



## ELL 401 – Contemporary Drama

*Asst. Prof. Michael D. Sheridan*

Tuesday 15<sup>00</sup>–18<sup>00</sup> (G213)

*Office Hours:* By appointment (email me to arrange meeting)

*Email:* michael.sheridan@tedu.edu.tr

### **Course Description**

Development of English-language drama from the mid-20th to the early 21st centuries. Study of exemplary plays from Britain, Ireland, the USA, and Nigeria: modern verse drama, social realism/kitchen sink, absurd theater, in-yer-face theater, and other trends and movements. Study of historical, theoretical, and dramaturgical background of contemporary drama.

### **Course Format and Expectations**

Although there will be occasional lectures or mini-lectures outlining, for example, the historical and sociocultural background of the texts that we will read, for the most part this course is a reading/viewing- and discussion-based course. Therefore, you will be expected to come to each class having read, thought about, taken notes on, and prepared questions or comments relating to the assigned texts. In many cases, viewing of film versions or filmed stage versions of the plays is also assigned, and you are expected to have watched these versions and included your viewing as part of that preparation. The class will then proceed according to your preparations as we discuss, debate, and (hopefully) clarify your thoughts and ideas.

Please note that, in the classroom, I rarely use slides but make frequent and heavy use of the blackboard/whiteboard. Thus, it will be to your benefit to come to each class prepared to take notes. While you are of course welcome to take notes in any manner you wish, it is worth noting that numerous neuroscientific studies have shown that taking notes by hand with pen/pencil and paper is more beneficial than typing (or taking pictures of the board) for learning and retaining information, as well as for understanding and synthesizing concepts.

### **Learning Outcomes**

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- ✓ recognize major trends and styles in English-language drama of the mid-20th to early 21st centuries and relate them to contemporary historical, intellectual, and theoretical contexts
- ✓ analyze and interpret mid-20th- to early 21st-century drama in English in connection with its historical, intellectual, and theoretical contexts
- ✓ formulate and argue independent ideas relating to mid-20th- to early 21st-century drama in English, its significance in its own time, and its relevance to our time

## Readings and Course Materials

All texts for the course will be provided for you via the course Moodle page in PDF format. You will be responsible for regularly checking the course Moodle page before class for assigned readings, updates, and announcements.

While this is a reading- and viewing-heavy course (with approximately one play focused on per week), our readings and viewings will consist mainly of primary sources (*e.g.*, plays and filmed versions of plays). Introductory or analytical/critical secondary sources (*e.g.*, book chapters, journal articles, etc.) may also be occasionally assigned; however, for the most part, you yourself will be responsible for seeking out additional introductory and/or analytical/critical works to help you understand or interpret each play. I am, of course, ready and willing and happy to point you in the direction of such sources.

## Grading

Your final grade will be determined according to the following criteria:

### *Ongoing (formative) assessment (45%)*

- **Attendance and participation (15% of total grade)**

As noted above, this is a reading/viewing- and discussion-based course, so regular attendance and active participation are expected and required. The attendance portion of your grade is 5% of your total grade (determined by the percentage of class hours attended), while the participation portion is 10% of your total grade. If any quizzes or Moodle forum questions are given, they will form part of your participation grade.

- **Reading/viewing responses (30% of total grade, 10% each)**

Over the course of the semester, you will write a total of three (3) short (approximately 750 to 1,000 words) reading/viewing responses to an assigned play; one of these responses will require you to, if possible, attend a play in Ankara and respond to that performance. The content of and approach to adopt with each response will vary, but each response will be worth 10% of your total grade. More details about these reading/viewing responses will be provided periodically in class throughout the semester.

### *Summative assessment (55%)*

- **Midterm essay (20% of total grade)**

You will be expected to write a midterm essay of approximately 1,000–1,500 words focusing on a play and/or filmed play of your choice; this may be a play that was not assigned for class, so long as it meets with my approval and suits the time period and basic themes and issues of the assigned plays and our discussion of them. More details

will be provided via Moodle, email, and/or in class. Your midterm essay will be due no later than Monday, November 21.

