Syllabus for HU3541 Major American Authors (American Drama Since World War I)

Spring Semester 2005 3:05 to 3:55 p.m. Professor Gill, PhD
Office location: Walker 327 Walker 108
Office phone: 487-3246 Office hours: 10:30 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. MWF
(Emergencies/urgent calls may be directed to my home at 482-4283, and before 9:00 p.m., please) 
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N.B. This plan, within reason, is flexible.

CATALOG DESCRIPTION: Reading in-depth of the works of one or more major American writers.

TEXTS:

- The Glass Menagerie, Tennessee Williams
- Getting Out, Marsha Norman
- Fences, August Wilson
- Death of a Salesman, Arthur Miller
- The Hairy Ape, Eugene O'Neill
  (found in Eugene O'Neill: Anna Christie, The Emperor Jones, and The Hairy Ape)

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

1. To expose the students to classics in the American canon.
2. To encourage critical thought.
3. To inform the student about theatre history.
4. To acquaint the students with the playwright's life and motivation in his or her work.
5. To surround the plays with their history, including architecture, costumes, scene designs, audience reception, political history and critical reception.
6. To foster improved skills in oral presentations.
7. To enhance writing and editing skills.
8. To offer creative options to the traditional critical paper.
9. To expose the students to critical theory which may inform the plays.
10. To develop an appreciation for the American theatre.
11. To learn basic research skills in the use of the library.
12. To embrace technology as it relates to the theatre.

Mon. - Jan. 10--Introduction of ourselves, distribution of syllabi, course expectations, and filling out of bio cards.
Wed. - Jan. 12--The Glass Menagerie
Fri. - Jan. 14--The Glass Menagerie
Mon. - Jan. 17--NO CLASS. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. RECESS BEGINS AT 2:00 p.m.

(next page, please)
Wed. - Jan. 19--The Glass Menagerie
Fri. - Jan. 21--The Glass Menagerie
Mon. - Jan. 24--Library orientation (tentative) in Walker 108
Wed. - Jan. 26--Bring an article to class and give a three-minute oral report on it. This may be theatre history, theory or literary criticism surrounding Williams and/or the play, The Glass Menagerie.
Fri. - Jan. 28--Reports continue. (No written work required. No grade.)
Mon. - Jan. 31--FIRST PAPERS/CREATIVE PROJECTS. Please bring an extra copy of the paper to class. This must be presented, on a timed schedule.
Wed. - Feb. 2--FIRST PAPERS/CREATIVE PROJECTS CONTINUE. (Please note the rest of the syllabus for details.)
Fri. - Feb. 4--Cushion for FIRST PAPERS/CREATIVE PROJECTS. When we finish those, we will begin Death of a Salesman.
Mon. - Feb. 7--Friday, Feb. 11--Death of a Salesman
Wed. - Feb. 16 and Fri., Feb. 18--Reports on theatre history, theory or literary criticism surrounding Miller and/or the play, Death of a Salesman.

MID-TERM REPORTING PERIOD (1st year students only)
Monday, Feb. 21-Monday, Feb. 28--Fences
Wed., Mar. 2 and Fri., Mar. 4--Reports (3 minutes) on theatre history or literary criticism surrounding August Wilson and/or Fences.
Mon., Mar. 7 - Friday, Mar. 11--SPRING BREAK
Mon. - Mar. 14 and Wed., Mar. 16--SECOND PAPERS/CREATIVE PROJECTS on Fences or Death of a Salesman
Fri., Mar. 18-Wed., Mar. 23--The Hairy Ape
Fri., Mar 25 and Mon., Mar 28--Three-minute reports on O'Neill and/or The Hairy Ape. Again, these should be on either theatre history, theory or literary criticism related to the play or the playwright. What was going on in America ten years before the play and/or ten years after may also be compelling.
Wed., Mar. 30-Wed., April 6--Getting Out (Language may be offensive to some students.)
Fri. - Apr. 8--TBA --We may need to begin reports on this day.
Mon. - Apr. 11 and Wed., Apr. 13--Reports on Norman and/or Getting Out (three-minutes). Here, a paper even on women in prison or people with multiple-personality disorders may be appropriate. Theory, criticism and production history reports are also encouraged.
Fri. - Apr. 15--FINAL PAPERS/CREATIVE PROJECTS on The Hairy Ape or Getting Out
Mon., Apr. 18 and 20--FINAL PAPERS/CREATIVE PROJECTS
Friday, Apr. 22--TBA
Monday, April 25--Friday, Apr. 29--FINAL EXAM PERIOD. There are no final examinations in this class.
Saturday, Apr. 30--COMMENCEMENT

