

LIT3043 African American Theater sec. 24922 sec. 1MR2 R6 (12h50-1h40), T5-6 (11h45–1h40) TUR 2322

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 drafting the analytical group-paper and organizing the group-dramatic performance, student-groups must create a Gumbo-like analysis through the group-performance of the lived, imagined, and performed elements found in the assigned dramas.

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)

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

- 1) Ten Pop quizzes** on assigned readings and film(s) screened in earlier class. **(20 POINTS)**
- 2) One 10-minute oral presentation and 5 min Q&A.** **(10 POINTS)**
a) Instructor assigns each student their oral presentation topic.
b) At 9AM on the Monday **before** their presentation, students submit on CANVAS a 1-page outline of their 10-minute oral presentation. **(10 POINTS)**
c) At 9AM on the day of their oral presentation, students submit on CANVAS a MSWord/PDF formatted copy of their presentation.
- 3) MIDTERM EXAM Tuesday 11, March (50 minutes)** **(40 POINTS)**
- 4) FINAL GROUP DRAMATIC PRESENTATIONS**
Instructor assigns Group Dramatic Presentation on an assigned play.
4a) Presentations, and Outlines are due Monday 14, April. **(20 POINTS of 40pts)**
4b) Each Group Member submits on CANVAS a MSWord/PDF copy of their presentation.
4c) Dramatic Presentations are presented on Tuesdays of 15 and 22 **(20 POINTS of 40pts)**

All Oral and Written Work is Graded On The Following Criteria:

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. Students must make brief references to primary scenes in a particular literary work (or film) to illustrate critical issues and support their argument. The written and oral submission must reflect intelligent, lucid, and precision in thinking and writing.

ATTENDANCE

The only excusable absence is one that results from an illness that a student documents 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.

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: Medical excuses are no accepted to explain a student's late delivery of any written assignment or film/video project.

GRADING SCALE

	<u>Cumulative</u>	<u>Dramatic</u>	<u>Midterm Exam</u>	<u>Oral and Outline</u>	<u>Pop quizzes</u>
		<u>Performance</u>	<u>(20 Points)</u>	<u>Presentation (20pts)</u>	<u>(20pts@2-4pts)</u>
A	100.00-93.00	40.00-37.20	20.00-18.60	10.00-09.30	2.00-1.86
A-	92.00-90.00	36.80-36.00	18.40-18.00	09.20-09.00	1.84-1.80
B+	89.00-86.00	35.60-34.40	17.80-17.20	08.90-08.60	1.78-1.72
B	85.00-83.00	34.00-33.20	17.00-16.60	08.50-08.30	1.70-1.66
B-	82.00-80.00	32.80 -32.00	16.40-16.00	08.20-08.00	1.64-1.60
C+	79.00-76.00	31.60-30.40	15.80-15.20	07.90-07.60	1.58-1.52
C	75.00-73.00	30.00-29.20	15.00-14.60	07.50-07.30	1.50-1.46
C-	72.00-70.00	28.80-28.00	14.40-14.00	07.20-07.00	1.44-1.40
D+	69.00-66.00	27.60-26.40	13.80-13.20	06.90-06.60	1.38-1.32
D	65.00-63.00	26.00-25 20	13.00-12.60	06.50-06.30	1.30-1.26
D-	62.00-60.00.	24.80-24.00	12.40-11. 81	06.20-06.00	1.24-1.20
E	59.00-00.00	23.60-00.00	11.80-00.00	05.90-00.00	1.18-0.00

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.

ARES E-RESERVE AS DOWNLOADABLE 'PDFs' [ACROBAT READER FILES]

WK 1 Course Introduction

JAN 14 T-- Samuel A. Hay, *African American Theatre*, introduction, and chap. 1. **ON ELECTRONIC RESERVE IN LIBRARY WEST**

JAN 16 R--

WK 2 INTEGRATIONIST DRAMAS WITH A WOMANIST TWIST

JAN 21 T-- Lorraine Hansberry, *A Raisin in the Sun* (1959); ACT I and ACT II and
-- **SCREEN: A RAISIN IN THE SUN**

JAN 23 R-- Analysis of Play and its screen adaptation. Dramatic Form and Politics of Production and Distribution

WK 3 THE BLACK ARTS MOVEMENT

JAN 28 T-- LeRoi Jones (Amiri Baraka), *Dutchman* (1964), Scenes 1 - 2. and Hay, *African American Theatre*, chap. 2. **ON RESERVE IN LIBRARY WEST** and Leslie Catherine Sanders, *The Development of Black Theater in America*, chap. 3

JAN 30 R-- and Lynn Nottage, *Crumbs from the Table of Joy and Other Plays*, Act 1, sc 1- 6 (*ON ELECTRONIC RESERVE IN LIBRARY WEST*, see ARES PDF file).

