

**ENGLISH 284
DRAMA**

BULLETIN INFORMATION

ENGL 284 – Drama (3 credit hours)

Course Description:

Drama from several countries and historical periods, illustrating the nature of the genre.

Prerequisites: ENGL 101 and 102 or equivalent

SAMPLE COURSE OVERVIEW

Theatre often serves as a metaphor for the world or for life and it is a form particularly well-suited to such uses since live drama is a representation of both a world and the lives led within it. This course is designed as an introduction to major plays in the western dramatic tradition, plays that have given rise to this metaphor. In our reading, we will emphasize performance as integral to the experience of drama. All of the plays we will read were directed primarily at a theatrical instead of a reading audience and we will attempt to keep that in mind. The theater is a social art form and much of a play's effect derives from this social character. We will necessarily attend to matters of performance and reception throughout the semester.

Our word "drama" derives from the Greek for "to do, act, perform" and thus refers to an art form that is meant to be acted out on stage. The English word "play" can refer to both the text performed and the action of performing it. When Shakespeare has Hamlet say that weeping and looking sad "are actions that a man might play," he is punning on both senses of the word. In this course we will explore the development of the drama and its sense of play.

I have divided the syllabus into four major sections: Classical Drama, Medieval Drama, Renaissance Drama, and, for lack of a better term, Modern Drama. We will read plays in a variety of genres—from classical tragedy and comedy to cycle plays and moralities to the comedy and tragedy of the English Renaissance and on through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. I have chosen to follow chronology here in order to demonstrate something of the way that the drama develops historically.

ITEMIZED LEARNING OUTCOMES

Upon successful completion of English 284, students will be able to:

1. Describe drama as an artistic and literary form.
2. Discuss the history of dramatic genres, theatrical styles, and aesthetic movements.
3. Analyze dramatic works with regard to style, period, and composition.
4. Interpret plays through in-class performance/readings.
5. Demonstrate an understanding of drama as performance.

SAMPLE REQUIRED TEXTS/SUGGESTED READINGS/MATERIALS

1. Lee Jacobus, *The Bedford Introduction to Drama* (Sixth Edition).

SAMPLE ASSIGNMENTS AND/OR EXAM

1. **Two papers:** The papers will require you to develop well-organized evidence-based critical arguments about the course material based in careful readings of one or more of the plays on the syllabus.
2. **Quizzes**
3. **A performance exercise**
4. **A final exam.**

SAMPLE COURSE OUTLINE WITH TIMELINE OF TOPICS, READINGS/ASSIGNMENTS, EXAMS/PROJECTS

- Week 1:** Introductions, Overview.
Classical Drama—Tragedy and Comedy (Jacobus 30-40).
Sophocles *Oedipus Rex* (Jacobus 69-106, read the commentaries too!)
- Week 2:** *Oedipus Rex*
Aristophanes, *Lysistrata* (Jacobus 164-187)
- Week 3:** Aristophanes, *Lysistrata*
Roman Drama—selections Jacobus 188-204
- Week 4:** Medieval Drama (Jacobus 205-215).
The Second Shepherd's Play (Jacobus 225-238)
Everyman (Jacobus 239-251)
- Week 5:** Renaissance Drama (Jacobus 252-263)
Christopher Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus* (Jacobus 265-296)
Doctor Faustus
- Week 6:** *Doctor Faustus*
William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Jacobus 296-336)
PAPER 1 DUE
- Week 7:** *A Midsummer Night's Dream*
William Shakespeare, *Hamlet* (Jacobus 337-400, read commentaries!)
- Week 8:** *Hamlet*
- Week 9:** Aphra Behn, *The Rover; or, The Banished Cavaliers* (Jacobus 539-582, also read 496-501 on drama after the Restoration).
The Rover

- Week 10:** Post-Renaissance Drama
Read Jacobus 644-657 on the Nineteenth Century
Henrik Ibsen, *A Doll's House* (Jacobus 658-696).
A Doll's House
- Week 11:** Anton Chekhov, *The Cherry Orchard* (Jacobus 787-815)
The Cherry Orchard
- Week 12:** Bertolt Brecht, *Mother Courage and Her Children* (Jacobus 987-1027).
Mother Courage and Her Children
- Week 13:** Samuel Beckett, *Krapp's Last Tape* (Jacobus 1162-1169)
Caryl Churchill *Far Away* (Jacobus 1615-1625).
PAPER 2 DUE
Performances
- Week 14:** Performances

FINAL EXAM according to university exam schedule