

University of Florida - College of the Arts - School of Theatre and Dance

## **THE 3231: Section 14C3 / Spring 2017**

### **African-American Theatre History and Practice**

Class Meeting Time - MWF Per. 7 (1:55-2:45) / CSE E220

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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 20<sup>th</sup> 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](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.)
- Hatch, James V. and Ted Shine, eds. *Black Theatre USA: Vol. 1 - The Early Period 1847-1938*. (New York: The Free Press, 1996)
- Hatch, James V. and Ted Shine, eds. *Black Theatre USA: Vol. 2 - The Recent Period 1935-Today*. (New York: The Free Press, 1996)
- Childress, Joseph and Gary Hentzi. *Columbia Dictionary of Modern Literary and Cultural Criticism*. (New York: Columbia UP 1995) Paperback cover.
- Wilson, August. *Radio Golf*. Play script (Theatre Communications Group 2007).

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

### **Optional Texts:**

- Hill, Errol G. and James V. Hatch. *A History of African American Theatre*. (New York: Cambridge UP, 2003, 2005)
- Hill, Errol, ed. *The Theatre of Black Americans: A Collection of Critical Essays*. (New York: Applause Theatre Books, 1980,1987, 1990)

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

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

**A = 470-500 / A- = 450-469 /**  
**B+ = 421-449 / B = 401-420 / B- = 381-400 /**  
**C+ = 366-380 / C = 350-365 / C- = 330-349 /**  
**D+ = 315-329 / D = 300-314 / D- = 280-299 /**  
**E = less than 280**

## COURSE CALENDAR: (Subject to changes or adjustments)

<b>Week #1:</b> Wed., Jan. 4 Fri., Jan. 6	Course Introduction and Overview Introduction to cultural studies terms ( <i>Columbia Dictionary</i> needed for class)
<b>Week #2:</b> Mon., Jan. 9 Wed., Jan. 11 Fri., Jan. 13	Read for Discussion: Introduction to <i>Theoretical Development</i> . . . Discussion: Chapters 1& 2 of <i>Theoretical Development</i> , including excerpts from "Here Comes Everybody: Scholarship and Black Theatre History" Discussion: Chapter 3 – Early Pioneering Efforts
<b>Week #3:</b> Mon., Jan. 19 Wed., Jan. 18 Fri., Jan. 20	<b>MARTIN LUTHER KING DAY HOLIDAY / No Classes</b> Discussion: Chapter 4 – From Minstrelsy to Warranted Assertion Discussion of cultural studies terminology through chapter 4
<b>Week #4:</b> Mon., Jan. 23 Wed., Jan. 25 Fri., Jan. 27	<b>Test #1:</b> Chapters 1-4 (including Introduction) <b>Play Discussion: THE ESCAPE; OR, A LEAP FOR FREEDOM (1858)</b> Discussion: Chapter 5– Sacred and Spiritual Nature
<b>Week #5:</b> Mon., Jan.20 Wed., Feb. 1 Fri., Feb. 3	Discussion: Chapter 6 – Minstrelsy’s Opponents <b>Play Discussion: IN DAHOMEY (1902)</b> <b>Video: Ethnic Notions</b> (Please be on time. Video is 50 minutes)
<b>Week #6:</b> Mon., Feb. 6 Wed., Feb. 8 Fri., Feb. 10	Discussion: Chapter 7 – Creating a New Image <b>Play Discussion: STAR OF ETHIOPIA (1912)</b> Discussion: Chapter 8 – W. E. B. Du Bois’ Criteria for Negro Art
<b>Week #7:</b> Mon., Feb. 13 Wed., Feb. 15 Fri., Feb. 17	<b>Play Discussion: RACHEL (1916)</b> Discussion: Chapter 9 – Developmental Years 1927-1950 <b>Play Discussion: THE PURPLE FLOWER (1928) &amp; OLD MAN PETE (1934)</b>
<b>Week #8:</b> Mon., Feb. 20 Wed., Feb. 22 Fri., Feb. 24	Chapter 9 continued <b>Play Discussion: BIG WHITE FOG (1938)</b> Black Images in 1940s Films- <b>Movie Excerpt: Stormy Weather &amp; The Green Pastures</b>
<b>Week # 9:</b> Mon., Feb. 27 Wed., Mar. 1 Fri., Mar. 3	<b>Major Mid Term Exam (100 points)</b> <b>Play Discussion: A RAISIN IN THE SUN (1959)</b> <b>Video and Discussion: Lorraine Hansberry</b>

