

## AMERICAN THEATRE HISTORY ONLINE (THE 369)

David Pellegrini, Ph.D. Assoc. Prof. of Theatre

Campus Office Hrs: M: 11-12; Tu & Thu: 2-3

On-line Office Hours: Wed 11am-12pm; Wed 8pm-9pm & Thurs 10-11am

On-Line Seminar Options: Wed 12-1pm or Wed 9-10pm or Thu 3-4pm

SPRING 2009

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### **Course Description:**

In this course we will examine the history of American Theatre from colonial times to the present in a seminar format and in an on-line environment. Our foundational premise is that theatre is a social institution, the various components of which (e.g., creators and audiences, market forces, producing and funding organizations, the critical establishment, training programs, theatre's relation to other social institutions, etc.) will comprise the focus of our inquiry. The first half of the course will cover colonial times to the late nineteenth century and the emergence of a national theatre tradition, our indebtedness to and divergence from British theatre, the democratizing forces of early theatre, and the distinction between "high" and "low" art forms. The second half focuses on twentieth and twenty-first century developments, especially theatre's politicization during the interwar years, the rise of counter-establishment theatre, and contemporary developments. Emphasis will be placed on how individual artists and theatre groups have responded to and represented changes in American society in relation to issues such as identity (e.g., race, class, gender, ethnicity), multiculturalism, globalization, censorship, and competition from other media. We will examine historical artifacts, dramatic and performance texts, the accomplishments of select theatre personalities, and significant performances alongside scholarship generated from the fields of theatre studies and the social sciences.

**Course Objectives:** If students complete all requirements and readings, they will be able to:

1. Understand the history and traditions of theatre, dramatic literature, and theatre/performance studies as constitutive of the evolution of theatre as a social institution in America;
2. Correlate instances of American theatre with political, social, and cultural manifestations at key historical junctures;
3. Describe the significance of practitioners, dramatists, theorists, movements, groups, texts, manifestos and select performances in the history of American society and culture;
4. Analyze artistic responses (individual and groups) to sociopolitical conditions, and how "dramatic character" has evolved to be more inclusive of changing notions of identity;
5. Utilize a variety of resources for researching topics in theatre history, drama, and performance, and apply a range of methodologies to assess theatre as a social institution;
6. Understand the relationship between theatre (& other representational modes) with the American popular consciousness, and how they reflect, shape, and conceal social, economic, political, and cultural realities.

**This course supports the objectives of Tier II of ECSU's Liberal Arts Curriculum. As a result of this course and the cumulative activities of Tier II courses, students should be able to:**

1. Identify and apply diverse methods of inquiry and ways of knowing in making and evaluating decisions in human affairs;
2. Develop the ability to think creatively, and come to value ingenuity and originality by engaging in multiple modes of problem solving; and
3. Apply ethical principles to practical problems of life and work.

**This course is also designed to meet the learning objectives of the "Individuals and Society" category of Tier II, which provides opportunities for students to:**

1. Demonstrate the ability to analyze factors that affect the behavior of individuals and the nature of social structures and processes;
2. Apply the theories and methods of social sciences to social issues and social contexts;
3. Evaluate the role of social institutions (e.g. family, government, economics, religion, education) in the promotion or diminution of human well-being; and
4. Make informed evaluations of social, economic, and political phenomena and issues.

