

# Development of Drama in America: English 483w.01 Spring 2008—3 Credit Hours

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Office Hours: 11:00-12:30, 3:30-4:00 TT and by appointment

**Class Meets:** 9:30-10:50 a.m. Tuesday/Thursdays, in Room 417 Evans Complex

**Texts:** Albee, Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?  
Foote, Horton Foote: 4 New Plays  
Hansberry, A Raisin in the Sun  
Howe, Coastal Disturbances: 4 Plays  
Kaufman & Hart, Three Plays  
Miller, The Portable Arthur Miller (ed. Christopher Bigsby)  
O'Neill, Four Plays by Eugene O'Neill (Beyond the Horizon, Anna Christie,  
The Emperor Jones, The Hairy Ape) and Long Day's Journey Into Night  
Simon, Brighton Beach Memoirs  
Wilder, Three Plays  
Williams: The Glass Menagerie and A Streetcar Named Desire  
Wilson, Ma Rainey's Black Bottom  
**Electronic Reserve Password:**

## INTRODUCTORY THOUGHTS:

Aside from Shakespeare and the Greek tragedy writers, Drama is generally the homely child in literary studies: not as beautiful as poetry, not as substantial as fiction. In part, this is the result of the fact that drama is inherently a collaborative effort; the words on the page are not meant to be read in private but to be brought to life and supplemented with the technology of performance. Yet to ignore and to be ignorant of drama is to lose something of great value indeed, and writers from Shelley to Henry James and T.S. Eliot have longed to find the audience that only drama can provide.

## Course Description and Prerequisites:

In this course, we are going to search for an explanation for this appeal as well as understanding of particular dramatic works by focusing on how drama has developed in America. In the words of the course catalogue, we will study "major movements and significant figures in American dramatic literature from Royall Tyler to the present." Yet, to be honest, we'll fly over the first 200 years of American drama and focus largely on works of the 20<sup>th</sup> century—a period when American drama came to be seen as equal to that of any other in the world. However, we won't merely focus on the three giants of American drama—O'Neill, Miller, and Williams. They will certainly draw serious attention, but we'll also look at the dramatic works that surround their recognized achievement, including both significant literary works and popular dramas as well. Indeed, my hope is that, with the exception of American musical theater, this course will offer a comprehensive look at the diversity and changes of American drama.

In the classroom, this will involve analysis of plays from both a textual and performance perspective. I will offer ideas and information in lecture that students are expected to expand with questions and comments. Students will also have the opportunity to participate in the process of developing dramatic productions, do dramatic readings in class, and explore the history of criticism and production surrounding assigned plays. And they will do original research and analysis on their own. Outside the classroom, we will all do a lot of reading of plays, attend at least two performances, and watch filmed plays or their adaptations. In short, students will be asked to experience drama. My hope is that every student will be surprised along the way and excited about the work that American dramatists have and are creating.

Of course, the ability to do this successfully depends on students coming to the class prepared with some skills. None of these include skills in acting or stage production, but they do include basic literary analysis skills. Consequently, it is important that all students meet the prerequisites for the course: 15 hours (5 classes) of English study, including at least one 300-level survey course.

### Course Objectives

Put into the bulletable language of educationese, we will seek to accomplish these objectives:

- Develop a sense of the history of American drama, particularly during its most vital period: the 20<sup>th</sup> century.
- Hone skills at reading, interpreting, and developing a literary analysis of drama.
- Recognize and begin to practice the ways performance can serve as an interpretation of a dramatic work.
- Increase familiarity with the terminology and theory of dramatic criticism and analysis.
- Expand knowledge of the canon of the American theater.

### GRADING:

Of course, you're probably wondering, "How am I going to earn my grade for this class?" The answer is that each student's grade for the course will be determined by **four** major factors.

### Exams

First, we will have three exams involving short, objective answer questions and essay prompts. Two of these exams will occur during the semester, and the third will occur during the time scheduled by the University for this course's final exam. The exams are of equal value. Each exam will focus on the material covered most recently in the course, but students may need to refer to concepts from previously tested material in order to do their best work. Also, each day a student attends an entire class session, he/she will earn one extra credit point toward the next exam. **All exams must be written in a "blue book" and use some form of ink.** My eyes are aging too rapidly due to the stress of trying to read faint pencil scratches. Collectively, a student's three exams will determine **one-third** of his/her course grade.

