

English 361 Dramatic Literature and the Moral Life 1875-Present Spring 2012

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English 361 meets the U2 (Moral Life) requirement for LinC and the genre requirement in the English major.

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 live and filmed performances and reader's theatre

Required Texts

Churchill, Caryl. *Cloud 9*. New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1994.

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. *The Little Foxes*. New York: Dramatists Play Service, Inc., 1969.

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

Mamet, David. *Glengarry Glen Ross*. New York: Grove Press, 1984.

Miller, Arthur. *A View from the Bridge*. New York: Penguin, 2009.

Ruhl, Sarah. *The Clean House and Other Plays*. New York: Theatre Communications Group, 2006.

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

Course Requirements

- **Quizzes**. Short quizzes will be administered, unannounced, at the start of ten class meetings. A quiz will assess basic familiarity with the assigned reading for that day. Quiz questions may be posed in a variety of forms: identification, multiple-choice, true-or-false, fill-in-the-blank, or short-answer. Each quiz will be worth 10 points, and the combined total of points earned will be worth 10% of the final course grade.
- **In-class responses**. Impromptu responses will be written at the start of ten class meetings. Each student will write a brief, thoughtful commentary on a short text selected by the instructor from the assigned reading for that day, focusing on a moral issue addressed in the text. Each written response can earn up to 10 points, and the combined total of points earned will be worth 10% of the final course grade.
- **Interdisciplinary insight**. Each student will sign up for a date on which to make a brief oral presentation (no more than 5 minutes) of an interdisciplinary insight into the play under consideration. An interdisciplinary insight will be information or an understanding about some aspect of the play from the perspective of a discipline other than literary analysis or theater study. Both value of information and quality of communication will be considered in assigning up to 10 points for this presentation, which may be substituted for any one quiz or in-class response grade, at the direction of the student.
- **Visual Analysis of a Character**. Each student will sign up for a date on which to present orally to the class a visual analysis of a character chosen from the play under consideration at that class meeting. Using a non-representational painting both to drive and to illustrate the analysis, the student will explore the principles, behavior, moods, motives, ideas, feelings, etc., involved in that character's moral life. The presentation, including an opportunity for audience questions, 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. Both value of analysis and quality of communication will be considered in assigning a grade that will encompass both the oral and written aspects of the visual analysis, and the grade will be worth 10% of the final course grade.

- Performance review. A review of a live performance of one of the plays studied for the course will be due no later than April 25, but students are encouraged to submit their reviews within a week of attending the performance, while notes scribbled in the dark are still decipherable, details are still clear in one's mind, and the emotional sense of the experience is still fresh. The review will be about 500 words long and will take particular notice of the production's handling of the moral issues in the play. Lehigh University will be presenting Lillian Hellman's *The Little Foxes* from February 17 through February 25. For further information and to order tickets, go to <http://www.zoellnerartscenter.org/2011/06/22/1112-the-little-foxes/>. DeSales University will be presenting Arthur Miller's *A View from the Bridge* from February 22 through March 4. For further information and to order tickets, go to <http://www.desales.edu/default.aspx?pageid=638#3>. Currently in previews, Margaret Edson's *Wit* officially opens at the Manhattan Theatre Club in New York City on January 26. For further information and to order tickets, go to <http://www.witonbroadway.com/index.html#ADV000000800>. If anyone discovers within reasonable distance another current or upcoming live spring production of these plays or any of the others on the course reading list, notify the instructor, and the information will be shared with the class. The review will count towards 10% of the final course grade.
- Mid-term examination. A mid-term examination on February 22 will be worth 20% of the final course grade. There will be no final examination.
- The Clean House panel. A panel of participants in Moravian College Theatre Company's April 2010 production of Sarah Ruhl's *The Clean House* is tentatively planned for the April 11 class meeting. Each student will submit at the start of class 10 questions about the play and the MCTC production to be posed potentially to one or more of the panel participants. A 250-500 word reflection on the panelists' response to one of the questions (one's own or someone else's) will be due at the following class meeting on April 16. Questions and reflection together will count towards 10% of the final course grade.
- Performances. Each student will randomly draw a date—April 16, 18, 23, or 25—on which to offer a practiced reading of a significant monologue by any character from any play studied during the semester. The speech will be read twice, preceding and following a brief analysis of its important elements and explanation of its significance with regard to an understanding of the character's moral life. The two readings and commentary together must not exceed 10 minutes, and the performance will be worth 10% of the final course grade.
- Paper. A research paper dealing with a moral issue in a play studied for the course will be due before noon on May 1 in Zinzendorf 306. During the semester each student will identify three critical essays addressing this moral issue in the play. 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 13, a second on March 19, and a third on April 18. 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+	97-100	B+	87-89	C+	77-79	D+	67-69
A	94-96	B	84-86	C	74-76	D	64-66
A-	90-93	B-	80-83	C-	70-73	D-	60-63
						F	0-59

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.** **16** Introduction to the course; readers' theatre presentation of *Trifles* (1916)
 18 *The Little Foxes* (1939), Act 1
- 23** *The Little Foxes*, Acts 2-3
 25 *A View from the Bridge* (1956), Act 1
- 30** *A View from the Bridge*, Act 2
- Feb.** **01** *Cloud 9* (1978), Act 1
- 06** *Cloud 9*, Act 2
 08 "Master Harold". . . and the boys (1982), read entire play
- 13** "Master Harold". . . and the boys, discussion continues; **1st critical summary**
 15 *Glengarry Glen Ross* (1984), Act 1
- 20** *Glengarry Glen Ross*, Act 2
 22 Examination
- 27** *Angels in America* (1990), Acts 1-2
 29 *Angels in America*, Act 3
- Mar.** **12** *Death and the Maiden* (1991), Acts 1-2
 14 *Death and the Maiden*, Act 3
- 19** *Wit* (1995), read to the top of page 44+; **2nd critical summary**
 21 *Wit*, read to the conclusion
- 26** *Doubt* (2004), Preface & I-V
 28 *Doubt*, VI-IX
- Apr.** **02** *The Clean House* (2004), Act 1
 04 *The Clean House*, Act 2
- 11** *The Clean House* panel; **10 questions**
- 16 Performances; panel question reflection**
 18 Performances; 3rd critical summary
- 23 Performances**
 25 Performances; final deadline for review
- May** **01** Research paper due by noon in Zinzendorf 306