THE 3231: Section 14C3 / Spring 2017

African-American Theatre History and Practice

Class Meeting Time - MWF Per. 7 (1:55-2:45) / CSE E220
Dr. Mikell Pinkney / Office: 222 McGuire Pavilion / 273-0512 / mpinkney@arts.ufl.edu
Office Hours: Tues. 2:00-4:00PM & Thurs. 2:00-4:00PM; also by appointment

Course Content: An investigation and examination of the historical origins and development of theatre by, for and about black/ African-Americans from the late 18th Century through the end of the 20th Century and beyond. The course examines theatre from an historical, philosophical, ethnic and racial perspective and provides a theoretical understanding of cultural studies and sociological influences on and within a larger American society as represented by theatre created for, about, by and through the perspectives of African-Americans, highlighting a systematic move from cultural margin to mainstream theatrical practices and acknowledgements.

Objectives and Outcomes: Students will learn the historical contexts of playwrights, performers, theorists & theoretical concepts, productions and organizations that help to identify African-American Theatre as an indigenous American institution. Terminology and concepts of cultural studies are learned as a means for access and critical thinking about the subject. Discussions are developed through readings, lectures, videos, and analysis of dramatic literature of the field. Two tests, a mid-term exam, a group presentation and a final paper are required to access competence, communication and critical thinking skills.

Student Learning Objectives:
1. Students identify and analyze key elements, biases and influences that shape thought within the discipline (Critical Thinking)
2. Students approach issues and problems within the discipline from multiple perspectives (Critical Thinking)
3. Students will communicate knowledge, thoughts and reasoning clearly and effectively in forms appropriate to the discipline, individually and/or in groups (Communication)
4. Students demonstrate higher awareness of minority and marginalized artistic cultural forms and perspectives of expression (Communication)
5. Students demonstrate awareness of foundations of American theatrical system (Communication)

For more information about General Education Student Learning Outcomes go to:
http://gened.aa.ufl.edu/Date/Sites/10/media/gened_slo.pdf

Course Goals:
• Students will be able to analyze the historical development of dramatic theory, philosophy and practice of marginalized/ minority cultures (SLO 1, 2 & 3)
• Students will become familiar with dramatic literature not part of the overall theatrical mainstream (SLO 1 & 2)
• Students will develop ability to discuss philosophies of “otherness” and “hermeneutical perspectives” among other cultural studies terminology (SLO 3, 4 & 5)
• Students will write about and discuss plays read over the course of the semester, focusing on being able to convey the essence of the literature with the skills of sociological awareness (SLO 1, 2, 3, 4 & 5)
• Students will communicate wider awareness of alternative voices and social agency (SLO 4 & 5)

**Required Texts:**
Pinkney, Mikell. *The Theoretical Development of African-American Theatre and Drama.* (*Unpublished material emailed to registered students in full attendance at regular intervals.)

**ALSO:** Various in-class handouts in relation to specific areas of discussion

**Optional Texts:**

**Class Attendance:** Attendance in each scheduled class is essential for success. University policy allows undergraduates students three (3) absences without penalty (these include illness and personal needs). After three absences from this course, 20 points will be deducted from your attendance point totals, which may also result in negative points deducted for the final grading process! Please make effort to be on time for each scheduled class, as the instructor is not required to explain missed information presented during classes. The course focuses on preparation for the production of live theatre. Therefore, being present in class is an important aspect of both the teaching and learning process in this course.

**Required Viewings:** Attendance at live theatre productions is required for all students enrolled in this course. This term’s coupon productions will include: *The Divine; Tennessee Williams One-Acts; King Lear.* Your attendance at these productions will be important and a production analysis paper will be required for extra credit points. Each production analysis will be worth 10 percentage points to be factored into your final grade. Students desiring additional extra credit may do analysis for all three productions. These “response papers” must be no longer than 2-3 pages in length.

**Final Papers:** Papers are to be typed, double spaced and formatted according to MLA standards. (1” margins surrounding the page; **name, date, instructor and course in upper left hand corner of first page**; title centered on first page; each page numbered in upper right hand corner of each page ½” from top of page. Neatness, grammar and spelling do count! No added title pages are necessary for papers.) Final Papers should reflect on any aspect of black theatre history, theory, biography of important artists or literature (plays) either studied or alluded to in this course during the semester. Papers should be between 7 - 10 pages in length. This does NOT include endnotes and bibliography pages.

