2014

499-01 Senior Seminar: Modern Drama

Graley Herren
herren@xavier.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://www.exhibit.xavier.edu/english_syllabi_spring_2014

Recommended Citation
http://www.exhibit.xavier.edu/english_syllabi_spring_2014/15
SENIOR SEMINAR: MODERN DRAMA  
ENGL 499 / Spring 2014

Professor: Graley Herren     Office: Hinkle 235  
Office Hours: MW 1:30-3:00pm, T 9:00-11:00am, and by appointment  
Email: herren@xavier.edu     Office Phone: 745-2877

Course Description
The Senior Seminar serves as a capstone course—the culmination of your career as an English major at Xavier University. This course is designed to provide you with a venue for showcasing the best of your independent critical reading, speaking, writing, and researching skills. Specifically, this seminar will promote intensive study of important themes and techniques in Modern Drama.

Goals and Desired Student Learning Outcomes
As the capstone course in English, this course is guided by the department’s goals and desired student learning outcomes for the entire English major program:

1) Textual/Language Knowledge and Skills  
a) To read critically and to interpret insightfully  
b) To understand the structure and use of the English language

2) Communication Knowledge and Skills  
a) To write effectively for various audiences and purposes  
b) To articulate ideas orally and engage in informed discussions of texts and issues

3) Research Knowledge and Skills  
a) To locate, evaluate, use, and document secondary sources effectively, both traditional and electronic

4) Knowledge of Literature and Critical/Theoretical Approaches  
a) To demonstrate knowledge of broad developments in literature, especially American and British, in various genres  
b) To demonstrate knowledge of literary criticism and theory

Required Texts
Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf? by Edward Albee
Wit by Margaret Edson
Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead by Tom Stoppard
How I Learned to Drive by Paula Vogel
Various readings made available electronically on Canvas

Grading Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>92 ↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>82-87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80-81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>72-77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70-71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>62-67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>60-61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>88-89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>78-79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>68-69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>59 ↓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Grades*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journals</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentations</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Thesis</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*All assignments must be completed and submitted in timely fashion in order to pass the course.

Attendance and Attention Policies
I will take attendance each class meeting. None of the participation expectations explained below can be met on days when you miss class. I do not have a fixed absence policy (e.g., \( x \) number of absences = \( y \) deduction of grade points), so there is no need to bring in written excuses, doctor notices, etc. Just know that if you miss multiple classes, it will negatively impact your grade. Additionally, the expectations explained below cannot be met if you are physically present but mentally distracted by personal electronic devices. I permit laptops or pads for use in taking notes and presentations, and I permit readers for those who have digital versions of the texts. However, you are not permitted to send or receive text messages, check e-mail or social network sites, or browse internet pages during class. Such distracting behavior betrays a lack of engagement with the material, as well as a lack of respect for the seminar.

Participation (15%)
A seminar is a small, student-centered class in which discussions are facilitated by the professor but primarily led by students. Students are expected to: 1) attend class, 2) arrive prepared, 3) engage openly and respectfully with classmates, 4) respond with questions and comments to presentations, and 5) bring three written questions to class on your assigned dates and work them into the discussion [Albin through Bolo on Mondays, Brown through Lasky on Wednesdays, and Lindley through White on Fridays]. Students who conscientiously meet these expectations will receive high grades, and those who fall short in any areas will receive lower grades.

Journals (30%)
Instead of assigning formal graded papers due at intervals over the course of the semester, I am opting for shorter, less formal, more regular, and more diverse forms of written reflection on the course content. Once a week I expect you to write 1-2 double-spaced typed pages reflecting on some aspect of our studies for the week. I refer to this ongoing assignment as a “journal,” but don’t confuse it with a diary; these writings are public in the sense that I’ll be reading them and I may occasionally ask you to share them with the class. Therefore, your approach should be interpretive, not confessional. The point of the journal is to form critical habits of mind in thinking and writing about modern drama.

