

## THE 543-Development of American Theatre Spring 2023

Instructor: Dr. Michael D. Coon, On Line Adjunct Professor of Theatre

Office Location: On Line

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COURSE INFORMATION
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### Required Textbooks:

*Three Hundred Years of American Drama and Theatre: From Ye Bare and Ye Cubb to Chorus Line (1981) - Garff Wilson*

**Alternative:** *Three hundred years of American drama and theatre, from Ye Bare and Ye Cubb to Hair (1973) Garff Wilson*

*American Drama: Colonial to Contemporary 1st Edition by Stephen Watt (Author), Gary A. Richardson (Author)*

### **Required Reading List**

- William Shakespeare, *The Tempest* (1601)
- Joseph Addison Esq. *CATO: A Tragedy* (1712)

#### **Required Presentation Texts**

1. **Thomas Godfrey *The Prince of Parthia* (1767)**
2. **Robert Munford *The Patriots* (1776)**
3. **Mercy Otis Warren, *The Blockheads: or The Affrighted Officers* (1776)**
4. **Royall Tyler *The Contrast* (1787)**
5. **William Dunlap, *Andre & The Glory of Columbia, Her Yeomanry* (1798 & 1803)**
6. **John Augustus Stone, *Metamora* (1829)**
7. **George Washington Parke Custis, *Pocahontas* (1830)**
8. **G.W.P. Custis, *The Indian Prophecy***
9. **Anna Cora Mowatt, *Fashion* (1845)**
10. **George L. Aiken, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852)**
11. **Dion Boucicault, *The Octoroon* (1859)**
12. **Augustin Daly, *Under the Gaslight.* (1867)**
13. **William Gillette, *The Secret Service***
14. **Steele Mackaye, *Hazel Kirke* (1880)**
15. **Bronson Howard, *Shenandoah* (1888)**
16. **David Belasco, *Madame Butterfly* (1900)**
17. **Clyde Fitch, *Captain Jinks of the Horse Marines* (1901)**
18. **Langdon Mitchell, *The New York Idea* (1906)**
19. **William Vaughn Moody, *The Great Divide* (1906)**
20. **Edward Sheldon, *The Nigger* (1909)**
21. **Percy Mackaye, *The Scarecrow* (1909)**
22. **Rachel Crothers, *He and She* (1912)**
23. **Angelina Weld Grimke, *Rachel***
24. **Eugene O'Neill, *Beyond the Horizon* (Pulitzer Prize) (1920)**
25. **Hatcher Hughes, *Hell Bent Fer Heaven* (Pulitzer Prize) (1923)**
26. **Louisa Smith "Lula" Vollmer, *Sun-Up* (1923)**

27. *Georgia Douglas Johnson, Plumes*  
 28. *Paul Green, In Abraham's Bosom*

**(Strongly) Recommended Text:** *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers. 7<sup>th</sup> Edition.* You are encouraged to acquire this text as soon as possible for your work in this course and throughout your graduate studies.

**Learning Outcomes**

1. Our primary objective is to develop a working background and understanding of truly "American Theatre," from the context of:
  - What makes a play "American?"
    - Geography?
    - Characters?
    - Subject matter?
    - Unique Cultural and Social interactions?
    - The experience of living in America?

Our focus on our investigations will respond to the above questions. There is no doubt that the term *American* is loaded with all sorts of connotations and images come to mind unbidden. In our course work we will view the "American Experience" from the perspective of marginalized segments of our society, with an eye towards caricatures, stereotypes (race, gender, relative access to power, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and class). *We will look at the official history of each period in an attempt to understand the play and conversely, look at the play to deconstruct the official history.*

2. Applying the information gained in making intelligent critical assessments of the American Canon as well as contemporary plays from a twenty-first century perspective.

**Course Description:**

This course offers studies of the major documents in the evolution of dramatic theory, from classical foundations through the 19<sup>th</sup> Century (where other courses in this program, such as Development of Modern Theatre and Directing Theory, generally "pick-up").

**Student Learning Outcomes:** By the end of this course, the student will be able to:

1. Display a learned knowledge of the evolution of a distinctly American drama.
2. Articulate critically informed personal standards of critical judgment.
3. Synthesize academic research into cohesive scholarly writing and mediated presentation.

