

St. Jerome's University in the University of Waterloo
Department of English
ENGL 324: Modern and American Drama
M/W 10:00 - 11:20, SJ2 2007, Winter 2022

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Course Overview and Objectives:

This course explores modern and contemporary American drama by engaging with some of the conventions and points of innovation within the broadly understood tradition of dramatic realism. We will begin by studying Arthur Miller's *All My Sons* (1947), August Wilson's *Fences* (1985), and Lynn Nottage's *Sweat* (2015), a group of historically and geographically situated plays about the rise and fall of working-class families in America. For the second half of the course, we will turn to Tennessee Williams' *The Glass Menagerie* (1944), Margaret Edson's *Wit* (1995), and David Auburn's *Proof* (2000), a handful of time-bending plays that probe the complexities of memory, definitions of genius and human health, while also challenging our conceptions of reality. We will end the term with Cormac McCarthy's *The Sunset Limited* (2006), an arresting and minimalistic play about the possibilities and limitations of dialogue and belief. While reading, viewing, and writing about these plays, you will gain insight into the social and artistic dynamics that come with interpreting scripts and staged performances, as well some of the problems and possibilities that develop through film adaptations.

Format of Course Delivery and COVID Contingency Plan:

Until at least January 27th, all announcements, postings, and lectures will be made available through Learn. Once this course returns to in-person delivery, lectures will no longer be recorded and posted, as we will be meeting at the following time and location (M/W, 10:00-11:20, SJ2 2007). Until we return to campus, I will post 60-70 minute lectures on the assigned readings and topics twice per week (normally on Mondays and Wednesdays). You will want to complete the assigned readings *before* viewing the course lectures. Until we return to campus, I will also hold 30 minute live discussion sessions on Fridays at 11:00 a.m. (starting January 14th). These sessions are optional, but they will provide opportunities for you to ask questions about assignments and to discuss the week's readings and lectures.

If, during the course of the term, the University of Waterloo must face short term closure (e.g. one week), course readings and pending due dates for assignments will be reassessed and potentially adjusted. If a longer-term cancellation of in-person meetings is required, the course will continue in an asynchronous environment following our established pattern of recorded lectures (M/W) and optional live sessions (Fridays at 11:00 am). Upon returning to in-person delivery, students who cannot attend class due to self-isolation will be accommodated to the best of my ability (e.g. through access to PowerPoint slides, any materials posted on LEARN, and possibly through adjusted due dates for assignments).

Required Texts:

Tennessee Williams, *The Glass Menagerie* (1944)
Arthur Miller, *All My Sons* (1947)
August Wilson, *Fences* (1985)
Margaret Edson, *Wit* (1995)
David Auburn, *Proof* (2000)
Cormac McCarthy, *The Sunset Limited* (2006; do not purchase this one)
Lynn Nottage, *Sweat* (2015)

Important Note: the UW/SJU library has kindly made several of our texts available through electronic reserve (links available via Course Reserves). The following texts are available electronically (*Fences*, *Sweat*, *The Sunset Limited*); once we return to campus *All My Sons*, *The Glass Menagerie*, *Wit*, and *Proof* will be available in hard copy for 3 Day loan in the SJU library).

Assignments and Due Dates:

Critical Exercise #1	20% (3 pages)	Friday, January 28 th (dropbox by midnight)
Critical Exercise #2	20% (3 pages)	Friday, February 18 th (dropbox by midnight)
Critical Exercise #3	20% (3 pages)	Wednesday, March 30 th (dropbox by midnight)
Final Project	40% (8-9 pages)	Tuesday, April 12 th (dropbox by midnight)

General Instructions for Assignments:

As the course progresses, guidelines will be distributed for the critical exercises and the final project. Generally speaking, the **critical exercises** will provide opportunities for you to examine the workings of a specific nuance, feature, or aspect of design/production within a particular play. I will provide specific ideas and topics for each exercise that are connected to course lectures and readings, but you will also be free to develop your own lines of inquiry. Because these plays can be approached in many ways, the **final project** will leave you with three different options to choose from: a critical essay, a study of film adaptations, or an artistic proposal focused on set design and directing (separate guidelines for the final project will be posted on LEARN in the coming weeks). As a general means of guidance, I am providing the following description of my marking in regard to the types of written work that I tend to receive:

“90-100” indicates that an assignment is worthy of truly exceptional recognition. The work is original and presented with qualities of voice and argumentation that suggest the emergence of a future literary scholar. After encountering such work, I tend to remember the assignment for months (perhaps years) to come. Work of this caliber is a rare species.

