

**ENGLISH 234**  
**Spring 2010**  
**American Drama**  
**Tuesday and Thursday 10:20-11:30A**  
**Comenius Hall 111**

**Instructor: Dr. Nicole Tabor**

**Office Hours: Mon 8:30-9:30, Wed 8:30-9:30, Thu 1:30-3:30, and by appointment**

**Office Location and Phone: 302 Zinzendorf Hall, (610)625-7842**

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**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

In this class we will closely read American plays with significant attention to dramatic form. It will be useful to historicize these texts' formal innovation(s) in order to consider how dramatic literature helps us understand American identity. Each play will illuminate a new way of seeing unique to its period in time. Some of the course's more recent texts reflect the enormous contributions of women and people of color to American drama. Developing and interrogating questions of national identity will complicate our understanding of drama as a unique literary genre. Our readings, discussions, and writing assignments will offer the opportunity to develop questions at issue for our American discourse community. Writing especially will provide the chance to develop your own line of inquiry regarding specific texts.

**COURSE GOALS:**

- Develop a sophisticated vocabulary of key terms to closely read, discuss and write about American drama
- Enrich our textual experience of American drama by critically watching and assessing live performances
- Deepen our understanding and appreciation of multicultural contributions to American drama
- Work collaboratively to generate challenging questions at issue for our discourse community
- Design and implement an intellectually substantial research project drawing on original argumentation, writing, and research which substantiates claims utilizing American drama as textual evidence
- Utilize life experiences to make connections between American drama and national identity

**REQUIRED TEXTS:**

1. *American Drama: Colonial to Contemporary* by Watt and Richardson
2. *Spoon River Anthology* by Edgar Lee Masters
3. *Four Plays* by Sarah Ruhl
4. *Dead Man's Cell Phone* by Sarah Ruhl
5. *Angels in America* by Tony Kushner

**ASSIGNMENTS**

**PERCENT OF FINAL GRADE:**

First Essay	20
Second Essay	20
Third Essay	20
Reading Journal	20
Oral Presentations	10
Class Participation	10

**ESSAYS:** You are required to compose three argumentative essays. The first essay will be 3-4 pages, essay two will be 4-6 pages and the final essay will be 10-12 pages in length. You will develop the final essay from an abstract and rough draft. These essays will be thesis-driven and follow MLA guidelines. Essays will be evaluated primarily on the quality of your ideas and the thoroughness of your critical argument (including appropriate citations of the text). Organizational, grammatical, and other writing matters will, however, also affect your grade. We will discuss these essays in further detail throughout the term.

**READING JOURNAL:** You will write a one-page journal entry for each play. This entry will consist of two parts. In part one you will briefly summarize the plot and part two will consist of a discussion question. These questions are useful in generating class discussion and essays from our readings. Please refer to the handout “Discussion Questions as Post-reading.” You may be asked to read from your response in class. These journals will be checked each class period and collected twice during the term. Also, you will be required to attend two productions of Sarah Ruhl plays and write two 1-2 page drama reviews in your journal. Please refer to the handout “Drama Review Guidelines” for format information.

**ORAL PRESENTATION:** You will be required to give two group presentations on two separate assigned plays. Your group will summarize the play, ask the class significant discussion questions related to your text, and create a handout. Your presentation will also historicize the play. A sign-up sheet will be circulated in class.

**PARTICIPATION:** Our classroom comprises a *discourse community*, in which we gain knowledge and insight through mutual inquiry as a result of both verbal and written interaction with others in the class. This interaction will take the form of co-operation as well as respectful disagreement. As a member of this discourse community, you will be expected to contribute intelligently and frequently to the discussion. Along with speaking, effective participation requires active and open-minded listening to others. Respond to and interact with your peers, not just with me. The more you participate, the more interesting, exciting, and rewarding this class will be. Always bring your textbook and notes to class. Expect to read passages aloud and closely investigate details of the texts we are studying. There will be unannounced quizzes and in-class writings throughout the term. You will also be required to attend a revision conference. I highly encourage you to visit me during office hours (or make an appointment) to discuss your paper ideas or any other questions or concerns related to the course. There will also be an extra-credit option related to the Multi-cultural Reading Group.

**POLICIES:**

**Grades.** It is within the instructor’s purview to apply qualitative judgment in determining grades for any assignments and for the final course grade.