A journal entry might focus on a particularly interesting, confusing, provocative, disturbing, or problematic scene in the play we’re reading that week. Sometimes you may choose to write about the critical article for the week instead of the play. Sometimes you may focus more on the text, other times on creative decisions faced by performers, directors, or adapters of the play. Your response might even focus on an unexpected or revealing turn our class discussions took that week. You may occasionally wish to consider connections between what you’re studying in this class and what you’re studying in your other courses. “A”-level work will be thoughtful, creative, and diverse in your various approaches to journal entries.
Fridays will be journal days. Bring your entry for the week with you to class. About every three weeks, I’ll take up journals (bound together in a folder) and grade you on that installment. These installment grades will be averaged at the end of the semester for one journal grade totaling 30% of your final grade.

Presentations (15%)
Along with heightened expectations for daily class participation, the Senior Seminar includes three formal presentations: 1a) an oral report on a work of criticism about a play we study, OR 1b) a multi-player performance from one of the plays we study; 2a) an individual research presentation to the class about what you are working on for your Senior Thesis, AND 2b) a poster presentation and brief talk on your Senior Thesis. Part 1 will count for half of your presentation grade, and Part 2 will count for the other half.

Part 1
Oral Report: Present an oral report on one of the secondary critical readings (see sign-up sheet). 1-2 presenters will be given 8-10 minutes total for the presentation. “A”-level work will involve identifying the thesis of the piece, explaining its argument, and evaluating its success or failure in enhancing your understanding of the play.
Performance: Perform with others in a scene from one of the plays we are studying. Groups should include 2-4 performers. Scenes will be performed at the beginning of class on the assigned date (see sign-up sheet). The choice of scenes is entirely up to the group. You may even want to “cut and paste” a couple of scenes. In any case, the criteria in making your selection should be: 1) includes speaking parts for each member of the group; 2) represents a crucial moment in the play; and 3) lasts 5-7 minutes. “A”-level work will require rehearsing, memorizing your lines, considering appropriate physical movement or positioning, incorporating any necessary props, and performing effectively with your cast on the assigned date and within the allotted time constraints. Each performer will be graded individually. However, drama is a collaborative art, so your performance will necessarily affect your group’s overall achievement. In other words: work hard to hold up your end.

Part 2
Research Presentation: Tell the class what you are working on for your Senior Thesis project. Explain what interests you in the subject, what questions or lines of argument you are pursuing, and what research seems most promising. You may even wish to acknowledge any difficulties or dead-ends you are encountering, since the class may have encountered similar difficulties and can offer advice. These 5-minute presentations will take place before the completion of your research paper, so they will necessarily be less than final. Your grade for Part 2 will be determined more by your polished final presentation. Think of this one as a dress rehearsal for the main event.
Public Poster Presentation: Assemble a poster for public display at the Senior Seminar Presentations event at the end of the semester (the English faculty will all be invited, as will any other guests you invite). Answer questions from guests about your work. “A”-level work will involve creating a visually interesting poster (combining both words and images) and engaging effectively with those who stop at your display. Each presenter will then have 3 minutes maximum to summarize succinctly the thesis, main points, and conclusion of your project. Please practice in advance to ensure that your brief talk is clear and concise. The audience will also have an opportunity to ask a few questions at intervals in the event.
Senior Thesis
The culmination of your studies is the Senior Thesis, a 12-15 page research paper based upon a topic of your own design. This research paper must deal at least in part with one or more works of Modern Drama—here defined as any work designed for performance and composed after 1875. Note that you are not limited to plays studied in class.

This is a major project that will require weeks of work. I encourage you to begin thinking about possible topics early on, and I encourage you to consult with me if you need help or want advice. Most of our class time will be devoted to discussion of plays on the syllabus. Therefore, the most useful instruction you will receive with respect to your Senior Thesis project will come through consultation outside class. The responsibility for seeking out that instruction lies squarely upon each student.

