. . . there is more to drama than mere communication. True, a communication takes place, an ultimate residue of meaning is left behind for the individual spectator, all the codes, all the signifiers are in operation and can be analyzed ad infinitum, but what really matters in the end in such a dramatic performance is that the spectator should emerge having had an emotional, poetic, and intellectual experience of an intensity and significance perhaps as great, perhaps even greater than one of the pivotal, decisive experiences of his or her “real” life. [Martin Esslin, *The Field of Drama*]

The theatre to me is life--the substance and interpretation of life. . . [And] life is struggle, often, if not usually, unsuccessful struggle; for most of us have something within us which prevents us from accomplishing what we dream and desire. And then, as we progress, we are always seeing further than we can reach. [Eugene O’Neill (qtd. in Bigsby Vol. I 42)]

Of all writing I love only that which is written in blood. Write with blood: and you will soon discover that blood is spirit. [Nietzsche, *Thus Spake Zarathustra*]

**Instructor Information**

Dr. Chris Ellery  
Office: A021B  
Office Hours: 10-11:00 MWF; 8:30-9:30 TR, and 2-3 MTWR  
Phone: 486-6142  
E-mail: cellery@angelo.edu

**Course Description**

Catalogue Description: “In-depth study of one or more American dramatists.”

Section Description: This course will carry readers and spectators of American drama from the makeshift wharf theater of Provincetown, Massachusetts, to Mama Nadi’s oasis in the war-ravaged Congo as it surveys major works and movements of modern and contemporary American drama. The interpretive approach will emphasize the social and cultural concerns and contexts of the playwrights and plays.

**Student Learning Outcomes**

- Students should gain knowledge of trends, theories, themes, figures, and works of American drama from O’Neill to the present.
- Students should know the historical and social contexts of the selected works and explain how that context contributes to meaning.
- Students should know terminology related to the study of drama as a literary genre.
- Students should be able to analyze and write critically about American drama by applying a variety of critical approaches.
Required Texts


Please note that the *Longman Anthology [LAMCD]* contains many of the texts on our schedule as well as valuable background material on modern and contemporary drama.

Selected Resources

ASU Reference Works:
*American Playwrights* (Ref. PS351 .M35)
*American Drama Criticism* (Ref. PS332 .F44)
*Contemporary Dramatists* (Ref. PR737 .C57 1993)
*Guide to American Drama Explication* (Ref. PS332 .O84 1995)
*20th Century American Drama (DLB 7)* (Ref. PN451 .D53 vol. 7)

ASU Periodicals:
*American Theatre*                 *Theatre Journal*
*American Literature*              *New Theatre Quarterly*
*Journal of American Studies*      *Modern Drama*
*The Drama Review (TDR)*           *Eugene O’Neill Newsletter*
*Performing Arts Journal (PAJ)*    *Eugene O’Neill Review*

Grading

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Daily Work includes weekly response essays (see below for instructions) and miscellaneous in-class quizzes, exercises, and activities. Your major class project will be a 12-15 page Critical Essay suitable for publication in a contemporary peer-reviewed journal. You will submit a
Proposal detailing your objectives, rationale, and methods for accomplishing this project. For the Presentation, each student will introduce one of the lecture/discussion topics posted on the syllabus. There will be two Exams.

Response Essays: Students should write a short response (200-250 words) on each week’s reading. Each response should be printed (double-spaced) and ready to hand in at the beginning of class. Do not summarize the play; rather, focus on an interesting image, character, theme, symbol or symbolic action. I am looking for some evidence of close reading here. The following questions might help you get started:

- What detail(s) [signifier(s)] stood out to you in the reading?
- What was most interesting? Most confusing? Most disturbing?
- What concerns or points do you want to talk about during class?
- What questions do you have about the play?
- What do you like? Dislike?
- If you were leading the class discussion, what is the first question you would ask?

Attendance and Make-up Policy

The following attendance policy is consistent with University OP 10.04 (“Academic Regulations Concerning Student Performance”).

- **This is a face-to-face class.** Regular attendance is essential for success in the class. Attendance will be taken daily at the beginning of the period. Students who arrive late or do not answer the roll should see the instructor after class to be sure they are counted present. Students who enter during a quiz will not receive extra time to complete the quiz.