**Group Presentations of Plays Should Include:**
- A Power Point presentation and handout materials of important issues for the entire class
- **Very brief** overview or summary of plot (everyone in class should read the play)
- Possible meaning(s) and purposes of play title
- **Brief** background about the playwright
• Other important works by the same playwright
• Theme and highlights of important issues discussed in play
• Location and setting of the action (including any meaning or metaphors associated)
• Major and minor characters (including their purpose and objectives in the play)
• The time period of the play and related issues from that historical moment
• Major quotes or lines from the play that present important messages for today
• Outside critiques of the play and the issues when it was produced (or later reviewed)
• Personal important and memorable perspectives of group members about the play
• Handout should include 3-5 relevant study questions that may be included on an exam
• Make sure to list each group members contribution to the presentation on your handout

Each presentation should take no longer than 30-35 minutes of class time. All group members will receive the same numerical point value for the presentations (100 points total). Points will be deducted for missing elements above. Outstanding presentations may be awarded bonus points!

**Grading:** Grading will be based on a point system with 400 total possible points:

1. Attendance and Participation 100
   *(100% for perfect attendance; 20 points dropped for each absence beyond 3.)*
2. 2 Tests @ 50 points each 100
3. Mid-Term Exam 100
4. Group Presentation 100
5. Final Paper 100
   *(Final Papers due no later than Monday, April 24th! No exceptions please!)*

Bonus points and extra credit papers may constitute no more than 30 additional points!

\[
\text{A} = 470-500 / \text{A-} = 450-469 / \\
\text{B+} = 421-449 / \text{B} = 401-420 / \text{B-} = 381-400 / \\
\text{C+} = 366-380 / \text{C} = 350-365 / \text{C-} = 330-349 / \\
\text{D+} = 315-329 / \text{D} = 300-314 / \text{D-} = 280-299 / \\
\text{E} = \text{less than } 280
\]
## COURSE CALENDAR:
(Subject to changes or adjustments)

### Week #1:
- **Wed., Jan. 4**: Course Introduction and Overview  
- **Fri., Jan. 6**: Introduction to cultural studies terms (*Columbia Dictionary* needed for class)

### Week #2:
- **Mon., Jan. 9**: Read for Discussion: Introduction to *Theoretical Development* . . .  
- **Wed., Jan. 11**: Discussion: Chapters 1 & 2 of *Theoretical Development*, including excerpts from “Here Comes Everybody: Scholarship and Black Theatre History”  
- **Fri., Jan. 13**: Discussion: Chapter 3 – Early Pioneering Efforts

### Week #3:
- **Mon., Jan. 19**: MARTIN LUTHER KING DAY HOLIDAY / No Classes  
- **Wed., Jan. 18**: Discussion: Chapter 4 – From Minstrelsy to Warranted Assertion  
- **Fri., Jan. 20**: Discussion of cultural studies terminology through chapter 4

### Week #4:
- **Mon., Jan. 23**: Test #1: Chapters 1-4 (including Introduction)  
- **Wed., Jan. 25**: **Play Discussion**: *THE ESCAPE; OR, A LEAP FOR FREEDOM* (1858)  
- **Fri., Jan. 27**: Discussion: Chapter 5 – Sacred and Spiritual Nature

### Week #5:
- **Mon., Feb. 6**: Discussion: Chapter 6 – Minstrelsy’s Opponents  
- **Wed., Feb. 8**: **Play Discussion**: *IN DAHOMEY* (1902)  
- **Fri., Feb. 10**: **Video**: *Ethnic Notions* (Please be on time. Video is 50 minutes)

### Week #6:
- **Mon., Feb. 13**: Discussion: Chapter 7 – Creating a New Image  
- **Wed., Feb. 15**: **Play Discussion**: *STAR OF ETHIOPIA* (1912)  
- **Fri., Feb. 20**: Discussion: Chapter 8 – W. E. B. Du Bois’ Criteria for Negro Art

### Week #7:
- **Mon., Feb. 19**: **Play Discussion**: *RACHEL* (1916)  
- **Wed., Feb. 15**: Discussion: Chapter 9 – Developmental Years 1927-1950  
- **Fri., Feb. 17**: **Play Discussion**: *THE PURPLE FLOWER* (1928) & *OLD MAN PETE* (1934)

### Week #8:
- **Mon., Feb. 20**: Chapter 9 continued  
- **Wed., Feb. 22**: **Play Discussion**: *BIG WHITE FOG* (1938)  
- **Fri., Feb. 24**: Black Images in 1940s Films - **Movie Excerpt**: Stormy Weather & The Green Pastures

### Week #9:
- **Mon., Feb. 27**: **Major Mid Term Exam** *(100 points)*  
- **Wed., Mar. 1**: **Play Discussion**: *A RAISIN IN THE SUN* (1959)  
- **Fri., Mar. 3**: **Video and Discussion**: Lorraine Hansberry

### WEEK #10: SPRING BREAK (March 6-10)
Week #1:
Mon., Mar. 13 Discussion: Chapter 10 – Revolutionary Black Arts Movement
Wed., Mar. 15 Play Discussion: DUTCHMAN (1964)

