

NEW YORK CITY COLLEGE OF TECHNOLOGY
The City University of New York
AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDIES DEPARTMENT

AFR 1321: BLACK THEATER- 3 credits
CityTech Flexible Core: Creative Expression

Semester: FALL 2016

Instructor: Prof. Jeannine Foster-McKelvia

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COURSE DESCRIPTION: This introductory course on African American dramatic literature explores the complex ways in which the black experience is constructed and presented by playwrights. In order to examine who or what informs contemporary Black playwrights, this course is divided into three parts. First, it will include a historical overview of early Black theatre beyond and within the United States. Second, it will analyze how contemporary playwrights have been influenced by Lorraine Hansberry, Leroi Jones, and Ntozake Shange. Third, it will consider the extent to which contemporary Black playwrights use theatre and performance to examine the social and political realities of African people. During the semester, students may have an opportunity to experience a theatrical production in New York City.

PREREQUISITES: CUNY proficiency in reading and writing or proficiency in reading and concurrent registration in ENG 092W

REQUIRED TEXT: A specially designed **University Reader Black Theater Course Packet** is required for this course. ***A Raisin in the Sun*** by Lorraine Hansberry, ***Dutchman*** by Leroi Jones, AKA Amiri Baraka, ***Intimate Apparel*** by Lynn Nottage and ***The Piano Lesson*** by August Wilson. Attendance to a local Black theatre production, details to be provided. All other **required** readings can be accessed through the Black Drama Database and through other online tools. Students will be unable to pass this course without the materials from the course packet and other online reading tools. The **University Reader Black Theater Course Packet is ONLY available in the College's Bookstore.**

RECOMMENDED READINGS:

Anderson, Lisa M. *Black Feminism in Contemporary Drama*.

Brown-Guillory, Elizabeth. *Their Place on the Stage: Black Women Playwrights in America*.

Elam, Harry. *The Past in the Present in the Drama of August Wilson*.

Fabre, Genevieve. *Drumbeats, Masks, and Metaphor: Contemporary Afro-American Theatre*.

Gates, Henry Louis and Nellie McKay, eds. *The Norton Anthology of African American Literature*.

Hamalian, Leo and James V. Hatch, eds. *The Roots of African American Drama*.

Harrison, Paul Carter. *Totem Voices: Plays from the Black World Repertory*.

Harrison, Paul Carter and Victor L. Walker, III, eds. *Black Theatre: Ritual Performance in the African Diaspora*.

Hatch, James V. and Ted Shine. *Black Theatre USA: Plays by African Americans – The Recent Period 1935 – Today*. New York: The Free Press, 1996.

Hill, Errol and James V. Hatch. *A History of African American Theatre*.

Hine, Darlene Clark and William C. Hine, eds. *The African-American Odyssey*.

Molette, Carlton W. and Barbara J. *Black Theatre: Premise and Presentation*.

Nottage, Lynn. *Crumbs from the Table of Joy and Other Plays*.

Shannon, Sandra and Dana Williams, eds. *August Wilson and the Black Aesthetics*.

Wilson, August. *The August Wilson Century Cycle*.

COURSE CONTENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

Learning Outcomes	Assessment Methods
Use play texts, recordings, essays, and live performances to dissect the ways in which black playwrights have contributed to theatre and drama;	In-class and Blackboard discussions, papers, quizzes, oral presentations, individual and group activities, and exams
Use black plays to critique race, gender, class, and sexuality;	In-class and Blackboard discussions, papers, quizzes, oral presentations, individual and group activities, and exams
Explore the ways in which sociopolitical issues and events, including but not limited to, The Great Migration, Civil Rights Movement, Black Power Movement, Feminist Movements, and Hip-Hop culture have shaped black theatre and drama; and	In-class and Blackboard discussions, papers, quizzes, oral presentations, individual and group activities, and exams
Analyze how Africana culture(s) have influenced and shaped black theatre in America.	In-class and Blackboard discussions, papers, quizzes, oral presentations, individual and group activities, and exams

General Education Learning Outcomes and Assessment Methods

Learning Outcomes	Assessment Methods
Develop critical thinking and writing skills by examining and critiquing key elements in black theatre;	Quizzes, in-class and Blackboard discussions, papers and exams.
Develop oral communications skills;	Group activities and oral presentations
Develop an appreciation for and understanding of the critical characteristics of theatre and drama and the ways in which people of African descent have contributed to the development of theatre and drama over time.	In-class and Blackboard discussions, papers, quizzes, oral presentations, individual and group activities, and exams

GRADING PROCEDURE & ASSIGNMENTS:

Attendance & Participation	20%
Quizzes, In-Class Exercises & Response Papers	20%
Final Presentation	10%
Midterm Exam	25%
Final Exam	25%
Total	100%

Various methods will be used to evaluate students' work throughout the semester. Attendance will be taken each day of class. **Each student is expected to read the required texts on time and to make thoughtful contributions to the class discussions.** Students are also required to take notes during class. The discussions, quizzes, in-class exercises, presentation and examinations are all designed to help students strengthen writing and critical thinking skills. Further details will be provided for all assignments. If a student misses the midterm exam, final exam, or presentation without clearing his/her absence he/she will receive a zero.

