

Eastern Illinois University
Department of Theatre Arts
Fall Semester 2012

THA 3753: DEVELOPMENT OF AMERICAN THEATRE AND DRAMA

Instructor. Dr. Chris Mitchell
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Office Hours: TR, 2 – 4:30 pm, or by appointment.

Professor’s Website: <http://ux1.eiu.edu/~cjmitchell> (check often)

Class Meets. MWF, 11 – 11:50 am, in DFAC 2040

Texts. Textbook rental should issue you:
Watt & Richardson, *American Drama: Colonial to Contemporary*
Londré & Watermeier, *The History of North American Theater*

You must read one play in Booth Library’s print reserves:
The Escape; Or, A Leap for Freedom (2 copies avail.; building use only)

Also, you should have close at hand:
A research paper style manual appropriate to your discipline. If your discipline is Theatre Arts, then that is MLA (*MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, most recent ed.). Majors and minors will use this in all my theatre history and literature courses.

Other Costs. \$5.00 for a student ticket to *Almost, Maine* (see below).

Prerequisites. ENG-1001G and ENG-1002G. No prior experience or coursework in Theatre Arts is required or expected.

Overview. This course examines “major themes in American civilization as seen through the 18th-20th Century American plays. Attention given to development of theatre as an art form and as a social-cultural force in the U.S. Focus is on reading and analyzing dramatic texts.” (from *Eastern Illinois University 2012-13 Undergraduate Catalog*)

We will also examine staging and playwriting practices in the broad sweep of U.S. theatre history, using both historical narrative and playtexts. This is a seminar-format course in which active discussion is encouraged and expected.

This course is designated as a “General Education” Course in the University’s curriculum, under the category of “Fine Arts.” For Theatre Arts majors/minors, the course is classified as an elective for the “History, Literature, and Directing” (prior to F08 catalog) or “History and Literature” (F08 catalog onward) component of the curriculum.

Requirements And Grading. The grading scheme is mathematically simple for this class. All of the numbered requirements listed below are of equal weight, and are **each scored out of 100 points**. Your final score is a simple average of the scores for these requirements, adjusted for adjusted for attendance (see “Attendance,” below) and any extra credit received (see “Extra Credit,” below). The letter grade equivalent is as follows:

- A = final adjusted score at least 90 points out of 100
- B = final adjusted score at least 80 but less than 90 points
- C = final adjusted score at least 70 but less than 80 points
- D = final adjusted score at least 60 but less than 70 points
- F = final adjusted score less than 60

The course requirements are as follows:

1. **Active participation and keeping up with assigned readings.** This includes ensuring that the reading assigned for a particular series of classes is done on time, that you bring the relevant texts to class, and that you enthusiastically and intelligently contribute to discussions in class, especially at times at which you are appointed the leader of a group discussion. (I will cover how that will work in the first days of class.) The volume and scope of covered material necessitates your constant engagement with the material and with other members of this class; your rating of 0-100 here reflects how consistently and diligently you are engaging these. You will be rated TWICE, once at midterm and once at the end of the semester. Each rating is an independent grade, to be averaged with the other requirements. There is a rubric sheet explaining how participation is evaluated on [my website](#).

Reading assignments are covered in a separate handout, which is posted on your class page of [my website](#).

SPECIAL NOTE TO THEATRE FOLKS: Repeat this until it sticks in your head— *“Being in rehearsal, in shop, in tech, or in performance does not excuse me from my responsibilities to this class.”* Part of being a theatre major/minor is learning to achieve a balance between classwork and the practice of your art. Strive to achieve that balance. I expect no less.

2. **A midterm exam and a final exam.** These are essay exams which will determine how well you connect concepts together. The midterm, tentatively scheduled for **October 8**, will cover material from the first half of the semester and the final, scheduled for **Wednesday, December 12, from 10:15 am to 12:15 pm**, will cover material from the second half only (i.e. it's not cumulative).

I do generate review sheets for each component we cover. They will be posted on your class page of [my website](#).

3. **A 3-5 pp. critical analysis of an American play** that we do not consider in depth in class. You will examine the play for cultural and staging implications; further details TBA. This paper will be due on **September 24**.

Paper particulars are covered in handouts which be posted on your class page of [my website](#).

4. **A 5-7 pp. written mini-research paper** on a topic in 20th century American theatre history chosen from a list I will provide. This will involve library work. Examples of these topics: a profile of a landmark production of an important play, a profile of a controversy in theatre, an examination of an aspect of a theatre movement, and so forth. Further details TBA. This paper will be due **November 7**.