<b>COURSE REQUIREMENTS</b>
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**Instructional / Methods / Activities Assessments (Tentative):**

- **ACTIVE PARTICIPATION (330 points):** Course structure supports a "community of learners." To contribute to the community, you must come to our electronic classroom prepared, and ready to engage in discussions of assigned readings or engagement in determined activities, etc. The "participation" aspect of your grade requires more than responding with minimal effort. I remind you this is a Master's Level Course and I have the expectation of Master's Level thinking. I will not tolerate haphazard, meaningless comments on the work at hand. I am planning monthly regular remote classroom meetings for opportunities for questions, clarification and and friendly classroom rapport.
- As graduate students, you should realize the importance of voicing your opinions during discussion in positive and respectful ways. Sometimes you will have to agree to disagree with other members of the class. Avoid "knee-jerk reactions" and frame your comments respectfully, with scholarly intelligence, and as a point of academic discourse.  
***Disrespect, rudeness, or offensive language of any kind has no place in our classroom space***

**\*Measures Course Learning Outcomes 1 and 2.**

**READINGS PRESENTATIONS (2 at 100 points each-200 TOTAL):** Over the course of the semester, working as individuals, you lead the class discussion in two separate weeks with via documented research, a brief PowerPoint, and discussion points. You will be responsible for moderating discussion for that play, playwright, and cultural norms and shifts in the period, for that week. You will offer overviews of the playwright & play in question and lead discussion on your work. Each of these presentations will require outside scholarly research by the presenters. On your assigned week, you must post your presentation to the discussion board along with pertinent discussion questions to elicit meaningful, critical responses from classmates. Your presentations must provide *professionally relevant* biographical sketches of the playwrights in question, the theorists'/playwrights' main contributions to the dramatic canon (in focusing a play, please also contextualize the play). Grading will center on the content of your presentation/handout, the structure/construction of your presentation/handout, ability to moderate class discussion effectively, ability to field your peers' questions, and the overall professionalism/preparedness exhibited.

**PRESENTATION TOPICS ARE ASSIGNED AT RANDOM**

**CLASSMATES:** You will do the readings scheduled for each week and engage in meaningful questions and analysis of the play, the playwright, and shifts in culture as well.

**\*Measures Course Learning Outcome 1 and 3.**

**CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS (11 @ 10 points each-110 TOTAL points):** These are statements of the lens(es) through which you frame your discussion of a particular **play from the readings** for each week, that is, the approach you use to analyze the play such as a particular theory, social practice, or thematic approach. You will select one of the plays we read during team presentations each week.

**Conceptual Frameworks** should be one long paragraph (6-9 sentences) typed, using complete sentences. Think of short paper abstracts. **DON'T OVERTHINK THIS!**

**\*Measures Course Learning Outcome 2 and 3.**

**ABSTRACT (10 POINTS)** Submit a short (250–300 word) abstract that summarizes your research topic and the frameworks (cultural, commercial, literary, historical relevance, etc.) you chose to examine the topic.

**Measures Course Learning Outcomes 1 and 3.**

**ACADEMIC PAPER (250 points):** You will be required to write a scholarly research paper of approximately 3,500 words in length based on a primary research question that you develop. The goal is a research question and resulting research paper based on a topic of your own selection, informed by theoretical and/or historical works in the fields of theatre and/or performance. Your paper should be comprised of original, focused research on a selected topic. Your paper should use acceptable quality writing practices, and you should utilize at least **ten scholarly sources**. The research paper must be in MLA format.

- You will be required to submit one (1) **rough draft** for my review approximately three weeks prior to the final draft due date. See the course schedule (under separate cover). *The rough draft will be worth one hundred (100) points.*
- The **final draft** due date is TBD, and *will be worth one hundred fifty (150) points.*

**\*Measures Course Learning Outcomes 1 and 3.**

**FINAL PROJECT (100 points):** The final project will consist of posting a PowerPoint presentation of sufficient length to give the class a good understanding of your topic.

You will defend your conclusions when questioned by your classmates or the instructor. The presentation is due on Monday of the same week the final polished draft of the paper is due and will stand open for the following week. You are expected to review and comment upon your peer's presentations.

**\*Measures Course Learning Outcome 1**

**GRADING SCALE:** The following grading scale determines the student's overall grade in the course:

A	900-1000 points	(Exceptional Quality Work)
B	800-899 points	(Above Average Quality Work)
C	700-799 points	(Average Quality Work)
D	600-699 points	(Below Average Quality Work)
F	0-599 points	(Fails to Meet Acceptable Expectations in Quality of Work)

### TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

**WORKING EMAIL REQUIREMENT:** It is a course expectation that you have a working email address that you check daily. If you have not already acquired an e-mail address through the university or otherwise, please make arrangements to do so before the next class meeting. There may be times that I need to contact you with important information and email is often the speediest and easiest way of doing so.

**SAVING OF ASSIGNMENTS:** Occasionally, rarely, a paper or presentation gets lost. Please, for your sanity, save your work on a disc or thumb drive, etc. Do not depend on your paper staying on the hard drive of any university computer, as it may be deleted, altered, or worse yet, someone else submits the paper as his or her work! **Be aware that it is a course expectation that you keep copies of your graded and originally developed assignments until you receive your final grade for the semester.**

### COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT

**Contacting Dr. Coon:**

Please feel free to visit me on line during my office hours at any time during the semester. I am here to help! If you cannot make my office hours due to a scheduling conflict, please set up an appointment with me. It is not an imposition. I am usually in my office a great deal; however, it is possible for a message from you to go over 24-36 hours without a response, depending on when you post it and when I sign in again.

