

***English 4335:
Senior Seminar: Tragedy***

Summer 2009

**MTWTF 9:40-11:10
Irby 304**

Instructor: Jay Ruud

Office: Irby 317I

Office hours: MTWTF 8:30-9:30; 1:30-2:30

Office Phone: 450-3674 (or 450-5100 to leave message)

Required Texts:

- Aeschylus. *The Oresteia*. Trans. Robert Fagles. New York: Penguin, 1984.
 - Coetzee, J.M. *Disgrace*. New York: Penguin, 1999.
 - Ibsen, Henrik. *Four Plays*. Trans. James McFarlane and Jens Arup. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1981.
 - Melville, Herman. *Billy Budd and Other Tales*. Intro. by Joyce Carol Oates. New York: Signet, 1998.
 - O'Neill, Eugene. *Three Plays*. New York: Vintage, 1995.
 - Shakespeare, William. *Antony and Cleopatra*. Folger Shakespeare Library. New York: Washington Square Press, 1999.
 - Soyinka, Wole. *Death and the King's Horseman*. Ed. Simon Gikandi. New York: Norton, 2003.
 - Wallace, Jennifer. *The Cambridge Introduction to Tragedy*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2007.
 - Wilson, August. *Fences*. New York: Penguin, 1986.
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Course description

According to the catalogue description of this course as a Senior Seminar, it is "A required capstone course for English majors in their senior year that may also satisfy upper-division genre or elective requirements. Others may enroll with the permission of the instructor. This variable-topics course crosses cultural, period, or genre lines. Students assemble a portfolio that demonstrates mastery of the course topic and reflection on the progress and culmination of their undergraduate literary studies. Lecture, discussion, writing. Fall, Spring.

Specifically regarding the subject matter of this specific class: the course is a survey of dramatic and narrative tragedy from classical writers like Aeschylus through authors like Shakespeare and Ibsen to more modern writers like August Wilson and J.M. Coetzee. The course will also include discussions of theories of tragedy, and will consider theoretical ideas of Aristotle, Northrop Frye, and others.

Course Objectives:

Students in this class will

- Read with sensitivity a representative sample of classical, renaissance, and modern tragedies.
 - Analyze, evaluate, and compare the tragic styles and themes of a wide variety of tragic writers.
 - Determine what are the main features of tragedy, which features have remained constant since the earliest dramatic productions, and which features have changed over time.
 - Classify types of tragedy, and make informed judgments about what is or is not a tragic text.
 - Understand how the cultural context and audience of specific tragedies affects our understanding of tragic texts.
 - Explore the performance dimensions of tragedy.
 - Explore major theoretical perspectives on comedy, both ancient and modern.
 - Improve their verbal and written communication skills and research skills through speaking, writing, and gathering and evaluating materials both from the library and the World Wide Web.
 - Improve their capacity to formulate arguments and to assess critically the interpretations of modern scholars.
 - Demonstrate an ability to do effective close reading of literary passages.
 - Demonstrate an ability to use scholarly research in composing a senior-level research paper.
 - Compile a portfolio that involves some reflection on the totality of the student's undergraduate experience in the major.
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Timetable:

Week 1:

- July 7 (Tuesday): Introduction, and consideration of Aristotle's *Poetics* and *Oedipus the King*.
- July 8 (Wednesday): Begin Aeschylus: *Agamemnon*.
- July 9 (Thursday): Continue with Aeschylus, *The Libation Bearers*.
- July 10 (Friday): Finish Aeschylus, *The Eumenides*. By this time, you should also have read Wallace, pp. 1-30 and pp. 117-120.

Week 2:

- July 13 (Monday): Medieval tragedy. Read Chaucer's *Monk's Tale* (online).
- July 14 (Tuesday): Begin Shakespeare, *Antony and Cleopatra*. Read Acts I and II.
- July 15 (Wednesday): Continue Shakespeare, *Antony and Cleopatra*. Read Act III.
- July 16 (Thursday): Finish Shakespeare, *Antony and Cleopatra*. Read Acts IV and V. By this time, you should also have read Wallace, pp. 43-63 and pp. 121-124.
- July 17 (Friday): Read Melville, *Billy Budd*.

Week 3:

- July 20 (Monday): Read Ibsen, *Ghosts*. EXPLICATION PAPER DUE. *Discuss Research Paper*.
- July 21 (Tuesday): Complete discussion of *Ghosts*. Begin Ibsen, *Hedda Gabbler*.
- July 22 (Wednesday): Finish Ibsen, *Hedda Gabbler*. By this time, you should also have read Wallace, pp. 63-75 and pp. 124-128.
- July 23 (Thursday). O'Neill, *Homecoming*.
- July 24 (Friday): O'Neill, *The Hunted*.

Week 4:

- July 27 (Monday): O'Neill, *The Haunted*.
- July 28 (Tuesday): Wilson, *Fences*. Read Act I.
- July 29 (Wednesday): Wilson, *Fences*. Read Act II. By this time you should also have read Wallace, pp. 75-87, and pp. 128-131.
- July 30 (Thursday): Tragedy in film. View Stanley Kubrick, *Paths of Glory*.
- July 31 (Friday): Discuss *Paths of Glory* and film tragedy. Read Wallace, pp. 172-176.

