Dr. Wayne B. Stengel

Spring 2016

ENGL 4347; CRN: 29427—Twentieth-Century American Drama; MWF 12:00; Irby 304

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Welcome to Twentieth-Century Drama! This course will be a careful look at eight very interesting American plays. The first four are very esteemed dramas by highly respected, canonical American male playwrights, the next three works by much more experiential, edgy, even avant-garde contemporary women playwrights who explore, theatrically and linguistically, social issues and concerns important to twentieth-first century American culture. The course concludes with Tony Kushner’s *Angels in America*, (19995), a landmark playabout the AIDS crisis, commonly regarded as the most important play in American theater, since the first work on our syllabus, Tennessee Williams’ *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1949). The course will, in ways obvious, and hopefully more subtly, trace the history of American theater, both thematically and formally, between the middle of the twentieth century until Annie Baker’s *The Flick,* which won the Pulitzer Prize for Drama in 2014. The course will demonstrate why each of these plays has found an attentive and engaged audience, why the language and characterization in each work has fascinated spectators on the other side of the footlights, and what this mutual embrace between a writer, director, and actors and these viewers reveals about the best American theater, perhaps even why these plays have outlived their initial performance space and are, or will eventually come to be, regarded as works admired as literature. I truly love teaching theater. (Perhaps because I am such a natural ham!) The requirements for this course are simple: you must make an honest and sincere attempt effort to read, understand, on your terms, and empathize with the vision of the playwright, even when you don’t agree with, or want to live in, the world that she creates. We will have a mid-semester exam, a final exam, at least one oral presentation from each student about the play we are currently discussing, and an important paper on another of our plays. The following is a list of the texts we are reading. It is important that you buy all eight plays **IN THE EDITION THAT THE UCA BOOKSTORE IS SELLING** very quickly.

Texts:

Tennessee Williams, *A Streetcar Named Desire*

Eugene O’Neill, *The Iceman Cometh*

Arthur Miller, A *View From the Bridge*

Edward Albee, *The Goat, or Who Is Sylvia?*

Suzan Lori Parks, *The Red Letter Plays*

Lynn Nottage, *Ruined*

Annie Baker, *The Flick*

Tony Kushner, *Angels in America*

Weeks 1 and 2: Williams, *Streetcar*

Weeks 3 and 4: O’Neill, *Iceman;* First oral report

Week 5: Miller: *Bridge;* Second oral report

Weeks 6 and 7: Albee, *Goat;* Third oral report; **MID-SEMESTER EXAMINATION**

Weeks 8 and 9: Parks, *Red Letter;* Fourth oral report

Week 10: Nottage, *Ruined;* Fifth oral report

**SPRING BREAK**

Weeks 11 and 12: Baker, *The Flick;* Sixth oral report

Weeks 13 and 14: Kushner, *Angels;* **PAPER DUE**

Week 15: **FINAL EXAMINATION**

Your grade in this course will come from four sources. First, the average of your md-semester and final exams. Secondly, your oral presentation on the play you have been assigned to evaluate. Third, your final paper due at the end of the course. Last, a class attendance grade given on the basis of your excellent job of showing up, your preparedness for class, your degree of engagement and familiarity with the texts assigned, and your growing ability to read, understand, and appreciate qualities of the plays in front of you. I teach school to learn from the students I am instructing. I attempt to run a friendly, relaxed, and stimulating classroom. But none of my goals can be met unless you give me some help with the heavy lifting in this classroom. I frequently call on students and I am very interested in, not the right answers, (whatever they may be), but that my students show me--in many, many different ways--that they are reading these texts, have many questions, some confusions, but a certain degree of enthusiasm and intellectual curiosity about why a certain play is worthy of study in a course devoted to high points in American Drama. I really am looking forward to this course. Just last semester I taught an excellent class in Twentieth Century British Drama, and I know that his class will be its equal. Let’s get off to a good start, and I promise you, by May, you will have more understanding of American Drama then you would have thought possible in January.

I must warn you. **I AM A STICKLER FOR ATTENDANCE. I CALL THE CLASS ROLL RELIGIOUSLY. IF YOU LIKE TO CUT CLASS, OR MISS MANY MEETINGS DURING THE SEMESTER, THIS SECTION OF TWENTIETH CENTURY AMERICAN DRAMA IS A VERY BAD PLACE FOR YOU TO BE. IF YOU CHOOSE TO BE SO THOUGHTLESS AS TO MISS MORE THAN FIVE (5) MEETINGS OF THIS CLASS, I WILL DROP YOU FROM THE ROLL WITH A WF. ENOUGH SAID. I HOPE I WILL NOT HAVE TO REPEAT THIS IRON-CLAD RULE. PLEASE DON’T TEST ME ON THIS ISSUE!**

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.

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.

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>. *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.*

Students should familiarize themselves with all policies in the *Student Handbook*, particularly with regard to the University’s Sexual Harassment Policy and University Academic Policies.