Lit7-368 American Theatre and Culture, 1776-1950

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Course Description

The aim of this course is to examine the development of drama and theatre in the United States from the eighteenth century to the mid-twentieth century. The plays selected represent a variety of periods, styles, and perspectives. The course will explore the relationship of drama to social, political, and cultural forces in order to offer a more complete understanding of the uniqueness of American Drama and its place in the construction of an American identity.

Learning Outcomes

Students attending this course will:

* Comprehend the role of theatre in American society as a public platform where political discourses are debated and cultural issues negotiated.
* Understand the impact of theatre on the formation of a distinctly American national identity.
* Become familiar with major movements, figures, and events that significantly contributed to the development of American theatre.
* Be able to approach a dramatic text by focusing on both its theatrical qualities and cultural significance.

Themes and Plays

The beginnings of American theatre – national identity

Royall Tyler, *The Contrast* (1787) (The Norton Anthology of

American Literature, vol. A)

The nineteenth century – melodrama

Anna Cora Mowatt, *Fashion* (1845)

George L. Aiken, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (1852)

The American West

William V. Moody, *The Great Divide* (1906)

Women dramatists and social issues

Sophie Treadwell, *Machinal* (1928)

Lillian Hellman, *The Children’s Hour* (1934)

The Great Depression

Clifford Odets, Waiting for Lefty (1935)

American Comedy and Environmental Issues

Thorton Wilder, *The Skin of Our Teeth* (1942)

Revisiting American Myths

Arthur Miller,*The Crucible* (1953)

American Expressionism

Eugene O’Neill, Long Day’s Journey into Night (1956) – The Norton

Anthology of American Literature, vol. D)

American Postmodernism

Edward Albee, *The Zoo Story* (1959)

Selected Bibliography

[Bigsby, C. W. E](http://search.lib.auth.gr/Author/Home?author=Bigsby%2C+C.+W.+E.). [*A critical introduction to twentieth-century American drama.*](http://search.lib.auth.gr/Record/188555)

[Bordman, Gerald Martin](http://search.lib.auth.gr/Author/Home?author=Bordman%2C+Gerald+Martin.). [*American theatre: a chronicle of comedy and drama, 1869-1914*.](http://search.lib.auth.gr/Record/463051)

[Chinoy, Helen Krich.](http://search.lib.auth.gr/Author/Home?author=Chinoy%2C+Helen+Krich.), [Jenkins, Linda Walsh](http://search.lib.auth.gr/Author/Home?author=Jenkins%2C+Linda+Walsh.). *Women in American theatre*.

[Engle, Ron](http://search.lib.auth.gr/Author/Home?author=Engle%2C+Ron), [Miller, Tice L.](http://search.lib.auth.gr/Author/Home?author=Miller%2C+Tice+L.) *The American stage: social and economic issues from the colonial period to the present*.

Quinn, Arthur Hobson. [*Representative American plays: from 1767 to the present day*.](http://search.lib.auth.gr/Record/77161)

Senelick, Laurence. *The American stage: writing on theater from Washington Irving to Tony Kushner*.

[Walker, Julia A.](http://search.lib.auth.gr/Author/Home?author=Walker%2C+Julia+A.%2C+1964-) [*Expressionism and modernism in the American theatre: bodies, voices, words*.](http://search.lib.auth.gr/Record/512071)

[Watt, Stephen](http://search.lib.auth.gr/Author/Home?author=Watt%2C+Stephen) and Gary A. [Richardson](http://search.lib.auth.gr/Author/Home?author=Richardson%2C+Gary+A.%2C+1949-). *American drama: colonial to contemporary.*

[Wilmeth, Don B.](http://search.lib.auth.gr/Author/Home?author=Wilmeth%2C+Don+B.) and C. W. E. Bigsby. *The Cambridge history of American theatre*. Witham, Barry. *Theatre in the United States, 1750-1915*.