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

1. Weekly seminars: Required login for 1 hour online sessions to interact with Professor and other students—choice of three possible times per week; *Note: Attendance will be taken during the 1 hour online session; you may login to any of the three sessions per week; missing more than one week will result in a reduction of 3 points from the total final points accumulated for each week missed.*  
Options for Synchronous Login to Weekly Seminars:  
    Wednesdays at 12 noon est. or  
    Wednesday at 9:00 p.m. est or  
    Thursday at 3:00 p.m.  
*If you cannot log-in at any of these times, please contact Professor Pellegrini by email immediately ([pellegrinid@easternct.edu](mailto:pellegrinid@easternct.edu) or you may need to drop the course. .*
2. Weekly login to review Learning Modules and other required activities, with at least one posting to the threaded discussion; *Missing one week of postings to the Threaded Discussion will result in a reduction of 2 points from the total points accumulated for each week missed.*
3. Online Quizzes (choose 4 of 6; 20 points total)
4. Online Assignments (choose 4 of 6; 20 points total)
5. Midterm (20 points)
6. Final (20 points)
7. Term Paper (20 points) Students will write one 10-page research paper on approved topics. Possible paper topics will be provided, as well as additional guidelines. MLA citation and style guidelines must be followed, and at least four primary and secondary sources of research must be utilized and documented. Research papers will be due prior to the last week of class.

--**Academic Support Services** *Students are encouraged to use the support offered by the Academic Services Center located on the ground floor of the Library. Tutoring & supplemental Advising Services are available for students in the Center at the following times: Sun. 2-9; M.-Th. 9-9, Fri. 9-5. (Closed Sat.) For further information call 465-4272 or visit <http://academicaffairs.easternct.edu/ASC-FAQs.html>*

**NOTE:** If you are a student with a disability and believe you will need accommodations for this class, it is your responsibility to contact the Office of AccessAbility Services at 465-0189 as soon as possible. Please note that I cannot provide accommodations based upon disability until I have received an accommodation letter from the Office of AccessAbility Services.

## **REQUIRED TEXTS:**

Questia Web-site subscription (\$7.95 per month for 3 months)

*The Crucible* (Arthur Miller) & *The Iceman Cometh* (Eugene O'Neill) ECSU bookstore or library reserve.

*All other play texts, documents, artifacts will be located in the learning modules on Vista*

# COURSE OUTLINE

## WEEK ONE January 26 – February 1

### **MOD ONE – Part I: Orientation to Course Material**

*Video Course Introduction*

*Orientation to VISTA*

*Review Syllabus*

*Course requirements & due-dates*

*Information re: THEATRE ON VIDEO*

*Information re: QUESTIA subscription*

*Vista home-page*

*Getting Started with Vista*

*Syllabus Review*

*ECSU Library Database (db)*

*Description of Questia services*

### **MOD ONE – Part II: EXAMINING EVIDENCE COLONIAL ERA THEATRE**

*Library/Web Resources for Research/Class*

#### **COLONIAL ERA THEATRE**

*The Anti-Theatrical Prejudice*

*Theatre Activities in the Colonies*

*The British Tradition & its Influence*

**Mod 1 part 2 PowerPoint**

**Questia:** *J.B Hornblow, History of  
The Theatre in America (21-39)*

*Assignment # 1*

*Threaded Discussion posting*

## WEEK TWO: February 2 to February 8

### **MOD-2 THEATRE & REVOLUTION**

*Major Trends in Performance*

*The Puritan Anti-Theatrical Prejudice*

*David Douglass's American Company*

**Mod 2 PowerPoint**

**Questia:** *Hewitt chapter*

*Mod 2 Artifacts; Assignment # 2*

*Threaded Discussion;*

*Theatre on Video (ECSU db)*

## WEEK THREE: February 9 to February 15

### **MOD-3 “Into the Hands of the People”**

*Class Division & Theatre Ownership*

*Early Commercial Theatre*

*The Contrast (Tyler)*

**Mod 3 PowerPoint**

*Mod 3: Vista Docs & artifacts*

**Questia:** *“The Contrast”*

*QUIZ # 1*

## WEEK FOUR: February 16 to February 22

### **MOD-4 B’HOYS & MATINEE LADIES: THEATRE IN NEW YORK 1825-1850**

*Fashion (Mowatt)*

*The Astor Place Riots*

**Mod 4 PowerPoint**

*Mod 4 Vista Docs*

*Quiz # 2*

*Theatre on Video (ECSU db)*

*A Search for an American Voice*

*Prelude & First Curtains (00:00 – 21:00)*

*Assignment # 3*

**WEEK FIVE: February 23 to March 1**

**MOD-5**      **ACTING, PERFORMING & STARS**  
**The Theatre Industry**

**Mod 5 PowerPoint**  
*Mod5 Docs*  
*Assignment # 4*  
*Theatre on Video (ECSU db)*  
*A Search for an American Voice*  
*Prelude & First Curtains (21:00-45:00)*

