

English 361 Dramatic Literature and the Moral Life 1875-Present Spring 2010

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Course Objectives

- To study selected plays of modern dramatic literature (1875-present) that pose moral problems for the characters
- To investigate in these plays, and especially in their characters, issues of race, ethnicity, religion, and gender, as well as other concerns that create or compromise the moral life as it is experienced in the modern world
- To enhance the literary and theatrical study of this dramatic literature by drawing upon complementary or rival perspectives, including the historical, psychological, philosophical, and theological, as well as the always helpful view of the fine arts
- To identify and understand better the personal values each reader or audience member brings to his or her judgment of a play or a character
- To develop analytical, oral, and writing skills
- To strengthen the listening and viewing skills of a practiced audience member through readings and filmed performances
- English 361 meets the U2 (Moral Life) requirement for LinC and the genre requirement in the English major.

Required Texts

Bennett, Alan. *The History Boys*. New York: Faber, 2004.

Dorfman, Ariel. *Death and the Maiden*. New York: Penguin, 1994.

Edson, Margaret. *Wit*. New York: Faber, 1999.

Fugard, Athol. "*Master Harold*". . . and the boys. New York: Penguin, 1984.

Glaspell, Susan. *Trifles*. Handout.

Hellman, Lillian. *Six Plays by Lillian Hellman*. New York: Vintage, 1979.

Ibsen, Henrik. *Ghosts and Other Plays*. Tr. Peter Watts. London: Penguin, 1964.

Kushner, Tony. *Angels in America, Part One: Millennium Approaches*. New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1993.

Miller, Arthur. *All My Sons*. New York: Penguin, 2000.

Shanley, John Patrick. *Doubt*. New York: Theatre Communications Group, 2005.

Course Requirements

Class Participation

Each class member will choose a play for which to serve as co-instructor. A co-instructor will meet with the course instructor before the class begins study of each play to prepare questions for an opening round of discussion. The co-instructor will also be responsible for offering a brief (5-10 minutes) oral presentation (and a companion written version) of an interdisciplinary insight about the play under consideration. An interdisciplinary insight will be an idea about or understanding of some aspect of the play from the perspective of a discipline other than literary analysis or theater study.

Students are expected to attend class regularly; absences will be noted and will negatively affect the class participation grade. In lieu of written quizzes, a quick round of oral questioning by the instructor and co-instructor, in which each student will have an opportunity to respond, will begin the study of every play. These short oral responses, contributions to class discussions, and active participation in other class activities will be considered in assigning the class participation grade, which will count as 20% of each student's final grade.

Journal

Each student will keep an electronic journal of her or his reactions to the readings, discussions, and videos for the course, writing at least 250 words about each play for a total of 10 entries. While not highly formal compositions, these journal entries will be shared communications and, as such, are expected to be written with some attention to clarity, facility, and correctness of expression. Each response will be e-mailed to student colleagues in the course and to the instructor within 48 hours of the last scheduled discussion of the play, i.e., according to the following schedule.

<i>Trifles</i> due 1/23 before 2:20 p.m.	<i>Angels</i> due 3/25 before 2:20 p.m.
<i>Ghosts</i> due 1/30 before 2:20 p.m.	<i>Death</i> due 4/3 before 2:20 p.m.
<i>Watch</i> due 2/11 before 2:20 p.m.	<i>Wit</i> due 4/10 before 2:20 p.m.
<i>Sons</i> due 2/20 before 2:20 p.m.	<i>History</i> due 4/17 before 2:20 p.m.
<i>Harold</i> due 3/4 before 2:20 p.m.	<i>Doubt</i> due 4/29 before 2:20 p.m.

Each entry can earn 10 points, 2 points each for the following—

1. being on time,
2. being at least 250 words long [include a word-count at the end of each response],

3. focusing on a specific moral issue,
 4. including a relevant quotation from the text in support of the ideas expressed in the entry, and
 5. demonstrating thoughtful consideration that extends the class discussion or approaches the play's moral content from a fresh perspective—
- for a total of 100 points. The total grade for the journal will be worth 20% of the final grade.

