



## COURSE OUTLINE

<b>Course Number</b> THR212	<b>Course Title</b> Central Voices in World Drama	<b>Credits</b> 3
<b>Hours:</b> 3 Lecture	<b>Co- or Pre-requisite</b> ENG102	<b>Implementation</b> Spring 2008

**Catalog description (2006-2009 Catalog):** 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.

**Required texts/other materials:**

*The Wadsworth Anthology of Drama*, 5<sup>th</sup> edition, edited by W. B. Worthen  
*A Streetcar Named Desire* by Tennessee Williams, Signet Paperback edition  
*The Normal Heart* by Larry Krame, Grove Press 1<sup>st</sup> edition

**Revision date:** 2008

**Course coordinator:** Jody P. Person

**Information resources:** *The Wadsworth Anthology of Drama* contains plays that are part of the traditional canon as well as background information on the plays/playwrights and critical/historical contexts. *Streetcar* and *The Normal Heart* are intended to supplement the *Wadsworth Anthology* and compensate for key omissions.

**Other learning resources:** Our library and the county system contain a collection of relevant books, videos, recordings, and electronic databases to supplement the students' learning and research projects. These are all well-known works of recognized quality, including: *The Idea of Theater* by Francis Fergusson; *Black Theatre, Ritual Performance in the African Diaspora* edited by Paul Carter Harrison; *Twentieth Century Theatre*, a sourcebook edited by Richard Drain; *Dramatic Theory and Criticism, Greeks to Grotowski* by Bernard F. Dukore; *The Theatre of Revolt, Studies in Modern Drama from Ibsen to Genet* by Robert Brustein; *Restoration Theatre* edited by John Russell Brown and Bernard Harris; *American Avant-garde Theatre: a History* by Arnold Aronson; and *The Theory of the Modern Stage* edited by Eric Bentley.

## Course Competencies/Goals:

### *The student will be able to:*

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

## Course-specific General Education Knowledge Goals and Core Skills.

### General Education Knowledge Goals

**Goal 1. Communication.** Students will communicate effectively in both speech and writing.

**Goal 4. Technology.** Students will use computer systems or other appropriate forms of technology to achieve educational and personal goals.

**Goal 5. Social Science.** Students will use social science theories and concepts to analyze human behavior and social and political institutions and to act as responsible citizens.

**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.

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

**Goal 8. Diversity.** Students will understand the importance of a global perspective and culturally diverse peoples.

**Goal 9. Ethical Reasoning and Action.** Students will understand ethical issues and situations.

### MCCC Core Skills

**Goal A. Written and Oral Communication in English.** Students will communicate effectively in speech and writing, and demonstrate proficiency in reading.

**Goal B. Critical Thinking and Problem-solving.** Students will use critical thinking and problem solving skills in analyzing information.

**Goal D. 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.

**Goal E. Computer Literacy.** Students will use computers to access, analyze or present information, solve problems, and communicate with others.

**Goal G. Intra-Cultural and Inter-Cultural Responsibility.** Students will demonstrate an awareness of the responsibilities of intelligent citizenship in a diverse and pluralistic society, and will demonstrate cultural, global, and environmental awareness.

## 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). **(Course Competencies 1 & 3; Gen Ed Goal 1 & 6; Core Skill A)**
- Discuss the characteristics of Italian commedia dell'arte and their influence on 17<sup>th</sup> century French Neoclassical Comedy. **(Course Competencies 1; Gen Ed Goal 1 & 6; Core Skill A)**
- 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. **(Course Competency 2; Gen Ed Goal 1, 6 & 7; Core Skill A)**
- Compare and contrast the plots, characters, and themes of Neoclassical tragedy and comedy. **(Course Competencies 1 & 4; Gen Ed Goal 1 & 6; Core Skill A)**
- Describe the scenic and performative innovations of 17<sup>th</sup> century French theatre. **(Course Competency 5; Gen Ed Goal 1 & 6; Core Skill A)**

