

THE 302: The Theatre in History IV: Dramatic History, Literature, Theory and Criticism; Contemporary Drama (1918-2011) Spring Semester, 2011

Class Meets Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 11:00-11:50 p.m.
In The Sage Center For the Arts, Room 234 ("The Seminar Room")

Dr. James M. Brandon
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Office Hours: M through F from 1:00-1:50 p.m., or by appointment.

My office is located on the first floor of the Sage Center for the Arts, directly across from the Art Gallery near the main entrance, office 126.

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GOALS

The primary goal of this course is to familiarize students with the literature, theories and developing history of contemporary drama. As such, the course will involve an *extremely* rigorous reading schedule designed to demonstrate the breadth and scope of theatrical activity from 1918-2011 (although our first play is from 1916!). By the end of this course, students will be familiar with and able to discuss the various components of the contemporary theatre. Students are also expected to master an array of difficult and complex theories of the theatre.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Brockett, Oscar G. with Hildy, Franklin J. History of the Theatre. Tenth Edition. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2008.

Fortier, Mark. Theory/Theatre: An Introduction. Second Edition. New York: Routledge, 2002.

Gainor, J. Ellen, Gardner, Stanton B., and Puchner, Martin. The Norton Anthology of Drama, Volumes 1 & 2. New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 2009.

GRADING SCALE

A=98-100 (A+), 93-97 (A), 90-92 (A-)

B=88-89 (B+), 83-87 (B), 80-82 (B-)

C=78-79 (C+), 73-77 (C), 70-72 (C-)

D=68-69 (D+), 63-67 (D), 60-62 (D-)

F=59 and below

GRADES

The final grade will be determined using the following formula:

Participation	5%
Alternate Readings Project	5%
"Extra" Play	5 or 10%
Discussion Leader	10%
Book Review	10%
Theory Project	10 or 15%
Mid-Term Examination	15%
Final Examination	15%
Quizzes	20%

ASSIGNMENTS

Participation: Discussion, preferably enthusiastic and educated discussion, will be a major component of this course. **Students are expected to contribute to class discussions. You need to talk.** At various points throughout the semester, individual students will be called upon to lead discussion (see "Discussion Leader" below). When it is clear that a student has not read the assigned material for the day, participation points will be lost. Attendance is a vital part of your participation grade, and every absence, **NO MATTER THE REASON**, will result in points being lost (see "**New Attendance Policy**" below).

Quizzes: There will be four quizzes given over the course of the semester. The degree of difficulty in the quizzes depends upon how well the instructor feels the students are keeping up in the reading. Quizzes will usually consist of 20 short-answer questions. **QUIZZES CANNOT BE MADE UP.**

Discussion Leader/Plays: Each student will be a discussion leader for at least one play over the course of the semester. There are two components to this assignment:

A) Discussion leaders need to prepare a single-page handout for the class (two-sided). On this handout should be:

- 1) A **very brief** plot summary and character breakdown
- 2) An annotated bibliography consisting of at least 10 books and/or web sites about the play or author
- 3) 10 discussion questions about the play
- 4) A passage from at least one performance review of the play
- 5) Anything else you feel should be included in the discussion of the play that you can fit on the one sheet of paper

B) Discussion leaders will also help to lead the class during discussion days with the following schedule:

- 1) *Video or Reading of the script.* If there is a video or DVD of the play available in the library, student will find and select a scene for presentation in class. If not, the student will select a short scene to be read aloud in class. The student will also select the actors from the class. **I have taught many of these plays at HC for over a decade, so I tend to know whether or not we have**

a version

on video in the library... (5-10 minutes total)

- 2) *Student Introduction to the Play.* The student will give the class a brief overview of the play. Not plot summary, but observations and opinions about the play. What they thought of it. Questions they had. Some interesting tidbit they dug up, etc. (5-10 minutes total)
- 3) *Faculty Introduction and Transition.* James will talk about the play we have read for the day from his perspective, as well as why he chose the alternative text for the day (5-10 minutes total)
- 4) *Alternative Play Discussion* (See "**Alternate Play Assignment**" below, 5-10

minutes

total)

- 5) *Discussion Questions and General Discussion.* The student will lead the class in consideration of discussion questions and other possibilities (10-20 minutes)

Discussion Leaders will be graded upon their preparedness, their mastery of the play, the quality of their discussion questions, their time-management skills, and their ability to lead a discussion that embraces a variety of viewpoints and possibilities.

