

Introduction to Dramatic Analysis
100 or 200 level
Meets 3x week for 50 minutes

Sara B.T. Thiel

Office Hours and Location

Contact Email

This course serves as an introduction to the practice of analyzing dramatic literature. Students will read a number of plays from the “canon” of dramatic literature alongside dramatic analysis theory. I have designed the course to unfold somewhat chronologically so we can examine the art of playwrighting within historical context and along the lines of artistic heritage. While most (though not all) of the plays read throughout this semester are Euro-American in origin, students will have the opportunity to read across a wide-range of themes and cultures that reflect the diversity of our world.

Course Objectives:

1. To introduce the fundamental elements of dramatic structure
2. To develop a shared vocabulary for the discussion of texts
3. To recognize and analyze a variety of stylistic forms of playwrighting
4. To read and analyze representative plays to develop written and verbal analytical skills
5. To develop personal strategies for analyzing plays

Required Texts:

Longman Anthology of Drama and Theater: A Global Perspective

Backwards and Forwards, David Ball

The Brother/Sister Plays, Terrell Alvin McCraney

M. Butterfly, David Henry Hwang

Grading

In-class quizzes/writing assignments	100 points
Group play presentation	50 points
Midterm Essay Exam	100 points
Play Attendance and Treatment	100 points
Interview with a Playwright	100 points
Final Anthology Project	100 points
Class Participation:	50 points

Total: 600 points

A=90-100%; B = 80-89%; C=70-79%; D=60-69%; F=0-59%

Class Participation: You are required to attend and participate in class. Please bring your book with you to every class as we will be working from it. Classroom discussions require alertness, constructive engagement with, and respectful attendance to your instructors and fellow students. Please do not text, check e-mail, or engage in extraneous talking during class. I reserve the right to ask any disruptive student to leave the room; should we do this, that student will receive an absence for the day and may not make up missed assignments. ATTENDANCE: more than 3 unexcused absences will result in the loss of all class participation points.

ASSIGNMENTS

Group Play Presentation (50 points)

Each student will have the opportunity to choose one play to present during the course of the semester. You may present alone or you may find yourself working in a group. Come prepared to discuss the historical context of the play (including its structure, artistic heritage, and performance history) and any pertinent information about the playwright. The presenter(s) will then open our class discussion with a series of 3-5 questions. These *can* be questions to which you don't have the answer. They should not be "quiz" or "reading comprehension" quizzes. Instead, interrogate the work of the playwright and think about the performance implications offered by varying interpretations of the play. I will provide considerations for each play and playwright to each group/presenter.

Midterm Essay Exam (100 points)

Every student write an analytical essay in class in lieu of a midterm multiple-choice exam. This will be a way for you to apply what you have learned during the class. More details will follow at a later date.

Play Attendance and Treatment (100 points)

All students will be required to attend one of the plays produced by the Department of Theatre/Local Theatre and write a 3-page analysis of the performance. More details and a treatment prompt will follow at a later date.

Interview with a Playwright (100 points)

You will choose one of the following playwrights and conduct an "interview" with him or her as if this would go into a popular stage magazine or newspaper. Establish a set of 10 questions appropriate to the individual that would allow us to understand his/her background, literary influences, interest in topical events and movements of his/her era, and relationship with contemporary stage practices. Research your individual to provide their answers with as much accuracy as possible. You may choose from the playwrights below. No more than two students may interview the same playwright. First come, first served. Email me with your requests.

Samuel Beckett	Langston Hughes	Zeami Motokiyo
Bertolt Brecht	Henrik Ibsen	Eugene O'Neill
Anton Chekhov	Alfred Jarry	Luigi Pirandello
Susan Glaspell	Federico Garcia Lorca	Hallie Flanagan
Lorraine Hansberry	Arthur Miller	William Shakespeare

George Bernard Shaw	Sophie Treadwell
August Strindberg	Oscar Wilde
John Millington Synge	Tennessee Williams

Final Anthology Project (100 points)

You will propose the creation of your own anthology of dramatic literature and accompany it with a 5-7 paper that justifies your choices, making it clear to the publisher why these particular texts ought to be printed together. This paper will serve as the Introduction to your anthology. You will need to

include fifteen plays in your anthology. While you are welcome to use plays from this course, five of these plays must be outside the course reading list. Additional details are forthcoming.