- **Final project (35% of total grade)**

You will be expected to prepare a final project focusing on one (or more) of the plays assigned for the course; this may be a play that was not assigned for class, so long as it meets with my approval and suits the time period and basic themes and issues of the assigned plays and our discussion of them. The project may be either a written essay of approximately 1,500–2,500 words, or a creative project, such as a short written play or dramatic scene or your own staged and recorded version of a scene from one of the plays. In either case, if you wish, you can potentially view this final assignment as preparatory for the graduation project you will pursue in ELL 406. More details will be provided via Moodle, email, and/or in class. Your final project will be due no later than Friday, January 13.

### **Statement on Academic Integrity**

TED University is committed to maintaining the highest standards of integrity and ethical conduct. Such a level of ethical behavior and academic integrity will be expected in this course. Participating in behavior that violates academic integrity—*e.g.*, unauthorized collaboration on homework assignments, plagiarism, multiple submissions of the same assignment and paper, cheating on examinations, fabricating information, helping another person to cheat, having unauthorized advance access to examinations, altering or destroying the work of others, or any other action deemed as giving an unfair academic advantage—will result in disciplinary action. For more information on what constitutes ethical academic integrity at TED University, please see the following page: <https://student.tedu.edu.tr/en/principles-academic-integrity>.

Also please note that, in this course, any form of discrimination and/or harassment based on race, color, religion, creed, ethnicity, ancestry, national origin, sexual orientation, age, or disability, among other personal characteristics or choices, are strictly prohibited and will not be tolerated.

Any cases of plagiarism or cheating of any kind will on no grounds be tolerated. Such cases will be reported to the department chair and result in a grade of zero for the relevant work.

### **Attendance, Late Submission, and TurnItIn Policies**

You are required to attend class regularly: as noted above, attendance is 5% of your total grade, but please note that more than 12 class hours of unexcused absence will result in failure (FX) of the course. In other words, you must attend at least 30 (71%) of the 42 total class hours.

Late submission of assignments, except in cases of documented illness or emergency, will be accepted at a penalty of 5% reduction of the assignment's overall grade per day. However, after three days from the due date, late submissions will no longer be accepted.

All assignments will be submitted via Moodle and checked with TurnItIn. The TurnItIn similarity index of your assignments must be lower than 25% to qualify for evaluation.

### **Feedback and Email Policies**

There will be a grading rubric available on Moodle that will give you a basic idea of what I look for in written work, and thus how I grade. For each submitted assignment, I will provide a breakdown of your grade according to this rubric, and, where necessary, a couple of short comments as feedback. If you would like more detailed feedback on a graded assignment, please email me to request it within three (3) days after the grade is posted.

Whenever you write an email to me for any question or request, please be aware that I will respond to your email as soon as I am able, but only within weekday business hours; that is, I do not respond to emails in the evenings or on weekends.

### **Course Reading Schedule**

Below you will find a schedule containing the plays, and some additional texts, that we will be reading each week, together with film versions or filmed stage versions of each play where available; in some cases, a YouTube link to the film is provided, while in other cases another means of viewing the film will be arranged in due time, if possible. Please do not use the films as substitutes for reading the text of the play, but feel free to watch the film before or simultaneously with reading the text. Please note that the name and date below the name of each play are the place and date on which the play premiered on the stage.

As mentioned earlier, there may occasionally be additional secondary source readings (*e.g.*, book chapters, journal articles, etc.) assigned, and any such assigned readings will be made available on Moodle and announced via Moodle, email, and/or in class. However, for the most part, basic introductory material will be provided via in-class lectures or mini-lectures, while you yourself will be responsible for seeking out any additional analytical/critical works to help you understand or interpret each play, though I will of course always be ready and willing and happy to assist you in doing so.

Please note that the schedule below is subject to change, with any changes to be announced via Moodle, email, and/or in class.

