

**Carleton University
Fall 2015
Department of English**

ENGL3606A: Twentieth Century Drama

Prerequisite(s): 1.0 credit in ENGL at the 1000 level and third-year standing or permission of the department.

Date/Time: Tuesday 2:30-5:30

Location: Please confirm location on Carleton Central

Instructor: Brenda Vellino

Email: brenda_vellino@carleton.ca

Office: 1815 DT

Office Hours: Wed. 3-5 or by appointment

Course Description for Modern and Contemporary Drama: Murder, Crime Scenes, Seduction, Dysfunctional Families, War zones: come explore plays that stage inner and outer dramas from all around the world. Structured by a comparative approach in which European, U.S., British, Canadian, and Indigenous plays are brought into conversation with each other, this course will engage key playwrights and theatrical movements and modes. These will include the following: Naturalism, Psychological Realism, Epic Theatre, Theatre of the Absurd, and African American, Feminist, Indigenous, Queer, Working Class, and Conflict Transformation Theatre. Special attention will be paid to how plays engage social, political, and historical questions, especially those addressing gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, class, culture, and political and historical trauma. The last segment of the course will focus particularly on conflict zone and conflict transformation theatre. Because theatre is a performance medium, we will screen scenes from productions where available in film versions, attend two plays outside of class (Michael Healey's *Generous* (GCTC) and Djanet Sears's *Adventures of A Black Girl in Search of God* (NAC) and students will produce a selected dramatic scene in groups. (Students in a prior class loved this assignment the most of all their assignments and no theatre experience is necessary). We will have guest visits from practicing Ottawa theatre artists to introduce us to theatre exercises that will support scene work.

Course Texts: All Course Books will be at Haven Books @ Seneca and Sunnyside.

The Broadview Anthology of Drama (Vol. II). Broadview Press, 2003.

Beckett, Samuel. *Waiting for Godot*. Grove Press, 2011.

Tony Kushner. *Angels in America*. NY: Theatre Communications Group, 2013.

Marie Clements. *The Edward Curtis Project*. Talonbooks, 2010.

Course Assignments

Participation (attendance, in class writing prompts):	10%
2 Play Reviews (1000 words each):	30%
1 scene analysis (1000 words):	20%
Final Project/Scene Production (Character analysis, Scene Production Notes and Self-Assessment, 1250-1500 words):	40%

**For each of these assignments, more detailed rubrics will be posted on cuLearn.

Course Calendar

Class 1/Sept. 8: Course introduction

Class 2/Sept. 15: Naturalism/Social Realism/Tragedy: Henrik Ibsen – *Hedda Gabler* (1891) - in the Broadview anthology.

*Screen clips from Hedda in class.

***Plan to see Michael Healey's *Generous* at the Great Canadian Theatre Company between Sept. 15-19. We will try to arrange a group rate and find a date that suites the majority of us.**

Class 3/Sept. 22: Feminist Murder Mystery/American Psychological Realism: Susan Glaspell – *Trifles* (1916): online: <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/10623/10623-h/10623-h.htm>

*Screen Trifles video in class.

*****ASSIGNMENT DUE: Play Review of Michael Healey's *Generous* due (1000 words)**

Class 4/Sept. 29: Political Theatre/Epic Theatre: Bertolt Brecht – *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* (1944) – in Broadview anthology.

*Screen clips from Caucasian Chalk Circle in class

****Scene Production Groups first meeting in class.**

Class 5/Oct. 6: US Psychological Realism/Family Drama: Tennessee Williams – *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (1947)

*Screen clips from Cat.

****ASSIGNMENT DUE: Scene analysis of *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* due in class (1000 words).**

Class 6/Oct. 13: African American Theatre: Richard Wright – *Native Son* (1941) – in Broadview anthology.

***Guest Theatre Artist Visit**

Class 7/Oct. 20: Theatre of the Absurd: Samuel Beckett – *Waiting for Godot* (1953) – Grove Press, 2011.

*Screen clips from Godot.

****Second Scene Production Group Meeting: Thinking Like A Director Notes Due in class.**

****This play is not in the course anthology and must be purchased separately.**

Week of Oct 27: No Class – Fall Reading Week!

Class 8/ Nov. 3: Working Class Drama/Quebec Drama/Tragi-comedy: Michelle Tremblay – *Les Belles Soeurs* (1965) - in Broadview anthology.

*Screen clips in class.