Course Calendar

This calendar is subject to change due to course developments

<u>Week 1</u>	<u>In-Class</u>	<u>What's Due?</u>
M	Introduction: What is a play?	
W	Basic Elements: Looking at Plot in short works by Suzan-Lori Parks	
F	Short play analysis	<i>The Bear</i> , Chekhov

UNIT 1: "The Classis"

<u>Week 2</u>		
M	Labor Day: No Class	
W	<i>Hamlet</i>	<i>Hamlet</i> & Ball (all)
F	<i>Hamlet</i>	
<u>Week 3</u>		
M	<i>Oedipus</i> presentation	<i>Oedipus</i>
W	<i>Oedipus</i>	Aristotle's <i>Poetics</i>
F	<i>Oedipus</i>	
<u>Week 4</u>		
M	<i>Tartuffe</i> presentation	<i>Tartuffe</i>
W	<i>Tartuffe</i>	"The (Third) Opening Night of <i>Tartuffe</i> "
F	<i>Tartuffe</i>	

UNIT 2: The Moderns

<u>Week 5</u>		
M	<i>Miss Julie</i> presentation	<i>Miss Julie</i>
W	<i>Miss Julie</i>	"Naturalism" and "Fathers of Realism"
F	<i>Miss Julie</i>	
<u>Week 6</u>		
M	<i>Trifles</i> presentation	<i>Trifles</i>
W	<i>Trifles</i>	"Intimate Theatres"
F	<i>Trifles</i>	

Week 7

M	Midterm Essay Exam	
W	<i>The Man Who Turned into a Stick</i> presentation	<i>The Man Who Turned into a Stick</i>
F	<i>The Man Who Turned into a Stick</i>	“Visit to a Small Planet” (handout)

UNIT 3: The (American?) DreamWeek 8

M	<i>Death of a Salesman</i> presentation	<i>Death of a Salesman</i>
W	<i>Death of a Salesman</i>	“Tragedy and the Common Man”
F	<i>Death of a Salesman</i>	

Week 9

M	<i>MASTER HAROLD...and the boys</i> pres.	<i>MASTER HAROLD...</i>
W	<i>MASTER HAROLD...and the boys</i>	“South Africa’s Market Theater and the Independent Theater”
F	<i>MASTER HAROLD...and the boys</i>	Play treatment

Week 10

M	<i>Raisin in the Sun</i> presentation	<i>Raisin in the Sun</i>
W	<i>Raisin in the Sun</i>	“The Revolutionary Theatre”
F	<i>Raisin in the Sun</i>	

Week 11

M	<i>Fences</i> presentation	<i>Fences</i>
W	<i>Fences</i>	
F	<i>Fences</i>	Interview with a Playwright

UNIT 4: Contemporary WorriesWeek 12

M	<i>Mud</i> presentation	<i>Mud</i>
W	<i>Mud</i>	“Acting Out: Feminist Performances”
F	<i>Mud</i>	

Week 13

M	<i>M. Butterfly</i> presentation	<i>M. Butterfly</i>
W	<i>M. Butterfly</i>	<i>Madame Butterfly</i> , Belasco (handout)
F	<i>M. Butterfly</i>	

Week 14

No Classes – Fall Break

Week 15

M *Angels in America* presentation

Angels in America

W *Angels in America*

F *Angels in America*

Week 16

M *In the Red and Brown Water* presentation

In the Red and Brown Water

W *In the Red and Brown Water*

The Fourth Stage, Soyinka

F *In the Red and Brown Water*

Finals Week

Final Anthology Project Due

Debrief