

Fall 2007

American Studies, ELTE

Tuesday 11:30-1:00

Rm E356, R5

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AM-340.107

20th Century American Drama

Enikő Bollobás

This is a seminar surveying the major authors of 20th century American drama from Glaspell to Albee. We will conduct two kinds of classes: discussions of plays and performances of (parts) of plays. Each student is required to (i) give a critical presentation of a drama, (ii) act as “director” (or co-director) of the performance of scenes from that particular drama (select the scene[s] and the actors, organize rehearsals, then be in charge of the performance in class), and (iii) participate as actors in the performances directed by fellow students.

Performances should convey some concept, derived from the critical reading of the drama; they are to be interpretations of the plays, or scenes, in question. Directors and actors are expected to be able to articulate the critical concepts and interpretation underlying their performances. Actors are NOT expected to learn the script: they can simply read out their words when on stage.

*Grades* will be based on participation in discussions, presentations, and performances.

*Attendance.* It is assumed that everyone will attend the classes. Missed classes will show in your grades.

*Reading the assigned texts.* Students are required to come prepared for class: you must read the assignments for each class. Actually, you are encouraged to read the assignments twice: once for “fun,” once “for class.” Not reading the assignments counts into your absences (missed classes) and will show in your grades.

*Visibility, active participation.* Be visible. Mere physical presence, even when you have read the assignments, is not enough: you have to prove your skills in reading, analysis, and argument in class discussions.

*Oral presentation.* Each student is required to give one short oral presentation (max. 5-10 minutes) introducing the subject/author of that class session. Contextualize your author as well as the views you cite. Give your sources in your presentation. Conduct scholarly research into the critical literature concerning the author: read books and journal articles (those that have appeared since the 1980s only, if possible), not just the easier internet sources. You are advised not to read your presentation but speak without notes as much as possible.

## Schedule of Topics and Presentations

**September 4**            Orientation

**September 11**        Susan Glaspell, *Trifles*

Presentation:

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**September 18**        Eugene O'Neill, *A Long Day's Journey Into Night* (1940)

Presentation:

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**September 25**        **Performances**  
**(Students perform scenes from *Trifles, Night*)**

**October 2**            Tennessee Williams, *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947)

Presentation:

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**October 9**            Arthur Miller, *Death of a Salesman* (1949)

Presentation:

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**October 16**          Arthur Miller, *View from the Bridge* (1955)

Presentation:

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**October 23**      **No class**

**October 30**      **No class**

**November 6**      **Performances**  
(Students perform scenes from *Streetcar, Death, View*)

**November 13**      **Performances cont'd**

**November 20**      Edward Albee, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (1962)

Presentation:

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**November 27**      Edward Albee, *Three Tall Women* (1991)

Presentation:

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**December 4**      **Performances**  
Students perform scenes from *Who's Afraid, Three Tall Women*

**December 11**      **Grade books signed**

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**Required primary readings:**

Susan Glaspell, *Trifles* (1916)

Eugene O'Neill, *A Long Day's Journey Into Night* (1940)

Tennessee Williams, *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947)

Arthur Miller, *Death of a Salesman* (1949)

Arthur Miller, *View from the Bridge* (1955)

Edward Albee, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (1962)

Edward Albee, *Three Tall Women* (1991)

**Recommended secondary readings:**

Bollobás Enikő, *Az amerikai irodalom története* (Budapest: Osiris, 2005) (relevant chapters)

Bigsby, C. W. E. *A Critical Introduction to Twentieth-Century American Drama*. I–III. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1986.

Bigsby, C. W. E. *Modern American Drama, 1945–2000*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000.