### Group Project

Second, students will be divided into three groups, and each group will be assigned a play that will be the basis for a presentation to the class. Essentially, the groups will do the basic work of planning a production of their assigned play, including such things as deciding on an interpretation of the play that a performance would emphasize, creating set and costume designs for the production, creating acting directions for each role, selecting music and any special effects, and creating a mock-up for an audience program. During a presentation to the class, each group will present their decisions and briefly act out a scene to demonstrate some of their ideas being put into practice. The specific details of this assignment are found on a sheet entitled "Group Presentations" that is part of this syllabus. Each student in a group will earn the same grade (unless unusual circumstances arise), and this grade will determine **one-sixth** of the student's grade for the course.

### Individual Papers

Third, students will write a 10-15 page paper about the significance/meaning of one American play not studied in this course. This paper will treat the play as a work of literature, examining how literary

elements create concepts that combine to form a complete meaning for the work. The paper **may** bring issues of performance into the discussion if they clarify literary meaning, but the focus is on the play as a work on the written page. A detailed assignment and suggested plays for study are found on a sheet entitled, "Paper Assignment" that is part of this syllabus. This paper will determine **one-third** of each student's course grade.

### Annotated Bibliography or Dramatic Script

Fourth, students must select one of the two following assignments to determine the final **one-sixth** of their course grade. They may select **either** an academic assignment involving preparing an annotated bibliography **or** they can select a creative assignment involving writing a short play. The details of both assignments are found on a sheet entitled, "Academic/Creative Assignment Option" that is included with this syllabus.

### Attendance Policy

The only other factor that could affect a student's grade is attendance. Generally, I try to use attendance as a positive inducement—something reflected in my giving extra credit points for each day a student is in class. However, excessive absences will not be tolerated. They discourage other students and me. Anyone missing more than 7 days of class (that's about one-eighth of the course) will see a lowering of their course grade by a minimum of one letter.

### Missed Exams / Late Paper Policy

Students who miss an exam for any reason should contact the instructor immediately. In cases involving illness or family crises, I will ask the student to have the reason for the absence verified by the Dean of Student Life Office before rescheduling an exam. In other cases—weather, car problems, stupidity, etc.—I will do my best to accommodate students, but all such cases are matters of grace and mercy, not right.

My general policy is not to accept late papers unless encouraged to do so by the Dean of Student Life office. However, I define late as anytime after 5 p.m. on the day the paper is due, and students may e-mail me a Microsoft Word attachment of their paper before that deadline—with a hard copy given to me later—in order to meet the deadline. Again, students are always welcome to discuss specific issues with me, but they need to realize I will refer all rulings of the validity of excuses to the Dean of Student Life office.

**Please note: any student who has major problems fulfilling the requirements of the course (family crisis; unexpected health issues; severe emotional turmoil) should contact the office of Frank Parker, the Assoc. V.P. for Student Services and Dean of Student Life. His phone number is 936-294-1785. This office will help you deal with all your instructors and makes it unnecessary for you to bring me documentation concerning such crises.**

### Legal Matters the University Requires Me to Include:

These are policies that cover the University as a whole. For a more detailed discussion of the items below, go to this link: <http://www.shsu.edu/syllabus/>.

- **Academic Dishonesty:** All students are expected to engage in all academic pursuits in a manner that is above reproach. Students are expected to maintain complete honesty and integrity in the academic experiences both in and out of the classroom. Any student found guilty of dishonesty in any phase of academic work will be subject to disciplinary action. The University and its official representatives may initiate disciplinary proceedings against a student accused of any form of academic dishonesty including, but not limited to, cheating on an examination or other academic work which is to be submitted, plagiarism, collusion and the abuse of resource materials.

In this course, two particular forms of academic dishonesty will result in a student earning a grade of “F” on the projects involved. These two forms are: (1) taking credit by statement or implication for the work of other students on the group project. This happens when a student presents information derived from the work of others and contributes nothing to the group’s formation of the presentation. In short, each student must help prepare the project as well as present it. (2) plagiarism. This involves taking the writing—either words and/or ideas—of another person—fellow student, published author, or paper seller--and passing them off as one’s own. Students should carefully read the section in the MLA Handbook on plagiarism and how to avoid it.