**WEEK #10: SPRING BREAK (March 6-10)**

**Week #11:**

Mon., Mar. 13  
Wed., Mar. 15  
Fri., Mar. 17

Discussion: Chapter 10 – Revolutionary Black Arts Movement

**Play Discussion: *DUTCHMAN (1964)***

**Play Discussion: *DAY OF ABSENCE (1965)* + *THE 1<sup>st</sup> MILITANT PREACHER (1967)***

**Week #12:**

Mon., Mar. 20  
Wed., Mar. 22  
Fri., Mar. 24

Discussion: Chapter 11 – The Afro-Centric Era, 1970s-1999s

Chapter 11 continued

**Play Discussion: *for colored girls who have considered suicide. . . (1975)***

**Week #13:**

Mon., Mar. 27  
Wed., Mar. 29  
Fri., Mar. 31

**Video Part 1:** Black Theatre-The Making of a Movement

**Video Part 2:** Black Theatre-The Making of a Movement

**Test #2:** Chapters 10-11, plays since Mid-Term & video information

**Week #14:**

Mon., Apr. 3  
Wed., Apr. 5  
Fri., Apr. 7

Discussion: Chapter 12 – “New Age” Post-Revolutionary Aesthetics

Chapter 12 continued

**Play Discussion: *THE COLORED MUSEUM (1988)***

**Week #15:**

Mon., Apr. 10  
Wed., Apr. 12  
Fri., Apr. 14

Discussion: Chapter 13 – Black Theatre at the End of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century

**Play Discussion: *RADIO GOLF* by August Wilson (2005-2007)**

Summation and New Directions / 21<sup>st</sup> Century Trends and Hip Hop Theatre

**Week #16:**

Mon., Apr. 17  
Wed., Apr. 19

**Closing Discussion:** Final Paper Topics Approved (1 page abstract due)

Final Day of Spring Classes

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

**Representative List of Additional African-American Plays and Playwrights**

**AUTHORS:**

Langston Hughes  
Amiri Baraka  
James Baldwin  
Adrienne Kennedy

Ntozake Shange  
August Wilson

William Wells Brown  
Angelina Weld Grimke  
Theodore Ward  
Suzan-Lori Parks

**PLAYS:**

*Mulatto / Simply Heavenly*

*Dutchman / The Slave/ The Toilet/ Slave Ship/ Great Goodness of Life/ etc.*

*The Amen Corner, Blues for Mr. Charlie*

*A Movie Star Has to Star in Black and White / Funnyhouse of a Negro/ The Ohio State Murders, etc.*