Week 5:

- August 3 (Monday): Soyinka, *Death and the King's Horseman*, scenes 1-3. Read also essay on "The Yoruba World" (pp. 67-73).
- August 4 (Tuesday): Finish Soyinka, *Death and the King's Horseman*, scenes 4-5. Read also the essay "Mediation in Soyinka" (pp. 141-151).
- August 5 (Wednesday): Read Coetzee, *Disgrace*, chapters 1-12 (pp. 1-106).
- August 6 (Thursday): Finish Coetzee, *Disgrace*, chapters 13-24 (pp. 107-220). By this time you should have also read Wallace, pp. 87-99, and pp. 131-137.
- August 7 (Friday): FINAL EXAM. RESEARCH PAPER DUE. PORTFOLIO ASSIGNMENT DUE BY 4:30.

Assignments:

- A short explication (or close reading) focused on an individual scene from one of the texts we are reading will be required, minimum 3 pages, to be due midway through the semester. A more detailed explication assignment will be online by the end of the first week.
- This being a seminar, you are in part responsible for class presentations, and learning from one another. You should choose one text we will be reading and volunteer to lead class discussion on the text on 7/10, 7/16, 7/22, 7/29, 8/3, 8/4, and 8/6.
- A research paper assignment will be due the last day of class. It may be on the same text that you choose to lead class discussion on. A complete assignment will be online before the end of the second week of class.
- A final exam (comprehensive), scheduled for Friday, August 7. The test will include one essay and several short answer IDs.
- Keep a READING JOURNAL in which you comment on, question, and otherwise respond to the readings. Write a journal entry each day on the reading assignment. You may also write a separate entry on the critical or "background" article assigned. Post your journal entries on the Blackboard Bulletin Board by 8:00 A.M. on the day of the class during which we will be discussing the text on which you comment. You should take a few minutes before or after class and read one another's journal entries (and reply to any that you feel compelled to—such online discussions will enhance your journal grade). These entries may raise some issues to discuss in class.
- Class discussion is expected and required. You are expected to be in class every day with the assignment read and ready to discuss the texts for the day. There may be occasional in-class writings and/or group work that would be figured into the Class Participation grade.
- Finally, because this is a capstone course, we ask that you prepare a portfolio. The portfolio should contain ungraded copies of both papers written for this class, plus at least two papers from previous classes taken in your college career: one of these should be a lower level (freshman or sophomore) course, the other from an upper-level (junior or senior) course. For each of the papers, you should fill out a form that includes a written self-assessment of the paper. A reflective paper of at least 500 words

should then be written that assesses your progress throughout your major, evidenced by these papers. For a more detailed assignment and copies of the forms, please see the “Portfolio Assignment” (online).

Grades and Other Policies

- Grades: Final grades in the course will be based on a point system, with a 1000 total possible points. A running total of points will be available on the WebCT site for the course online. The following list equates total points with letter grades:
 - 900-1000 pts.=A
 - 800-899 pts.=B
 - 700-799 pts.=C
 - 600-699 pts.=D
 - 0-599 pts.=F
- Grades will be determined as follows:
 - Explication is worth 200 points (180 pts. or higher is the equivalent of an A).
 - Classroom Discussion Leader role is worth 100 points (90 pts. or higher is equivalent of an A).
 - The Research Paper is worth 250 total points (225 pts. or higher is the equivalent of an A).
 - Final Exam is worth 150 total points (135 pts. or higher is the equivalent of an A).
 - The journal is worth 100 points. total. Posting an entry per day will be worth at least 3 pts. (thus posting 21 perfunctory entries will get you 63 pts.—enough for a “D” on this section). Particularly insightful or fluent entries may garner up to 2 extra points. Extra entries on critical texts or in response to other people’s postings will also get extra points. It may be possible to gain more than the 100 assigned point total for the journal entries.
 - Class participation will be worth 100 pts. You can get 3 pts. per day just for attendance, though you will lose points for coming late or leaving early. Points will be added for regular contributions to class discussion. It may be possible to amass extra points in class participation.
 - The portfolio and its contents will be worth a total of 100 points (90 pts. or higher is the equivalent of an A).
- Late papers or tests will be docked one letter grade, that is, 20 or 25 pts. EXCEPTION: you will be able to turn in the final paper and portfolio late if you are willing to take an incomplete in the class. I would rather you did a good job on them than that you rush to finish them and do them badly.
- Plagiarism or any other form of academic dishonesty will result in an F for the assignment involved and/or an F in the course. Plagiarism is representing the work of another as your own. This would include taking the words or ideas of a published source but representing the source’s words as your own (i.e., not putting the author’s ideas into your own words, or not using quotation marks around quotations); or using the work of other students and passing it off as your own.
- Other Policies:
 - Important academic policies and the campus Sexual Harassment policy are detailed in your *Student Handbook*. Consult the *Handbook* for specifics.
 - AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT: the University of Central Arkansas adheres to the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act. If you need accommodation under this act due to a disability, contact the Office of Disability Services at 450-3135.
 - According to the Department Assessment Plan, “Students completing the BA program in English will take (either in the penultimate or in the final semester of study) a senior seminar which will serve as a capstone course for the major; the course will require at least two written assignments (one a close reading, the other a research paper), random samples of which will be submitted to the department’s Assessment Committee for evaluation before they are graded. The submissions will be “blind” (without student or instructor names), and the analysis performed on them will be for programmatic improvement only.”