- **Americans with Disabilities Act:** It is the policy of Sam Houston State University that individuals otherwise qualified shall not be excluded, solely by reason of their disability, from participation in any academic program of the university. Further, they shall not be denied the benefits of these programs nor shall they be subjected to discrimination. Students with disabilities that might affect their academic performance are expected to visit with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities located in the Counseling Center. They should then make arrangements with their individual instructors so that appropriate strategies can be considered and helpful procedures can be developed to ensure that participation and achievement opportunities are not impaired. SHSU adheres to all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and guidelines with respect to providing reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. If a student has a disability that may affect adversely his/her work in this class, then the student is encouraged to register with the SHSU Counseling Center and to talk with the instructor about how best to deal with the situation. All disclosures of disabilities will be kept strictly confidential. NOTE: no accommodation can be made until the student registers with the Counseling Center. All requests for accommodation must be initialed by the student.
- **Religious Holidays:** Section 51.911(b) of the Texas Education Code requires that an institution of higher education excuse a student from attending classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day, including travel for that purpose. A student whose absence is excused under this subsection may not be penalized for that absence and shall be allowed to take an examination or complete an assignment from which the student is excused within a reasonable time after the absence. "Religious holy day" means a holy day observed by a religion whose places of worship are exempt from property taxation under Section 11.20, Tax Code.
- **Visitors in the Classroom:** Unannounced visitors to class must present a current, official SHSU identification card to be permitted into the classroom. They must not present a disruption to the class by their attendance. If the visitor is not a registered student, it is at the instructor's discretion whether or not the visitor will be allowed to remain in the classroom. This policy is not intended to discourage the occasional visiting of classes by responsible persons. Obviously, however, the visiting of a particular class should be occasional and not regular, and it should in no way constitute interference with registered members of the class or the educational process.
- **Instructor Evaluations:** Students will be asked to complete a course/instructor evaluation form toward the end of the semester.
- **Classroom Rules of Conduct:** The Code of Student Conduct and Discipline is found at the following link: <https://www.shsu.edu/students/guide/dean/codeofconduct.html>. I expect students to show respect for everyone in the classroom—the instructor, students, guests—through both words and actions. I ask students not to do other work during class, to place cell phones on silent mode, and to put away other distractions: ipods, newspapers, etc. If something else needs your attention during class time, don’t come to class.
- **Study Tips:** The best way to succeed in this course is to attend regularly having read the assigned work for that day. Ask questions—particularly about terminology and approaches that are unclear. Schedule a time to meet with the professor at some point in the term—preferably early in order to get a better sense of his personality. If you need help with reading, writing, or other study assistance, you may want to take advantage the resources listed below:

**The SAM Center**

The Student Advising and Mentoring Center, also known as the SAM Center, offers a wide variety of services for the students of Sam Houston State University. We offer academic advisement and enrichment services to all undergraduate and graduate students. The SAM Center is a resource dedicated to helping students adjust to academic life at Sam Houston State University. Services available include career testing, aid with time management, and study skills. The center has grown rapidly since we've been open and with new programs being offered, our students are taking more advantage of our resources. With a great faculty and staff, all students are encouraged to look into any of the programs we have available. The SAM Center is located in Academic Building 4 (AB4) on the second floor, room 210. AB4 is located on the corner of Bowers Blvd. and Ave. I. For more information, go to [http://www.shsu.edu/~sam\\_www/index.html](http://www.shsu.edu/~sam_www/index.html). Or call one of the numbers listed below:

Toll Free: (866) 364-5211  
Houston Area: (281) 657-6432  
Phone: (936) 294-4444

### **The SHSU Reading Center**

The mission of the Sam Houston State University Reading Center is to contribute to the SHSU's community growth both personally and academically so that students, faculty, and staff may use their talents more fully to achieve educational and professional goals. The SHSU Reading Center seeks to promote the acquisition of and use of reading strategies and to promote independent learning which will motivate learners to value literacy throughout their lives.

The SHSU Reading Center is available to all students, faculty, and staff. The primary goal of the instructors is to empower all students with effective reading strategies and the confidence to excel in their classes. The SHSU Reading Center is staffed and equipped to assist students with their expository reading in a variety of learning environments, such as:

- \* individual tutoring sessions,
- \* small group tutoring sessions,
- \* computer assisted tutoring sessions.

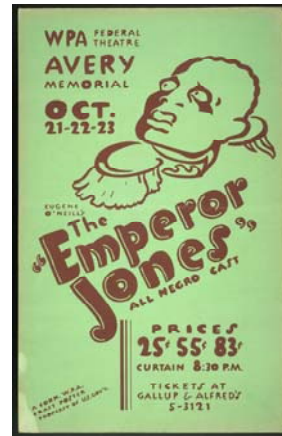
For more information, go the Reading Center web page: [http://www.shsu.edu/~rdg\\_www/](http://www.shsu.edu/~rdg_www/). Or call 936-294-3114.