**WEEK SIX: March 2 to March 8**

**MOD-6**      **(MELO)DRAMATIZING THE CIVIL WAR 1850-1870**  
*Representations of Race & Ethnicity*  
*Riverboat Theatre*  
*Minstrelsy & its Legacies*  
*Colloquium # 3*

**Mod6 PowerPoint**  
*Uncle Tom's Cabin (Vista Doc)*  
**Questia:** *Brewster chapter*  
*Mod 6 docs & artifacts*  
*Theatre on Video (ECSU db)*  
*A Search for an American Voice*  
*The Tragedian, Rebel & the Prince*

**WEEK SEVEN: March 9 to March 15**

**MOD-7**      **MIDTERM**

*Post Essays Online by 3/15*  
*Theatre on Video (ECSU db)*

**WEEK EIGHT: March 16 to March 22**

**MOD-8**      **MODERNISM: 1900-1915**  
*The actor-manager*  
*The rise & fall of the theatre syndicate*  
*Realism in the Theatre*  
*The Little Theatre Movement*  
*Provincetown Playhouse*  
*Glaspell's Trifles*

**Mod8PowerPoint**  
*QUIZ # 4*  
*Trifles (Vista Doc)*  
*Brockett 489-496 (Vista Doc)*  
*Theatre on Video (ECSU db)*

**WEEK NINE: March 20 to April 5**

**MOD-9**      **O'NEILL: The Father of American Drama**

*The Iceman Cometh*  
*Assignment # 5 (Mandatory)*  
*Theatre on Video (ECSU db)*

**WEEK TEN: April 6 to April 12**

**MOD-10**      **THE GROUP THEATRE;**  
**THE METHOD & ITS MADNESS**  
*The Mercury Theatre*  
*The Federal Theatre Project &*  
*the Living Newspaper*  
*The Method & its Legacy*  
*A Streetcar Named Desire in Performance*

*Streaming Video (Streetcar)*  
*Theatre on Video (2)*  
*Vista Docs: Kazan; Streecar*  
*Awake & Sing artifacts*  
*Radio Theatre (weblink)*

**WEEK ELEVEN: April 13 to April 19**

**MOD-11: *INTERPRETING THE AMERICAN DREAM***

*American Tragedy*  
*Miller's The Crucible*  
*The Golden Age of Musical Theatre*

*Vista docs & artifacts*  
*Theatre on Video (ECSU db)*  
*Miller's The Crucible;*  
*Quiz # 5*

**WEEK TWELVE: April 20 to April 26**

**MOD-12: *YOU DON'T WRITE, YOU DON'T CALL...":  
VERSIONS OF THE AMERICAN FAMILY***

*Theatre, Race & Ethnicity*  
*August Wilson: theory & plays*  
*Alternative Theatre Collectives*

*Vista docs & artifacts*  
*Wilson's Fences*  
*Quiz # 6*

**WEEK THIRTEEN: April 27 to May 3**

**MOD-13 *EXPERIMENTAL THEATRE:***

*The Living Theatre & SF MIME Troupe*  
*Performance Art*

*Vista docs & artifacts*  
*Theatre on Video (ECSU db)*  
*Quiz # 7*

**WEEK FOURTEEN: May 4 to May 10**

**MOD-14 *THE FIRST AMENDMENT: THEATRE & CENSORSHIP***

*Theatre & Identity*  
*My Name is Rachel Corrie &*  
*the NYTW controversy*  
*The NEA-4*

***TERM PAPER DUE***

**WEEK FIFTEEN: May 11 to May 18**

**MOD-15 *FINAL***

***FINAL ESSAYS DUE***