Week #2:
Wed., Mar. 22 Chapter 11 continued
Fri., Mar. 24 Play Discussion: for colored girls who have considered suicide. . . (1975)

Week #3:
Mon., Mar. 27 Video Part 1: Black Theatre-The Making of a Movement
Wed., Mar. 29 Video Part 2: Black Theatre-The Making of a Movement
Fri., Mar. 31 Test #2: Chapters 10-11, plays since Mid-Term & video information

Week #4:
Mon., Apr. 3 Discussion: Chapter 12 – “New Age” Post-Revolutionary Aesthetics
Wed., Apr. 5 Chapter 12 continued
Fri., Apr. 7 Play Discussion: THE COLORED MUSEUM (1988)

Week #5:
Mon., Apr. 10 Discussion: Chapter 13 – Black Theatre at the End of the 20th Century
Fri., Apr. 14 Summation and New Directions / 21st Century Trends and Hip Hop Theatre

Week #6:
Mon., Apr. 17 Closing Discussion: Final Paper Topics Approved (1 page abstract due)
Wed., Apr. 19 Final Day of Spring Classes

Final Papers due no later than Monday, April 24th, 5PM! McGuire Pavilion is locked at 5PM each day.

Representative List of Additional African-American Plays and Playwrights

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AUTHORS</th>
<th>PLAYS:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Langston Hughes</td>
<td>Mulatto / Simply Heavenly</td>
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<tr>
<td>Amiri Baraka</td>
<td>Dutchman / The Slave/ The Toilet/ Slave Ship/ Great Goodness of Life/ etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>James Baldwin</td>
<td>The Amen Corner, Blues for Mr. Charlie</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adrienne Kennedy</td>
<td>A Movie Star Has to Star in Black and White / Funnyhouse of a Negro/ The Ohio Stare Murders, etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ntozake Shange</td>
<td>For Colored Girls Who have Considered Suicide/ Spell #7/ Layla’s Dream</td>
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<tr>
<td>August Wilson</td>
<td>Ma Rainey's Black Bottom/ Fences/ Piano Lesson/ Joe Turner's Come and Gone/ Seven Guitars/ Two Trains Running/ Jitney / King Hedley, II/ Gem of the Ocean/ Radio Golf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Wells Brown</td>
<td>The Escape; or, A Leap for Freedom (1858)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Angelina Weld Grimke</td>
<td>Rachel (1916)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Theodore Ward</td>
<td>Big White Fog (1938)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Suzan-Lori Parks</td>
<td>The America Play/ The Death of the Last Black Man in the Whole Entire World / Top Dog-Under Dog / Venus/ 365Days-365 Plays / Father Comes Home From the Wars/ etc.</td>
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Ed Bullins

Alice Childress

Lorraine Hansberry

Douglas Turner Ward

Ossie Davis

George C. Wolfe

Judi Ann Mason

P. J. Gibson

Steve Carter

Leslie Lee

Charles Fuller

Don Evans

Richard Wesley

Samm-Art Williams

Pearl Cleage

Cheryl West

Lynn Nottage

SOME OTHER AFRICAN-AMERICAN PLAYWRIGHTS:


PLAY ANTHOLOGIES:


Harrison, Paul Carter and Gus Edwards, eds. Classic Plays from the Negro Ensemble Company.


Oliver, Clinton F., ed. Contemporary Black Drama: From A Raisin In The Sun to No Place To Be Somebody.

Perkins, Kathy A., ed. Selected Plays by Alice Childress.

IMPORTANT MONOGRAPHS:


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**Academic Honesty:**

As a result of completing the registration form at the University of Florida, every student has signed the following statement:

“I understand that the University of Florida expects its students to be honest in all their academic work. I agree to adhere to this commitment to academic honesty and understand that my failure to comply with this commitment may result in disciplinary action up to and including expulsion from the University.”

The instructor of this course fully supports the intent of the above statement and will not tolerate academic dishonesty. We, the members of the University of Florida Community, pledge to hold ourselves, and our peers, to the highest standards of honesty and integrity.

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**SOTD Handbook and Production Policy Manual:**

Listed on webpage under General Theatre / Current Students/ Student Resources

[http://www.arts.ufl.edu/programs/generaltheatre.aspx](http://www.arts.ufl.edu/programs/generaltheatre.aspx)

**SOTD Production Policy Manual**


In case of a disaster affecting the UF campus, for the latest information see

[http://www.ufl.edu](http://www.ufl.edu)

University Police

352-392-1111

*City Emergency Notification:*

Weekdays Evenings/ Weekends

Fire/Police/Medical Emergency: 911 911