### **The SHSU Writing Center**

The Sam Houston Writing Center helps SHSU students, staff, and faculty and community members. Our goal is to help people become better writers and so develop more confidence in their writing abilities. To this end, Writing Center tutors provide one-on-one and small group writing instruction. We also offer one-session workshops on various topics relating to writing throughout the school year. Students may come in with any type of writing. We help writers on assignments ranging from English composition essays to science lab reports, résumés, scholarship and job application letters, even M.A. theses and Ph.D. dissertations. We do not offer simply an editing or proofreading service. That is, Writing Center tutors will not merely correct a student's writing. Instead, we will help students learn prewriting, revising, and editing skills by working with them on the writing tasks they bring in. The Writing Center is located in Farrington 111. For more information, go to the Writing Center web page: <http://www.shsu.edu/~wctr/>. Or call 936-294-3680. For e-mail contact, use this address: [wctr@shsu.edu](mailto:wctr@shsu.edu).



Eugene O'Neill



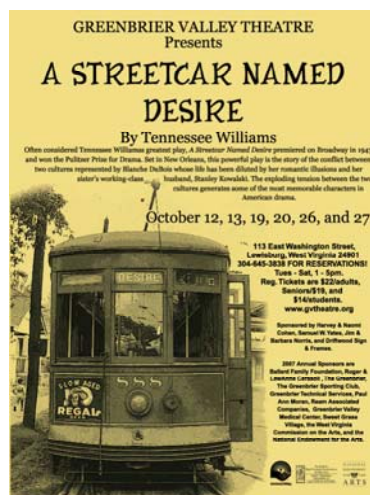


## Schedule of Assigned Readings:

### BELOW IS THE DAILY CALENDAR FOR READINGS AND WORK STUDENTS SHOULD PREPARE AND BRING TO CLASS

Thursday 1/17	Introduction to the Course
Tuesday 1/22	American Drama before 1900—a Quick Overview
Thursday 1/24	O'Neill, <u>Beyond the Horizon</u>
Tuesday 1/29	O'Neill, <u>The Emperor Jones</u>
Thursday 1/31	O'Neill, <u>Long Day's Journey Into Night</u>
Tuesday 2/5	O'Neill, <u>Long Day's Journey Into Night</u>
Thursday 2/7	Kaufman and Hart, <u>You Can't Take It With You</u>
Tuesday 2/12	Kaufman and Hart, <u>You Can't Take It With You</u>
Thursday 2/14	Kaufman and Hart, <u>The Man Who Came to Dinner</u>
Tuesday 2/19	<b>Exam One</b>
Thursday 2/21	Wilder, <u>Our Town</u>
Tuesday 2/26	Wilder, <u>The Skin of Our Teeth</u>
Thursday 2/28	Williams, <u>The Glass Menagerie</u>
Tuesday 3/4	Williams, <u>The Glass Menagerie</u>
Thursday 3/6	Williams, <u>The Streetcar Named Desire</u>
Tuesday 3/11	Spring Break—No Class
Thursday 3/13	Spring Break—No Class
Tuesday 3/18	Miller, <u>Death of a Salesman</u>
Thursday 3/20	Miller, <u>Death of a Salesman</u> <b>Major Paper "Plan" materials due</b>
Tuesday 3/25	Miller, <u>After the Fall</u>
Thursday 3/27	Miller, <u>After the Fall</u>

Tuesday 4/1	Hansberry, <u>Raison in the Sun</u> <b>Bibliography/Scripts due</b>
Thursday 4/3	Work day for group presentations Professor in Georgia for Academic Conference
Tuesday 4/8	Hansberry, <u>Raison in the Sun</u>
Thursday 4/10	<b>Exam Two</b>
Tuesday 4/15	<b>Group Presentations</b>
Thursday 4/17	Foote, <u>Talking Pictures</u>
Tuesday 4/22	Foote, <u>Dividing the Estate</u>
Thursday 4/24	Simon, <u>Brighton Beach Memoirs</u> <b>Major Paper Due</b>
Tuesday 4/29	Albee, <u>Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?</u>
Thursday 5/1	Wilson, <u>Ma Rainey's Black Bottom</u>
Tuesday 5/6	Howe, <u>Painting Churches</u>
Thursday 5/8	Student Plays
<b>Tuesday, 5/13</b>	<b>FINAL EXAM at 8:00 a.m. or date and hour set by the UNIVERSITY</b>







## Paper Assignment: Analyzing Drama

Part of any reputable English class is the experience of learning through writing that is based on research and textual analysis. Such an experience is important because it gives a

student a chance to hone and demonstrate skills in

- close reading of a text
- collection and assimilation of research
- understanding the nature of literary elements
- creative thinking
- logical organization
- clear, correct writing.