Paper particulars are covered in handouts which be posted on your class page of [my website](#).

ATTENDANCE. Along with active participation, consistent and prompt attendance is absolutely necessary to reap the maximum benefit from the course. As such, you will be held accountable for your attendance. An attendance sheet will be circulated at every class meeting on and after Monday, August 27, and it is YOUR RESPONSIBILITY to ensure you have signed it before you leave class. In tracking absences, the following definitions apply:

- “Excused absence”: An excused absence results ONLY from a university-sanctioned activity, a family emergency, a health-related absence in which you are under a physician’s care, or an extraordinary circumstance as determined by the professor. All “excused absences”

must be supported by a note from an official (physician, university official, etc.) supporting the absence.

- “Excused absences” do not result in a penalty applied to your final average.
- “Unexcused absence”: Anything not defined by “excused absence” above. This includes, but is not limited to: “personal” days or non-university business, oversleeping, and health-related absences not supported by a physician’s note.
 - You are permitted THREE “unexcused” absences without penalty to your final average; more than two, see box below.

For every unexcused absence beyond the two you are permitted, you will lose **three points** off your final average. (That’s nearly 1/3 of a letter grade, folks. ATTENDANCE IS SERIOUS BUSINESS IN MY CLASSES.)

SPECIAL ATTENDANCE EVENTS:

You are required to attend two departmental events:

- One performance of the production of *Almost, Maine*. This show runs from **Wednesday, October 17 through Sunday, October 21 in the Theatre**. Ticket info at <http://www.eiu.edu/doudna> or visit the box office in the Doudna lobby. Student tickets are \$5.00. You must give me your ticket stub as proof of attendance.
- The 2012 *Department of Theatre Arts Undergraduate Research Symposium*, which takes place **Tuesday, November 6 at 7 pm in the Doudna Lecture Hall**. This event is free and requires no ticket. I will have an attendance sheet there for you to sign. More details TBA.

Missing either of these events is like missing **two classes** for attendance purposes.

EXTRA CREDIT. There will be an opportunity or two for you to earn some extra points that can bolster your final average. As a general rule, these will be posted to [my website](#), so it is up to you to keep checking it!

Late Policy. Papers. Unless an alternate arrangement is made with me in advance, I will accept your work past the due date subject

to the following late penalty: for each class period of lateness, FIVE points will be deducted from the score for that assignment.

Exams. I only grant makeups for absences that meet the criteria for “excused absences” above. These will be done outside of class time.

Classroom Etiquette. A few ground rules to maximize fairness to all and to help make our classroom environment enjoyable and productive:

1. Be on time and plan to stay the whole time. Class begins at 11:00 am and ends at 11:50 am. (That is, don’t begin getting ready to go at 11:45— or earlier. If you’re doing that, you’re being rude to everyone in the class.)

“The 10-minute rule.” Even though I can’t remember the last time this was relevant (I’m very time-conscious), you can safely assume that the “10-minute rule” is valid for this class, according to the “official time” of the classroom (usually the classroom clock, unless otherwise designated by the professor).

2. Respect other class members’ right to learn as well as your own. This includes not having distracting conversations with your neighbor (or cell phone/text message buddy), not listening to your iPod/mp3 during class time, not reading newspapers or other non-class material during class, and always respecting others’ opinions in class conversation, even if you disagree. While you may keep your cell on “VIBRATE” in case of emergencies, all other electronic devices must be turned OFF during class time.
2. During examinations, no electronic device is permitted in the classroom, save your cell phone on “VIBRATE.”

Disabilities. Should you require any special accommodations due to a documented disability, please contact the office of disability services at 581-6583 as soon as possible. It is YOUR RESPONSIBILITY to give me a copy of the “Academic Accommodations” statement no later than August 31.

Academic Integrity. All assignments are expected to be your original work, and ALL resources you quote must be properly cited using an accepted citation method, appropriate to your discipline. (If you are in Theatre Arts, the most appropriate method is MLA.) THIS INCLUDES INTERNET SOURCES! You can always ask for help from me on citation method; that’s what I’m here for.

Academic honesty, suffice it to say, is taken VERY seriously here, and any instance of plagiarism (see me if you are not clear on the definition of the word) or cheating will result in a zero for the assignment AT MINIMUM (depending on the severity of the infraction).

No project will be accepted for a grade without proper documentation of sources. If I see a paper without citations, I will return it to you the next class period and you will begin losing points as per the late policy above.

***THIS SYLLABUS IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE
AT THE DISCRETION OF THE PROFESSOR.***