*******LATE ASSIGNMENTS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.*******

CLASS CONDUCT:

- ❖ Students must arrive on time, in order to fully participate and receive full credit for attending the class session. If lateness is unavoidable, the student is welcome to join the class, but he/she is expected not to disrupt the session already in progress. Points will be deducted from the final average, if students are consistently late and absent.
- ❖ **Students must turn off cell phones and other electronic devices before class begins. In addition, texting in class is absolutely prohibited.** Points will be deducted from the final average, if students consistently text in class, allow cell phones to ring in class and/or consistently leave class to answer calls.
- ❖ No one is allowed to wear headphones in class.
- ❖ No one is allowed to eat in class.
- ❖ Please note **plagiarism** is the act of taking someone else's words and passing them off as your own. **IT IS A FORM OF CHEATING! IT WILL NOT BE TOLERATED!** (View CityTech's Academic Integrity Policy Manual: http://www.citytech.cuny.edu/aboutus/docs/policies/CT_PolicyManual11_12.pdf)

CLASS SCHEDULE

*****SUBJECT TO CHANGE at professors discretion.

WEEK 1

- **Monday, August 29, 2016**
Topic: Introduction to Black Theatre
Assignment: Read "Criteria of Negro Art" by W. E. B. DuBois (See Handout)
Carlton W. and Barbara J. Molette, *Black Theatre: Premise and Presentation*
(Course Packet)

- **Wednesday, August 31 2016**
Discussion Topic: Why Black Theatre: "Criteria of Negro Art"
The beginnings (Abydos Passion Play)
Assignment: Read * William Branch, editor. *Black Thunder: An Anthology of Contemporary American Drama* (Course Packet)
*Genevieve Fabre, *Drumbeats Masks and Metaphor: Contemporary Afro-American Theatre* (Course Packet)

WEEK 2

- **Monday, September 5, 2016** *****NO CLASS***** LABOR DAY

- **Wednesday, September 7, 2016**
Discussion Topic: Early Black Theatre (African Grove Theatre)
View and Discuss documentary film Black Theatre: The Making of a Movement
Assignment: Read "The Sighted Eyes and Feeling Heart of Lorraine Hansberry," by Margaret Wilkerson (Course Packet)
**A Raisin in the Sun* by Lorraine Hansberry Act I

WEEK 3

- **Monday, September 12, 2016**
Discussion: Lorraine Hansberry and *A Raisin in the Sun* ACT I
Assignment: Read *A Raisin in the Sun* Act II and Act III

- **Wednesday, September 14, 2016**
Discussion Topic: *A Raisin in the Sun* Act II and Act III
In class assignment: read **Jet Magazine*, March 26, 1959 (Course Packet)

WEEK 4

- Monday, September 19, 2016
Discussion Topic: continue *A Raisin in the Sun*
View and discuss film: *A Raisin in the Sun* (1961)

- Wednesday, September 21, 2016
View and discuss film: *A Raisin in the Sun* (1961) complete viewing
Assignment: * Read "The Black Arts Movement," by Larry Neal, *Drama Review*, Summer 1968.
Download the article from the website below and print the article to bring to class:
<http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/maai3/community/text8/blackartsmovement.pdf>

WEEK 5

- Monday, September 26, 2016
Discussion Topic: Amira Baraka, The Black Arts Movement
View and discuss film: excerpts from *I'll Make Me a World*
Assignment: * Read the entire one act play *Dutchman* by Leroi Jones AKA Amiri Baraka

- Wednesday, September 28, 2016
Discussion Topic: *Dutchman*
View and discuss film: *Dutchman* (1967)
Assignment: TBA

WEEK 6

- Monday, October 3, 2016 *****NO CLASS*****

- Wednesday, October 5, 2016
Discussion Topic: Complete *Dutchman*
Assignment: Read *Lisa M. Anderson, *Black Feminism in Contemporary Drama* (Course Packet)
* Black Female Playwrights by Kathy . Perkins, Introduction (See Handout)
*Excerpt of *for colored girls who have considered suicide when the rainbow is enuf* by Ntozake Shange (Black Drama Database) See handout for specific instructions