Indeed, all of these will be essential to success here where the goal will be a paper that deals either strictly with literary/philosophical meaning in the play or with meaning and significance.

So what exactly does this assignment require you to do?

First, select an American play that is **not** one of the assigned readings for this course to be the subject of your paper. Plays that I recommend are:

Angels in America by Tony Kushner

The Iceman Cometh by Eugene O'Neill

Moon for the Misbegotten by Eugene O'Neill

All My Sons by Arthur Miller

Broken Glass by Arthur Miller

Battle of Angels by Tennessee Williams

Cat on a Hot Tin Roof by Tennessee Williams

Once in a Lifetime by Kaufman & Hart

Buried Child by Sam Shepard

Fool for Love by Sam Shepard

True West by Sam Shepard

Glengarry, Glen Ross by David Mamet

A Life in the Theater by David Mamet

The Basic Training of Pavlo Hummel by David Rabe

Streamers by David Rabe

The Heidi Chronicles by Wendy Wasserstein

The Little Foxes by Lillian Hellman

Joe Turner's Come and Gone by August Wilson

Trip to Bountiful by Horton Foote

The Last Night of Ballyhoo by Alfred Uhry

The Miss Firecracker Contest by Beth Henley

The Marriage of Bette and Boo by Christopher Durang

Topdog/Underdog by Suzan-Lori Parks

Students are not required to limit their selection to this list, but **any play not on this list must be cleared** with the instructor. Students do need to be aware that slight plays are seldom good subjects for analysis, and if I advise students to stay away from a play, they should heed that advice.

Second, read the play carefully and begin the process of breaking it down into its literary elements. These should include: plot, character, symbols, images, allusions, setting, tone, etc. If a student does not have a clear definition or grasp of any of these terms, a quick check of a literary handbook such as Harmon and Holman's *Handbook to Literature* will help. Any paper that does not focus on literary elements and build its meaning for the play from analysis of those elements will not do well.

Third, go to the library and begin to research the selected play and its author. For contemporary writers, the *Dictionary of Literary Biography* can be a good place to start, but students will want to look for critical articles, books, reviews and interviews from as many sources as possible. Students should use this research to expand their grasp of the literary elements in the play and to find dimensions of the play they missed during their own reading.

Fourth, once research is complete, students should begin to derive a thesis. If this thesis is directed toward meaning only, it is important that the meaning statement be complete and not merely an identification of the play's theme or topic. One way to do this is to derive from each element an abstract concept. For instance, if a play has allusions to the Bible, a student might take this to mean that the play is interested in the concept of "religion" or "holiness" or "revelation"—depending on how the student and the play views the element. Once this has been done for all the elements, the concepts may be combined to form a complete meaning statement that serves as the thesis for the paper. However, if a student decides to focus on meaning and significance, a much heavier reliance must be placed on the reception of the play throughout its history and on the comments various people have made about the play. In short, the student will want to conclude why the ideas in the play had particular significance at particular moments in the play's history. Of course, a significance paper is not a mere collection of opinions. It must synthesize those opinions with the student's own interpretation of the play to derive a statement of significance. This will result in a less formulaic thesis, but it still must be a thesis that is proven piece by piece through the paper. In both cases, be sure the thesis is complex and not merely a repetition of what the critics have said. Interpretation should be aided by the critics, but it should stand apart from them—at best, use them as shoulders to stand on and see further.

Fifth, once the thesis is clearly stated, schedule a time to meet with me to discuss it. I have my limitations, but I am a resource that is worth using. My goal will be to help students avoid wasting time on simplistic ideas, but I can best help them do that if they come to our meeting armed with completed research and an interpretation of the play. Once we've met, begin to write. Be sure you allow yourself time for revision and editing. Once the paper is written, be sure to check the format requirements of the *MLA Handbook*. These are crucial to your success.

