

Fall 2009
English 311, section 2
Dramatic Literature I:
The Comic and The Tragic

TuTh, 2:35-3:50, Friends 301
Course Instructor: Dan Breen
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Office Hours: Tues. 11-12; Wed. 2-4; Thurs. 11-12 and by appointment
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Course Texts:

The following texts are REQUIRED for this class:

Available at the Ithaca College Bookstore:

--Richmond Lattimore, et. al., eds., *Sophocles II*, in *The Complete Greek Tragedies*, vol. 2 (University of Chicago Press, 1969), ISBN: 9780226307862

--Thomas Kyd, *The Spanish Tragedy*, ed. J. R. Mulryne, New Mermaids Series (Methuen, 2007), ISBN: 0713667923

--William Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, ed. Alan Brissenden, Oxford World's Classics Series (Oxford UP, 1998), ISBN: 9780192834195

--John Marston, *The Malcontent*, ed. Bernard Harris, New Mermaids Series (A & C Black, 2007), ISBN: 9780713642889

--Aphra Behn, *The Rover and Other Plays*, ed. Jane Spencer, Oxford World's Classics Series (Oxford UP, 2008), ISBN: 0199540209

--William Wycherly, *The Country Wife and Other Plays*, ed. Peter Dixon, Oxford World's Classics Series (Oxford UP, 2002), ISBN: 0192834541

Available at the English and Politics Administrative Office, 309 Muller:

--Course reader

You **MUST** purchase the course reader for this class. Course readers are available in 309 Muller at times TBA. 309 Muller is not equipped to handle electronic transactions, and so you must bring either cash or check.

The following text is **RECOMMENDED** for this class:

Available at the Ithaca College Bookstore:

--Richmond Lattimore, et. al., eds., *Sophocles I*, in *The Complete Greek Tragedies*, vol. 1 (University of Chicago Press, 1969), ISBN: 9780226307862

Aims and Goals:

“Comedy” and “tragedy” are ancient categories, invoked originally to describe different kinds of dramatic composition. Though this distinction remains a convenient (and relevant) one for contemporary readers and audiences, it is also the case that these seemingly simple, seemingly antithetical terms convey a range of emotion and experience that is not always easily divisible. Tragic—or potentially tragic—situations often arise in comedy, and there are moments in most tragedies at which the plays seem as though they might begin to move in more optimistic or affirming directions. This course will begin with the hypothesis that the terms “comedy” and “tragedy” describe actions taken by dramatic characters in response to crisis, and the specific consequences of those actions. As such, we will attempt to locate “comedy” and “tragedy” within fundamental elements of human experience, and examine the emotional, intellectual, and spiritual dimensions of each.

Requirements:

Your written work will consist of one analytical midterm essay (5-6 pages), one critical/theoretical essay (4-5 pages), and one short response paper (2-3 pages). You will also have a comprehensive take-home final exam. It is important to understand that each of these assignments is **required** in order to receive credit for the course.

Essay Policy:

1) Revisions

You may revise **either** the midterm essay **or** the critical/theoretical essay for full credit (ie, the grade on your revision will replace the grade on your initial version). The short response paper is meant essentially to be diagnostic and is therefore ineligible for revision.

2) Due Dates

Essays are due in class on the date stipulated below in the Class Schedule.

You may request a one-week extension in advance of the essay’s due date; however, **essays for which extensions are granted may not be revised.**

3) Plagiarism

Any incident of academic misconduct will be taken very seriously and submitted to the Office of Judicial Affairs, in accordance with the guidelines stipulated in the Ithaca College Student Policy Manual, section 7.1.2.6. These guidelines are available at:

http://www.ithaca.edu/link_index.php?url=http://www.ithaca.edu/attorney/policies/vol7/Volume_7-70102.htm&source=handbook. See also the College policy on plagiarism in the Policy Manual, section 7.1.4.1, available at http://www.ithaca.edu/attorney/policies/vol7/Volume_7-70104.htm

Class Participation:

Class participation will also be an important part of your grade; the course is, after all, designed as a seminar. Most of the important work we do will develop as a result of our conversations, and it is essential therefore that each of us comes to class having read the assigned material carefully, and prepared to participate in thoughtful discussion.

It is also important to recognize, however, that not everyone feels comfortable taking part in analytical discussions. In this course, then, there are three ways in which students can improve their class participation grades:

1. By participating in the analytical discussions we have each class

This includes:

- Asking questions about the material
- Offering a reading of a passage, or making a larger analytical point
- Responding to comments made by others

2. By volunteering to read passages aloud

Many of our discussions will focus on specific passages that are crucial to some aspect of the development of the play. We will always begin these discussions by reading these passages aloud. Students who volunteer to read these passages will earn credit toward their class participation grades.

