

Critical Reading and Writing: Drama (ENGL 122-01)

College of the Holy Cross, Spring 2008

WF 2:00-3:15, Stein 307

Instructor: Paige Reynolds

Office Hours: Fenwick 228, W 10:30-11:30 am, 4:00-5:00 pm; F 9:30-10:30 am, and by appointment

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Texts:

Cain, Kathleen Shine, et al., eds. *Pearson Custom Library Introduction to Drama*. Boston: Pearson, 2007.

Raimes, Anne. *Keys for Writers*. 5th ed. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2006.

Shakespeare, William. *The Tempest*. Ed. Peter Holland. New York: Penguin, 1999.

Course Objectives: This course will introduce you to the basic principles of reading drama, watching performances, and writing critically. Because drama is often intended to be performed live on-stage before audiences, we will look closely not only at the formal aspects that make meaning in dramatic texts, but also at the devices in live performances of those texts that help to convey that meaning. Primarily, we'll study the formal components of the genre and work to hone your capacity to express creative and critical ideas in discussion and in written analysis. We'll examine each play to discover how the author employs the elements of dramatic form and characterization to advance particular concerns. As well, we'll explore the richness that unfolds when the words on the page come to life on stage and in film by attending performances, watching film adaptations of dramatic texts, and performing ourselves in class scene work. Ideally, the semester's endeavors in the close, critical reading of texts and performances will enhance your capacity for seeing, feeling, and thinking.

Coursework:

Class participation (10%): Come to class having read the material closely and be prepared to participate actively in discussion. You must keep up with all of the reading and attend each class – as well, you will be required to participate in class scene work. You will also be expected to attend events outside of class such as film screenings and theatrical productions. Unexcused absences jeopardize your grade; more than three absences and you will not pass the course.

Four Critical Papers (Paper One: 10%; Papers Two – Four: 20% each): You will be expected to write four critical papers over the course of the semester. The first paper will be a short explication of a scene from *Oedipus Rex*. The subsequent papers will demand that you develop your own contestable claim about a particular text and support that intelligent assertion with concrete evidence and rich textual analysis. We will discuss the particular expectations for these papers (including their lengths) *ad nauseum* during the semester.

Exercises and Peer Reviews (5%): I will occasionally assign short written exercises for class. As well, you will peer review your colleagues' papers, and your critiques will be assessed for the amount of time and thought you put into helping them improve their work.

Review of *Dinner at Eight* (5%): You will be expected to write a lively and insightful review of the Holy Cross Theatre Department's fall production of George S. Kaufman and Edna Ferber's *Dinner at Eight* (4/3-5 and 4/10-12). Standards for this review will be provided prior to the assignment.

Film Screenings: I will screen film adaptations of *The Piano Lesson*, *The Glass Menagerie*, and *Our Town*. There will be a question on the final exam about these adaptations. If you cannot attend a class screening, the films are on reserve in the Media Resource Center (Stein 324).

Final Exam (10%): An in-class final exam will test your knowledge of particulars drawn from the plays we've read during the semester. The exam will, as well, demand you synthesize in writing your command of the texts and themes we've addressed throughout the course.

IMPORTANT NOTE: For these written assignments, I will expect your paper to be in proper MLA form. These papers will be typed, double spaced, stylistically and grammatically correct. If you don't have a style book, I highly recommend that you purchase one. I've ordered Anne Raimes's *Keys for Writers* for our class, but you may use a guide of your own choosing.

Basic Ground Rules:

- **Office hours:** Plan to meet with me during office hours at least once this semester. Also, please feel free to talk with me about reading or writing during office hours. I much prefer face-to-face encounters over hurried email exchanges; we'll both learn more about your work and ideas in office hours.
- **Changes to the syllabus:** Each class has different needs. Be prepared for a few changes in the syllabus, if we see that our class would benefit from those changes.
- **The internet:** Don't use the internet or other outside resources to help you write your papers. Trust me, trust me, trust me - internet research for CRAW analyses almost always weakens your papers. Plus, if you don't learn how to work independently through demanding material, you'll be unable to develop the critical thinking skills you'll need to succeed in future classes and in the workplace. Trust me, there are no "Sparknotes" for most of life's challenges – so you might as well learn how to face down your anxieties about the unknown and use legitimate resources in this class. If you need to look up words or other references, please use a legitimate source on the library webpage (such as the OED or *Encyclopedia Britannica*). Don't rely on Wikipedia or other free sources on the web; they are not necessarily accurate.
- **Academic honesty:** Don't plagiarize. If you're confused about what constitutes plagiarism, see the English Department website on "Academic Honesty," Raimes on academic honesty, your copy of *Understanding Plagiarism: A Student Guide to Writing Your Own Work* by Menager-Beeley and Paulos, or ask me questions. Any plagiarized work receives a zero, and I report it to the Dean.
- **Late assignments:** Late papers are penalized 1/3 of a grade for each date they are late, including weekends. So Friday's A- is Monday's B-. Any work that is over one week late receives an F. If I do not receive all of your assignments for the class, you cannot pass the class.

Reading and Assignment Schedule:

W 1/16 Introduction; Pinter, "The Black and White"

Drama and Fiction, Page and Performance

F 1/18 MLK Day make up (no class).

W 1/23 Glaspell, *Trifles*; Glaspell, "A Jury of Her Peers"; "How To Read a Play"

F 1/25 Wilson, *The Piano Lesson*

T 1/29 Screening: *The Piano Lesson* (dir. Lloyd Richards)

W 1/30 Wilson, *The Piano Lesson*

The Words on the Page

F 2/1 Sophocles, *Oedipus Rex*

W 2/6 Sophocles, *Oedipus Rex*

F 2/8 Anonymous, *Everyman*

M 2/11 Paper One Due

W 2/13 Anonymous, *Everyman*

Families

F 2/15 Williams, *Glass Menagerie*

W 2/20 Williams, *Glass Menagerie*

T 2/21 Screening: *The Glass Menagerie* (dir. Paul Newman)

F 2/22 Williams, *Glass Menagerie*

W 2/27 Writing Workshop: Revising an Academic Paper

Paper Two Draft Due

F 2/29 Synge, *Riders to the Sea*

Paper Two Due

W 3/5 Spring Break.

F 3/7 Spring Break.

Classrooms

W 3/12 Shakespeare, *The Tempest* (Acts 1-2)

F 3/14 Shakespeare, *The Tempest* (Acts 3-4)

W 3/19 Shakespeare, *The Tempest* (Act 5, epilogue)

F 3/21 Easter Break

W 3/26 Shakespeare, *The Tempest*

F 3/28 Screening: Versions of *The Tempest*, Act 2, scene i

W 4/2 Writing Workshop: **Paper Three Draft Due**

Community and Critique

F 4/4 Wilder, *Our Town*

M 4/7 **Paper Three Due**

W 4/9 Wilder, *Our Town*

T 4/10 Screening: *OT: Our Town* (dir. Scott Hamilton Kennedy)

F 4/11 Brecht, *Mother Courage and Her Children*

W 4/16 Brecht, *Mother Courage and Her Children*

F 4/18 Brecht, *Mother Courage and Her Children*

M 4/21 **Review of HC Theater Dept. Production of *Dinner at Eight* Due**

W 4/23 Churchill, *Cloud Nine*

F 4/25 Churchill, *Cloud Nine*

Paper Four Due

W 4/30 Study Period

M 5/10 (8:30 am) Final Exam