Now the paper is ready for submission. I will initially assign the paper a grade based on the degree of success it shows in demonstrating the skills with which this assignment discussion began:

- close reading of a text
- collection and assimilation of research
- understanding the nature of literary elements
- creative thinking
- logical organizing
- clear writing.

Once I have that grade established, I will assess the paper's presentation flaws. Students will be penalized for each of the following errors:

- failure to follow MLA paper format
- failure to follow MLA style on titles of literary works
- failure to document facts/claims made about events and situations in the play
- failure to document outside research
- mechanical mistakes such as spelling errors, comma errors, subject-verb agreement errors, pronoun errors, sentences that don't make sense, failure to follow basic grammar rules.

Consistent and repeated instances of such errors in any combination will lower the paper's grade drastically from the grade I assign based on content and thought. In other words, if you don't edit your writing, you have a good chance of being unhappy with your grade. Please care enough about your grade to avoid such an unwise decision.

To give these papers their best chance of earning a good grade, it will come due in two stages. Stage one consists of a thesis statement and a break down of research and analysis of literary elements that led to the meaning statement, and it is due **Thursday, March 20**. If I see any problems or have questions about the material, I will request the student conference with me about it. I will assign a temporary grade—based purely on content—to the paper at this point. The completed paper is due at the beginning of class on **Thursday, April 24**. At that time I will assign the final grade for the paper which will completely replace the temporary grade assigned earlier. Students who do well on the temporary grade need to realize

that failure to follow stylistic and grammatical issues could result in a significantly lower grade on the final paper.



## Group Project Assignment

Unlike most literary texts that are fixed and unchanging on a published page, a play is part of a collaborative, living process that makes each production a unique interpretation of the written text. This project is designed both to enable students to practice some of the elements of that process and to experience the joys and frustrations of collaborative work.

Once the class begins, students will be divided into three groups and assigned to work on one of the following plays:

Eugene O'Neill's "The Hairy Ape"  
Horton Foote's Night Seasons  
Tina Howe's The Art of Dining

These three plays are in assigned texts. **Every student is responsible for reading all three of these texts.**

For their assigned play, each group will need to make decisions about the following elements of production:

- set design (how can the descriptions offered in the text be realized in a way that will best facilitate the action that must take place? what will the general "look" be?)
- costume design (what kind of clothes should the actors wear? will you keep the period of the play or alter it? what should clothes signal to the audience about character or some other facet of the play?)
- textual changes (does the play need cutting for either audience endurance or for clarity?)
- casting (what actors or actor-types would work best in the major roles and why?)
- program design (what will the audience be handed as they arrive that will help them start to think about the play as you want them to think?)
- background music (if music is called for in the text, what music should it be? what music should be played between acts or during scene changes)
- directing guidelines (what instructions should the director give to each actor about the way to play his/her character)
- audience reaction (what effect does the production want ideally to achieve on those who watch it? How should this effect be defined in terms of both intellect—what the audience is made to think—and emotions—what the audience is made to feel?)

All of these decisions must be based on and be able to justified by three things:

1. A close reading of the dramatic work.
2. An overview of the production history of the play to the extent it can be recreated.
3. Critical and scholarly commentary on the play.

Once these decisions have been made, the group should begin to plan its 20-25 minute presentation to the class. This presentation should include:

- a brief summary of the play (realizing that the class is expected to have read it, this should largely be a matter of emphasizing the rhythm of the play, how it builds and climaxes)
- a statement of the general meaning the group feels the play is trying to communicate
- a bibliography of resources consulted in designing the production such as reviews of other productions, literary criticism, comments by the author, historical sources, etc.
- pictures, descriptions, models, mock-ups, sound-bites, etc. for each of the items listed above, explaining during the presentation how these reflect or encourage the interpretation of the play the group has made.
- the presentation of a brief scene from the play that attempts to capture the general feel and sense of the play. The scene may be no more than 7-10 minutes in length.

The exact format for the presentations is up to the group, but it must all be accomplished within 20-25 minutes. Also, the more creative and entertaining the better. **I strongly discourage relying on technology driven presentations such as powerpoint because of the unreliability of our classroom's technological equipment.** I don't expect professional drawing skills or acting, but I expect that the groups will be lively and rehearsed. I also expect students to have done a close reading of the play and at least some research into its background and commentary.

