THEA 170
AFRICAN AMERICAN THEATRE & CULTURE
Spring 2013

[The social and historical contexts of production can critically affect theatrical performances of blackness and their meanings. At the same time, theatrical representations and performances have profoundly impacted African American cultural, social, and political struggles.


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<tr>
<th>DR. MELINDA WILSON RAMEY</th>
<th>OFFICE HOURS</th>
<th>CLASS MEETINGS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preferred Email: Via SacCT</td>
<td>Shasta Hall (SHS) 106</td>
<td>Brighton Hall 208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alt. Email: <a href="mailto:mwilson@csus.edu">mwilson@csus.edu</a></td>
<td>M 10:30 am – 12:30 pm</td>
<td>TR 3:00-4:15 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Office Phone: 278-7719</td>
<td>Dept. Phone: 278-6368</td>
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COURSE DESCRIPTION & LEARNING OUTCOMES
This writing intensive seminar surveys African American theatre as a reflection of African American culture. By placing particular emphasis on African American theatre and drama post 1959, this course seeks to explore contemporary themes and developments in African American theatre. By the end of the semester, you will be able to 1) recall and cross-examine African American dramas from 1959 to the present; 2) interpret the works of premier African American playwrights; 3) analyze theatrical representations of African American experiences in relationship to specific historical, cultural, and social contexts; and 4) evaluate and criticize live and filmed performances.

This seminar is designed to enhance learning and improve critical thinking skills through collaboration. I encourage you to ask questions, share your own experiences, express your views, and find useful and creative ways to engage the material and each other. Keep in mind that we must all agree to disagree in order for this seminar to be fruitful as we explore issues of culture, performance, race, ethnicity, class, gender, etc.

**THEA 170 fulfills theatre major and Pan African Studies requirements as well as General Education (Area C4: Further Studies in the Arts and Humanities and Writing Intensive) requirements.

CLASSROOM EXPECTATIONS
In order to create and maintain a positive and productive learning environment, it is imperative that you treat me and your classmates with respect. Therefore, disruptive behavior (including but not limited to sending and/or receiving voice or text messages, leaving class early or coming to class late, talking while another individual is talking/performing, sleeping or eating during class, or doing assignments for other classes during this class) will not be tolerated. If you continue to disrupt class proceedings, then I will ask you to leave and deduct points from your attendance record. Please remember to turn OFF all cell phones prior to class. If you need to use your cell phone during class for emergency/family situation, then please sit by the door and excuse yourself from the classroom. If you otherwise use your cell phone, ipad, etc. to make/receive messages or texts, then I will confiscate your cell phone for the duration of class. Unless you require disability accommodations, you may NOT use laptops or other electronic devices to take notes during this class except when referring to online course readings.
Students with Disabilities
If you have a disability and require accommodations, then you need to provide disability documentation to SSWD, Lassen Hall 1008, (916) 278-6955. Please discuss your accommodation needs with me after class or during my office hours by the end of the second week in the semester.

Required Texts & Materials
- A Raisin in the Sun, Lorraine Hansberry*
- Dutchman, LeRoi Jones*
- for colored girls who have considered suicide when the rainbow is enuf (preferably 2010 edition), Ntozake Shange*
- King Hedley II, August Wilson*
- Topdog/Underdog, Suzan-Lori Parks*
- Course reader (CR) – available at Simply Brilliant Press (925 Howe Avenue)
- Additional readings posted on SacCT 9.1 (SCT).
- Ticket to S/BAD: New Beginnings Concert (Feb. 28 – March 10)
*Available at Hornet Bookstore

Course Requirements
**SacCT (SCT) acts as a supplement to this course. You need to consult SCT on a regular basis for announcements, assignments, and class communications.