*For Colored Girls Who have Considered Suicide/ Spell #7/ Layla's Dream*

*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*

*The Escape; or, A Leap for Freedom (1858)*

*Rachel (1916)*

*Big White Fog (1938)*

*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.*

Ed Bullins	<i>The Duplex/ Going to Buffalo/ The Electronic Nigger/ Clara's Ole Man/ In The Wine Time/ etc.</i>
Alice Childress	<i>Trouble in Mind/ Wine in the Wilderness/ Florence/ Wedding Band</i>
Lorraine Hansberry	<i>A Raisin in the Sun/ The Sign in Sidney Brustein's Window/ Les Blancs</i>
Douglas Turner Ward	<i>Day of Absence/ Happy Ending</i>
Ossie Davis	<i>Purlie Victorious</i>
George C. Wolfe	<i>The Colored Museum/ Spunk/ Jelly's Last Jam</i>
Judi Ann Mason	<i>Daughters of the Mock/ Indigo Blues/ Livin' Fat/ A Star Ain't Nothin' But a Hole in Heaven/ Roseleaf Tea/ The Time Traveler's Ball/ The Cornbread Man / etc.</i>
P. J. Gibson	<i>Long Time Since Yesterday/ Brown Silk and Magenta Sunsets</i>
Steve Carter	<i>Eden</i>
Leslie Lee	<i>Colored People's Time/The First Breeze of Summer/ Rabbit's Foot/ etc.</i>
Charles Fuller	<i>A Soldier's Play/ Zooman and the Sign</i>
Don Evans	<i>One Monkey Don't Stop No Show/ Showdown Time/ Love Song for Miss Lydia/ etc.</i>
Richard Wesley	<i>The Sirens/ The Talented Tenth/ Autumn/ etc.</i>
Samm-Art Williams	<i>Home/ Eyes of the American/ The Sixteenth Round/ The Waiting Room</i>
Pearl Cleage	<i>Flyin' West/ Blues for an Alabama Sky/ Hospice/ Puppet Play/ Bourbon at the Border / etc.</i>
Cheryl West	<i>Before it Hits Home/ Jar the Floor/ Holiday Heart/ etc.</i>
Lynn Nottage	<i>Intimate Apparel/ Fabulation, or the Re-Education of Undine / Crumbs from the Table of Joy/ Ruined/ By the Way, Meet Vera Stark/ Sweat/ etc.</i>

### **SOME OTHER AFRICAN-AMERICAN PLAYWRIGHTS:**

Edgar White, Willis Richardson, Garland Anderson, Marita Bonner, Georgia Douglas Johnson, Randolph Edmonds, Ted Shine, Martie Charles, Keith Glover, Eugene Lee, Shay Youngblood, Keith Glover, Lynne Nottage, Tarrell Alvin McCraney, Katori Hall, Lydia Diamond . . .

### **PLAY ANTHOLOGIES:**

Branch, William B. ed. *Crosswinds: An Anthology of Black Dramatists in the Diaspora*. (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1993).

Couch, William, Jr., ed. *New Black Playwrights: An Anthology*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Press 1968.

Elam, Harry J., Jr, and Robert Alexander, eds. *Colored Contradictions: An Anthology of Contemporary African-American Plays*. (New York: Plume/ Penguin, 1996).

Harrison, Paul Carter and Gus Edwards, eds. *Classic Plays from the Negro Ensemble Company*. (Pittsburgh and London: U. of Pittsburgh Press 1995).

Hatch, James V. and Ted Shine, eds. *Black Theatre USA: The Early Period 1847-1938*. (New York: The Free Press, 1996)

Hatch, James V. and Ted Shine, eds. *Black Theatre USA: The Recent Period 1935-Today*. (New York: The Free Press, 1996)

Jackson, Pamela Faith and Karimah, eds. *Black Comedy: Nine Plays (A Critical Anthology with Interviews and Essays)*. (New York: Applause Books 1997).

King, Woodie, Jr., ed. *The National Black Drama Anthology: Eleven Plays from America's Leading African-American Theaters*. (New York: Applause, 1995).

Mahone, Sydne, ed. *Moon Marked & Touched by Sun: Plays by African-American Women*. (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1994).

Oliver, Clinton F., ed. *Contemporary Black Drama: From A Raisin In The Sun to No Place To Be Somebody*. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons 1971).

Perkins, Kathy A., ed. *Selected Plays by Alice Childress*. (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press 2011).

Banks, Daniel, ed. w/ Introduction. *Say Word: Voices from Hip Hop Theatre*. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press 2011).

**IMPORTANT MONOGRAPHS:**

*Black Theatre's Unprecedented Times: The National Black Theatre Summits of 1998*. Perez, Hely M., ed. (Gainesville, FL: Black Theatre Network, 1999).  
*African American Review (Special Black Theatre Issue)*. Vol. 31, Number 4, Winter 1997. Ed. by Paul Carter Harrison and Victor Leo Walker, II.

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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>

**SOTD Production Policy Manual**

<http://www.arts.ufl.edu/downloads/sotd/10-11%20Production%20Policy%20Manual.pdf>

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

**<http://www.ufl.edu>**

**University Police**

352-392-1111

***City Emergency Notification:***

**Weekdays Evenings/ Weekends**

**Fire/Police/Medical Emergency:**

911

911