Part of the process is learning how to manage all these tasks, how to organize the work. I encourage each group to appoint or elect a leader who can let me know if anyone is failing to participate. You'll have to work around everyone's schedules, but this should prove a fun part of the course.

**In addition to the oral presentation, the group must submit to me in writing (typed, double-spaced of course):**

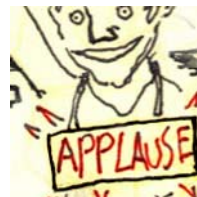
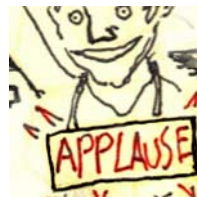
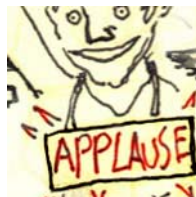
- a one page (maximum) statement of the meaning of the play arrived at by the group and the basic reasoning the group used to arrive at this meaning.
- a one or two page description of the work done by individuals in the group (example: Bill and Sally came up with the costume ideas; Bill hunted down photos of some costumes in magazines while Sally sketched drawings).
- a printed bibliography of resources examined by anyone in the group.

Everyone in the group will receive the same grade (unless the group reports that one or two members offered no contribution), and that grade will be determined by

- the clarity of the interpretation.
- the degree to which the production elements support the interpretation.
- the thoroughness of the justifications for each production element.
- the degree of intellectual interest encouraged by the presentation.

I strongly encourage students to take these presentations seriously. Read the play carefully, and do research (for brownie points, you could always turn in a bibliography). You can even ask questions of the professor. The groups should plan on at least **three** other sessions to discuss the play, lay out responsibilities, and be sure each member of the group is carrying his/her load. Such sessions are difficult to schedule, but they are necessary.

Presentations will take place on tax day, **Tuesday, April 15**. Be prepared for unexpected emergencies within the groups as the date cannot be rescheduled.





## Academic/Creative Assignment



To determine one/sixth of their course grade, each student must select to do **EITHER** a bibliographic project **OR** write a brief original script. Both are described on these pages. Though the description of the bibliographic assignment is more detailed and lengthy, both assignments present challenges, and I give students the option between them in order to allow students to use play on their strengths.

### **Bibliographic Option:**

This assignment is connected with the group project. Whatever play a student is assigned to work with for the group project will also be the subject of this assignment. Specifically, a student should do research to uncover critical commentary on the play that is his/her subject. In all, a **minimum of seven** sources must be found.

Specifically, students should take as their subject whatever play is the focus of their group project. After reading the play, they must locate and read a minimum of **seven** published items. None of these seven sources may be published on the internet only. All must exist in published print form—even if the text examined by the student is located using a database. The nature of these seven items should fit the following parameters:

- **At least two sources should be reviews of performances of the play.** Internet searches will often help students find reviews of recent productions, but they should also try to find reviews of early productions using reference resources and, for some authors, books in the library. Remember that initial reviews of first-runs are the most crucial, and New York reviews are more important than those from Cleveland or Seattle.
- **At least one source should be an interview with the play's author.** Try to find interviews that are either done near the time the play was written and first performed or that specifically discuss your play. These may come from newspapers, magazines, and journals. Internet databases will help some, but students will probably need to work with the reference librarians to find some in books and scholarly journals.
- **At least one scholarly discussion.** These sources should come from scholarly—not mass circulation--journals, books of essays, or books written by a single author. Be sure the source focuses on your specific play or on the playwright's work in general. A great way to locate such sources is to use the MLA International Bibliography database available through the library. However, some pieces from essay collections may require the use of interlibrary loan—something that takes about 10 days to receive. Plan ahead, and ask me for help early in the process.

Obviously, this leaves space for other kinds of sources, including essays written by the playwrights. It also means a student may go beyond the minimum requirement in each of the three categories.

Once the seven items are located, students should:

1. prepare a correct bibliographic entry following the guidelines in the current *MLA Handbook*. Both reviews and interviews have peculiar entry forms.
2. summarize the basic argument of the review and the reasons offered for it. In the case of an interview, summarize the major insight about the play obtained from the interview. Because the annotation is brief, no evaluation is necessary. The whole thing should consist of two to five sentences.
3. be sure to arrange the entries in alphabetical order, based on the first letter in each entry.
4. Attach photocopies of all reviews/interviews/scholarly articles at the back of the project.

Below are sample entries for both a performance review and an interview:

Miller, Arthur. "A Conversation with Arthur Miller." *Humanities* 22.2 (2001): 4-6.

