Dr. Wayne B. Stengel

Fall 2015

English 20471/4345 20690/5345 20th Century English Drama

Irby 304

Office Hours: MWF: 1:30-3:30; TTh: 3-4, and by appointment.

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Course Objectives and Requirements: This course will give you a good understanding of one long play, or several one-act plays by eight established British dramatists of the late twentieth and twenty-first century. We will study the plays as literature for their language, structure, sense of character and story-telling power. This is not a course in theater practice or dramatic interpretation of literature. However, for drama to become alive in a reader’s imagination, I do think it is important for readers to grasp how a play might look, sound and be staged not just on the page but in theatrical space. So I do want my students to attempt imagining these plays as movies running in their heads and nervous systems. I assume no previous knowledge of contemporary theater, dramatic literature, or any of these playwrights. I only ask that you read the plays carefully, with an open mind, and some consideration of how you feel they might look if you were to see them live as theatrical event. I give a mid-semester examination, a final exam, and a ten-page research paper, due in the last weeks of the semester, and once a week (or so) homework assignments. After we complete our discussion of each playwright, one or two, of you will give a twenty- minute class presentation “staging of the play” in which you will enact for your audience how you best feel a specific portion of a single play’s language, characterization, structuring and qualities of tension, suspense, humor, or absurdity might be best visualized, directed, or presented with actors and in three dimensions.

**Required** **texts and editions:**

**Harold Pinter: Plays 1, A Slight Ache**

**Enda Walsh, Plays: One, Disco Pigs**

**Martin McDonagh, The Pillowman**

**Michael Frayn, Copenhagen**

**Tom Stoppard, The Real Thing**

**Caryl Churchill, Cloud Nine**

**Jez Butterworth, Jerusalem**

**Nina Raine, Tribes**

Major assignments and examinations: We will have a mid-semester and final examination at those times in the semester; a researched term-paper, driven by your own original thesis about an idea, concept, or theatrical ‘problem’ in one of the plays we have read, due within the last ten days of the semester; about eight homework assignments, sometimes graded, given over the course of the semester, and an oral presentation GIVEN EACH STUDENT OVER THEIR CLOSE READING, UNDERSTANDING, VISUALIZING, IMAGINING, AND **SEEING OF THE PLAY BEFORE THEM.**

Grading Policies: Your grade in this class will come from three sources:

1. Examinations and term paper, 60%
2. Oral presentation and homework, 30% 3) Regular class attendance and class participation grade, 10%

I delight in teaching what I consider an interactive class. That means I ask questions, professionally am very interested in your opinions, interests, confusions, frustrations with these texts. For this class to be a learning experience for us both, you must **APPEAR IN THIS CLASS VERY REGULARLY. CUTTING THIS CLASS IS FROWNED UPON, AND MISSING MORE THAN FIVE SESSIONS WILL RESULT IN YOUR BEING DROPPED FORM THE COURSE WITH A GRADE OF WF.**

The following Academic Integrity statement:

The University of Central Arkansas affirms its commitment to academic integrity and expects all members of the university community to accept shared responsibility for maintaining academic integrity. Students in this course are subject to the provisions of the university’s Academic Integrity Policy, approved by the Board of Trustees as Board Policy No. 709 on February 10, 2010, and published in the *Student Handbook*. Penalties for academic misconduct in this course may include a failing grade on an assignment, a failing grade in the course, or any other course-related sanction the instructor determines to be appropriate. Continued enrollment in this course affirms a student’s acceptance of this university policy.

The following Americwith Disabilities Act statement:

The University of Central Arkansas adheres to the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act. If you need an accommodation under this Act due to a disability, please contact the UCA Disability Resource Center, 450-3613.

 The following Building Emergency Plan statement (to be discussed in class/lab during the first week of the semester):

An Emergency Procedures Summary (EPS) for the building in which this class is held will be discussed during the first week of this course. EPS documents for most buildings on campus are available at http://uca.edu/mysafety/bep/. Every student should be familiar with emergency procedures for any campus building in which he/she spends time for classes or other purposes.

 The following Title IX disclosure:

If a student discloses an act of sexual harassment, discrimination, assault, or other sexual misconduct to a faculty member (as it relates to “student-on-student” or “employee-on-student”), the faculty member cannot maintain complete confidentiality and is required to report the act and may be required to reveal the names of the parties involved. Any allegations made by a student may or may not trigger an investigation. Each situation differs, and the obligation to conduct an investigation will depend on the specific set of circumstances. The determination to conduct an investigation will be made by the Title IX Coordinator. For further information, please visit: https://uca.edu/titleix. Updated 2014-10-21 Page 2 of 3

*\*Disclosure of sexual misconduct by a third party who is not a student and/or employee is also required if the misconduct occurs when the third party is a participant in a university-sponsored program, event, or activity.*

 Direct students to familiarize themselves with all policies included in the *Student Handbook*, particularly the following:

 Sexual Harassment Policy

 Academic Policies

Dramatic literature is one of my favorite things to teach at UCA. I have had very good results teaching this class in the past and feel certain that this contemporary theater class will be one of my very best yet. The plays we are reading, though not necessarily easy, are fantastic! From the dark menace of Harold Pinter’s theater of the absurd poetry in A Slight Ache to the Kafkaesque dream and fantasies, with highly political overtones, of Martin McDonagh’s The Pillowman, these plays take an audience into surreal dream states and examine the force of collective hallucination on an individual. Three of these plays, Disco Pigs, Jerusalem, and Tribes, examine the family under siege in modern British theater and the effort of these tribal communities to create theatrical metalanguages to withstand the ravages and intrusions of the modern world. That leaves us with Copenhagen, The Real Thing, and Cloud Nine all of which examine the force and/or fidelity of love and friendship in contemporary life and rather these qualities and states of mind are strong or sustaining enough to prevent warfare, divorce, or sexual and political repression. From a British theatrical perspective, what does love and friendship have to do with it? Have they made the world saner, less violent, and more emotionally, psychologically progressive? Or, are they part of the problem?

I am really looking forward to this semester. I know if you give me a maximum amount of your effort from the very beginning of this class, this course will be a rich and rewarding learning experience for us all. Welcome.