

COURSE SYLLABUS
THR 463
Dramatic Theory & Criticism
3 Credit Hours
Spring 2007

- Location & Times: Section W.01 on MWF, 10:00-10:50 a.m., in AB1 Room 206
Section W.02 on MWF, 1:00-1:50 p.m., in UTC Room 135
- Instructor: David A. McTier, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Theatre
- Office & Phone: Smith-Kirkley G27, 936-294-4063
- e-mail: dam005@shsu.edu
- Office Hours: Monday-Friday, 2:00-3:00; other times available by appointment
- Blackboard: Course materials and grades are available on Blackboard.
- Catalogue Description: A study of the principles of various styles and periods of dramaturgy, involving a history of criticism from Aristotle to the present. Representative plays will be analyzed for theme, structure, characterization and dialogue with a view to their influences on contemporary theatre. Emphasis is placed on written student criticism and evaluation of plays. Writing Enhanced. Credit 3.
- Course Description: This is a lecture-discussion course on dramatic theory and criticism. While we will read a few scripts in their entirety and numerous others in excerpted form, our focus is not script analysis but, rather, *theory* (why theatre is the way it is—its conventions of writing and production) and *criticism* (how we perceive and judge theatre). On Mondays, we will focus on the ten critical perspectives surveyed in Lois Tyson's book, *Critical Theory Today*, adding one additional perspective, postmodernism. On Wednesdays, student teams will make presentations about and lead discussions of assigned, key theoretical topics/questions. On Fridays, we will apply our knowledge of theory and criticism to plays and performance.
- Course Objectives: By the end of the semester, you should be able to:
- know how and why current conventions of writing and production exist;
 - understand and apply any of the ten critical perspectives in analyzing and evaluating a given script or performance
 - understand and appreciate how subjective the perception and evaluation of theatre/art is; and,
 - understand and appreciate how such subjective differences, be they individual or cultural, past or present, enrich our art and allow it to continuously evolve.
- Required Texts: Lois Tyson, *Critical Theory Today: A User-Friendly Guide*, 1st or 2nd Edition
Our Country's Good by Timberlake Wertenbaker, *Our Town* by Thornton Wilder
- Supplies & Expenses: Your course fee provides you with one complimentary ticket to each of the three required theatre productions.
- Attendance Policy: You are expected to attend every class and be punctual and prepared. University policy stipulates that: *A student shall not be penalized for three or fewer hours of absences when examinations or other assigned class work has not been missed; however, at the discretion of the instructor, a student may be penalized for more than three hours of absences.*

Thus, you are allowed to miss three (3) MWF classes without penalty. Additional absences will result in penalties (described in detail later in this syllabus).

Only two exceptions are made: one, religious holy days and required travel time (requests must be submitted within the first fifteen days of the semester); and, two, pre-approved and documented university obligation, e.g., KCACTF festival, Alpha Psi's children's show. If you miss class due to pre-approved religious or university obligation, you should submit your assignment(s) prior to your anticipated absence to avoid penalty.

No other absences (even due to severe illness, hospitalization, death in family, etc.) will be accommodated without penalty unless there is intervention by the Dean's Office.

- Late & Makeup Work: Any work submitted late will be penalized one letter grade. **Unlike last semester, you will be allowed only one week to submit an overdue assignment; after that one week, you automatically will receive a zero (0) for that assignment.** Any other allowance for making up assignments and/or examinations will be left to my discretion as instructor.
- 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.
- Please note that all of the papers you write and submit in this class are individual. You may not use or submit writing by any person other than yourself.**
- Classroom Conduct: Students will refrain from behavior in the classroom that intentionally or unintentionally disrupts the learning process and, thus, impedes the mission of the university. Cellular telephones and pagers must be turned off before class begins. Students are prohibited from eating in class, using tobacco products, making offensive remarks, reading newspapers, sleeping, talking at inappropriate times, wearing inappropriate clothing, or engaging in any other form of distraction. Inappropriate behavior in the classroom shall result in a directive to leave class. Students who are especially disruptive also may be reported to the Dean of Students for disciplinary action in accordance with university policy.
- Unlike last semester, you may not bring food or candy into the classroom. Beverages are acceptable as long as you clean up any spills and dispose of your containers. Gum and lozenges are acceptable only if I, the instructor, cannot see, hear, or smell them.**
- Any infringement upon or violation of classroom conduct will affect your "Participation Grade" negatively.**
- Visitors: Unannounced visitors to class must present a current, official SHSU identification card to be permitted in 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.
- Student Disabilities: SHSU adheres to all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and guidelines with respect to providing reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. If you have a disability that may affect adversely your work in this