3. By performing well on in-class writing assignments

We will have a number of in-class writing assignments this semester (roughly one every other week). These will short essay questions designed to help you think through some of the problems the plays present.

In addition, there are certain basic standards to which students must adhere in order to maximize their class participation grades. Students must attend class regularly (see the attendance policy below for clarification), and must bring a text of the essay, or play we'll be studying to every class. **Students who do not bring a text will be considered to be unprepared for class.**

Midterm and Final Grades:

Your **midterm grade** will be calculated according to the following percentages:

Short response paper: 25%

Class participation: 25%

Midterm essay: 50%

Your **final course grade** will be calculated according to the following percentages:

Midterm and critical/theoretical essays: 50%

Final exam: 20%

Class participation: 20%

Short response paper: 10%

Attendance Policy:

You are allowed **four** absences, no questions asked—use them carefully. Beginning with the fifth, however, your **final course grade will drop one full letter grade** for each additional absence (eg, from B+ to C+, or A to B). Students who miss nine classes before the withdrawal deadline (**Friday, November 6**) will be automatically dropped from the course. Students whose accumulated absences total ten or more before the end of the semester **will not pass the course**. There are, of course, exceptions to this rule. If you are seriously ill or need to attend to a personal emergency, you obviously won't be penalized.

Class Schedule

*** An "R" next to an entry on the Class Schedule indicates that a text is found in the course reader

***All reading assignments are REQUIRED unless otherwise designated

August:

Thurs. 27—Course Introduction

September:

Tues. 1—Unit I: Tragedy and its Contexts

A) Joyce, excerpt from *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (photocopy)

B) Aristotle, *Poetics* (R)

Thurs. 3—Aristotle, *Poetics* (R)

Tues. 8—Unit II: Tragedy in Ancient Greece

Sophocles, *Ajax*

Thurs. 10—Sophocles, *Ajax*

Tues. 15—Sophocles, *Philoctetes*

Thurs. 17—Sophocles, *Philoctetes*

(Recommended: MacIntyre, excerpt from *After Virtue* (R))

*****Short Response Paper Due*****

Tues. 22—Unit III: Comedy in Ancient Rome:

A) Horace on Dramatic Composition (R)

B) Plautus, *Pseudolus* (R)

(Recommended: Cicero on Humor (R))

Thurs. 24—Plautus, *Pseudolus* (R)

Tues. 29—Unit IV: Tragedy in Renaissance England

A) Puttenham on Drama (R)

B) Sidney on Drama (R)

(Recommended: Excerpt from *A Mirror for Magistrates* (R))

October:

Thurs. 1—A) Atreus' Revenge (excerpt from Seneca, *Thyestes*) (R)

B) Kyd, *The Spanish Tragedy*, Act I

Tues. 6—Kyd, *The Spanish Tragedy*, Acts II-III

Thurs. 8—Kyd, *The Spanish Tragedy*, Acts III-IV

Tues. 13—Unit V: Comedy in Renaissance England

A) Jonson, excerpt from *Bartholomew Fair* (R)

B) Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, Acts I-II

(Recommended: Excerpt from Jonson, *Discoveries* (R))

*****Midterm Essay Due*****

Thurs. 15—**Fall Break—NO CLASS**

Tues. 20—Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, Acts III-IV

Thurs. 22—Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, Acts IV-V

Tues. 27—Marston, *The Malcontent*, Acts I-II

Thurs. 29—Marston, *The Malcontent*, Acts III-IV

November:

Tues. 3—Marston, *The Malcontent*, Acts IV-V

Thurs. 5—Unit VI: Restoration Drama

A) Dryden, Preface to *An Evening's Love* (R)

B) Wycherley, *The Country Wife*, Acts I-III

*****Critical/Theoretical Essay Due*****

Tues. 10—Wycherley, *The Country Wife*, Acts IV-V

Thurs. 12—**NO CLASS**

Tues. 17—Behn, *The Rover*, Acts I-II

Thurs. 19—Behn, *The Rover*, Acts II-III

Tues. 24—**Thanksgiving—NO CLASS**

Thurs. 26—**Thanksgiving—NO CLASS**

December:

Tues. 1—Behn, *The Rover*, Acts III-IV

Thurs. 3—Dryden, *The Indian Emperor*, Acts I-II (R)

Tues. 8—Dryden, *The Indian Emperor*, Acts III-IV (R)

Thurs. 10—Dryden, *The Indian Emperor*, Acts IV-V (R)

*****There will be a TAKE-HOME FINAL EXAM in this class*****