-- SCREEN: Anthony Harvey, *Dutchman* (1967) 55mins *ON ELECTRONIC RESERVE IN LIBRARY WEST*

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

WK 4 THEATER OF THE BLACK FEMALE EXPERIENCE

FEB 04 T-- *Crumbs from the Table of Joy and Other Plays*, Act 1, sc. 1- 6

FEB 06 R-- *Crumbs from the Table of Joy and Other Plays*, Act 2, sc. 1- 4 and epilogue. **DISCUSSION:** Lynn Nottage: THEMES, ISSUES AND DRAMATIC FORM

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

FEB 11 T-- SCREEN: *PASSING STRANGE* (dir. Spike Lee, 2010) 135mins remaining scenes *ON ELECTRONIC RESERVE IN LIBRARY WEST*

FEB 13 R -- Stew and Heidi Rodewald, *Passing Strange: The Complete Book and Lyrics of The Broadway Musical*

WK 6 TELLING A BLACK STORY: 'THE BLOOD'S MEMORY' – JAMES BALDWIN

FEB 18 T-- Baldwin, *Blues for Mister Charlie* (1964), pp. xiii- Act 1

-- SCREEN: Raoul Peck (director), *I AM NOT YOUR NEGRO* (2016) 94mins.

FEB 20 R-- *Blues for Mister Charlie*, Acts 2 - 3

WK 7 TELLING A BLACK STORY: 'THE BLOOD'S MEMORY' – AUGUST WILSON

FEB 25 T-- August Wilson, *The Piano Lesson* (1987), Act 1, sc. 1-2 and Act 2, sc. 1-5.

--- SCREEN: *The Piano Lesson* (1995) 99 minutes. *ON RESERVE IN LIBRARY WEST*

FEB 27 R-- August Wilson, *Fences* (1985), Act 1, sc. 1– 4

WK 8 TELLING A BLACK STORY: 'THE BLOOD'S MEMORY' – AUGUST WILSON

MAR 04 T-- SCREEN: *A CONVERSATION WITH AUGUST WILSON* (1992) 22 mins. **Wilson articles**

MAR 06 R-- **Discussion** on Racial Historical Memory as Dramatic Form, Style, and Tone in James Baldwin, Amiri Baraka, Lorraine Hansberry, and August Wilson.

WK 9 MIDTERM EXAM Thursday 13, March (50 minutes, 20 POINTS)

MAR 11 T-- *NO CLASS STUDY FOR MIDTERM EXAMINATION (20pts)*

MAR 13 R-- MIDTERM EXAM August Wilson, *Fences* (1985), Act 2, sc. 1–5

WK 10 SPRING BREAK (SAT. 15 MARCH – SUN. 23 MARCH)

Read the whole Play --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*)

WK 11 THE SIXTIES

MAR 25 T-- **Read the whole Play** --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*)

MAR 27 R-- Anna Deavere Smith, *Fires in the Mirror*, pp. 1-139.

-- **Discussion** on Race, Ethnicity, Gender, Class in the competing social politics in *The Taking of Miss Janie* and Leslie Catherine Sanders, *The Development of Black Theater in America*, ch.4.

WK 12 BLACK PERFORMANCE ARTIST: Anna Deavere Smith

APR 01 T-- Anna Deavere Smith, *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992*, pp. 1-89 and articles on Smith (ARES).

APR 03 R-- *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992*, pp. 90-162.

WK 13 **BLACK PERFORMANCE ARTIST:** Anna Deavere Smith

APR 08 T-- *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992*, pp. 163-265.

APR 10 R-- -- **GROUPS MEET IN CLASSROOM TO PREPARE THEIR FINAL DRAMATIC PROJECT**

WK 14 **FINAL GROUP DRAMATIC PRESENTATIONS**

10-MINUTE GROUP PRESENTATIONS AND 5-MINUTE Q & A (20PTS)

APR 15 T—

GRP1: STUDENTS:

GRP2: STUDENTS:

GRP3: STUDENTS:

GRP4: STUDENTS:

GRP5: STUDENTS:

APR 17 R--

FINAL GROUP DRAMATIC PRESENTATIONS

10-MINUTE GROUP PRESENTATIONS AND 5-MINUTE Q & A (20PTS)

GRP1: STUDENTS:

GRP2: STUDENTS:

GRP3: STUDENTS:

GRP4: STUDENTS:

GRP5: STUDENTS:

WK 15

APR 24 T-- **LAST CLASS**

FINAL GROUP DRAMATIC PRESENTATIONS

10-MINUTE GROUP PRESENTATIONS AND 5-MINUTE Q & A (20PTS)