I reserve Sundays for my family, so do not expect an immediate response.

**Communicate, communicate, and communicate!** If something is occurring that is presenting you with difficulties with this class, let me know. Do not be intimidated. I am here to assist you in success and will do my best to help you achieve it. Talk to me! The easiest and most reliable way to contact me is via the course shell messaging system and email. I check it frequently.

**Department of Mass Media, Communication and Theatre**

Performing Arts Center (PAC) #101

Phone: 903-886-5346 (Main Office)

<http://www.tamuc.edu/mmct/default.asp>

**Communication Skills Center**

Hall of Languages #103

<http://www.tamuc.edu/litlang/CSC/index.htm>

### COURSE AND UNIVERSITY PROCEDURES/POLICIES

**Course Specific Procedures:**

**ATTENDANCE:** \* For information on the university attendance policy please go to the following link: <http://www7.tamuc.edu/registrar/attendance.asp>

**LATE ARRIVALS:** This section is included as “boiler plate” material for all syllabi in the system. Once an assignment or discussion is closed, you will not be able to access the material for amendment or addition. Students must be on time for every class. Entering a class late or leaving early is disruptive to the flow of the class. Please be on time out of consideration to your learning process and the processes of others. If you are late for class, your participation grade will reflect this. The class will begin promptly at 4:00 p.m.! If you arrive after 4:10 p.m., please do not enter the classroom (you will be marked absent regardless). If you arrive within the ten-minute grace period, please do so discretely in order to avoid disrupting the class activities/discussions. Arrival within the grace period constitutes a “late arrival.” You are expected to stay until you are dismissed from class. An early departure will significantly reduce your participation grade as well. *Two late arrivals (within the ten-minute grace period) or early departures (or any combination of the two) may be counted as one absence in the class.*

During each class period, you will receive a ten-minute break. You are expected to be back in the classroom within ten minutes (without having to be told to come back). We are all adults, and we can all remain aware of the time, arriving back into the classroom within ten minutes. Otherwise, you will be marked as a “late arrival,” and the same policies outlined above for late arrivals at the beginning of class apply.

**LATE ASSIGNMENTS:** I will not accept drafts or assignments after the announced due date unless you have discussed the situation with me in advance and we have agreed on arrangements for submission. Presentations not given during the assigned class sessions will not count toward the final grade. Under normal circumstances, being absent on the date of an assigned presentation will result in a grade of zero for the assignment.

**ADAPTATION OF ASSIGNMENTS:** Due to the fluid nature of this class, some assignments may need to be adapted. I will announce all changes prior to implementation.

**INCOMPLETES:** An Incomplete (I or X) will not be given as a final grade in this course.

**WRITTEN WORK:** I require all written work be submitted in **Modern Language Association (MLA) format**, including one-inch margins on all sides, in **Times New Roman, Arial, or Courier New 12 pt. font**, double spaced (please remember that you *must* go into “Page Layout” in Word and bring the spacing in the “After” field down to zero). Any modification to that requirement demand requires approval in advance and only for a specifically justified reason.

**EXTRA CREDIT:** There is no extra credit offered in this class – please, do not even ask.

#### **University Specific Policies and Procedures:**

**ACADEMIC DISHONESTY:** This course adheres strictly to the college’s guidelines for Academic Dishonesty printed in the *Student’s Guide Handbook*. Plagiarism or otherwise representing another’s work or ideas as your own without proper attribution risks dire consequences.

*Note: All of your work must be new and created for this class during this semester; otherwise, you risk plagiarizing yourself – which falls under the category of academic dishonesty. It is your responsibility to be sure that you understand the definition of Academic Dishonesty at Texas A&M - Commerce. If such an instance occurs, the student will receive an automatic zero for the work in question, and I will immediately report the incident to the head of the department, who will in turn decide the appropriate course of action. Remember: Citing=good; Not Citing=very bad! Make sure that you understand the intricacies of citations, formatting, etc., so that you*

*avoid unintentional plagiarism at all costs. (Please be aware that an instance of academic dishonesty could result in dismissal from school without credit for the semester or worse – suspension from the program.)*

**STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:** The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities work in a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact:

Office of Student Disability Resources and Services  
Texas A&M University-Commerce  
James G. Gee Library  
Room 132  
Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835  
Fax (903) 468-8148  
StudentDisabilityServices@tamuc.edu

*\*Note: Please be aware that under no circumstances can I implement any disability accommodations without official documentation from the Office of Student Disability Resources and Services at Texas A&M University - Commerce.*

**STUDENT CONDUCT:** All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment. (See *Student's Guide Handbook*, Policies and Procedures, Conduct.)