- Attendance (100 points). I expect you to attend all class meetings. This class operates using a “random roll” practice meaning that I take attendance at the beginning of class on unannounced days throughout the semester. If you are present when your name is called, then you will receive 10 points. If you are absent, tardy, or leave class early, then you will receive 0 points. I grant excused absences ONLY with official written documentation and in the event of illness, family emergency, work-related conflict, or a university sponsored event. Sending me an email stating you will not be in class does not constitute an excused absence. THERE IS NO LATE SEATING FOR THEA 170! If you arrive late and find the main classroom door already closed, then please do not disrupt class by entering. Class has already begun.
- Quizzes (20 points each). Quizzes that cover the assigned readings, film screenings and/or class discussions will be posted on SacCT throughout the semester. Quizzes are timed (5 minutes) and available for approximately 72 hours prior to the due date. They include multiple choice, true/false, and/or fill in the blank questions. You may NOT make up a missed quiz for any reason including technical difficulties.
- Short Papers (100 points each). You are required to write five short papers (500 words or less each) some of which require you to purchase tickets and attend live performances. Each paper focuses on a different genre of writing for theatre. The writing prompts and specific instructions for each paper will be discussed in class and posted on SCT.
- Final Paper Preparations (25 points each). The final paper will be divided into four preparatory steps that are submitted and graded in succession:
  1. Abstract. A 2-paragraph statement that states your argument and “roadmap” to prove it.
  2. Annotated Bibliography. A MLA formatted and explanatory bibliography of the intended sources you will utilize for your final paper.
  3. Detailed Outline. A tentative outline of your paper that overviews the argument and supporting statements/evidence of each section/paragraph.
  4. Rough Draft. A rough draft, minimum 8 pages, of your final paper.
- Final Paper (200 points). Your final paper for this course is a 10-12 page paper that requires you to synthesize multiple types of sources to examine the social, cultural, and historical
situations presented in African American drama(s). Your paper is an “open topic” for which you could analyze a particular play/playwright, trace an aspect of African American theatre history, or evaluate the social/cultural implications in African American drama(s). Specific instructions for the final paper will also be discussed in class and posted on SCT.

- **Extra Credit Options (20 points each; 40 points total)** for extra credit you may complete one or two of the following options:
  1. Visit the URWC for assistance with papers. (20 points/visit and verification required)
  2. Attend Sons/Ancestors Players performance (details and dates TBA)
  3. Attend an additional production at Celebration Arts (4469 D Street; (916) 455-ARTS). Visit SCT for more details…verification also required.

**UNIVERSITY READING & WRITING CENTER**
For free, one-on-one help with reading and writing in any class, visit the University Reading and Writing Center (URWC) in Calaveras 128. The URWC can help you at any stage in your reading and writing processes: coming up with a topic, developing and organizing a draft, understanding difficult texts, or developing strategies to become a better editor. To make an appointment or a series of appointments, visit the URWC in CLV 128. The URWC also offers tutoring for one unit of academic credit through ENGL121. For current URWC hours and more information, visit [www.csus.edu/writingcenter](http://www.csus.edu/writingcenter).

**LATE POLICY & ASSIGNMENTS NOTES**
- I DO NOT ACCEPT LATE ASSIGNMENTS. I am happy to discuss any extenuating circumstances that may hinder the timely completion of work *in advance*. Please contact me when such circumstances arise.
- All papers/assignments must adhere to MLA style formatting and be typed, single-spaced (short papers), double-spaced (long papers), with 1-inch margins, and 12-point Times New Roman font.

**ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT**
THIS COURSE OPERATES ON AN ABSOLUTELY “NO TOLERANCE” POLICY IN REGARDS TO ALL FORMS OF ACADEMIC DISHONESTY. If I find you cheating or plagiarizing, then you will automatically fail this course. I will also report you to the Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs. For more information on academic honesty, visit [http://library.csus.edu/content2.asp?pageID=353](http://library.csus.edu/content2.asp?pageID=353)

