

THEA 320- Marginalized Voices: Women Playwrights- Spring 2012

W 1:30-4:20pm

Professor Siouxsie Easter

Office Hours Mondays 10:30-11:30am, Tuesdays 1:00-3:00pm, or by appointment

Phone: 364-3232 Email: seaster@wells.edu

Course Objectives:

Students will explore, through readings and discussion, several plays by women who are identified as marginalized due to their social class, ethnicity, race, sexual identity, and/or religion.

The course discussion will focus on exploring topics, themes, language, style, and structure prominent in each work and how these are similar and different among the writers. The plays will also be looked at in a dramatic context. How are they envisioned on stage? What about casting? Technical challenges? Audience reaction?

Plays range from the obscure to the most recent off-Broadway hit. It is the goal of this course that students become exposed to the wide range of plays by women playwrights and are able to look at this work with a critical and interpretive eye.

Texts:

Chinoy, Helen Krich and Linda Walsh Jenkins, eds. Women in American Theatre. New York: Theatre Communications Group, Inc., 2006. (Required)

Mahone, Sydne, ed. Moon Marked and Touched by Sun. New York: Theatre Communications Group, Inc., 1994. (Optional- On Reserve)

Various Reserved Readings of plays and articles pertaining to playwrights, playwriting, performance, and dramatic theory.

Grading/Evaluation:

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| Questions (10 sets of 5 @ 25 points each) | 250 points |
| Response Paper- "A Forum on Black Theatre" | 50 points |
| Mid-term Paper | 100 points |
| Final Project | 100 points |

TOTAL POSSIBLE POINTS 500 points

Attendance:

Your attendance and full participation are expected at each class. One unexcused absence is allowed, but not suggested. Further absences will result in the reduction of your grade. If you miss more than three classes, you will fail the course.

Honor Code:

This professor abides by the Wells College Honor Code as stated in your Wells College Community Handbook and requires each student in this class to do the same.

Women Playwrights- Professor Easter- Page 2

Discussion Questions: (program goal 1, 3, 4, and 5)

Students will prepare a set of 5 discussion questions for each play read. Questions should be typed and are due on the day of the discussion of each play to be handed in at the end of class. No late questions will be accepted. No handwritten questions will be accepted.

Midterm: (program goal 1, 3, 5- learning objective 1, 3, 5)

Focusing on a play (other than the ones discussed in class) by an American woman playwright of your choosing, create a 15-20 minute presentation that contains the following:

1. Biography of the playwright- include dates, awards, other plays written
2. Synopsis of the play- concise character and plot description in your own words
3. Production concept- what are your ideas for design elements, casting, directing choices?
4. Artistic statement- what do you think are the major themes of the play?
How does your production concept reflect these themes?

On the day of the midterm, you will hand in a portfolio containing the following:

1. Biography- 1-2 pages
2. Synopsis of the play- 1 page
3. Production concept- can consist of renderings, collages, writing, etc. Be creative!
4. Artistic statement- 3-4 pages
5. Research bibliography

All written elements should be typed with 1.5 spacing and standard margins. Presentations will be made to the class on the day of the midterm and the portfolio will be handed in at that time. No late work will be accepted.

Final Paper: (program goal 1, 3, 5- learning objective 1, 3, 5)

Write a paper about one or more of the following elements that affect the woman playwright in America today: social/economic influence, “popular culture”, media, racism, homophobia, etc. Your focus can be on a single playwright, or on a single ethnicity, religion, culture, or sexual identity. You must include the theory/philosophy behind the writer’s work and structure and her impact on theatre as an institution, a business, and an art form.

The paper should be 6-8 pages, typed, with 1.5 spacing and standard margins. No late papers will be accepted.

Women Playwrights- Professor Easter- Page 3

COURSE SCHEDULE:

- Wednesday, January 25th - Introduction and discussion
In class reading and discussion of
The Purple Flower and *Exit: An Illusion* by Marita Bonner
- Wednesday, February 1st - Discuss *Funnyhouse of a Negro* and *The Ohio State Murders*
by Adrienne Kennedy
Discuss “**Women Alone, Women Together**” (p. 173-WinAT)
“**Here are the Women Playwrights**” (p. 118-WinAT)
Due: Questions- Sets 1 and 2
- Wednesday, February 8th- Discuss *Topdog/Underdog*
by Suzan-Lori Parks
In class work on *365 Days 365 Plays*
Due- Questions- Set 3
- Wednesday, February 15th- Discuss “*A Forum on Black Theatre*” (on reserve)
“**Sharing the Work**” (p. 482- WinAT)
Read Suzan-Lori Parks play of your choice
Suzan-Lori Parks video
Due- Questions- Set 4 (Parks play of choice),
2-4 page response paper to “*A Forum on Black Theatre*”
- Wednesday, February 22nd - Discuss *Simply Maria* by Josefina Lopez
Video- *Real Women Have Curves*
Due- Questions- Set 5
- Wednesday, February 29th - Discuss *Fefu and Her Friends* by Maria Irene Fornes
Discuss “**Fefu and Her Friends**” (p. 302- WinAT)

“Maria Irene Fornes: The Playwright as Director”

(p. 454- WinAT)

Due: Questions- Set 6

Wednesday, March 7th - Discuss **“Women in Pulitzer Prize Plays”** (p. 233- WinAT)
“Black Women in Plays by Black Playwrights”
(p. 240-WinAT)
Discussion of Characters in Women's Plays
Due: MIDTERM Presentations Group 1

Women Playwrights- Professor Easter- Page 4

Wednesday, March 14th - Discuss *The Children's Hour* by Lillian Hellman
Discuss **“Articles of Faith”** by Marsha Norman (reserve)
“Lillian Hellman Talks About Women: Interviews”
(p. 162- WinAT)
Due: Questions- Set 7
Due: MIDTERM Presentations Group 2

Wednesday, March 21st - **NO CLASS- SPRING BREAK**

Wednesday, March 28th - Discuss *Nine Parts of Desire* by Heather Raffo
Listen to CD *Nine Parts of Desire*
Due: Questions- Set 8

Wednesday, April 4th - NO CLASS- Attend Imagination and Innovation Day
Attend Neofuturists' Workshop and Performance

Wednesday, April 11th - Discuss *How I Learned to Drive* by Paula Vogel
Discuss **“Theatre Role Models”** (p. 424- WinAT)
“Politically Incorrect: Paula Vogel” (p. 435- WinAT)
Due: Questions- Set 9

Wednesday, April 18th - Discuss *Uncommon Women and Others* by Wendy Wasserstein
Discuss **“An Unconventional Life”** by Carol Rosen (reserve)
Staging Scenes from *Uncommon Women and Others*
Due: Questions- Set 10

Wednesday, April 25th - Video- *Uncommon Women and Others*

Wednesday, May 2nd -

Guest Artist Judith Pratt
Discuss *The Lady Dick* by Holly Hughes

Wednesday, May 9th -

Guest Artist Judith Pratt
Discuss *Tales of the Lost Formicans* by Constance Congdon

Thursday, May 17th -

**Final Paper Due NO LATER THAN 5:00pm- Put in INBOX in
Prof. Easter's office**