***Third Scene Production Group Meeting: Character Analysis Notes Due in Class.**

***Groups should set a rehearsal schedule and coordinate calendars over the next four to five weeks.**

***Theatre outing: Nov. 4 or Nov.5: See Djanet Sears, *Adventures of a Black Girl in Search of God*, NAC; These evening have a talkback with the playwright.**

Class 9/Nov. 10: Queer Theatre/Postmodern Theatre: Tony Kushner: *Angels in America: Part I* (1991)

*Screen clips from Angels in class.

****This play is not in the course anthology and must be purchased separately.**

*****ASSIGNMENT DUE: Play Review of *Adventures of a Black Girl* due in class**

Class 10/Nov. 17: Conflict Zone Theatre: Carol Churchill – *Mad Forest: A Play From Romania* (1996) – in Broadview anthology.

Class 11/Nov. 24: Conflict Zone Theatre: Colleen Wagner – *The Monument* (1995) – in Broadview anthology.

*See Isoko-Rwanda website for interviews and clips of the play: www.isoko-rwanda

***Guest Theatre Artist Visit**

Class 12/Dec. 1: Conflict Transformation Theatre/Indigenous Theatre: Marie Clements – *The Edward Curtis Project*. Talonbooks, 2010.

****This play is not in the course anthology and must be purchased separately.**

Dec.: Last Class: TBA: Scene Productions

****TBA:** Scene Productions will require an extra scheduled class in the final exam period and are in place of a final take-home exam.

****Scene Production Assignment Due (1250 words) – submit on cuLearn: Dec. 21 (final deadline for Take-home Exams)**

Course Assignments

Theatre Reviews: Write a 1000 word theatre review on each of the two designated live performances. **You must include your theatre program with your assignment.** Make notes at intermission and immediately after seeing a play. Take note of production details in terms of director's interpretive staging choices for design elements such as set, props, lighting, sound, character blocking. How well do the actors convey the character they present? How did the cast as a whole ensemble work together? What is the overall effect of the production? Were there weaknesses? If you were directing this play, what might you do differently? I will provide a rubric on cuLearn. For further details, you may also consult "How to Review a Play," from The Writing Centre at the University of Wisconsin: <https://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/PlayReview.html>

Scene Analysis: Write a 1000 word scene analysis based on elements of setting, action, scene structure, stage directions, character interactions, dramatic language, imagery, and overall importance of a major scene from *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*. You will not necessarily need to focus on each of these elements, but will want to select the most important ones for your particular scene. I will provide a rubric on cuLearn.

Character Analysis as preparation for scene work: Develop a 1000 word character analysis by choosing a focus character from your group's chosen play. For those who are acting a part, choose your character so that you can develop understanding of your role. You may consider external or direct cues for characterization (conveyed by stage directions, props, costumes, gesture, actions, language or speech style) and internal or indirect elements of characterization (motivations, objectives, hopes, fears, dreams, responses to conflicts, responses to and interactions with other characters). Is your character a major or minor character, protagonist or antagonist? Is he or she a multi-dimensional, complex character or a mono-dimensional character? Is your character paired with another character for contrast? Does your character often appear alone on the stage, with one other character, or with a group? What dynamics define your character's relationships to other characters? What social and cultural issues contextualize your character's experience of dramatic conflict and their responses? You may not find all of these questions relevant to every character. Use them as guiding means to develop an interpretation of the significance of your particular character to the play.

**See Debra Bruch, "Character Analysis" Guide on-line:

<http://www.fa.mtu.edu/~dlbruch/scriptanalysis/char.html>

*You may wish to use her "Character Exercise Form" as a prewriting exercise to create notes from which to build your character analysis. Caution: do not structure your assignment by the simple step-by-step rubric she offers. These are guiding questions not a template for your Character Analysis.

Group Scene Production: Here you will collaboratively develop your ability to “think like a director.” Once your group has decided on a play and a scene, each member should photocopy the scene and mark it up to produce one page of production notes and ideas. **Due date Oct. 20th in class for scene production group meeting.** Consider how would you begin to envision staging the scene and bringing it to life? With what kind of props, set, lighting and sound design, costuming, character blocking etc.? You will meet with your group in class to share your ideas and decide on roles; for example, not everyone needs to act; you will need a director/producer (who will assist with scene choreography, character blocking, design choices, acting notes, prompting during production); a stage manager (who will assist director with props, set, sound, lighting design, costume design); actors may be double cast if needed to cover parts or if there are fewer parts than actors, the part can be shared among several actors by the use of a shared costume and prop. **Each cast member should write up their character analysis notes due for the third in class scene production group meeting on Nov. 3.** Do keep costume and props simple for easy set up and tear down. Interpretation of character and ensemble acting should be the primary focus. Groups should determine the number of outside class rehearsals they will need to produce the scene. **Suggested minimum is three 2-hour rehearsals. Actors are not required to be completely off book but they should need minimal prompting or hidden scripts.**

