

HL3006: Modern Drama

Semester 1, AY2025-26

Instructor: Prof Octavian Saiu

Course description

This module teaches you the skills and vocabulary required to close read drama. You will learn how to analyze and evaluate hard copy scripts and to recognize the way in which these scripts accommodate themselves to evolving theatrical traditions - and, moreover, what these evolving traditions owe to changes in society more generally. Special attention will be given to how and why theatre often disrupts its primary narrative to draw attention to its artificiality, and, moreover, why this feature has become more explicit in contemporary theatre.

Course Readings

Text subject to changes.

Henrick Ibsen, *A Doll's House*

August Strindberg, *Miss Julie*

Anton Chekhov, *The Cherry Orchard*

Bertolt Brecht, *Mother Courage and Her Children*

Eugene O'Neil, *Long Day's Journey into Night*

Samuel Beckett, *Waiting for Godot*

Eugene Ionesco, *The Lesson*

Tennessee Williams, *A Streetcar Named Desire*

Arthur Miller, *Death of Salesman*

Heiner Muller, *Hamletmachine*

Kuo Pao Kun, *No Parking on Odd Days*

Geraldine Song, *Jiwa Singapura*

Assignments

10% - Participation and Presentations: Students will be evaluated base on their understanding of the journal article they are presenting and how they respond to questions from their peers. Students will also be assessed according to the feedback they give to their peers and their day-to-day participation in course discussion.

5% - Final Essay Proposal: Students will be evaluated according to the strength of their driving question (and the extent to which the question is large and engaging enough to support a final essay) - the viability of their answer to that question - and their list of relevant "scenes" from the text which will be necessary to their answer.

35% - Final Essay: Students will defend an original thesis about one of the works read in class- and do so by close reading of the relevant scenes in the work - and by reflecting on secondary material about the play and/or the author of the play. You must use at least 4 secondary sources. Students will be assessed according to their familiarity with the relevant material, their original-critical thinking about that material, and their ability to express themselves in a clear and organized fashion so that the reader can follow their idea from point to (larger) point.

50% - Final Exam: Students will have to answer two questions (out of a total of five) - one from each of two loosely defined categories (one more comprehensive across the term, the other more focused on individual texts).

Planned weekly schedule

Week	Topic	Reading/ Activities
1	Introduction to Theatre, Drama, and Performance	Henrick Ibsen, <i>A Doll's House</i>
2	Introduction to Early Modern Drama	August Strindberg, <i>Miss Julie</i>
3	Realism and its Metaphors	Anton Chekhov, <i>The Cherry Orchard</i>
4	American Realism and Expressionism	Eugene O'Neil, <i>Long Day's Journey into Night</i>
5	The Theatre of the Absurd (I)	Samuel Beckett, <i>Waiting for Godot</i>
6	The Theatre of the Absurd (II)	Eugene Ionesco, <i>The Lesson</i>
7	Research Interviews - No Seminar	Proposal due in Research Interview
8	The Epic Theatre - continued work on proposal	Bertolt Brecht, <i>Mother Courage and Her Children</i>
9	American Drama and Stage Modernism	Tennessee Williams, <i>A Streetcar Named Desire</i>
10	Theatre and The Crises of Society	Arthur Miller, <i>Death of Salesman</i>
11	Postmodern Drama	Heiner Muller, <i>Hamletmachine</i>

12	Asian Drama, beyond Modernism and Postmodernism	Kuo Pao Kun, <i>No Parking on Odd Days</i>
13	Asian Drama, beyond Modernism and Postmodernism	Geraldine Song, <i>Jiwa Singapura</i>

Course Policies:

Attendance and Participation: The success of any seminar depends on the active participation of all its members. Barring illness or emergencies, you must attend every seminar. You must arrive on time, having done the required readings and any assigned work, and be ready to participate in the class discussion. Failure to do so will reduce your participation grade significantly. If you need to miss a class you must get in touch with me before that week's meeting.

Late Work and Extensions: if your essay is late, it will be marked down by one third of a letter grade for each day that it is overdue (i.e. a paper that would have received an A will receive a A-). No work will be accepted more than three days late without prior permission. Extensions will be granted only in exceptional circumstances, including documented illness or genuine emergency. You can earn a two-day extension if you work on your paper with a writing coach at the LCC Communication Cube.

Seeking Help Outside Class: you are encouraged to use any form of legitimate aid to help you write papers and research topics that interest you. Obvious sources of legitimate assistance include your tutors, the coaches at the LCC Communication Cube, and the subject librarians at the library. If you work on a paper with a writing coach, you are eligible for a two-day extension. Please speak to me if you would like to take advantage of this!

Generative AI: generative AI (such as ChatGPT) is not designed for research and is inclined to make things up. If you intend to use generative AI for your work in any capacity, you must get written permission from me first. You must follow the university's prevailing policies about how to acknowledge the use of generative AI in your work. Although it can be a useful tool, you must not use it to replace your own thinking or learning.

Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty: Don't do it! If I find that you have misrepresented someone else's work or wording as your own you will fail the assignment and possibly the course. If you are unsure of how or when to cite a source, please ask me or refer to the university's academic integrity resources online.