

ENG 4042  
MODERN DRAMA  
Fall 2002  
MWF 12:30-1:20, Bogue 17

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Office Hours: Tuesday 2:00-4:00, Wednesday 3:00-5:00, Thursday 9:30-10:30 or by  
appointment

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REQUIRED TEXTS:

*Seeds of Modern Drama*, ed. Norris Houghton

*Eight Modern Plays*, ed. Anthony Caputi

ON RESERVE IN THE LIBRARY:

Robert Corrigan, ed., *Theatre in the Twentieth Century*

Martin Esslin, *Essays on Modern Theatre*

John Gassner, *Directions in Modern Theatre and Drama*

Theodore Hatlen, *Orientation to the Theater*

Felicia Hardison Londré, *The History of World Theater*

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This is a reading course in modern drama, and so our focus will be on the analysis and interpretation of several of the major plays of the period. We will also, however, pay some attention to related developments in the history of the theater, as well as to issues of performance that arise when we try to imagine the enactment of a printed text.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

1. Developing analytical and interpretive skills in textual analysis
2. Learning about the major developments in modern theater.
3. Understanding the role of performance in the production of drama.
4. Enhancing written and oral expression.

GRADING:

The seven issue cards will be averaged to produce 50% of your grade. The essay and final exam will each be worth 20%, and attendance and participation will be worth 5% each.

ISSUE CARDS: An issue-oriented comment productive of class discussion, typed or neatly written on one sheet of paper, with your name on the REVERSE side. Due at the beginning of the indicated classes.

The key is "productive of class discussion." Comments that are (1) so OBVIOUS that everyone will see the same thing, or (2) mere OPINION -- 'I liked/didn't like it' and nothing more -- or (3) plain old PLOT SUMMARY, aren't going to generate a lively exchange of views. What will produce such discussion is harder to identify precisely, but here are a few tips:

A. Distinctions between manifest, surface content and latent, beneath-the-surface content can be fruitful. Morals may receive lip service while the text undermines them in various ways, and apparently 'bad' characters may be described in sympathetic language or 'good' characters dumped on.

B. A recurrent image/phrase/situation/whatever may strike you as having particularly important significance that (1) isn't obvious and (2) enriches our response to the book. Sometimes these have interesting relationships to things outside (myths, religions, other texts) as well as inside the text. Conversely, an image/etc. may strike you as used to excess, to the point of predictability and banality.

C. The text may raise a moral or other issue on which you have strong views. These tend to be either very engrossing -- for those who reflect on and reconsider their opinions -- or extremely irritating -- for those who dogmatically lay down the moral law in 'I'm right!' terms. Remember, the point is to produce class discussion, not control or direct it.

D. You may be convinced that the author has a specific purpose in mind, and that this has influenced what she has written. These can be fruitful, although be careful about saying that you "know" what the author intended; since my first question will be "How do you know that?," you will probably want to use less assertive language.

E. Some aspect of the author's style may strike you as remarkable. If characters are always introduced in the same manner, for example, we might -- and let's stress that might -- reasonably infer something about the author; or this could be related to a decision to use some specific kind of linguistic tone, say a melodramatic or clinical one.

As you're reading, jot down ideas, and the pages where you found them, for ease of future reference. Last, but definitely not least, ALWAYS GIVE EXAMPLES, using page numbers, of how what you are saying is actually there in the text. This way we'll be talking about the same thing while we discuss whether or not what you've observed means what you think it does.

ESSAY:

A 6-8 page expansion of one of your issue cards, or on a topic approved by the instructor.

FINAL EXAM:

You will be asked to briefly identify key terms and concepts dealt with in the course, and to answer one essay question on a general theme or topic.

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION:

Students with more than four unexcused absences will receive no marks for attendance. Participation is graded on the quality of your classroom responses, and on the extent to which you demonstrate familiarity with, and understanding of, the assigned readings.

## SCHEDULE:

Sept. 4: Introduction and issue card practice  
Sept. 6: Theater history up to Ibsen  
Sept. 9: Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People* – 1<sup>st</sup> issue card due  
Sept. 11: “ “ “ “ “ “ -- issues  
Sept. 13: “ “ “ “ “ “ -- contexts  
Sept. 16: “ “ “ “ “ “ -- performances  
Sept. 18: “ “ “ “ “ “ -- interpretations  
Sept. 20: “ “ “ “ “ “ -- conclusions/ linkages/ essay topics  
Sept. 23: Strindberg's *Miss Julie* – 2<sup>nd</sup> issue card due  
Sept. 25: “ “ “ “ -- issues  
Sept. 27: “ “ “ “ -- contexts  
Sept. 30: “ “ “ “ -- performances  
Oct. 2: “ “ “ “ -- interpretations  
Oct. 4: “ “ “ “ -- conclusions/ linkages/ essay topics  
Oct. 7: Chekhov's *Three Sisters* – 3<sup>rd</sup> issue card due  
Oct. 9: “ “ “ “ -- issues  
Oct. 11: “ “ “ “ -- contexts  
Oct. 14: “ “ “ “ -- performances/ interpretations  
Oct. 16: “ “ “ “ -- conclusions/linkages/ essay topics  
Oct. 18: NO CLASS – FALL BREAK  
Oct. 21: Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author* – 4<sup>th</sup> issue card due  
Oct. 23: “ “ “ “ “ “ “ “ -- issues  
Oct. 25: “ “ “ “ “ “ “ “ -- contexts  
Oct. 28: “ “ “ “ “ “ “ “ -- performances/ interpretations  
Oct. 30: “ “ “ “ “ “ “ “ -- conclusions/ linkages/ essay topics  
Nov. 1: O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey into Night* – 5<sup>th</sup> issue card due  
Nov. 4: “ “ “ “ “ “ “ “ -- issues  
Nov. 6: “ “ “ “ “ “ “ “ -- contexts  
Nov. 8: “ “ “ “ “ “ “ “ -- performances  
Nov. 11: “ “ “ “ “ “ “ “ -- interpretations  
Nov. 13: “ “ “ “ “ “ “ “ -- conclusions/ linkages/ essay topics  
Nov. 15: Brecht's *Mother Courage* – 6<sup>th</sup> issue card due  
Nov. 18: “ “ “ “ -- issues  
Nov. 20: “ “ “ “ -- contexts  
Nov. 22: “ “ “ “ -- performances/ interpretations  
Nov. 25: “ “ “ “ -- conclusions/ linkages/ essay topics  
Nov. 27 and 29: NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING  
Dec. 2: Beckett's *Happy Days* – 7<sup>th</sup> issue card due  
Dec. 4: “ “ “ “ -- issues  
Dec. 6: “ “ “ “ -- contexts. Essay due.  
Dec. 9: “ “ “ “ -- performances/ interpretations  
Dec. 11: “ “ “ “ -- conclusion/ linkages  
Dec. 13: REVIEW  
Dec. 16-19: FINAL EXAM