

What makes dramas written by Black American playwrights and theater collectives different from those written and or performed by such dramatists and collectives as Arthur Miller, Sam Shepard, Richard Foreman, Laurie Anderson, Judith Malina and Julian Beck's Living Theatre and Peter Brook's International Centre of Theater Research? Using recent theoretical and political debates on performance and the construction of identity, the class will trace the historical trajectory of African American theater from the 1950s to the present.

The course covers representative works from the Theater of the Black Experience, the Black Arts Movement, the Free Southern Theatre, and the African American avant-garde and experimental stage. Assigned readings may include works by Amiri Baraka, Ed Bullins, P. J. Gibson, Lorraine Hansberry, Langston Hughes, Adrienne Kennedy, Lynn Nottage, Suzan-Lori Parks, Stew, August Wilson, Tracey Scott Wilson, George C. Wolfe, and such performance artists as Fred Holland, Robbie McCauley, John O'Neal, Whoppi Goldberg, and Anna Deavere Smith.

In writing the analytical group-paper **or** in the group-dramatic performance, student-groups must create a gumbo-like analysis/performance of the lived, imagined, and performed elements found in the assigned dramas.

### **I. REQUIRED TEXTS:**

Lorraine Hansberry A Raisin in the Sun (NY: Signet, 1959)

LeRoi Jones (Amiri Baraka). Dutchman and The Slave (NY: William Morrow, 1964)

Lynn Nottage. Crumbs From the Table of Joy and Other Plays (NY: Theatre Communications Group, 2004)

Ed Bullins, The Taking of Miss Janie (1975) in William B. Branch, Black Thunder: An Anthology of Contemporary African American Drama (NY: Penguin, 1992)

Anna Devere Smith. Fires in the Mirror (NY: Anchor/Doubleday, 1993)

Anna Devere Smith. Twilight: Los Angeles 1992 (NY: Anchor/Doubleday, 1994)

Stew. Passing Strange: The Complete Book and Lyrics of the Broadway Musical (NY: Applause Books, 2009)

James Baldwin. Blues for Mister Charlie: A Play (NY: Signet, 1964)

August Wilson. The Piano Lesson (NY: Penguin, 1990)

August Wilson. Fences (NY: Penguin, 1986)

Samuel A. Hay. African American Theatre: An Historical and Critical Analysis (NY: Cambridge UP, 1994)

**Note: Assigned and recommended texts and readings are held at the Reserve Desk on the second floor of Library West. Check the Reserve List for this course to see if any assigned essays or plays are available as PDF files on ARES (ELECTRONIC RESERVE) section on the Smathers Library Website. Look under Reid and this course's section number.**

### **II. COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

1) Pop Quizzes on weekly readings as well as film(s) screened in the previous class **20 points**  
(1pt - 3pts each)

2) Individual 5-minute oral presentation and 5-min Q&A. Instructor assigns each student their oral presentation of a required reading Due Weeks 3-11 **20 points**

The grade on the presentation is based on the following criteria:

A. The importance of the material presented to the class. Students must make brief references to primary scenes in a particular literary work (or film) to illustrate important issues and support their argument.

B. The clarity of the written and oral work. Here, "clarity" refers to smooth oral delivery, correct use of descriptive terminology and grammar.

C. The student's ability to pose important questions to the class at the end of their oral presentation. Students must introduce the argument/thesis of their oral presentation based on their assigned section.

3) **1-page outline** Each Student is responsible for a typed outline of their 5-minute discussion. **10 points**

**Due on the day when the student presents her/his 5-minute discussion**

4) **MIDTERM EXAM 60MINS WEDNESDAY, 24 FEBRUARY** **20 points**

5) **15-MINUTE GROUP Dramatic Performance Due 6 and 13 APRIL (Weeks 14 & 15)**

GROUP DRAMATIC PRESENTATION **20 points**

5-minute Q&A on the DRAMATIC PRESENTATION **10 points**

### **III. ATTENDANCE**

**The only excusable absence is one that results from an illness that is documented by a written and signed physician report. Two non-excused absences lower the student's cumulative grade by minus 10 points, Three non-excused absences give the student an E, a failing grade for the course.**

### **IV. LATE WORK**

All written work and oral presentations are due **during** the class period. Students receive minus 2 points for EACH DAY (INCLUDING WEEKENDS AND HOLIDAYS) when any assignment is late. **NOTE: A medical excuse will not be accepted to explain the late delivery of any written assignment or film/video project.**