Visual or Critical Analysis of a Character

Each student will schedule an oral presentation and analyze a character from the play under consideration on that day. The student will present orally to the class

- **either** a visual analysis of the nature, behavior, moods, motives, feelings, etc., of that character in facing a moral crisis, using a non-representational painting to illustrate the analysis
- **or** a critical analysis of the character based on what the character says, what he or she does, and what other characters and the playwright say about the character.

The visual or critical analysis should not exceed 15 minutes. A companion essay—two word-processed, double-spaced pages of written analysis summarizing the oral presentation—will be submitted to the instructor immediately following the oral presentation. The student will conclude the activity with a practiced reading of a speech by the character, selected for its illustrative and/or revelatory significance. This activity will be worth 20% of the final grade.

Examination

An examination on March 4 will be worth 20% of the final grade. There will be no final examination.

Paper

A research paper dealing with a moral issue in a play studied for the course will be due on April 29. Each student will identify three critical essays addressing the issue. One of the three critical essays may be a theater or film review. The citation (in MLA format, as it will appear on the works-cited page of the finished draft of the research paper) and a brief summary (100 words) of one critical essay will be due on February 11, a second on March 18, and a third on April 15. Using the three critical essays previously summarized and two additional sources, one of which may be a theater or film review, a student will develop a paper supporting a thesis about the play's treatment of the moral issue in question. The final paper will be 8-10 word-processed, double-spaced pages in length, including documentation in the MLA format, and will count as 20% of the final grade.

Grading

The final grade will, in general, be computed according to the percentages noted above. Late work will be penalized. An examination missed for a valid, documented reason may be re-scheduled at the discretion of the instructor. The instructor will apply both quantitative and qualitative judgments in determining grades for individual assignments and for the course.

Grading equivalents:

A+	98	B+	88	C+	78	D+	68
A	95	B	85	C	75	D	65
A-	92	B-	82	C-	72	D-	62
						F	55

Academic Honesty

Students in this course should refer to the statement on academic honesty at Moravian College in the current *Student Handbook*. It is also available online at <http://www.moravian.edu/StudentLife/handbook/academic2.htm>

Students must retain copies of all written work submitted to the instructor, as well as all notes, drafts, and materials used in preparing assignments. These are to be made available for inspection by the instructor at any time.

Questions about appropriate collaboration, proper documentation, and other honesty issues can be confusing. If in doubt, ask the instructor.

N.B.

- This syllabus, including the schedule of readings, written assignments, and examinations that follows, is subject to change.
- To be successful, students should expect to work at least twelve hours per week outside of class preparing for this class.
- Students with disabilities who believe that they may need accommodations in this class are encouraged to contact the Learning Services Office as soon as possible to enhance the likelihood that such accommodations are implemented in a timely fashion.

Schedule of Readings, Written Assignments, and Examinations for English 361

- Jan.** 19 Introduction to the course; readers' theater presentation of *Trifles* (1916)
 21 *Ghosts* (1881)
- 26 *Ghosts*
 28 *Ghosts*
- Feb.** 02 *Watch on the Rhine* (1941)
 04 *Watch on the Rhine*
- 09 *Watch on the Rhine*
 11 *All My Sons* (1947); **first critical summary due**
- 16 *All My Sons*
 18 *All My Sons*
- 23 "*Master Harold*" . . . and the boys (1982)
 25 "*Master Harold*" . . . and the boys
- Mar.** 02 "*Master Harold*" . . . and the boys
 04 **Examination**
- 16 *Angels in America* (1990)
 18 *Angels in America*; **second critical summary due**
- 23 *Angels in America*
 25 *Death and the Maiden* (1991)
- 30 *Death and the Maiden*
- Apr.** 01 *Death and the Maiden*
- 06 *Wit* (1995)
 08 *Wit*
- 13 *History Boys* (2004)
 15 *History Boys*; **third critical summary due**
- 20 *Doubt* (2004)
 22 *Doubt*
- 27 *Doubt*
 29 Conclusions; **paper due**