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<tr>
<th><strong>GRADE BREAKDOWN</strong></th>
<th><strong>GRADES FROM POINTS EARNED:</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>Attendance</td>
<td>1000-945 (A); 944-895 (A-);</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quizzes (5 x 20 pts)</td>
<td>894-865 (B+); 864-835 (B); 834-795 (B-);</td>
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<tr>
<td>Short Papers (5 x 100 pts)</td>
<td>794-765 (C+); 764-735 (C); 734-695 (C-);</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Paper Prep. (4 x 25 pts)</td>
<td>694-665 (D+); 664-635 (D); 634-595 (D-);</td>
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<td>Final Paper</td>
<td>594-0 (F)</td>
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See the current online university catalog for explanations of the grading system and symbols.
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<tr>
<th>WK</th>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>TOPIC/ACTIVITY/READING(S)</th>
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| 1  | T 1/29 | Course Introduction  
|     |       |  ▪ Byrd, “Twenty Questions” (handout) |
| R 1/31 | What is a Black Play?  
|     |       |  ▪ Smith, “Black ‘plays’” (SCT)  
|     |       |  ▪ McCauley, “The struggle continues” (SCT)  
|     |       |  ▪ Parks, “New black math” (SCT) |
| 2  | T 2/5 | The Abolition Circuit & Solo Performances  
|     |       |  ▪ Wells Brown, *The Escape, or a Leap for Freedom* (CR)  
|     |       |  ▪ Elam, “The Black Performer and the Performance of Blackness” (CR) |
| R 2/7 | **Short Paper 1 Due** (Plot Summary of *The Escape, or a Leap for Freedom*)  
|     |       | Blackface Minstrelsy  
|     |       |  ▪ **Film Screening: Ethnic Notions** |
| 3  | T 2/12 | **Short Paper 2 Due** (Assessment of Lott article)  
|     |       | Blackface Minstrelsy continued  
|     |       |  ▪ Lott, “Love and Theft: The Racial Unconscious of Blackface Minstrelsy” (SCT) |
| R 2/14 | **Quiz 1 Due**  
|     |       | The Native Drama Debate/Anti-Lynching Plays  
|     |       |  ▪ Johnson, *Sunday Morning in the South* (CR)  
|     |       |  ▪ DuBois, “Krigwa Players Little Negro Theatre” (CR)  
|     |       |  ▪ Gregory, “The Drama of Negro Life” (CR)  
|     |       |  ▪ Stephens, “Anti-Lynch Plays by African American Women” (SCT) |
| 4  | T 2/19 | The Black Family and the 1950s  
|     |       |  ▪ **Film Screening: Lorraine Hansberry: The Black Experience in the Creation of Drama**  
| R 2/21 | Hansberry, *A Raisin in the Sun* |
| 5  | T 2/26 | *A Raisin in the Sun* continued  
|     |       |  ▪ Broadway Production Reviews (CR)  
|     |       |  ▪ Menson-Furr, “Hip Hopping Hansberry: Hansberry’s Revolution is Continued” (CR) |
| R 2/28 | **Film Clip Screenings: A Raisin in the Sun** 1959 and 2008 |
| 6  | T 3/5 | **Quiz 2 Due**  
|     |       | The Black Arts Movement of the 1960s  
|     |       |  ▪ Neal, “The Black Arts Movement” (CR)  
|     |       |  ▪ Baraka, “The Revolutionary Theatre” (SCT)  
|     |       |  ▪ **YouTube Film Screening: “Somebody Blew Up America”** |
| R 3/7 | Jones, *Dutchman* |
| 7  | T 3/12 | **Short Paper 3 Due** (Performance Review of S/BAD concert)  
|     |       | *Dutchman* continued |
| R 3/14 | **Film Screening: Dutchman** |
| 8  | T 3/19 | Black Womanhood in the 1970s  
|     |       |  ▪ “Womanism” (CR)  
|     |       |  ▪ Anderson, “A Black Feminist Theatre Emerges” (CR)  
|     |       |  ▪ Blackwell, “An Interview with Ntozake Shange” (SCT)  
|     |       |  ▪ Lyons, “Interview with Ntozake Shange” (SCT) |
| R 3/21 | Shange, *for colored girls who have considered suicide/when the rainbow is enuf* |
**SPRING BREAK!**

9 T 4/2 Film Screening: *for colored girls who have considered suicide/ when the rainbow is enuf*
   - Broadway Production Reviews (CR)

R 4/4 **Quiz 3 Due**
   *for colored girls who have considered suicide/ when the rainbow is enuf* continued

10 T 4/9 **Short Paper 4 Due** (Performance Review/Comparative Analysis of *for colored girls who have considered suicide/ when the rainbow is enuf*)
The 1980s and August Wilson
   - Harrison, “The Crisis of Black Theatre Identity” (SCT)
   - Parks, “The Light in August” (CR)
   - Wilson, “A Century on Stage” (CR)

Film Screenings: Interviews with August Wilson

R 4/11 Wilson, *King Hedley II*

11 T 4/16 *King Hedley II* continued

R 4/18 **Short Paper 5 Due** (Assessment of Pease article)
   *King Hedley II* continued
   - Pease, “August Wilson’s Lazarus Complex” (SCT)

12 T 4/23 **Quiz 4 Due**
   African American Theatre in the 1990s
   Cleage, *Bourbon at the Border*

R 4/25 **Final Paper Abstract & Annotated Bibliography Due**
   *Bourbon at the Border* continued
   - Scott Giles, “The Motion of Herstory: Three Plays by Pearl Cleage” (SCT)

13 T 4/30 *Bourbon at the Border* continued

R 5/2 **Final Paper Outline Due**
   African American Theatre Today
   Film Screenings: Women in Theatre: Suzan-Lori Parks
   - Parks, “The Equation for Black People on Stage”
   - Parks, *Topdog/Underdog*

14 T 5/7 **Quiz 5 Due**
   *Topdog/Underdog* continued

R 5/9 *Topdog/Underdog* continued
   Film Screening Clips: *The Topdog Diaries*

15 T 5/14 **Final Paper Rough Draft Due**

R 5/16 Course Wrap-up

R (5/21) **Final Papers due** to SHS 110 by 5:00 pm