ENGLISH 2314: Introduction to American Drama

Instructor: Pamela Herron  
Semester: Fall 2014  
CRN: 16888  
Classroom: Hudspeth 100  
Credits: 3  
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Purpose: This course is designed for the study of the nature and variety of drama through examination of the contemporary Theatre and its historical development. Emphasis is on American drama.

Prerequisite: ENGL 1312 or ENGL 1313 or ESOL 1312.

Procedure: The course will focus on required readings of selected American plays; in class discussion, participation and analysis; and an examination of the context and significance of the selected dramas. Students will become more familiar with the literary genre of drama, its history and development. Students will read, discuss, and write about a wide variety of classic and contemporary American plays. Required readings will be from the text and texts provided electronically on Blackboard. Readings will serve as the springboard for individual, small group, and whole class discussion and writing experiences. Students should be familiar with Blackboard functions as many assignments will be posted through BB by instructor and students. Please read all assignments thoroughly and carefully, so that others can learn from your interpretations and you learn from the interpretations of others through class discourse. Please note students should be aware that some plays deal with sensitive topics including prejudice, rape, violence, AIDS, and language that may be offensive to some. Some students may find some works disturbing.

Learning Goals and Outcomes

With full participation, after completing this course, students should be able to:

- Demonstrate basic familiarity with dramatic elements and selected American drama and be able to interpret and discuss both in writing and class discussions.
- Appreciate the significance and relevance of American drama within contexts of culture and literature.
- Analyze dramatic elements, literary and cultural aspects of the assigned texts through critical writing.
- Analyze deeply the texts and utilize those texts for specific writing assignments.
- Understand basic forms and elements of drama as literature and an art form; be able to analyze and appreciate drama; analyze and critique live performances of drama.
- Evaluate and compare texts.
- Understand the nurturing and development of analytical and writing skills especially considering drama, characters and writers from differing backgrounds or cultures in a way that is respectful and promotes mutual understanding.

With full participation, after completing this course, students will have improved their skills in:
• **Reading** – Students will become critical and careful readers of both primary and secondary source material and learn to synthesize what they are reading by responding to it in writing and in class discussion. *Liberal Arts Honors Criteria #2 Advanced Readings*

• **Writing** – Students will write reflective response papers, both in class and online, and will learn to develop and support an argument through their writing and incorporate the arguments and thoughts of others. *Liberal Arts Honors Criteria #3 Intensive Writing and #4 Intensive Research*

• **Critical thinking** – Students will be asked to critically evaluate texts, the perspectives articulated in those texts, and the assumptions underlying the arguments being made. Students should become comfortable with differences of opinion and confident in expressing their own point of view. *Liberal Arts Honors Criteria #9 Critical Thinking*

• **Campus and community engagement** – Students will be encouraged to participate in campus and community events related to the subject being studied. Students will be encouraged to participate in class appropriate events and performances. *Liberal Arts Honors Criteria #6 Campus Resources and #7 Community Based Experiences*

• **Lifelong learning** – Students should feel motivated and confident in seeking out new and unfamiliar cultural experiences with the goal of learning more about themselves and their world.

**Grading Scale:** A = 450-500 points; B = 374-449 points; C = 273-373 points, D = 172=272 points; F = 171 points and below

**Assignments:**

- Quizzes or projects – may be unannounced especially if it is evident that students are not prepared.
- Literature-linked writing (13 pieces 900-100 words each, each worth 25 pts. for a total of 325 pts. Please see syllabus calendar for a list of assignments. Place word count on first page of document.)
- Final Paper (50 pts. Approximately 1500 words)
- 2 reviews of live local performances (50 pts. each X 2 for 100 pts. Approximately 1000 words each.) Plays may be at UTEP Theatre or Dinner Theatre, EPCC, El Paso Playhouse, etc.
- Class participation (25 pts.)

**Attendance and Participation:** Active participation is essential. Lack of participation, particularly in the class discussions will result in a reduction of points. Cell phones and all electronic devices will be turned off at the beginning of class. This includes no text messaging. If you must eat in class, please limit your food to a small, quietly consumed snack. Because learning rarely happens in isolation, but from a sharing of ideas and experiences, *attendance at every class is mandatory*. Since emergencies do arise, two absences will be allowed without penalty; after two absences, you will lose 10 points for each class you miss, regardless of the reason. Students who miss a portion of the class will lose a commensurate number of points. These points will be deducted from the total accumulation of points you have earned by the end of the semester. If you miss a class, it is YOUR responsibility to contact a CLASSMATE, not the instructor, to get information on what was covered that day and copies of any papers that were passed out. It is assumed that since you signed up for this time slot, you are able to make the class in a timely manner. If you come to class late, after a quiz has been passed out, you will not be given the test. Make-up work will be allowed only with the documented excuse (i.e. medical emergency or military duty). Attendance will be taken at the beginning of class; those students entering class after roll call are counted tardy; each tardy counts as half an absence. It is your responsibility to notify the instructor at the end of class if you are tardy. Do not assume I have noted your appearance after roll call has been taken. You do not need to contact me if you are going to be absent. Students missing more than 20% of classes (6 classes) will be dropped.

**Plagiarism and theft of intellectual property:** If you use work from someone else, including any internet or print sources, and submit it as your own; if you use work from another source in your assignments and do not give direct credit to your source; or if someone with whom you are working writes/creates any part of the work for you, you are plagiarizing. Acts of plagiarism are acts of theft, and will be dealt with swiftly according to UTEP’s established policy.