“80-89” indicates that an assignment reflects excellence in all areas. The work is not only thought provoking and structurally polished, but it is also completed with a high level of style and critical independence. The work presents obvious signs of fresh and independent thinking, a sense of thoughtful organization, and excellent control over mechanics and style.

“70-79” indicates that an assignment is average or above average. The work explores difficult questions in ways that are creative, critical, and thought provoking. The work is

critically and organizationally sound, contributing to the interpretive concerns present in the course.

“65-69” indicates that an assignment meets the minimum requirements. The work is functional and all aspects of the assignment have been addressed, but the assignment may be hindered by a lack of critical argument, sophistication, or organizational clarity.

“55-64” indicates that an assignment is presented in a way that is haphazard, incomplete, or reckless. The work tends to be completed in haste and suggests a lack of commitment. Major portions of the assignment are completed poorly and need revision.

SCHEDULE OF READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS

Week One

W-1/5 Introduction to the course, syllabus, and assignments

Week Two

M-1/10 Key terms and concepts from Aristotle’s *Poetics* (see handout in LEARN)

W-1/12 Aristotle’s *Poetics*, continued; Arthur Miller, “Tragedy and the Common Man” (1949, LEARN); Arthur Miller commenting on the writing and staging of *All My Sons* (1995, LEARN)

Unit I:

The Rise and Fall of America’s Working Class

Week Three

M-1/17 Arthur Miller, *All My Sons* (Act I, pp. 5-40); set design (Montana Repertory Theatre, 2016; LEARN); set design (Jewel Theatre Company, 2017; LEARN); scenes from Act I (see pp. 21-22; pp. 29-30), London Apollo Theatre (2011, LEARN)

W-1/19 Arthur Miller, *All My Sons* (Act II, pp. 40-71); scene from Act II London Apollo Theatre (2011, LEARN; corresponding script pp. 62-64); scene from Act II, American Playhouse Production (1987, LEARN; corresponding script pp. 50-58); handout on Miller’s use of irony in Act II (LEARN)

Week Four

- M-1/24 Arthur Miller, *All My Sons* (Act III, pp. 73-84); set design, Regent's Park Open Air Theatre (2014, LEARN); final scene from Arthur Miller *Death of a Salesman*, American Playhouse Production (1985, LEARN)
Due: Critical Exercise #1 (by Friday, 1/28 at midnight)
- W-1/26 August Wilson, "I Want a Black Director" (1990); Preface to *Three Plays* (1991); Blues Lyrics (handout, LEARN)

Week Five

- M-1/31 August Wilson, *Fences* (Act I, Scenes 1-2; pp. 1-28)
- W-2/2 August Wilson, *Fences* (Act I, Scenes 3-4; pp. 29-58); comparative productions of Act I, Scene 3 (see pp. 37-38; Broadway, 1987; Broadway, 2010; film, 2016 – all on LEARN)

Week Six

- M-2/7 August Wilson, *Fences* (Act II, pp. 59-101); scenes from film adaptation (2016, on LEARN), see corresponding script pp. 65-72; pp. 96-101
- W-2/9 Lynn Nottage, *Sweat* (Act I, Scenes 1-3; pp. 1-33); Langston Hughes, "Let America Be America Again" (1936, LEARN); Lynn Nottage on the origins of *Sweat* (The Public Theatre, 2018; LEARN); *Sweat: Journey to Reading* (Broadway, 2017; LEARN)