### **V. GRADING SCALE**

|    |              |             |             |             |           |
|----|--------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-----------|
| A  | 100.00-90.00 | 40.00-36.00 | 20.00-18.00 | 10.00-09.00 | 2.00-1.80 |
| A- | 89.99-87.00  | 35.99-34.80 | 17.99-17.40 | 08.90-08.70 | 1.78-1.74 |

|    |             |                     |                                     |                            |   |
|----|-------------|---------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|---|
| B+ | 86.99-84.00 | 34.79-33.60         | 17.20-16.80                         | 08.69-08.40                | 1.72-1.68   |
| B  | 83.99-80.00 | 33.59-32.00         | 16.60-16.00                         | 08.39-08.00                | 1.66-1.60   |
| B- | 79.99-77.00 | 31.99-30.80         | 15.99-15.40                         | 07.99-07.70                | 1.59-1.53   |
| C+ | 76.99-74.00 | 30.79-29.60         | 15.20-14.80                         | 07.69-07.40                | 1.52-1.48   |
| C  | 73.99-70.00 | 29.59-28.00         | 14.79-14.00                         | 07.39-07.00                | 1.47-1.40   |
| C- | 69.99-67.00 | 27.99-26.80         | 13.99-13.40                         | 06.99-06.70                | 1.39-1.34   |
| D+ | 66.99-64.00 | 26.79-25.60         | 13.39-12.80                         | 06.69-06.40                | 1.33-1.28   |
| D  | 63.99-60.00 | 25.59-24.00         | 12.79-12.00                         | 06.39-06.00                | 1.27-1.20   |
| D- | 59.99-57.00 | 23.99-22.80         | 11.99-11.40                         | 05.99-05.70                | 1.19-1.14   |
| E  | 56.00       | 22.79-00.00         | 11.39-00.00                         | 05.69-00.00                | 1.13-0.00   |
|    | Cumulative  | Performance and Q&A | student presentation 20pts, MIDTERM | presentation outline 10pts | ten or more quizzes worth 1-3pts for a total of 10pts |

## VI. COURSE OUTLINE and READINGS:

READINGS LISTED ON A PARTICULAR DAY SHOULD BE READ BEFORE THAT CLASS MEETS. POP QUIZZES WILL COVER THESE ASSIGNED READINGS AS WELL AS ANY FILMS SCREENED IN THE LAST CLASS. ***ALL READINGS FOR WEEK TWO MUST BE READ BEFORE CLASS MEETS***

***\* Denotes that Readings are held on RESERVE IN LIBRARY WEST AT CHECK OUT DESK OR ON ARES E-RESERVE AS DOWNLOADABLE 'PDFs' [ACROBAT READER FILES]***

### WK 1 Course Introduction

JAN 06 W---SCREEN: Woody King, Jr., *Black Theatre: The Making of A Movement* (1978) 114mins

### WK 2 INTEGRATIONIST DRAMAS WITH A WOMANIST TWIST

JAN 13 W--- Lorraine Hansberry, *A Raisin in the Sun* (1959); Samuel A. Hay, *African American Theatre*, introduction and chap. 1. ***ON RESERVE IN LIBRARY WEST***

### WK 3 THE BLACK ARTS MOVEMENT

JAN 20 W --- LeRoi Jones (Amiri Baraka), *Dutchman* (1964); also read Hay, *African American Theatre*, chap. 2. ***ON RESERVE IN LIBRARY WEST*** and Leslie Catherine Sanders, *The Development of Black Theater in America*, chap. 3 (on electronic reserve in library see ARES PDF).

---SCREEN: Anthony Harvey, *Dutchman* (1967) 55mins

--- Analysis of Play and its screen adaptation. Dramatic Form and Politics of Production and Distribution

### WK 4 THEATER OF THE BLACK FEMALE EXPERIENCE

JAN 27 W--- Lynn Nottage, *Crumbs From the Table of Joy and Other Plays*

### WK 5 MUSICAL DRAMA, AFRICAN AMERICAN EX-PAT & SELF-DISCOVERY

FEB 3 W---Stew, *Passing Strange: The Complete Book and Lyrics of The Broadway Musical*

### WK 6 TELLING A BLACK STORY: 'THE BLOOD'S MEMORY'

FEB 10 W---James Baldwin, *Blues for Mister Charlie* (1964)

### WK 7 TELLING A BLACK STORY: 'THE BLOOD'S MEMORY'

FEB 17 W---August Wilson, *The Piano Lesson* (1987);

---SCREEN: *THE PIANO LESSON* (1995) 99 minutes.

### WK 8 MIDTERM EXAM 60MINS (20PTS)

#### TELLING A BLACK STORY: 'THE BLOOD'S MEMORY'

FEB 24 W---August Wilson, *Fences* (1985), and August Wilson articles on E-RESERVE;

---SCREEN: *A CONVERSATION WITH AUGUST WILSON* (1992) 22 minutes.

### WK 9 27 FEBRUARY - 06 MARCH SPRING BREAK

### WK 10 THE SIXTIES

MAR 09 W--- Ed Bullins, *The Taking of Miss Janie* (1975) in William B. Branch, *Black Thunder* and Leslie Catherine Sanders, *The Development of Black Theater in America*, ch. 4 (on reserve in library).

### WK 11

MAR 16 W---Anna Deavere Smith, *Fires in the Mirror*, and articles on Anna Deavere Smith (ARES).

### WK 12 BLACK PERFORMANCE

MAR 23 W---Anna Deavere Smith, *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992* and articles on Smith (ARES).

### WK 13

MAR 30 W--- **GROUPS MEET IN CLASSROOM TO PREPARE THE FINAL DRAMATIC PROJECT**

### WK 14

APR 6 W---**10-MINUTE GROUP PRESENTATIONS AND 5-MINUTE Q & A (20PTS)**

### WK 15

APR 13 W---**10-MINUTE GROUP PRESENTATIONS AND 5-MINUTE Q & A (20PTS)**