- **Be prepared for class each day.** An absence does not excuse the student from being prepared for the next class. Thus, students who miss class should contact a classmate or the instructor to be sure of the assignment for the next class.

- **All assignments are due when called for.** Being permitted to accept work after the deadline gives students an advantage over those who turn work in on time; thus late work will be accepted without penalty only in the case of excused absences. The penalty for an unexcused late essay is one-half letter grade for each day late.

- **Observance of Religious Holy Days:** Students who intend to be absent from class to observe a religious “holy day” (as defined in ASUOP 10.19) must inform the instructor in writing prior to the absence and make up any scheduled assignments within an appropriate timeframe as determined by the professor. While the absence will not be penalized, failure to complete the make-up assignment within the specified timeframe will result in penalties consistent with other absences and assignments.

- **Students must present credible documentation to receive an excused absence.** Absences are excused for school travel, illness, or personal or family emergency. Contact the instructor as soon as possible (before a school trip or personal travel) to excuse the absence and arrange make-up work.

- **Daily grades for quizzes and other in-class activities cannot be made up.** Two daily grades will be dropped at the end of the term.

- **E-mailed assignments will be accepted only at the request of the instructor.**
Social Conduct and Personal Responsibilities

In this and all college courses, you should conduct yourself with professionalism and collegiality, and you should take responsibility for your own learning and performance. Excellent students are motivated, dedicated, and self-reliant; they have a positive attitude and a good work ethic. You will improve your chances of succeeding in this class by following these rules:

- **Stay focused.** Attend class and be actively involved. Pay attention and participate in discussions. Ask questions when you have them, and consult your teacher when you have concerns.
- **Be prepared every day.** Critically read all assignments. Conscientiously complete homework and class activities. Keep up with your work.
- **Follow instructions carefully,** especially those on assignment prompts, and prepare assignments according to the guidelines provided.
- **Encourage learning and collaborate** with classmates and support the instructor in the goal of learning.
- **Be courteous.** To avoid distracting others, arrive on time and leave when class is dismissed.
- **Avoid talking in class except when appropriate.** While it is sometimes acceptable and even desirable to question opinions and even facts offered by others (including the teacher), you should do so respectfully and thoughtfully, with learning goals in mind.
- **Mute and put away cell phones.** Do not use any electronic devices, including smartphones and laptops, unless prompted to do so as part of the lesson.
- **Take good care of your body and mind.** Keep yourself nourished and rested.

Departmental Policy on Academic Honesty

“Angelo State University expects its students to maintain complete honesty and integrity in their academic pursuits. Students are responsible for understanding the Academic Honor Code, which is contained in both print and web versions (www.angelo.edu/forms/pdf/honorcode5.pdf) of the Student Handbook.”

Accommodations for Disabilities

“Persons with disabilities that may warrant academic accommodations must contact the Student Life Office, Room 112 University Center, in order to request such accommodations prior to any being implemented. You are encouraged to make this request early in the semester so that appropriate arrangements can be made.” (Dean of Student Life)
## Schedule of Readings and Assignments

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings/Assignments</th>
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<tr>
<td>M 8/27</td>
<td>Introduction: Reading Drama as a Genre</td>
<td>Susan Glaspell, “Trifles” (1916) [handout]</td>
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<td>M 9/3</td>
<td>HOLIDAY</td>
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<td>M 9/10</td>
<td>Lecture/Discussion: Tragedy and Comedy</td>
<td>Eugene O’Neill, <em>The Emperor Jones</em> (1920) and <em>The Hairy Ape</em> (1922)</td>
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<tr>
<td>M 9/17</td>
<td>Lecture/Discussion: Modernism, Expressionism, and First-Wave Feminism</td>
<td>Sophie Treadwell, <em>Machinal</em> (1928) [LAMCD]</td>
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<td>M 10/22</td>
<td>Lecture/Discussion: The Southern Renaissance</td>
<td>Tennessee Williams, <em>Cat on a Hot Tin Roof</em> (1955) [LAMCD]</td>
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<td>M 11/5</td>
<td><strong>Proposal Due</strong></td>
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<td>Lecture/Discussion: Postmodernism</td>
<td>Sam Shepherd, <em>True West</em> (1980) [LAMCD]</td>
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<td><strong>Critical Essay Due</strong></td>
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<td>M 12/10</td>
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