**Week 1 (Sept. 27): Introduction to Modern Drama**

- In-class reading:
  - Selection from Bertolt Brecht, “A Short Organum for the Theater” (1949)
  - Selection from Antonin Artaud, “The Theater of Cruelty” (1932)

**Week 2 (Oct. 4)**

- W.B. Yeats, *Purgatory*  
(Abbey Theatre, Dublin; Aug. 19, 1938)
  - Filmed stage version: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y4rcsWfDwqQ>
- W.B. Yeats, “An Introduction for My Plays” (1937)

**Weeks 3–4 (Oct. 11 + 18)**

- Samuel Beckett, *Waiting for Godot*  
(French: Théâtre de Babylone, Paris, Jan. 5, 1953; English: Arts Theatre, London, Aug. 3, 1955)
  - Filmed stage version (1988): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q77jgal4Gto>
  - Film (2001): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YuxISg9tjHk>

**Week 5 (Oct. 25)**

- Tennessee Williams, *The Glass Menagerie*  
(Civic Theatre, Chicago; Dec. 26, 1944)
  - Film (1973): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eizufqTgQ2k> (Part 1),  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LCd8yCBEYwE> (Part 2)

**Week 6 (Nov. 1)**

- Shelagh Delaney, *A Taste of Honey*  
(Theatre Royal Stratford East, London; May 27, 1958)
  - Film (1961): To be provided via Moodle

**Week 7 (Nov. 8)**

- Lorraine Hansberry, *A Raisin in the Sun*  
(Ethel Barrymore Theatre [Broadway], New York; Mar. 11, 1959)
  - Film (1961): To be provided via Moodle

**Week 8 (Nov. 15): Review and Prep for Midterm Essay**

- Please note that your midterm essay will be due no later than Monday, November 21; the exact due date will be provided in due course.

**Week 9 (Nov. 22)**

- David Mamet, *American Buffalo*  
(Goodman Theatre, Chicago; Nov. 23, 1975)
  - Film (1996): To be provided via Moodle

**Week 10 (Nov. 29)**

- Wole Soyinka, *Death and the King's Horseman*  
(University of Ife, Ife-Ife; March 1, 1976)
  - Film (2022): To be provided via Moodle, if possible

**Week 11 (Dec. 6)**

- Philip Ridley, *The Pitchfork Disney*  
(Bush Theatre, London; Jan. 2, 1991)
  - Filmed stage version: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6dVcLHRusR8>

**Week 12 (Dec. 13)**

- Moisés Kaufman, *The Laramie Project*  
(Ricketson Theatre, Denver; Feb. 26, 2000)
  - Film (2002): To be provided via Moodle

**Week 13 (Dec. 20)**

- Caryl Churchill, *A Number*  
(Royal Court Theatre [West End], London; Sept. 23, 2002)
  - Filmed stage version (2013): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ic9ZtEU32io>

**Week 14 (Dec. 27): Review and Prep for Final Project**

- Please note that your final project will be due no later than Friday, January 13; the exact due date will be provided in due course.

**Student Development and Psychological Counseling Center**

The Student Development and Psychological Counseling Center is mandated with providing crisis intervention and supportive listening services to the campus community. The center conducts individual counseling, group guidance studies, workshops, seminars, and orientation studies for all students in need. You may apply to the center in order to deal with all your current problems.

For further information and/or questions: [ogrencidanismamerkezi@tedu.edu.tr](mailto:ogrencidanismamerkezi@tedu.edu.tr),  
<http://csc.tedu.edu.tr>

**TEDU Without Barriers Unit**

Please inform the *TEDU Without Barriers* Unit and the instructor of the course about specific issues in case you have a physical or mental disability and are having trouble with anything related to this course, such as accessing the material; participating in the class; taking notes; or preparing for, attending, or managing to complete the exams. Your situation will be reviewed by commission, in accordance with the principle of confidentiality, and if deemed appropriate, facilitating measures will be taken so that you can take the course more efficiently.

For further information and/or questions: [engelsiz@tedu.edu.tr](mailto:engelsiz@tedu.edu.tr),  
<https://www.tedu.edu.tr/engelsiz-tedu>