About a month before the Senior Thesis is due, I will require each student to schedule a conference with me where you will submit a written prospectus (a one-page description of what you plan on studying for your project) and a working bibliography (a list of at least seven sources that seem useful to guide your study). The final draft of your Senior Thesis will be due during finals week.

Plagiarism
Taking the words or ideas of another person and claiming them as your own is plagiarism. If you borrow words or ideas from another source, in print or on the internet, and do not acknowledge your use of that source, you are committing plagiarism. The penalties range from receiving a zero on the assignment, to failing the course, to being expelled from the university. If you have any uncertainties about what constitutes plagiarism, or any questions about when and how to cite your sources, please consult me at any time. Do not compromise your personal integrity and jeopardize your entire academic career by cheating in this or any other course.

READINGS & ASSIGNMENTS FOR MODERN DRAMA
Secrets & Lies, Crime & Punishment

January
13 Course Introductions
15 Glaspell’s Trifles
17 Ibsen’s Hedda Gabler, Act 1
20 MLK Day (no class)
22 Ibsen, Acts 2-3
24 Ibsen, Act 4 / Supplemental Criticism on Ibsen
27 Wilde’s The Importance of Being Earnest, Act 1
29 Wilde, Act 2 / Supplemental Criticism on Wilde
31 Wilde, Act 3 / Journal Check #1

February
3 Hwang’s M. Butterfly, Act 1
5 Hwang, Act 2 / Supplemental Interview with Hwang
March
3-7 Spring Break (no class)
10 Kushner’s Angels in America, Part 1: Millennium Approaches, Act 1
12 Kushner, Act 2
14 Kushner, Act 3
17 Kushner, continued / Supplemental Criticism on Kushner
19 Albee, The Zoo Story [ pdf file of play on Canvas], all
21 Albee, continued
24 Research Day / Journal Check #3
26 Albee’s Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?, Act 1
28 Albee, Act 2 / Supplemental Criticism on Albee
31 Albee, Act 3

April
2 Albee’s The Goat, or Who Is Sylvia?, Scene 1
4 Senior Survey (no readings) / Class meets in McDonald Library Room 134
7 Albee, Scene 2
9 Albee, Scene 3
11 Conference (no class) / Prospectus & Working Bibliography Due at Conference
14 Edson’s Wit, beginning through Mr. Bearing’s scene
16 Edson, rest of the play
18-21 Easter Break (no class)
23 Edson, continued / Course Evaluations / Final Journal Check
25 Research Presentations: Courtney Albin, John Appeldorn, Jennifer Bakes, Hannah Barker, and Taylor Beckham
28 Research Presentations: Leanue Bolo, Sabrina Brown, Rayshaunda Byrd, Katherine Colborn, and Ashley Corbett
30 Research Presentations: Dan Douaire, Heather Landrum, Mark Lasky, Matt Lindley, and Michael Nelson

May
2 Research Presentations: Patrick Phillips, Mark Sandman, Kristin Tan, Jason Waters, and Melissa White
5 Senior Seminar Poster Presentations, 2:00-4:00pm, Kennedy Auditorium
7 Senior Thesis Due by 5pm (no class)
SIGN-UP SHEET FOR ORAL PRESENTATIONS
[Sign up for either an Oral Presentation or a Performance by Friday, January 17]

Nilsen’s Article on Ibsen

Powell’s Chapter on Wilde

DiGaetani’s Interview with Hwang

Koprince’s Article on Wilson

Abbotson’s Article on Stoppard

Herren’s Article on Vogel

Korby’s Article on Kushner

Roudanés Essay on Albee
SIGN-UP SHEET FOR PERFORMANCES
[Sign up for either an Oral Presentation or a Performance by Friday, January 17]

Ibsen’s Hedda Gabler

Wilde’s The Importance of Being Earnest

Hwang’s M. Butterfly

Wilson’s Fences

Stoppard’s Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead

Vogel’s How I Learned to Drive

Kushner’s Angels in America

Albee’s The Zoo Story

Albee’s Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?

Albee’s The Goat, or Who Is Sylvia?

Edson’s Wit