TRAGIC DRAMA: FROM ANCIENT GREECE TO THE PRESENT DAY (ENGLISH 165)

Fall 2016 • Fridays, 11:30-2:20 in COB 265
Instructor: Professor Katherine Steele Brokaw, kbrokaw@ucmerced.edu
Office: CAOB 375 Office hours: Mondays 11:30 am-1:00 pm or by appointment
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Office: Office hours:

In this class, we will be reading plays written thousands of years ago as well as very recently, all while exploring the questions of what makes a play a tragedy, and what function tragedy serves for the many times and places that produce this genre of drama. We'll read tragedies written in ancient Greece (including Sophocles), in Elizabethan England (including Shakespeare), in nineteenth century Europe (including Ibsen), and in 20th and 21st century America and Britain (including Beckett and various contemporary playwrights). In addition to exploring tragic plays as literature, we will think about their performance possibilities by watching both filmed performances and student-performed presentations.

COURSE GOALS:
After engaging with this course actively and thoughtfully, you will be able to:

1. **Identify** several forms of tragic drama as well as the people, places, and events that shaped the context in which these plays were written.
2. **Interpret** dramatic texts, sensitive to textual, contextual, and performative cues.
3. **Define** the qualities that make a drama tragic, and understand the how these definitions of tragedy change in time and space.
4. **Compare** tragedies by different playwrights, written in and for different settings.
5. **Closely watch** performances, analyzing the way performance creates meaning.
6. **Perform** and recite dramatic texts aloud, with proper presentation suitable to its original context, enhancing your public speaking and cooperation skills.
7. **Articulate your evaluations** of this drama, in speech and writing, cogently and with sensitivity to context.
8. **Apply** interpretive strategies developed in historical and generic literary study to other academic and professional contexts.

TEXTBOOKS:
- Shomit Dutta, ed., *Greek Tragedy* (Penguin)
- Kathryn Maus, ed., *Four Revenge Tragedies* (Oxford)
- William Shakespeare, *Coriolanus* (Folger)
- William Shakespeare, *Titus Andronicus* (Folger)
- Henrik Ibsen, *Ibsen: Four Major Plays* (Signet)
- Bertolt Brecht, *Mother Courage* (Penguin)
- Arthur Miller, *Death of a Salesman* (Penguin)
- August Wilson, *Fences* (Samuel French)
- Additional texts will be available via hyperlinks and PDFs at our CatCourses site. Please print out these readings and bring them to class for easy reference during discussion.
RECOMMENDED READING (IN LIBRARY OR ON eBook):
• Adrian Poole, Tragedy: A Very Short Introduction (Oxford)
• Nancy Sorkin Rabinowitz, Greek Tragedy (Blackwell)
• David Wiles, Tragedy In Athens (Cambridge)
• Emma Smith and Garret Sullivan, eds., The Cambridge Companion to English Renaissance Tragedy
• Claire McEachern, ed., The Cambridge Companion to Shakespearean Tragedy

REQUIREMENTS:
20% Paper one: Comparative analysis, 4-5 pages.
30% Paper two: Research paper. 8-10 pages.
5% Analytical review of Coriolanus or Sandra Steingraber lecture. 2 pages.
20% Final: Short answers identifying and discussing quotations from the plays, and a final interpretive essay.
15% Reading quizzes and freewriting in class.
10% Participation and engagement (will be forfeited after 2 unexcused absences).
Extra credit opportunities: memorized performance of a scene or monologue from an assigned play; analytical review essay of a filmed version of one of the tragedies.

SCHEDULE:
Note: You need to read the entire play before that play is discussed.

I. ANCIENT GREECE, C. 550-400 BCE
Friday, August 26: Aeschylus, Agamemnon pp. 3-67 in Greek Tragedy; “Introduction” by Simon Goldhill in Greek Tragedy, xiii-xxxiii.

Friday, September 2: Sophocles, Oedipus Rex, pp. 71-128.

Friday, September 9: Aristotle, Poetics pp. 227-255 in Greek Tragedy; Euripides, Medea, pp. 131-185.

Paper 1 assigned.

