



**MERCER**  
COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

## COURSE OUTLINE

Course Number	Course Title	Credits
THR 212	Central Voices in World Drama	3
Hours: Lecture/Lab/Other	Co- or Pre-requisite	Implementation Semester & Year
3 Lecture	ENG 102	Fall 2022

**Catalog description:** Introduces students to important dramatic texts and looks at them beyond the page as blueprints for performance. Emphasizes playwriting conventions, elements, styles, trends, and movements to chart changing dramaturgy and production practices in the World. Some playwrights include Christopher Marlowe, Henry David Hwang, Tennessee Williams, Bertolt Brecht, Amiri Baraka, Arthur Miller, Caryl Churchill, and Wole Soyinka.

**General Education Category:**  
Goal 6: Humanities  
Goal 8: Diversity and Global Perspective

**Course coordinator:**  
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**Required texts & Other materials:**

Norton Anthology of Drama, Shorter Third Ed. by Gainor, Garner Jr., & Puchner  
 ISBN-13: 978-0393283501  
 ISBN-10: 9780393283501

**Course Student Learning Outcomes (SLO):**

***Upon successful completion of this course the student will be able to:***

1. Describe and discuss authors and periods of performance movements in Western drama. [Supports ILG # 7 & 8; PLO # 2]
2. Understand the historical context and value systems in which the plays were written and produced. [Supports ILG # 7, 8 10 & 11; PLO # 2]
3. Identify and analyze the basic elements of a play: theme, characters, conflict, dialogue, dramatic action, and plot. [Supports ILG # 1,10, &11; PLO # 1 ]
4. Compare and contrast how different playwrights utilize theme, characters, conflict, dialogue, and plot to construct a play. [Supports ILG # 1, 2, 10, &11; PLO #1, 2, 3 & 7]
5. Approach a play as a living text designed not for reading but for performance. [Supports ILG # 2 & 3; PLO #1, 2, & 3]
6. Use what they've learned to more deeply assess current theatrical-political landscapes. [Supports ILG # 1, 6, 10, & 11; PLO # 1-3 ]

## **Course-specific Institutional Learning Goals (ILG):**

**Institutional Learning Goal 1. Written and Oral Communication in English.** Students will communicate effectively in both speech and writing.

**Institutional Learning Goal 6. Humanities.** Students will analyze works in the fields of art, music, or theater; literature; philosophy and/or religious studies; and/or will gain competence in the use of a foreign language.

**Institutional Learning Goal 7. History.** Students will understand historical events and movements in World, Western, non-Western or American societies and assess their subsequent significance.

**Institutional Learning Goal 8. Diversity and Global Perspective:** Students will understand the importance of a global perspective and culturally diverse peoples

**Institutional Learning Goal 9. Ethical Reasoning and Action.** Students will understand ethical frameworks, issues, and situations.

**Institutional Learning Goal 10. Information Literacy:** Students will recognize when information is needed and have the knowledge and skills to locate, evaluate, and effectively use information for college level work.

**Institutional Learning Goal 11. Critical Thinking:** Students will use critical thinking skills understand, analyze, or apply information or solve problems.

**\*Special Note: Theatre is inherently an interdisciplinary subject that combines many subject areas depending on the play being studied or utilized for performance, so in theory a well-run theatrical classroom engages the scholar across several disciplines.**

## **Program Learning Outcomes for Theatre AA, AFA and Communications: Speech & Theatre (PLO)**

1. Conduct research in preparation for performing a role;
2. Independently interpret dramatic literature for performance;
3. Use a variety of acting, movement, and vocal techniques to craft a performance;
4. Work collaboratively with artistic and production staff;
5. Create successful auditions by preparing materials and exhibiting professional conduct.

*Communication: Speech and Theatre utilizes these two additional PLOs:*

6. Develop communicative competencies in physical presentation, vocal variety techniques, and anxiety management skills to deliver prepared or extemporaneous speeches;
7. Develop effective interpersonal and intrapersonal communication skills.

## **Units of study in detail – Unit Student Learning Outcomes:**

### **Units of study in detail.**

#### **Unit I: Aristotilian Tragedy and Comedy, Commedia dell'arte, and 17<sup>th</sup> Century French Neoclassical Tragedy and Comedy**

*The student will be able to*

- Discuss the characteristics of Aristotle's observations about tragedy and comedy (in *The Poetics*) in Ancient Greece and their influence on 17<sup>th</sup> century French Neoclassical Theatre (as represented by the comedy *Sganarelle* by Moliere and the tragedy *Phaedra* by Racine). **(SLO #: 1 & 3)**
- Discuss the characteristics of Italian commedia dell'arte and their influence on 17<sup>th</sup> century French Neoclassical Comedy. **(SLO #: 1)**
- Identify the ways in which Aristotilian ideas as well as the political and social climate of 17<sup>th</sup> century France gave rise to the characters, plots, and themes of Neoclassical Drama. **(SLO #: 2)**
- Compare and contrast the plots, characters, and themes of Neoclassical tragedy and comedy. **(SLO #: 1 & 4)**
- Describe the scenic and performative innovations of 17<sup>th</sup> century French theatre. **(SLO #: 5)**

