

COLLEGE OF ARTS AND HUMANITIES
Course Proposal

1. Catalogue Description:

- a. Number: THA 3755G
- b. Title: African-American Theatre
- c. Meeting/Credit: 3-0-3
- d. Term: S
- e. Short Title: Afr-Am Theatre
- f. Description: This course will trace the roots of the African-American Theatre movement to African ritual, its transfer to the United States, and eventual evolution into a dynamic movement from 1960 to the present.
- g. Prerequisites: ENG 1001G and ENG1002G
- h. This course is writing active

Term offered changed from to "F-odd-numbered years" per 3/1911 catalog revisions from Jean Wolski, Theatre Arts

The course was designated writing intensive, effective Fall 2007 (10/25/07 CAA.)

2. Student Learning Objectives:

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

- read and analyze a significant body of theatrical literature (critical thinking)
- identify symbolic language and ascertain its significance to the literature as a whole (critical thinking)
- express analyses through the written and spoken word (write and speak effectively)
- demonstrate the connection between a body of literature and African-American culture (write and speak effectively, citizenship)
- relate the plays studied to societal and cultural influences of the time periods covered (critical thinking, citizenship)

3. Outline of the Course:

This course will meet for 45 fifty-minute class periods, for a total of three credit hours. The focus of the course will be on an examination of scripts as primary documents to explain the need for and development of an African-American Theatre movement dating from 1960 to the present.

Topics covered in the course will consist of the following:

1. An examination of historical/cultural data that influenced trends in the theatrical literature.
2. An examination of the theatrical/social/cultural activities of the 18th and 19th centuries that influenced trends in the contemporary theatre.
3. An examination of the dramatic literature of the 1960s, 70s and 80s and its connection to

the African-American culture.

4. A study of the major figures in the African American theatre movement.

5. An examination of current trends and their implications for the future.

Schedule of Topics:

Week 1 - Introduction to the course.

- I. African Influence
 - A. Importance of Ritual
 - B. Use of Rhythm, Song, Dance
- II. Types of African Theatre/Drama
 - A. Oral Tradition
 - B. Symbolic Dance-drama

Week 2 - Early History of African-American Theatre

- I. African Theatre Company
- II. Ira Aldridge
- III. William Wells Brown
- IV. Minstrel and Tom Shows
 - A. Storytellers
 - B. Role of the Church
 - C. Significance of Language

Weeks 3-4 - Early 20th Century: Repression and Emergence

- I. Language Codes
- II. Availability of Roles
- III. Lafayette Players
- IV. Federal Theatre Project

Weeks 5-7 - Emergence of the Playwright: Voices of Revolt 1955-69

SUGGESTED PLAYS:

- I. Lorraine Hansberry: A Raisin in the Sun
- II. Ossie Davis: Purlie Victorious
- III. Amiri Baraka: Dutchman
- IV. James Baldwin: Blues for Mr. Charlie
- V. Douglas Turner Ward: Day of Absence
- VI. Lonnie Elder: Ceremonies in Dark Old Men

Weeks 8-10 - Critical Acclaim: 1970-79

SUGGESTED PLAYS:

- I. Charles Gordone: No Place to Be Somebody
- II. Joseph Walker: The River Niger
- III. Alice Childress: Wedding Band
- IV. Ed Bullins: The Taking of Miss Janie

- V. Leslie Lee: The First Breeze of Summer
- VI. Ntozake Shange: For Colored Girls....

Weeks 11-12 - Exploration of Form: 1980-89

SUGGESTED PLAYS:

- I. Kathleen Collins: The Brothers
- II. P.J. Gibson: Long Time Since Yesterday
- III. George C. Wolfe: The Colored Museum

Weeks 13-14 - August Wilson: Voices through the Decades

READ AND/OR DISCUSS:

- I. Joe Turner's Come and Gone
- II. Ma Rainey's Black Bottom
- III. The Piano Lesson
- IV. Seven Guitars
- V. Fences
- VI. Two Trains Running

Week 15 - Current Trends: 1990-present

4. Evaluation of Student Learning:

The course will consist of the following graded components:

Discussion/analysis of scripts	10%
Short response papers covering plays read/seen	20%
One 10-15 page research paper	25%
Midterm essay exam	20%
Final essay exam	25%

Several short written responses over the plays, two essay exams and one research paper meet the criteria for a writing-active course.

5. Rationale:

- a. This course examines the artistic expression of a minority segment of the American populace and relates it to the cultural and societal attitudes and concerns of that population. It is therefore placed in the Humanities and Fine Arts component of the General Education program.
- b. This course requires an advanced level of critical thinking and analysis, and mature writing skills. The 3000 level plus the prerequisites of ENG 1001G and ENG 1002G will help ensure that students are prepared for this course.
- c. There is no similarity to any existing course.

d. This course is a General Education elective open to all majors. This course does meet state requirements for Non-Western credit for Teacher Certification majors. This course is an elective for AFR majors and minors.

6. Implementation:

a. Faculty members to whom course may be assigned:

David Wolski

Jean Wolski

b. Texts:

Hatch, James V. & Ted Shine. Black Theatre U.S.A.: Forty-five Plays by Black Americans, 1847-1995. New York: Free Press, 1995.

Branch, William. Black Thunder: An Anthology of Contemporary African American Drama. New York: Mentor, 1992.

Wilkerson, Margaret B. 9 Plays by Black Women. New York: Mentor, 1986.

c. When available in the area, field trips to see live performances of the plays studied will be included. Travel and ticket cost (not to exceed \$25.00) will be the responsibility of the student.

d. Term First Offered: Spring 2001

7. A community college course 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 4/12/00

10. Date Approved by CAA _____

Department contact person: Jean Wolski

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