II. ELIZABETHAN AND JACOBEAN ENGLAND, 1590-1615
Friday, September 16: Thomas Kyd, “The Spanish Tragedy” in Four Revenge Tragedies (pp. 1-92); Katharine Maus, “Introduction” (ix-xviii); “The Era of the Outdoor Playhouses,” on CatCourses

Friday, September 23: William Shakespeare, Titus Andronicus; “I wouldn’t touch that pie if I were you” on CatCourses.

Friday, September 30: William Shakespeare, Coriolanus.

III. INDUSTRIALIZED EUROPE, 1870-1941

Paper 1 due. Paper 2 assigned.
Friday, October 14: Bertolt Brecht, *Mother Courage and Her Children* and Introductions, xi-xli.

→ Tuesday, October 18: Staged reading of *Coriolanus*, time and location TBA.
→ Thursday, October 20: Lecture by Sandra Steingraber: “Fracked Out,” 7:00 pm, KL 355
Friday, October 21: Cherríe Moraga, *Heroes and Saints* (on CatCourses)

Friday, October 28: Samuel Beckett, “Play,” “Not I,” “Footfalls,” and “Rockaby” on CatCourses; Excerpts from *The Cambridge Introduction to Samuel Beckett* on CatCourses.

**IV. AMERICAN VOICES: 1945-1999**

Friday, November 4: Arthur Miller, *Death of a Salesman*, and Introduction, pp. vii-xxxvii; “American Dreamer…” and “Philip Seymour Hoffman….” on CatCourses.

Friday, November 11: No class for Veterans’ Day

*Paper 2 due*

Friday, November 18: August Wilson, *Fences*.

Friday November 25: No class for Thanksgiving

Friday, December 2: Suzan-Lori Parks, *Venus*

Friday, December 9: Wrap-up discussion and final exam.

**COURSE POLICIES:**

**Special Needs:** If you have any special needs, please speak to me and to Student Services as soon as possible so that we can outline the best ways to promote your success in this course.

**Writing Help:** Students who would like help with their writing are encouraged to visit the Student Advising and Learning Center (SALC) in Kolligian 172. Please check their website (learning.ucmerced.edu) for details on tutoring and other academic assistance.

**Plagiarism Policy:** As a simple guideline, if you submit your own work, you will avoid all serious types of plagiarism. Nevertheless, a responsible student should also consider the less obvious variants of plagiarism, especially when writing research papers that require citations. Consider these examples:

- **Paraphrasing or summarizing a written source, including text from the Internet, without footnoting or otherwise referencing the source.**

  When does another person’s idea supplant your own? Who “owns” an idea?

- **Copying a written source, including text from the Internet, without using quotation marks or block indentation.**

  How can a student paraphrase or summarize without using at least some language from the original source?

For serious instances of plagiarism, such as submitting an essay obtained from an online “paper mill,” students in this course will automatically fail the assignment, receive a final grade of F, and be recommended for dismissal from the university. There is no excuse for serious plagiarism.
I will also regard unattributed citations – verbatim copying of another’s person’s work without some indication of the source – as a serious form of plagiarism.

**Technology:** Laptops and tablets are not allowed in class. Cell phones must be turned off, and iPods and other recording devices are forbidden during class. Taping, filming, and photography in class (by camera, cell phone, or any other means) is prohibited, as it may infringe on privacy and copyright, and it has a negative effect on classroom discussion. When emailing any instructor, you are expected to write as you would in any professional correspondence, with courtesy, respect, and clarity. Please refer to the “How to email your professor” handout, posted on CROPS.

**Participation:** Arrive to class on time and do not leave early unless you have emailed the instructor in advance with regards to an urgent prior commitment. Try to use the restroom before coming to class. Please do not read other materials during class, or bring food into the classroom. Show respect for your instructor and fellow students by listening to whomever has the floor and being respectful of their ideas. As this class meets only 13 times, you grade will suffer considerably for every absence. If you miss more than two classes without a valid excuse, you will forfeit your participation grade. If you miss class, you are responsible for speaking with a classmate about the class discussion to get caught up on the material. You will not be able to make up quizzes missed for absence or late arrivals (but you can make up the points through extra credit assignments). Two significantly late arrivals (or early departures) equal one absence, and texting during class also equals one absence.