#### **Unit II: European Naturalism and Realism**

*The student will be able to*

- Explain the impact of major historical and cultural/philosophical shifts (including those inspired by the French Revolution and the works of Charles Darwin, Sigmund Freud, and Karl Marx) on the development of a new European Naturalism. **(SLO #: 1 & 2)**
- Discuss key characteristics of Naturalism (as explained by Emile Zola) as a self-conscious theatrical movement. **(SLO #: 4)**
- Assess the impact of Emile Zola's key tenants of Naturalism on the characters, plots, themes, and structure of Naturalist drama (as represented by Strindberg's *Miss Julie*). **(SLO #: 3)**
- Compare and contrast Naturalist drama with the concurrent movement of theatrical Realism (as represented by Ibsen's *A Doll House*). **(SLO #: 4)**
- Identify examples of Symbolism in Realist and Naturalist theatre. **(SLO #: 1)**
- Assess the extent to which Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard* conforms to and/or (re)combines elements of theatrical Naturalism, Realism, and Symbolism. **(SLO #: 1 & 4)**
- Discuss the political ramifications of race, class, and gender in the theatre of early 20<sup>th</sup> century Europe. **(SLO #: 2)**
- Identify the origins of "independent theatre" in the new venues created for publicly presenting Naturalist and Realist drama. **(SLO #: 1)**
- Describe the scenic and performative innovations of the new Naturalist and Realist theatre, including most notably Stanislavski's "system" for acting. **(SLO #: 5)**

### **Unit III: American Realism and Expressionism**

*The student will be able to*

- Explain the impact of an emerging U.S. national identity on the themes, plots, characters, and aesthetics of four recognized U.S. playwrights (Susan Glaspell, Eugene O'Neill, Arthur Miller, and Tennessee Williams). **(SLO #: 1, 2 & 4)**
- Compare and contrast European and U.S. Realism. **(SLO #: 5)**
- Discuss key characteristics of American Expressionism (as represented by O'Neill's *The Hairy Ape* and Miller's *Death of a Salesman*). **(SLO #: 1 & 3)**
- Discuss characteristics of Magic or Poetic Realism (as represented by Williams' *Streetcar*). **(Cou SLO #: 1)**
- Discuss the political ramifications of race, class, and gender in the theatre of the early- and mid-twentieth century United States. **(SLO #: 2)**

### **Unit IV: Brecht and Artaud**

*The student will be able to*

- Discuss key ideas and characteristics of Brechtian and Artaudian theatre. **(SLO #: 1)**
- Explain the impact of major historical and cultural/philosophical shifts (including those inspired by World Wars I and II) on the development of Brecht's and Artaud's ideas. **(SLO #: 2)**
- Compare and contrast the goals of Epic Theatre (Brecht) and the Theatre of Cruelty (Artaud). **(SLO #: 4)**
- Discuss the significance of Brecht and Artaud to the creation of Postmodern drama and performance (including Peter Brook's experiments with devising a Theatre of Cruelty at the RSC and his production of Peter Weiss' *Marat/Sade*). **(SLO #: 1 & 7)**
- Identify present-day examples in film, television, and theatre of Brechtian and Artaudian principals (such as Brecht's "v-effect" and Artaud's "plague"). **(SLO 5 & 6)**
- Compare and contrast Brecht/Artaud and European Naturalism/European and U.S. Realism. **(SLO #: 6)**

### **Unit V: European Absurdism**

*The student will be able to*

- Discuss key ideas and characteristics of Absurdism (as explained by Esslin in "Theatre of the Absurd"). **(SLO #: 1)**
- Explain the impact of major historical and cultural/philosophical shifts (including those inspired by World War II) on the development of Absurdist plays and playwrights (as represented by Samuel Beckett). **(SLO #: 2)**
- Compare and contrast Existentialism and Absurdism (as explained by Esslin). **(SLO #: 4)**

### **Unit VI: Postcolonialism and Postmodernism**

*The student will be able to*

- Explain the impact of major historical and cultural/philosophical shifts (including those inspired by Civil Rights Movements, Feminism, and Globalization) on the development of Postcolonial and Postmodern plays and playwrights (as represented by Amiri Baraka, Caryl Churchill and Wole Soyinka). **(SLO #: 1 & 2)**
- Describe and identify examples of “metanarratives” in course materials covered in Units I-V. **(Cour SLO #: 1)**
- Compare and contrast the political underpinnings of Postmodernism and 19<sup>th</sup> century Naturalism/Realism. **(SLO #: 4)**
- Assess the significance of Brecht and Artaud to both the theatrical practice and ideological purpose of Postcolonial and Postmodern drama. **(SLO #: 4)**
- Engage in a cumulative discussion that draws upon course materials covered in Units I-VI to assess past representations of “reality” on stage and use them to discuss the dramatic “realities” of the present (as represented by contemporary plays, films, and television). **(SLO #: 5 & 6)**

### **Evaluation of student learning:**

1. Students will each research and assemble one research “post” to an internet blog maintained by the instructor and accessible by all students. Each “post” requires that students use three academic books or articles which they acquire at the MCCC Library to outline major points of interest concerning the playwright, the play, and the historical period under discussion during that week’s class. Students are then responsible for downloading and reading each other’s posts in preparation for class and responding, in class and via the blog commenting feature, with questions and observations about each other’s research.
2. Students will take two exams, a Midterm and a Final, which ask them to recall and correctly identify key figures and historical contexts of the theatrical movements discussed in class as well as major characters, themes, plot occurrences, and passages of dialogue from the plays.
3. Students will write two essays, one for the Midterm Exam and one for the Final, to use what they’ve learned to more deeply assess past as well as current theatrical-political landscapes.
4. Students will take periodic and unannounced in-class quizzes on the works they have read for each class.