Writing up your scene production: Please include the following:

- “Thinking like a director” notes (1 page)
- Character Analysis (1000 words)
- Individual two paragraph assessment of one’s own contribution, short narrative of the group process, including break down of tasks and roles and number of rehearsals with times, dates, and members in attendance. (250 words)
- Marks will be based 50% on these individual papers and 50% on the overall quality of the scene production.

Course Policies

Attendance and Participation: Active participation is essential in this class, which will be based largely on class discussion and in-class writing. I define class participation as both physical and mental presence in class, preparedness, engagement in discussion, and willingness to take risks. **Please undertake active, thorough reading, with a pencil in hand, underlining key passages.**

Please Take Note: Each student is required to bring hard copies of the plays to class. We will frequently be reading aloud from scenes. **Students who do not bring textbooks to class will lose participation marks.**

Allowable Absences: You may have two allowable absences for sickness, emergencies or appointments. Subsequent absences will negatively affect your participation grade. If you must be absent, out of courtesy, please let me know that you will be absent and the reason for your absence. **Students who are absent for more than 50% of the course will fail the course.**

Late Assignment Policy: Extensions must be arranged with me (for difficult circumstances only) in advance of the due date. Essays handed in late without prior arrangement will not receive any comments. Essays handed in more than one week late without prior notification may not be accepted.

Plagiarism: Intellectual honesty is considered the ground rule of any university level course. Plagiarism is defined in the “Academic Regulations of the University: Instructional Offences” section of the *Carleton Undergraduate Calendar* as “using and passing off as one’s own ideas the work of someone else without expressly giving credit to another.” If you find yourself tempted to use someone else’s work because of stress, anxiety about your ability, personal crisis, time crisis, or any other issues, I urge you to let me know about these circumstances, so that we can work together to create the space and means for you to do work of the highest integrity. **Please ensure that all sources (including biographical and internet) you use in character or scene analysis or play reviews are properly credited. Also note that sources are NOT required so if you Google it and use it, provide a proper Works Cited and use Parenthetical Citation.** Grey areas of plagiarism sometimes arise from confusion about what counts as putting things in your own words or paraphrase. This would include direct quotation or mostly direct quotation from a source or sources you *do* document in your essay but *do not* indicate as direct quotation. If you change a word or two in a critic’s sentence, this is *not* acceptable paraphrase. Put altered words in brackets and put the whole sentence in quotes.

If I suspect that an essay or portion of an essay has been plagiarized, I am required to submit the essay to the Associate Dean of the Faculty. The penalties for plagiarism are very severe, ranging from failure of the assignment, to failure in the course to expulsion from the university. For more information please go to: <http://www2.carleton.ca/studentaffairs/academic-integrity>

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION

For Students with Disabilities: The Paul Menton Centre (PMC) provides services to students with Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/mental health disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), chronic medical conditions, and impairments in mobility, hearing, and vision. If you have a disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact PMC at 613-520-6608 or pmc@carleton.ca for a formal evaluation. If you are already registered with the PMC, contact your PMC coordinator to send me your Letter of Accommodation at the beginning of the term. After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with me to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. See www.carleton.ca/pmc

For Religious Observance: Students requesting academic accommodation on the basis of religious observance should contact their instructors for alternate dates and/or means of satisfying academic requirements. Such requests should be made during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known. Instructors will make accommodations in a way that avoids academic disadvantage to the student.

For Pregnancy: Pregnant students requiring academic accommodations are encouraged to contact an Equity Advisor in Equity Services to complete a *letter of accommodation*. The student should also meet with the instructor to discuss accommodations required.

<http://carleton.ca/equity/accommodation/academic/students/>

STUDENT SERVICES

Writing Tutorial Service: If you know your writing needs improvement, do consider free tutoring with this service. Contact <https://carleton.ca/sasc/writing-tutorial-service/appointments/>

Carleton Health and Counselling Services offers confidential consultations with medical doctors, lab testing, and emotional support for difficult times from Monday to Friday, 8:00- 4:00. They are located in the Carleton Technology Building on the east side of campus. Check out their website at <https://carleton.ca/health/contact/>