

B.A. (Honours) in Contemporary English Studies

Course Title	:	Contemporary Drama in English
Course Code	:	ENG205
Recommended Study Year	:	2 nd & 3 rd Year
No. of Credits/Term	:	3
Mode of Tuition	:	Lecture and Tutorial
Class Contact Hours	:	2 hours Lecture/week 1 hour Tutorial/week
Category in Major Programme	:	Required Course
Prerequisite(s)	:	N/A
Co-requisite(s)	:	N/A
Exclusion(s)	:	N/A
Exemption Requirement(s)	:	N/A

Brief Course description

This course introduces students to drama both as a literary genre and as a blueprint for performance, advancing character as the engine of “incident”, and of depicting “incident” as an illustration of character (to paraphrase Henry James). It will explore the ways in which themes can be developed polyphonically, through the use of different, often competing, conflicting, as well as complementary voices.

Aims

This course is designed to elicit from the student an appreciation of multiple perspectives, of seeing from more than one point of view, and of understanding complex themes and issues dialectically rather than didactically, through the evocation of character and of multiple subjectivities. By encouraging students to “project” themselves in the characters of a play, in effect teaching them mimetically, one hopes to advance their comfort level in the use of oral English. Participation in the annual English drama production – especially if it involves one of the studied texts – would be welcomed.

Learning Outcomes

The students are expected to: 1) develop an appreciation of drama and dramatic literature as a moral and aesthetic value; 2) enhance skills in dramatic/literary analysis; 3) enhance their ability to write and speak more effectively in English; and 4)

Indicative Content

Texts will be selected around a particular theme or themes, or they may focus on particular authors or groups of authors who share the same concerns. The relationship between Modern Drama and Contemporary Drama will be explored.

Teaching Method

As mentioned earlier, the teaching mode for this course will be “dialectic” rather than “didactic”. It is our belief that critical and hermeneutic thinking work in tandem like two legs walking. Thus in addition to large class lectures which aim at providing background information about writers and texts, small group tutorials will be conducted for critical feedback from students. Only through such a constant interplay of critical and hermeneutic activities can we tackle the complex problems of literary/dramatic meaning and value and of the relationship between text and performance.

Measurement of Learning Outcomes

Students’ progress towards the learning outcomes outlined above will be measured by continuous assessments of their engagement with lectures, individual and group readings and tutorial discussions. Speaking/ presenting/ performing tasks will be of a group nature while written tasks will be individual. Knowledge of set texts and dramatic mode and genre will be assessed by a summative examination.

Assessment

Continuous assessment: 60%

1. Performed reading and commentary: Group Oral Assessment (two): 20%
2. Tutorial participation: 15%
3. Term paper on a range of drama texts studied on the course: 25%
4. The term paper will be approximately 1,200 words in length.

Final examination: One text commentary and one critical essay: 40%

Required Readings

Introductory Overview – not for intensive study:

Modern Classic Drama texts: Henrik Ibsen’s *A Doll’s House* (1879); Tennessee Williams’ *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947); Lorraine Hansberry’s *A Raisin in the Sun* (1958). (Norton Anthology of Literature); Harold Pinter’s *The Dumb Waiter* (1960).

Set Texts for Intensive Study:

Contemporary Classic Drama texts: Patrick Marber’s *Closer* (1997); Wendy Wasserstein’s *The Heidi Chronicles*(1987); Alan Bennett’s *The History Boys* (2004); April de Angelis’ *Playhouse Creatures* (1994)

NOTE: Movie versions of most of these texts are available and will be used for teaching purposes, but it is important to note that there are often **significant differences** between original play-scripts and movie adaptation versions. References to scenes, dialogue, actions and characterization taken from a film version differing in crucial ways from the play-script will be penalized in exam and term paper response.

Supplementary Readings:

Pickering, K., *Studying Modern Drama*, Palgrave Study Guide, Macmillan, 2003.

Hodgson, T., *Modern Drama from Ibsen to Fugard*, Batsford Books, 1992.

The Norton Anthology of Literature, 8th Edition.