**Assignments:** All class assignments MUST be typed, double-spaced, 12 pt. font (10 pt. Arial), unless otherwise stated. Save a copy of your assignments before you hand them in, as well as keep track of
your grades on completed assignments until the end of the semester. Your final grade should not be a surprise. Please ensure that you understand the requirements for the assignments before you begin, and give yourself ample time to complete them so that you can turn in your best work. Assignments are due on Blackboard through SafeAssign before the deadline. If you know you are going to be absent, submit early. Do not email late assignments unless requested by the instructor. Please note: assignments that do not follow the given directions will not be given a passing grade. There are no “redo’s.”

PLEASE REALIZE AT ALL TIMES THAT YOU ARE PREPARING TO ENTER A PROFESSIONAL CAREER. IN THIS CLASS, YOU ARE EXPECTED TO LEARN, BEHAVE, AND DRESS IN THE COURTEOUS, CONSCIENTIOUS, AND GENERALLY BUSINESS-LIKE MANNER CALLED FOR IN THE FIELD OF EDUCATION.

Liberal Arts Honors Program - This class has been designated as a Liberal Arts Honors Program [LAHP] course. It has received this designation because it features at least five of the Honors course criteria, which include student leadership, advanced readings and/or reviews, opportunities for intensive writing, opportunities for intensive research, opportunities to utilize technology, opportunities to make extensive use of campus resources, community-based experiences, pre-professional opportunities, and development of critical thinking. In broader terms, this course is honors-designated because of its creativity and/or intellectual rigor, both of which are integral components of the Liberal Arts Honors Program. No additional coursework is necessary for this course to count towards the LAHP Honors minor. If you are not a member of the LAHP, and are interested in the program, please visit the LAHP website at http://academics.utep.edu/lahp.

UTEP Resources

CASS (Center for Accommodations and Support Services) – If you have a disability and need classroom accommodations, please contact The Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS) at 747-5148, or by email to cass@utep.edu, or visit their office located in the UTEP Union East, Room 106. For additional information, please visit the CASS website at www.sa.utep.edu/cass.

Military Student Success Center – If you are active military, a veteran, or a family member of military personnel, please visit the Military Student Success Center in the UTEP University Library Room 205 for help with benefits, registration, and tips for being successful at UTEP. You can also call them at 747-5342, or visit their website at http://academics.utep.edu/Default.aspx?alias=academics.utep.edu/militaryservicesoffice

University Counseling Center – If you are having a difficult time with personal relationships or with college life, please visit the University Counseling Center at the UTEP Union West, Room 202, or contact them at 747-5302, or visit their website http://sa.utep.edu/counsel/. They provide one on one counseling as well as many helpful workshops

Extra Help: Students may see me by appointment. Help is also available at the UTEP Library Tutoring and Learning Center, Room 30, 747-5366. Resources are also available at the UTEP library home page.

Class Contact:
Class Contact:
Phone Number:
Phone Number:
E-mail:
E-mail:
This syllabus is subject to change at my discretion to meet instructional needs and/or to accommodate time constraints. Bring this syllabus and your book to class daily. You may bring an e-reader or your computer when we are discussing the plays on pdf.

Assignments: Assignments are organized weekly and are due on Blackboard through SafeAssign by the stated deadline. Texts assigned to be discussed on a particular date must be read prior to class. Quizzes are unannounced and may be over texts or class lectures. Be prepared.

Readings: Readings come from the Bedford anthology and from the pdf provided on Blackboard. You are expected to read the play AND all introductory or analytical material on the play. Pay attention to the page numbers required.

Wk 1 Introduction to class and review of syllabus, objectives and expectations. Discussion of use of texts and how to read and approach dramatic works. Introduction of dramatic and literary elements. Read “Writing About Drama (1073-1092)” and “Drama in the early and Mid-Twentieth Century (494-510).” Assignment #1 Please note any questions you may have about the course or this introductory material and turn in on Wed.

Wk 2 Assignment #2 Read: Eugene O’Neill 1924 - Desire Under the Elms (547-578)

Wk 3 Assignment #3 Read: Lillian Hellman 1934 – The Children’s Hour (pdf on BB)

Sept. 19 Last day to select P/F option.

Wk 4 Read: Arthur Miller 1949 - Death of a Salesman (668-738) Watch film version in class.

Wk 5 Assignment #4 Comparison of drama as literature and filmed drama.

Wk 6 Assignment #5 Read: Tennessee Williams 1955 - Cat on a Hot Tin Roof (620-667)

Wk 7 Assignment #6 & 7 Read: Lorraine Hansberry 1959 - Raisin in the Sun (771-811) and August Wilson 1987 Fences (889-925) Please note Civil Rights issues of the times and the 28 year span between these works. Compare the two plays and the two authors’ approaches to their characters and situations. (This counts as a double assignment and paper should be 1500-2000 words.)

Wk 8 Be prepared – weeks 8 & 9 we will read some of these aloud in class. Read: “Contemporary Drama (812-833)” & “Theatre of the Absurd (768-770).” Read: Jean Claude Van Itallie plays (pdf on BB)

Wk 9 Read: Jane Martin (pdf on BB) Assignment #8 Choose at 3 or 4 of these short plays to compare and contrast. First play review due this week.

Oct. 31 Course Drop Deadline

Wk 10 Assignment #9 Read: Tony Kushner 1992 Angels in America: Millennium Approaches (926-965)

Wk 11 Assignment #10 Read: Suzan-Lori Parks 2001 – Topdog/Underdog (966-995)

Wk 12 Assignment #11 Read: Susan Ruhl 2003 – Eurydice (996-1016)


Wk 14 Assignment #12 Comparison of drama as literature and adaptation for film. Final Paper due.

Wk 15 Assignment #13 Read: Lynn Nottage 2008 – Ruined (1037-1072)