class, you should register with the SHSU Counseling Center and then talk with me about how I can best help you. All disclosures of disabilities will be kept strictly confidential. Please note that no accommodation will be made until you register with the Counseling Center.

- Graded Components:** 20% from two group presentations (10% each; members graded individually)
20% from two individual papers on the two presentation topics (10% each)
15% from a final, individual critique of an assigned play, production, or film
10% from 2 objective quizzes on 2 assigned plays (5% each)
25% from Option #1 (2 exams) OR Option #2 (5 response papers to any of the 10 assigned chapters in Tyson's book)
5% participation
5% timeliness
- Grading Format:** For each paper and presentation, the following will applied:
75% substance/content (what you say, write, or present)
25% form (how effectively you say, write, or present your ideas; this includes writing mechanics/grammar on your papers)
- Group Presentations:** You will work with two different groups to make presentations on two different theoretical topics/questions (one group and topic before mid-term, the second after mid-term). Your presentation should last 25-30 minutes, allowing the remainder of class time for questions and discussion. Although the presentation as a whole will be considered, grading is individual. Each presentation is worth 10%.
- Presentation Papers:** For each of your two presentations, you will submit an individually written paper summarizing the group's topic, resources used, effectiveness of the presentation, and your individual contribution and learning. Each paper is worth 10% and should be appr. 750 words; each is due one week after your group has presented.
- Final Critique:** You will write a critique (750-1000 words) on an assigned play, production, or film employing one of the ten critical perspectives in Tyson's book, e.g., a feminist critique of _____. This critique is due no later than the final exam period.
- Option #1 Exams:** If you select Option #1, you will take an in-class mid-term (10%) and final(15%) exam. Both are essay exams covering theory and criticism.
- Option #2 Responses:** If you select Option #2, you will submit response papers (appr. 750 words each) on 5 of the 10 assigned chapters in Tyson's book. The first third of each paper should be an objective summary of the critical perspective; the other two-thirds are a mini critique of one of the plays we have read or productions we have seen (instructor will specify) applying that particular critical perspective.
- Timeliness:** 5% of your grade is determined by the percentage of days you arrived on-time and left on-time.
- Participation:** 5% of your grade is determined by your participation in class.
Positives: alertness, responsiveness, volunteering, leadership, etc.
Negatives: cell phones, food, chatting, newspapers, falling asleep, etc.
- UTC Productions:** You are required to attend all three UTC productions: *Night of the Iguana* (Feb. 14-17), *Life X 3* (February 27-March 3), and *South Pacific* (April 11-14).

Information gained from attending these productions will be used in class discussions and exams.