Week Seven

- M-2/14 Lynn Nottage, *Sweat* (Act I, Scene 4 - Act II, Scene 2; pp. 34-75); Another Round with *Sweat: In Conversation with Lynn Nottage and Kate Whoriskey* (Broadway, 2017; LEARN)
- W-2/16 Lynn Nottage, *Sweat* (Act II, Scene 3 – end; pp. 76-112); Another Round with *Sweat: Playing Complex Characters* (Broadway, 2017; LEARN); Another Round with *Sweat: Creating Community on Stage* (Broadway, 2017; LEARN)
Due: Critical Exercise #2 (by Friday, 2/18 at midnight)

Reading Break (2/21-2/25)

**Unit II:
Variations of the “Memory Play”**

Week Eight

- M- 2/28 Tennessee Williams, “Production Notes to *The Glass Menagerie*” (1945, xix-xxii; LEARN); *The Glass Menagerie* (Scene 1, pp. 1-10); scene from film adaptation (1987, LEARN)
- W- 3/2 Tennessee Williams, *The Glass Menagerie* (Scenes 2-5, pp. 11-49)

Week Nine

- M- 3/7 Tennessee Williams, *The Glass Menagerie* (Scenes 6-7, pp. 50-97); final scene from Masterworks Theatre Company production (2105, LEARN; see corresponding script pp. 95-97)
- W- 3/9 Margaret Edson, *Wit* (pp. 1-34); interview with Margaret Edson (Manhattan Theatre Club; 2012, LEARN); scene from HBO film adaptation (2001, LEARN) and Manhattan Theatre Club production (2016, LEARN; see corresponding script pp. 12-15)

Week Ten

- M- 3/14 Margaret Edson, *Wit* (pp. 34-63); scene from Manhattan Theatre Club production (2016, LEARN; see corresponding script pp. 35-37)
- W- 3/16 Margaret Edson, *Wit* (pp. 64-85); scene from HBO film adaptation (2016, LEARN; see corresponding script pp. 78-80)

Week Eleven

- M- 3/21 David Auburn, *Proof* (Act I, Scenes 1-3; pp. 1-39); scene from film adaptation (2005, LEARN; see corresponding script pp. 1-13); Court Theatre Chicago production (2013, LEARN; see corresponding script pp. 11-13)
- W-3/23 David Auburn, *Proof* (Act I, Scene 4 – Act II, Scene 1, pp. 39-59); Inside the Playwright’s Studio: Charles Newell and David Auburn Interview (Court Theatre, 2013; Learn – not required, but recommended)

Week Twelve

- M-3/28 David Auburn, *Proof* (Act II, Scene 2 – End, pp. 59-83); Court Theatre Chicago production (2013, LEARN; see corresponding script pp. 64-65); scene from film adaptation (2005; LEARN; see corresponding script pp. 69-74)
Due: Critical Exercise #3 (by Wednesday, 3/30 at midnight)

Unit III: The Arresting Power of Minimalism and Dialogue

- W-3/30 Cormac McCarthy, *The Sunset Limited* (pp. 1-75); interviews from The San Francisco Playhouse Production (2010); “Black”—An Inside Look at *The Sunset Limited* (Triad Stage, 2011; Learn); “White” – An Inside Look at *The Sunset Limited* (Triad Stage, 2011; Learn)

Week Thirteen

- M-4/4 Cormac McCarthy, *The Sunset Limited* (pp. 76-143); scenes from HBO film production (2011)
Due: Final Project (by Tuesday, 4/12 at midnight)

ADDITIONAL DETAILS AND PROCEDURES

ASSIGNMENT SUBMISSION AND LATE ASSIGNMENTS

- All assignments will be submitted to a dropbox on LEARN. A few days before an assignment is due (for example, Week 4), I will set up a dropbox. Assignments must be submitted (preferably as a Word document) no later than midnight on the due date. Assignments submitted after the midnight deadline will be marked 2% per day late, including weekends.

