

Eastern Illinois University
Senior Seminar Proposal
EIU 4162G, Women's Voices: Women in the Theatre

1. Catalogue Description:

- a. Course Number: EIU 4162G
- b. Title: Women's Voices: Women in the Theatre
- c. Meeting/Credit: 3-0-3
- d. Term: S, Su
- e. Short Title: Women in Theatre
- f. Description: A discussion course that examines the contributions of women to the theatre and the effect those contributions have had on society in general. Attention will be given to the political/social concerns expressed in the dramatic literature.
- g. Theatre majors and English majors are excluded.
- h. Writing intensive.

2. Student Learning Objectives:

In successfully completing this course, students will:

- Analyze and evaluate through writing and discussion the works of several playwrights. (write and speak effectively)
- Recognize how theatre and society mutually affect each other. (critical thinking)
- Identify the socio-cultural environment that shaped a playwright's work. (citizenship)

3. Outline of the Course:

This seminar is a theme-centered, issues-oriented course. The outline below indicates the organization of the seminar. Scheduling the class for one 150-minute class session per week for fifteen weeks will allow sufficient time for discussion, writing assignments, and in-class viewing of videos.

If local theatre groups present a play or plays germane to the course, the outline below would be modified to include an outside viewing assignment or field trip to, e.g., Krannert or an EIU production.

Week One: Overview

1. Introduction/Orientation to the course.
2. In-class writing, addressing (but not limited to) the following:
 - definition of what constitutes art
 - the need for the arts, specifically theatre, as a means of expression
 - perceptions of the changing role of women in society
 - artists as spokespersons for causes.
3. Exchange of ideas/viewpoints arising from writing.
4. Discussion/debate on the connection between theatre and society.

Weeks Two through Four: Early Voices

Week Two:

1. Read Aphra Behn's The Rover, or the Banished Cavaliers
2. Discuss marriage and courtship during the Restoration as depicted in the play.

Week Three:

1. Read Anna Cora Mowatt's Fashion
2. Discuss marriage and courtship and the different roles of men and women during the 19th century as depicted in the play.

Week Four:

1. Read Susan Glaspell's Trifles
2. Discuss the differences in the men's and women's worlds at the turn of the century as depicted in the play.
3. Discuss views of marriage and courtship as presented in the three plays read thus far.
4. Discuss each playwright's intent.
5. Written reaction paper based on questions raised in discussion.

Weeks Five through Seven: Political Voices

Week Five:

1. Read Lady Gregory's The Rising of the Moon
2. Discuss Lady Gregory's contributions to the Irish Renaissance and the emergence of the Little Theatre movement in Ireland and abroad.
3. Discuss the political message presented in this play, the importance of that message to the particular time period of the play. Relate the significance of that message in light of the political changes currently underway in Ireland.
4. Discuss/Debate the impact this play had and/or has on political change.

Week Six:

1. Read Megan Terry's Viet Rock (or Goona Goona)
2. Discuss the political message presented in this play, the importance of that message to the particular time period of the play, and the significance of that message today.
3. Discuss/Debate the impact this play had and/or has on political/social change.

Week Seven:

1. Read Suzan-Lori Parks' The Death of the Last Black Man in the Whole Entire World
2. Discuss the political/social message presented in this play, and the importance of that message to the African-American community.
3. Examine the impact of performing artists on different political and social causes and the controversy generated by the positions expressed.
4. Discuss the importance of the political themes and actions of the artists.
5. Written reaction paper based on questions raised in discussion.

Weeks Eight through Eleven: Inner Voices/Advocates Social Change

Week Eight:

1. Read Lillian Hellman's The Children's Hour and The Little Foxes
2. Discuss central character's connection to and/or isolation from society in general.
3. Discuss various means depicted of coping with isolation and inner conflict.
4. Discuss significance of the resolution presented.
5. Contrast the period of the play with the period in which the play was written. Discuss the growth in women's power from the 19th century to the 1930s and 1940s.

Week Nine:

1. Read Marsha Norman's Getting Out or 'Night, Mother.
2. Discuss central character's connection to and/or isolation from society in general.
3. Discuss various means depicted of coping with isolation and inner conflict.
4. Discuss significance of suicide as a resolution.

Week Ten:

1. Read Lorraine Hansberry's A Raisin in the Sun
2. Discuss central character's connection to and/or isolation from society in general.

3. Discuss timeliness of abortion as a means of survival in the 1950s.
4. Discuss significance of the family's relocation.

Week Eleven:

1. Read Laurie Brooks Gollobin's Selkie and Wendy Kesselman's I Love You, I Love You Not.
2. Discuss central characters' struggles to find purpose in their lives and overcome the sense of isolation from society in general.
3. Discuss the connection between the central characters' need to fit into society and contemporary connections to this issue.
4. Written reaction paper on the depiction of women in society as presented in the plays and films studied in this segment.

Week Twelve

TASKS test/assessment.

Weeks Thirteen through Fifteen: Voices of Experimentation

Week Thirteen:

1. Read Caryl Churchill's Top Girls
2. Discuss the integration and obscuring of different time periods in this play and the message this technique implies.
3. Written reaction paper on the depiction of women in this play and what the play says about the roles, achievements, and goals of women today.

Week Fourteen:

1. Read Ntozake Shange's Spell #7
2. Discuss the importance of this play in its depiction of a minority group and of the African-American woman's view of men. Discuss the play's ability to transcend ethnic boundaries.

Week Fifteen:

1. Examine the various styles of writing and the impact of that style on the message of the plays studied.
2. Discuss the historical scope of the material studied.
3. Written reaction paper on possible trends in dramatic literature by and about women.

4. Evaluation of Student Learning:

- a. Students will be required to submit six short reaction papers to the subjects discussed throughout the term. In addition, each student will select a specific playwright from a list provided by the instructor and write an extensive analysis of the works of that playwright.

Reaction Papers	55%
Research/Analysis paper	25%
Participation/Discussion	20%

- b. More than 35% of the final grade is based on the writing component. Additionally, one of these papers will be resubmitted after revision for a grade reconsideration. This is consistent with the criteria for a writing-intensive course.

5. Rationale:

- a. Senior Seminar.
- b. Completion of 75 semester hours.
- c. This course does not duplicate current offerings.
- d. This course will not be required in any majors or programs other than general education senior seminar.

6. Implementation:

a. Faculty member to whom course is initially assigned: Jean Wolski

b. Texts:

Watt and Richardson, American Drama: Colonial to Contemporary, 1995.

Klaus, Gilbert, Field, Stages of Drama, 3rd edition, 1995.

Jacobus, Bedford Introduction to Drama, 3rd edition, 1997.

Klein, Girls Coming of Age, publication pending.

c. Additional cost to students: If students see productions, costs could range from \$5.00 to no more than \$20.00.

d. Term First Offered: Spring 2001

7. Community College Transfer:

A community college will not be judged equivalent to this course.

8. Date approved by the Department: 4/3/00

9. Date approved by the College Curriculum Committee: 4/19/00

10. Date approved by the Senior Seminar Advisory Committee: 4/27/00

11. Date approved by the CAA: 10/19/00

Departmental Contact Person: Jean Wolski
Campus Phone: 217-581-5919