Miller says that the focus of Death of a Salesman is "the humanity of these people," and he rejects the idea that the play has any "a priori political position." He also sees the play as being new in its time because it has no "waste. The play begins with the action, and there are no transitions." He also discusses the impact of Williams' Streetcar Named Desire on the play, saying Streetcar "validate[s] . . . the way Salesman uses language."

Simon, John. "American Bridal." Rev. of The Day Emily Married, by Horton Foote. Primary Stages, New York. *New York Magazine* 16 Aug. 2004: 57. *New York Metro.Com*. 11 Jan. 2005 <<http://www.newyorkmetro.com/nymetro/arts/theater/reviews/9598>>.

This extremely brief review sees the play as a "strong" and a "new direction, that of Sean O'Casey" for Foote. It says the play is "old-fashioned," but it praises it as "well crafted."

ONE MAJOR PIECE OF ADVICE: do not guess about MLA bibliographic form. Check the book. If you don't own one, the library has a copy, and I have copies I can share with you. The easiest way to destroy a good grade on this assignment is to neglect to use correct MLA bibliographic form.

Finally, because this is the kind of research that should be done by the group in preparation for the group project, I have set the due date as **April 1—no joke**. If you have any questions about this project or the works you find doing research, be sure to check with me. I'll be happy to help.



### Creative Script Option:

Because some students are more interested in creative writing than scholarly research and because it can be fun and instructive for all of us, I also offer a creative option to fulfill this part of the course. Students may write a 10-15 minute play—approximately 10 typed pages using standard script form (see below). However, because I'm not interested in reading the play you've had in your desk for the past two semesters and because I want to insure that we avoid stock situations and settings that typically afflict undergraduate scripts, all plays must not only fit the length requirement stated above but they must also:

- Contain **at least** the following characters: your mother, a photographer, and a confused tour guide.
- Have its action take place during or immediately following a natural disaster.
- Have a dramatic moment that disintegrates into jibberish.
- Takes advantage of silence and visuals.
- Must form a complete action (this isn't part of something longer)

Otherwise, all options are open. It may be funny, serious, realistic, fantastic, easy or impossible to stage, add other characters—just about anything.

Once the scripts are submitted for evaluation on **April 1—no joke**—I will grade them and give them to one or two colleagues to select the three best. These three will get a dramatic reading using as our actors/readers students in the class directed by the author. This reading—and it must be a reading, not a staging—will take place the last day of class—May 8. And should New York or Hollywood decide to option your work, I get \$5,000 up front and 10 percent of all grosses for forcing you to write it.

It is important that all scripts follow the standard format on the page for scripts. I offer a model found at <http://bellarmine.lmu.edu/fyi/scriptformat.html>. It is printed on the next page and presents all the relevant information.

Beyond that, you need merely to make your writing lively and interesting. Learn from the masters we are reading in class as well as your own reading and play attendance. It will be harder than you think but a lot of fun.



**Tina Howe**

## Sample Script Format

### ACT ONE

The first stage direction at the beginning of an act or scene should start one tab stop in from the left margin and go all the way across the page. Then skip a line before the first character's name which is always capitalized and centered.

#### CHARACTER NAME

(stage directions after CHARACTER NAME are indented to the second tab stop, placed in parentheses, and single-spaced. There is no line space between CHARACTER NAME and stage direction, and no space between stage direction and dialogue. Note that there is no period at the end of the stage direction)

Hey! This is the dialogue which begins at the left margin and goes all the way over to the right margin - - - just like this. Lines of dialogue are single-spaced. If you want stage directions within a speech, use the following format.

(indent, without skipping a line just as in the previous direction)

Then continue the speech from the left margin without skipping a line. This format holds true even for one word directions like, say

(pause)

Or even

(beat)

Do you understand?

#### SECOND CHARACTER NAME

Yes, I think so, and I see that you skip a line before the next Character Name. The second character's speech again begins at the left margin and runs the same way.

(with all the stage directions indented, in parentheses, and single-spaced When directions: follow a speech, you skip a line before the next CHARACTER NAME)

#### CHARACTER NAME

Now that's just about all you need to know about script format except, of course, that the margins must be one and one-half inches from the left, and one inch from the top, bottom and right sides of the page.

#### SECOND CHARACTER NAME

And you keep going just like this.

#### CHARACTER NAME

Yes.

#### SECOND CHARACTER NAME

Until the play is done.