EMAIL COMMUNICATION AND OFFICE HOURS

Students using email to contact me should include their first and last names, as well as the course in which they are enrolled in the email subject line. Feel free to contact me about the course through email, but please keep the following in mind:

- I am unable to provide in-depth responses about assignments, readings, and proofreading. If you wish to discuss these matters after reviewing guidelines for an assignment, please set up a time for a virtual office meeting. I may also save general questions to be addressed during the Friday live meetings.

UW POLICY REGARDING ILLNESS AND MISSED TESTS

The University of Waterloo Examination Regulations

(www.registrar.uwaterloo.ca/exams/ExamRegs.pdf) states that:

- A medical certificate presented in support of an official petition for relief from normal academic requirements must provide all of the information requested on the “University of Waterloo Verification of Illness” form or it will not be accepted. This form can be obtained from Health Services or at www.healthservices.uwaterloo.ca/Health_Services/verification.html.
- If a student has a test/examination deferred due to acceptable medical evidence, he/she normally will write the test/examination at a mutually convenient time, to be determined by the course instructor.
- The University acknowledges that, due to the pluralistic nature of the University community, some students may on religious grounds require alternative times to write tests and examinations.
- Elective arrangements (such as travel plans) are not considered acceptable grounds for granting an alternative examination time.

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

Students should be aware that this course contains the intellectual property of their instructor, TA, and/or St. Jerome’s University. Intellectual property includes items such as:

- Lecture content, spoken and written (and any audio/video recording thereof);
- Lecture handouts, presentations, and other materials prepared for the course (e.g., PowerPoint slides);
- Questions or solution sets from various types of assessments (e.g., assignments, quizzes, tests, final exams); and
- Work protected by copyright (e.g., any work authored by the instructor or TA or used by the instructor or TA with permission of the copyright owner).

Course materials and the intellectual property contained therein, are used to enhance a student’s educational experience. However, sharing this intellectual property without the intellectual property owner’s permission is a violation of intellectual property rights. For this reason, it is necessary to ask the instructor, TA, and/or St. Jerome’s University for permission before uploading and sharing the intellectual property of others online (e.g., to an online repository).

Permission from an instructor, TA, or the University is also necessary before sharing the intellectual property of others from completed courses with students taking the same/similar courses in subsequent terms/years. In many cases, instructors might be happy to allow distribution of certain materials. However, doing so without expressed permission is considered a violation of intellectual property rights.

Please alert the instructor if you become aware of intellectual property belonging to others (past or present) circulating, either through the student body or online. The intellectual property rights owner deserves to know (and may have already given their consent).

OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Academic Integrity: In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo community are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility. Check www.uwaterloo.ca/academicintegrity/ for more information.

Grievance: A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of their university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. [Read the St. Jerome's University Policy on Student Petitions and Grievances](#). When in doubt, please be certain to contact the St. Jerome's Advising Specialist, Student Affairs Office, who will provide further assistance.

Discipline: A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing an academic offence, and to take responsibility for their actions. Check www.uwaterloo.ca/academicintegrity/ for more information. A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offence, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offences (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about "rules" for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course instructor, academic advisor, or the Associate Dean. When misconduct has been found to have occurred, disciplinary penalties will be imposed under the [St. Jerome's University Policy on Student Discipline](#). For information on categories of offences and types of penalties, students should refer to University of Waterloo [Policy 71, Student Discipline](#). For typical penalties, check the [Guidelines for the Assessment of Penalties](#).

Appeals: A decision made or penalty imposed under the [St. Jerome's University Policy on Student Petitions and Grievances](#) (other than a petition) or the [St. Jerome's University Policy on Student Discipline](#) may be appealed if there is a ground. A student who believes they have a ground for an appeal should refer to the St. Jerome's University Policy on [Student Appeals](#).

Note for students with disabilities: [AccessAbility Services](#), located in Needles Hall (Room 1401) at the University of Waterloo, collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with AccessAbility Services at the beginning of each academic term.