper Queen, Hothouse*

Maria Irene Fornes: *The Conduct of Life, Mud*

Anna Deavere Smith: *Fires in the Mirror*

Holly Hughes: *The Lady Dick, The Well of Horniness*

Eve Ensler: *The Good Body, Necessary Targets*

Claire Booth Luce: *Slam the Door Softly*

Sarah Ruhl: *The Clean House*

Some Other Plays and Playwrights (Recommended):

Anne Baker: *The Vermont Plays* (The Aliens)

Julie Bovasso: *Schubert's Last Serenade*

Pearl Cleage: *Blues for an Alabama Sky*

Constance Congdon: *Tales of the Lost Formicans; Casanova*

Rosalyn Drexler: *Investigation*

Margaret Edson: *Wit*

Lucille Fletcher: *Sorry Wrong Number*

Rebecca Gilman: *Boy Gets Girl*

June Havoc: *Marathon '33*

Tina Howe: *Art of Dining; Painting Churches; Pride's Crossing*

Adrienne Kennedy: *Funnyhouse of a Negro; Deprivations*

Tina Landau and Adam Guettel: *Floyd Collins*

Anita Loos: *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes; Gigi*

Emily Mann: *Execution of Justice; Still Life; Having Our Say*

Ellen McLaughlin: *Tongue of a Bird*

Cassandra Medley: *Ma Rose*

Edna St. Vincent Millay: *Aria da Capo*

Marsha Norman: *Getting Out; 'Night Mother*

Lynn Nottage: *Ruined*

Dorothy Parker: *Here We Are*

Suzan-Lori Parks: *In the Blood; Topdog/Underdog; 365 Days*

Polly Pen and Peggy Harmon: *Goblin Market*

Elizabeth Robbins: *Votes for Women!*

Rachel Rosenthal: *My Brazil: A Recital*

Kate Moira Ryan and Linda S. Chapman: *The Beebo Brinker Chronicles*

Ntozake Shange: *for colored girls who considered suicide when the rainbow is enuf; spell #7*

Claudia Shear: *dirty Blonde*

Diana Son: *Stop Kiss*

Gertrude Stein: *The Mother of Us All*

Regina Taylor: *Dreams of Sarah Breedlove*

Paula Vogel: *How I Learned to Drive; The Mineola Twins; The Baltimore Waltz; The Oldest Profession*

Naomi Wallace: *Trestle at Pope Lick Creek; One Flea Spare*

Wendy Wasserstein: *The Heidi Chronicles; Uncommon Women and Others; Isn't It Romantic?*

Ara Watson: *A Different Moon*

Suggested Readings:

Beauvoir, Simon de, *The Second Sex*

Dolan, Jill, *The Feminist Spectator as Critic*

Friedan, Betty, *The Feminine Mystique*

Hart, Lynda and Phelan, Peggy, *Acting Out: Feminist Perspectives*

Millet, Kate, *Sexual Politics*

Mulvey, Laura, *Visual and Other Pleasures*

Phelan, Peggy, *Unmarked*

Plath, Sylvia, *The Bell Jar*

Sexton, Anne, *Transformations*

Valenti, Jessica, *Full Frontal Feminism; He's a Stud, She's a Slut and Other Double Standards Every Woman Should Know*

Wood, Robin, *Sexual Politics and Narrative Film*