- Thursday, October 6, 2016 ^^^^^CLASSES FOLLOW MONDAY SCHEDULE^^^^^
 Discussion Topic: Black Female playwrights, Ntozake Shange, and reshaping form and Content,
 for colored girls.....
 Assignment: Read Excerpt from *for black boys who considered homicide when the streets were
 too much* by Keith Antar Mason (Course Packet) and handout

WEEK 7

- Monday, October 10, 2016 *****NO CLASS***** COLUMBUS DAY
- Wednesday, October 12, 2016 *****NO CLASS*****

WEEK 8

- Monday, October 17, 2016
 Discussion Topic: Discuss and compare *for colored girls.....* and *for black boys...*
 Assignment: History Research Assignment #1(see handout for details)
 **Due Wednesday, October 26
- Wednesday, October 19, 2016
 Discussion Topic: Complete *for colored girls....* & *for black boys*
 Review for Mid-Term
 Assignment: Study for Mid-Term

WEEK 9

- Monday, October 24, 2016
 ****Mid-Term Test**** #####Make up test WILL NOT be given#####
 Assignment: Read *Excerpt of *Fires in the Mirror* by Anna Deavere Smith (Course Packet)
- Wednesday, October 26, 2016
 Discussion Topic: Documentary Style Theatre, History Research Assignment #1
 Anna Deavere Smith and *Fires in the Mirror*
 View and discuss excerpt of the film *Fires in the Mirror*
 Assignment: History research Assignment #2 (see handout for Details)
 ***Due Wednesday, November 2, 2016

WEEK 10

- Monday , October 31, 2016
Discussion Topic: Complete *Fires in the Mirror*
Assignment: Read *Intimate Apparel* by Lynn Nottage ACT I

- Wednesday , November 2, 2016
Discussion Topic: History as setting in Contemporary Black Theatre,
Discuss History research Assignment #2, *Intimate Apparel* Act I
Assignment: Read *Intimate Apparel* Act II

WEEK 11

- Monday, November 7, 2016
Discussion Topic: *Intimate Apparel* ACT II
Assignment: TBD and Details for final project Due December 5

- Wednesday, November 9, 2016
Discussion Topic: Complete *Intimate Apparel*
Assignment: Read *August Wilson, "The Ground on Which I Stand," *Callaloo*, Summer 1997.
Download and Print this article at: <http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/callaloo/v020/20.3wilson02.html>
*Dana A. Williams and Sandra Shannon, editors. *August Wilson and Black Aesthetics* (Course Packet)

WEEK 12

- Monday, November 14, 2016
Discussion Topic: August Wilson's Aesthetic
View and discuss film *The Ground on Which I Stand*
Assignment: *The Piano Lesson* By August Wilson Act I

- Wednesday, November 16, 2016
Discussion Topic: *The Piano Lesson* ACT I
Assignment: Read *The Piano Lesson* Act II Scenes 1,2 & 3

WEEK 13

- Monday, November 21, 2016
Discussion Topic: The Piano Lesson ACT II Scenes 1, 2 & 3
Assignment: *The Piano Lesson* Act II Scenes 4 & 5

- Wednesday, November 23, 2016
Discussion Topic: The Piano Lesson ACT II Scenes 4 & 5
View and discuss excerpts from the film *The Piano Lesson* (1995)
Assignment: TBA

WEEK 14

- Monday, November 28, 2016
Discussion Topic: Complete *The Piano Lesson*
Assignment: Read Excerpt of *The Colored Museum* by George C. Wolfe (See Handout)

- Wednesday, November 30, 2016
Discussion Topic: Scrutinizing the Tradition of Stereotypes and Black character Stereotypes,
The Colored Museum
Assignment: TBA

WEEK 15

- Monday, December 5, 2016
Discussion Topic: Complete discussion on *The Colored Museum*
Assignment: Read Excerpt of *Deep Azure* by Chadwick Boseman (Course Packet)

- Wednesday, December 7, 2016
Discussion Topic: And There Was the Word: Voices in Hip Hop Theatre
Assignment: *****FINAL PROJECT DUE MONDAY, DECEMBER 12, 2016*****
LATE PROJECTS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED

WEEK 16

- Monday, December 12, 2016
Presentation of FINAL PROJECTS ### LATE PROJECTS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED###
*****REVIEW FOR FINAL EXAM*****

- Wednesday, December 14, 2016

FINAL EXAMINATION

******MAKE-UP TEST WILL NOT BE GIVEN******