Alternate Play Assignment: For every play that we read, there will be an alternate text that only one person in the class will be expected to read. This will allow us to consider a total of 40 plays for the semester, while each individual student will only be responsible for reading 18. There are three components to this assignment:

A) Alternate Play leaders need to prepare a single-page handout for the class (two-sided). On this handout should be:

- 1) A **brief** plot summary and character breakdown
- 2) An annotated bibliography consisting of at least 5 books and/or web sites about the play or author
- 3) A passage from at least one performance review of the play
- 4) Anything else you feel should be included in the discussion of the play that you can fit on the one sheet of paper

B) Alternate Play leaders need to introduce their play to the class, paying particular attention to the “high points” of the play and also to how this play compares with the assigned reading for the day. This should take no more than 10 minutes, and will be done in the context of the Discussion Leader’s presentation for the day.

C) Alternate Play leaders need to 1) select an important scene or scenes from their play, 2) as well as actors to perform in it, 3) make photocopies of the scene for the actors and James, and 4) introduce this scene during one of the five “Alternate Readings Days” scheduled throughout the semester. The introduction and reading should last between 8-10 minutes.

“Extra” Play Assignment: Each student will present to the class three times. One will be a “Discussion Leader Assignment,” one will be an “Alternate Play Assignment,” and the third will depend on how the plays are allocated in the class. Some students will do a second “Discussion” and others will do a second “Alternate.” The “extra” play assignments are the exact same as the descriptions above, and are worth the same percentages. Students doing a second “Alternate” Play will have a more substantial Theory Project. **Each student will also provide a 3-minute summary of a “Play Since 2000”.**

Theory Project: Each student will pick one of the theories that we are studying this semester and will create a project that will demonstrate their further inquiry into this mode of thinking. This project can take a number of directions, and will be discussed further in class.

Book Review: Every student in the class will be assigned to at least one alternate play this semester. When doing research for this project, each student is expected to find a book relating to the play or author that they wish to write an 800-1,200 word review of. You must be able to find and cite from at least one previously published book review of the book that you select. For this task you will want to access *Book Review Digest*, which is available online (1983-present) and in paper (in our library). This is your primary writing assignment for the semester, and will be graded as such. **I would vastly prefer that the book you review is written as close to 2011 as possible.**

Mid-Term and Final Exams: These exams will consist of short answer, multiple choice and/or essay questions. Each will receive short review sessions in class. The mid-term exam will cover only the first half of the course. The final exam will primarily cover the latter half of course material, but there will be some questions which require the student to synthesize ideas from the course as a whole. Further information on these exams will be distributed as they approach. **EXAMS CANNOT BE MADE UP.**

STANDARD ATTENDANCE POLICY (For Upper Division Students)

My classes are graded on a 1,000 point scale. **Every absence, no matter the reason, will cost you 10 points off of your final grade.** That's it. However, if you are absent on a day during which there is to be class discussion (which is most of them), then you also will lose points from your participation grade.

CALENDAR

Week 1

W 1/19 Introduction to Course, Syllabus and Each Other

F 1/21 Discussion Leader/Alternate Play Assignments
Discussion of *Trifles* by Susan Glaspell (**Norton 471**)

Week 2

M 1/24 "Continental European Theatre in the Early Twentieth Century"
Read **Brockett Chapter 18 (427-446, 449-451)**

W 1/26 Discussion of *From Morn to Midnight* by Georg Kaiser*
Alternate Text: *Machinal* by Sophie Treadwell*

F 1/28 Discussion of *The House of Bernarda Alba* by Federico Lorca (**Norton 539**)
Alternate Text: *Blood Wedding* by Federico Lorca*

Week 3

M 1/31 Discussion of *The Good Person of Setzuan* by Bertolt Brecht (**Norton 579**)
Alternate Text: *Life of Galileo* by Bertolt Brecht*

W 2/2 **Alternate Readings Day #1**
Quiz #1

F 2/4 Discussion of Brecht and Materialist Theory/Read **Fortier Introduction and Chapter 3:1** and Brecht Handouts*

Week 4

M 2/7 "British and American Theatre in the Early Twentieth Century"

Read Brockett Chapter 19 (452-465, 467-468)

W 2/9 Discussion of *Long Day's Journey into Night* by Eugene O'Neill
(Norton 927)
Alternate Text: *The Adding Machine* by Elmer Rice*

F 2/11 Discussion of *The Skin of Our Teeth* by Thornton Wilder*
Alternate Text: *Under Milkwood* by Dylan Thomas*