**Format.** All written work should include your name, the course number and instructor (Tabor), the date, and the assignment in the upper right-hand corner. Any pages after the first should be numbered and stapled. All work must be typed using a reasonable 12-point font, double-spaced, and conventional margins (one inch). No electronic assignments accepted without special arrangement.

**Deadlines.** Reading responses, quizzes, and other daily assignments will not be accepted late including assignments due to absence. Assignments are due during the class period of the due date. Extensions may be given on essays, provided that a student asks for the extension at least one week in advance. Unless an extension is given, late essays will be reduced by one letter grade for each day that passes after the due date, e.g. an A becomes a B if one day late.

**Access for Students with Disabilities.** Students who wish to request accommodations in this class for a disability should contact Mr. Joe Kempfer, Assistant Director of Learning Services for Disability Support, 1307 Main Street (extension 1510). Accommodations cannot be provided until authorization is received from the office of Learning Services.

**Plagiarism.** All work submitted in this course must be your own and be written exclusively for this course. The use of sources (ideas, quotations, paraphrases) must be properly documented. Please see the Student Handbook if you have any questions about your use of sources.

**Attendance.** It is your responsibility to sign the attendance sheet at each class. Your final course grade will be dropped by 10% for each unexcused absence after the third. A note from a doctor’s office is required for an excused absence.

**Tentative Reading Schedule.** Readings are to be completed on the day assigned. The schedule is subject to change.

**Week One**

Tue Jan 19 Introduction

Thu Jan 21 *The Contrast* by Royall Tyler  
Critical Reading: Jeffrey Richards, *Early American Drama*

**Week Two**

Tue Jan 26 *Metamora* by John Stone  
**Essay One Due**

Thu Jan 28 *Fashion; or, Life in New York* by Anna Mowatt

**Week Three**

Tue Feb 2 *Under the Gaslight* by Augustin Daly

Thu Feb 4 *Shenandoah* by Bronson Howard  
Critical Reading: Donald Shiach, *Contexts in Literature*

**Week Four**

Tue Feb 9 *Trifles* by Susan Glaspell  
*Machinal* by Sophie Treadwell

Thu Feb 11 *Mulatto* by Langston Hughes  
**Thesis Workshop**

**Week Five**

Tue Feb 16 Library Visit: Primary and Secondary Sources

Thu Feb 18 *Spoon River* by Edgar Lee Masters

**Week Six**

Tue Feb 23 *The Iceman Cometh* by Eugene O'Neill  
Critical Reading: Sonia Moore, *The Stanislavski System*

Thu Feb 25 *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* by Tennessee Williams  
**Essay Two Due**

**Week Seven**

Tue March 2 *Dutchman* by Amiri Baraka/Jones  
Critical Reading: David Krasner, *American Drama 1945-2000*

Thu March 4 *The Tooth of Crime* by Sam Shepard  
**Reading Journal Due**

**Week Eight**

Tue March 9 Spring Recess, No Class

Thu March 11 Spring Recess, No Class

**Week Nine**

Tue March 16 *Getting Out* by Marsha Norman  
**Abstract Due**

Thu March 18 *Dead Man's Cell Phone* by Sarah Ruhl  
Also: March 19<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup> *Dead Man's Cell Phone*, Lehigh University Production

**Week Ten**

Tue March 23 *Dead Man's Cell Phone* by Sarah Ruhl  
Guest Speaker: Bess Rowen, Director

Thu March 25 *Spell #7* by Ntozake Shange  
**Rough Draft Due**

**Week Eleven**

Tue March 30 **Conferences**

Thu April 1 **Conferences**

**Week Twelve**

Tue April 6 *M. Butterfly* by David Henry Hwang

Thu April 8 *The Clean House* by Sarah Ruhl  
Also: April 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup>, *Clean House*, Moravian College Production

**Week Thirteen**

Tue April 13 *The Clean House* by Sarah Ruhl

Thu April 15 *Oleanna* by David Mamet

**Week Fourteen**

Tue April 20 *Angels in America* by Tony Kushner

Thu April 22 *Angels in America* by Tony Kushner  
Critical Reading: Tony Kushner and Bertolt Brecht  
**Reading Journal Due**

**Week Fifteen**

Tue April 27 *Euridice* by Sarah Ruhl

Thu April 29 Conclusions and Evaluations  
**Essay Three Due**