### 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. **(Course Competencies 1 & 2; Gen Ed Goal 1, 6 & 7; Core Skill A)**
- Discuss key characteristics of Naturalism (as explained by Emile Zola) as a self-conscious theatrical movement. **(Course Competency 4; Gen Ed Goal 1 & 6; Core Skill A)**
- 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*). **(Course Competency 3; Gen Ed Goal 1 & 6; Core Skills A & B)**
- Compare and contrast Naturalist drama with the concurrent movement of theatrical Realism (as represented by Ibsen's *A Doll House*). **(Course Competency 4; Gen Ed Goal 1 & 6; Core Skill A)**
- Identify examples of Symbolism in Realist and Naturalist theatre. **(Course Competency 1; Gen Ed Goal 1 & 6; Core Skill A)**
- Assess the extent to which Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard* conforms to and/or (re)combines elements of theatrical Naturalism, Realism, and Symbolism. **(Course Competencies 1 & 4; Gen Ed Goal 1 & 6; Core Skills A & B)**
- Discuss the political ramifications of race, class, and gender in the theatre of early 20<sup>th</sup> century Europe. **(Course Competency 2; Gen Ed Goal 5 & 7; Core Skill A)**
- Identify the origins of "independent theatre" in the new venues created for publicly presenting Naturalist and Realist drama. **(Course Competency 1; Gen Ed Goal 1 & 6; Core Skill A)**
- Describe the scenic and performative innovations of the new Naturalist and Realist theatre, including most notably Stanislavski's "system" for acting. **(Course Competency 5; Gen Ed Goal 1 & 6; Core Skill A)**

### **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). **(Course Competencies 1, 2 & 4; Gen Ed Goal 1, 5, 6 & 7; Core Skills A & B)**
- Compare and contrast European and U.S. Realism. **(Course Competency 5; Gen Ed Goal 1 & 6; Core Skill A & B)**
- Discuss key characteristics of American Expressionism (as represented by O'Neill's *The Hairy Ape* and Miller's *Death of a Salesman*). **(Course Competencies 1 & 3; Gen Ed Goal 1 & 6; Core Skill A)**
- Discuss characteristics of Magic or Poetic Realism (as represented by Williams' *Streetcar*). **(Course Competency 1; Gen Ed Goal 1 & 6; Core Skill A)**
- Discuss the political ramifications of race, class, and gender in the theatre of the early- and mid-twentieth century United States. **(Course Competency 2; Gen Ed Goal 1, 5, 6 & 7; Core Skill A)**

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

*The student will be able to*

- Discuss key ideas and characteristics of Brechtian and Artaudian theatre. **(Course Competency 1; Gen Ed Goal 1 & 6; Core Skill A)**
- 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. **(Course Competency 2; Gen Ed Goal 1, 6, 7 & 9; Core Skill A)**
- Compare and contrast the goals of Epic Theatre (Brecht) and the Theatre of Cruelty (Artaud). **(Course Competency 4; Gen Ed Goal 1 & 6; Core Skill A)**
- 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*). **(Course Competencies 1 & 7; Gen Ed Goal 1, 6 & 7; Core Skills A & B)**
- Identify present-day examples in film, television, and theatre of Brechtian and Artaudian principals (such as Brecht's "v-effect" and Artaud's "plague"). **(Course Competency 5 & 6; Gen Ed Goal 1 & 6; Core Skill A)**

- Compare and contrast Brecht/Artaud and European Naturalism/European and U.S. Realism. **(Course Competency 6; Gen Ed Goal 1 & 6; Core Skill A & B)**

#### **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”). **(Course Competency 1; Gen Ed Goal 1 & 6; Core Skills A & B)**
- 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). **(Course Competency 2; Gen Ed Goal 1, 6, 7 & 9; Core Skills A & B)**
- Compare and contrast Existentialism and Absurdism (as explained by Esslin). **(Course Competency 4; Gen Ed Goal 1 & 6; Core Skills A & B)**

#### **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). **(Course Competencies 1 & 2; Gen Ed Goal 1, 5, 6, 7, 8 & 9; Core Skills A, B & G)**
- Describe and identify examples of “metanarratives” in course materials covered in Units I-V. **(Course Competency 1; Gen Ed Goal 1, 5 & 6; Core Skill A)**
- Compare and contrast the political underpinnings of Postmodernism and 19<sup>th</sup> century Naturalism/Realism. **(Course Competency 4; Gen Ed Goal 1, 5, 6 & 7; Core Skills A & B)**
- Assess the significance of Brecht and Artaud to both the theatrical practice and ideological purpose of Postcolonial and Postmodern drama. **(Course Competency 4; Gen Ed Goal 1, 6, 7 & 8; Core Skills A, B & G)**
- 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). **(Course Competencies 5 & 6; Gen Ed Goal 1, 5, 6, 7, 8 & 9; Core Skills A, B & G)**

#### **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 have 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.

**Academic Integrity Statement:** Students are expected to comply with the college-wide requirements for academic integrity. Mercer County Community College is committed to Academic Integrity—the honest, fair, and continuing pursuit of knowledge, free from fraud or deception. This implies that students are expected to be responsible for their own work. Presenting another individual’s work as one’s own and receiving excessive help from another individual will qualify as a violation of Academic Integrity. The entire policy on Academic Integrity is located in the Student handbook and is found on the college website ([http://www.mccc.edu/admissions\\_policies\\_integrity.shtml](http://www.mccc.edu/admissions_policies_integrity.shtml)).