GRADING POLICY: I will weigh the three major papers/creative projects equally. In the case of borderline students, I will consider the quality of the reports, but a report is not the same as analysis or a project in which you have invest considerable effort.
NATURE OF PAPERS/CREATIVE PROJECTS

You have choices of:

1. a critical paper or critical theory, supported by at least one article (three articles are preferred), generally indexed in the MLA Bibliography.

2. a performance analysis of an actor's work in one of the plays studied in class. Here, you will need three reviews from quality magazines or newspapers. Since we are covering the periods 1921-1977, Lexis Nexis may or may not include information you want. It indexes plays produced on the stage in the last twenty years, and some of these plays have been produced in that time span. More than likely, you will need to go to the library and work with a Reference Librarian. One place to start is Current Biography. It goes back to 1940, but with O'Neill, especially, I will need to make suggestions as to sources.

3. theatre history papers or a social analysis of a play, informed by three sources, which I must approve.

4. a creative project, often, but not always, with a scholarly narrative. You may do a computer puzzle, photojournalism, still photos, an original movie (costs money), use music, puppetry, a website (check with Kim Puuri, first, on the third floor of Walker about equipment availability), an original poem (if you are a good poet), costume design, sound design, or scene design. You are not limited to these suggestions.

I MUST APPROVE ALL TOPICS, HOPEFULLY NO LESS THAN TWO DAYS IN ADVANCE OF THE PRESENTATION. ALL PAPERS AND PROJECTS MUST BE PRESENTED BEFORE THE CLASS.

Please note the grading criteria at the end of this syllabus.

I do respectfully request that all work be done in a size 14 font, and double-spaced. I make this request under the ADA, please.

The suggested length of papers is 1,000 words. Presentations should not exceed seven minutes unless you are in a group. Then, each individual has seven minutes, per person.

Unless you are ill or facing a severe crisis, I expect you to honor all due dates. Late papers are a hassle and are hard to fit in.

ATTENDANCE: You have three unexcused absences; thereafter, I reserve the right to lower your grade one letter grade per absence. I do not expect you to come to class ill or in bad weather. I also fully expect students to go on job interviews, to weddings and funerals and other important missions. This is a reasonable request that allows you to work for your success. Thanks.
GRADING CRITERIA
Glenda E. Gill

No set of criteria can include all the characteristics of every forceful and convincing piece of writing or speaking. However, the purpose of this form is to help you learn to incorporate certain elements of effective communication in all your papers and speeches.

CONTENT

Central idea: clear; limited; implications of situation carefully considered? adapted to audience?
Support: sufficient, relevant? specific? sources attributed as needed?

ORGANIZATION

Beginning engages interest? indicated purpose? Development: thoughtful analysis apparent?
Purpose and relationship of sections clear? paragraphs coherently structured?
Ending: significance maintained? Is there a sense of closure?

EXPRESSION

Tone: indicates involvement with subject? (I hold that tone is the single most important element in writing.) Appropriate to purpose and audience? Appropriately maintained?
Sentences: clear? concise? varied? patterns suitable for reading and/or listening?
Word Choice: accurate? appropriate to audience?

DELIVERY

Conveys involvement with audience and subject; animation? (Is your delivery alive and enthusiastic?) Are gestures appropriate? Do you have too many gestures? Are they overdone? Eye contact? Too much reliance on notes? Are you familiar with the piece you are presenting?
Voice: articulation clear? appropriate projection? intensity? rate?

MECHANICS (Writing and speaking)

Punctuation? Spelling?
Usage: tense? subject-verb agreement? (This can be very serious.)
Do you write in fragments? (This is a serious problem.)
Documentations: form correct? We use the MLA Handbook as our guide. It can be purchased. I recommend the Fourth Edition. It is also available on the World Wide Web. It is in the library and in The Writing Center.