ITINERARY & GRADING

January	10	WED	Syllabus; Introductions	
	12	FRI		
	15	MON	NO CLASS: MLK HOLIDAY	
	17	WED	QUIZ: <i>Our Town</i>	
	19	FRI	NO CLASS: DAVE AT TETA; COMP FOR SEEING <i>IGUANA</i>	
	22	MON	New Criticism Option #2 Paper Due	
	24	WED	QUIZ: <i>Our Country's Good</i>	
	26	FRI		
	29	MON	Reader-Response Criticism Option #2 Paper Due	
	31	WED	Group #1 Presentation	
	February	2	FRI	
		5	MON	Psychoanalytic Criticism Option #2 Paper Due
7		WED	Group #2 Presentation; Group #1 Individual Papers Due	
9		FRI		
12		MON	Marxist Criticism Option #2 Paper Due	
14		WED	Group #3 Presentation; Group #2 Individual Papers Due	
16		FRI		
19		MON	Feminist Criticism Option #2 Paper Due	
21		WED	Group #4 Presentation; Group #3 Individual Papers Due	
23		FRI		
26		MON	Group #5 Presentation; Group #4 Individual Papers Due	
28		WED	TBA: If Dave is at KCACTF, then comp for seeing <i>LIFE X 3</i>	
March	2	FRI	TBA: If Dave is at KCACTF, then comp for seeing <i>SO PACIFIC</i>	
	5	MON	Catch-up & Review; Group #5 Individual Papers Due	
	7	WED	Mid-Term Exam Option #1 Only	

9	FRI	
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	12	MON	NO CLASS: SPRING BREAK
	14	WED	NO CLASS: SPRING BREAK
	16	FRI	NO CLASS: SPRING BREAK
	19	MON	New Historical & Cultural Criticism Option #2 Paper Due
	21	WED	Group A Presentation
	23	FRI	
	26	MON	Post-Colonial & African-American Criticism Option #2 Paper Due
	28	WED	Group B Presentation; Group A Individual Papers Due
	30	FRI	
April	2	MON	Lesbian, Gay, & Queer Criticism Option #2 Paper Due
	4	WED	
	6	FRI	NO CLASS: GOOD FRIDAY HOLIDAY
	9	MON	Structuralist Criticism Option #2 Paper Due
	11	WED	Group C Presentation; Group B Individual Papers Due
	13	FRI	
	16	MON	Deconstructive Criticism Option #2 Paper Due
	18	WED	Group D Presentation; Group C Individual Papers Due
	20	FRI	
	23	MON	Postmodern Criticism (no reading or paper)
	25	WED	Group E Presentation; Group D Individual Papers Due
	27	FRI	
	30	MON	
May	2	WED	Group E Individual Papers Due

Final Option #1 takes Final Exam; Deadline for all Individual Critiques

GRADED COMPONENTS

Objective Quizzes on 2 Plays		10%
Wilder's <i>Our Town</i>	5%	
Wertebaker's <i>Our Country's Good</i>	5%	
Presentations and Papers on Dramatic Theory		40%
Group Presentation on 1 st Topic	10%	
Individual Paper on 1 st Topic	10%	
Group Presentation on 2 nd Topic	10%	
Individual Paper on 2 nd Topic	10%	
Final Individual Critique		15%
Timeliness		5%
Participation		5%
Option #1 or #2		25%

OPTION #1 (25%)		OPTION #2 (25%)
Mid-Term Essay Exam	10%	5 (out of 10 possible) response papers on corresponding chapters on criticism; each is worth 5%.
Final Essay Exam	15%	

FINAL COURSE GRADE

Initial Course Grade MULTIPLIED BY Degree of Attendance

Your final course grade is determined by multiplying your Initial Course Grade (the grade on Blackboard) by your Degree of Attendance, which is calculated using the following formula:

(total # classes you attended) divided by (total # classes given minus 3)

Note that this degree factor easily can change your final course grade for the better or worse. Unlike last semester's penalty system, this approach rewards excellent attendance as well as penalizes excessive absences. To give a couple of examples, if we end up with 40 total classes this semester:

Example #1: If your initial course grade was a 94 but you had 5 total absences:

Formula: (35 classes attended) divided by (40-3) OR $35/37 = .95$

94 multiplied by .95 = 89; thus, your final course grade would be a "B."

Example #2: If your initial course grade was a 84 but you had 0 total absences:

Formula: (40 classes attended) divided by (40-3) OR $40/37 = 1.08$

84 multiplied by 1.08 = 91; thus, your final course grade would be an "A."

Final Grade:	90-100 = A
	80-89 = B
	70-79 = C
	60-69 = D
	0-59 = F