Week 5

M 2/14 "Continental European Theatre in the Mid Twentieth Century"
Read **Brockett Chapter 20 (469-486, 488-489)**

W 2/16 Discussion of *Waiting for Godot* by Samuel Beckett (Norton 843)
Alternate Text: *Endgame* by Samuel Beckett *

F 2/18 Discussion of Semiotics/ Read **Fortier Chapter 1:1**

Week 6

M 2/21 **Alternate Readings Day #2**
Catch-up Day

W 2/23 Discussion of *The Maids* by Jean Genet (Norton 653)
Alternate Text: *The Physicists* by Freidrich Duerrenmatt*

F 2/25 Discussion of Phenomenology/Read **Fortier Chapter 1:2**

Week 7

M 2/28 "British and American Theatre in the Mid Twentieth Century"
Read **Brockett Chapter 21 (490-504, 508)**

W 3/2 Discussion of *Death of a Salesman* by Arthur Miller (Norton 753)
Alternate Text: *A Streetcar Named Desire* by Tennessee Williams
(Norton 681)

F 3/4 Discussion of Post-Structuralism and Deconstruction /Read **Fortier 1:3**

Week 8

M 3/7 Discussion of *Old Times* by Harold Pinter (Norton 1013)
Alternate Text: *Equus* by Peter Shaffer*

W 3/9 **Alternate Readings Day #3**
Quiz #2

F 3/11 Discussion of Psychoanalysis/Read **Fortier 2:1**

Week 9

M 3/14 Discussion of Feminist and Gender Theory/Read **Fortier 2:2**

W 3/16 Discussion of *Dutchman* by Amiri Baraka*
Alternate Text: *Los Vendidos* by Luis Valdez*
Review for Mid-Term Examination

F 3/18 **MID-TERM EXAMINATION**

Week 10

M 3/21 SPRING BREAK (No Class)

W 3/23 SPRING BREAK (No Class)

F 3/25 SPRING BREAK (No Class)

Week 11

M 3/28 “Continental European Theatre in the Late Twentieth Century”
Read **Brockett Chapter 22 (509-526, 527-528)**

W 3/30 Discussion of *Hamletmachine* by Heiner Muller*
Alternate Text: *Picnic on the Battlefield* by Fernando Arrabal*

F 4/1 “British and American Theatre in the Late Twentieth Century”
Read **Brockett Chapter 23 (529-551, 554)**

Week 12

M 4/4 Discussion of *Death and the King's Horseman* by Wole Soyinka
(**Norton 1043**)
Alternate Text: *The Strong Breed* by Wole Soyinka*

W 4/6 Discussion of Post-colonial Theory/Read **Fortier 3:3**

F 4/8 **Alternate Readings Day # 4**
Quiz # 3

Week 13

M 4/11 Discussion of *Master Harold and the Boys* by Athol Fugard (**Norton 1195**)
Alternate Text: *Translations* by Brian Friel*

W 4/13 Discussion of Reader-Response Theory/Read **Fortier 2:3**

F 4/15 Discussion of *Glengary Glen Ross* by David Mamet (**Norton 1253**)
Alternate Text: *Buried Child* by Sam Shepard (**Norton 1097**)

Week 14

M 4/18 Discussion of *Angels in America* by Tony Kushner (**Norton 1459**)
Alternate Text: *The America Play* by Suzan-Lori Parks (**Norton 1529**)

W 4/20 Discussion of Postmodern Theory/Read **Fortier 3:2** and
Handouts*

F 4/22 "Contemporary Theatre"
Read **Brockett Chapter 23 (555-577)**

Week 15

M 4/25 NO CLASS TODAY (Easter Travel Day)

W 4/27 **THEATRE SINCE 2000**, Discussions of:
The Goat by Edward Albee (**Norton 1563**)
A Number by Caryl Churchill (**Norton 1605**)
Art by Yasmina Reza
Proof by David Auburn
August: Osage County by Tracy Letts
Doubt, A Parable by John Patrick Shanley
I Am My Own Wife by Doug Wright
Anna in the Tropics by Nilo Cruz
Playing the Victim by the Presnyakov Brothers
Dinner With Friends by Donald Margulies
Omnium Gatherum by Theresa Rebeck and Alexandra Gersten-
Vassilaros

F 4/29 **Alternate Readings Day # 5**

Quiz #4

Week 16

M 5/2 Course Summary
 Review for Final Exam

Week 17: FINALS WEEK

M 5/9 8 A.M. **FINAL EXAMINATION**

*** Indicates that this text will be provided by the instructor.**