

## XIDS 2100—The Thirties and the Theatre

Tuesday, Thursday 2:00—3:15 Section 02 Fall, 2009 Anthropology Bldg, Room 2.  
Instructor: Shelly Elman  
Office: Martha Munro bldg. Room 207C  
Office Hours: Mondays, Wednesdays 10:00—11:00; 2:00—4:00  
Tuesdays, Thursdays 10:00—11:00; 3:30—4:30  
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Texts: ***You Can't Take It With You*** by Kaufman & Hart  
***Our Town*** by Thornton Wilder  
***The Children's Hour*** by Lillian Hellman

### Course Packet which includes:

***Waiting for Lefty*** by Clifford Odets

***Power*** by Arthur Arent

***Triple-A Plowed Under*** by the staff of the Living Newspaper

***The Purple Flower*** by Marita Bonner

***Don't You Want To Be Free*** by Langston Hughes

***The Big White Fog*** by Theodore Ward

Recommended Text: ***A Writer's Resource: A Handbook for Writing and Research***  
by Elaine Maimon & Janice Peritz

### Office Hours:

I am available to address matters of concern during my office hours. If those hours are not convenient, please schedule an appointment. If you visit my office at other times, I may not be available because of other duties I must attend to. If you have problems in the class, it is your responsibility to initiate contact with me. I cannot help you if you do not communicate with me. Let me know of any problems early in the semester. I will not accept excuses for poor performance or missing exams, especially late in the semester.

### Course Description:

*The Thirties and the Theatre* will examine the political theatre of the Great Depression. The 1930's were a time of great political upheaval in the entire world; this course will examine the leftist movement of politics specifically in the U.S. By studying the theatre, art, music of the 1930s, students will be able to answer the question, "how do the arts reflect the politics of the country and the world now?" This course is interdisciplinary and will therefore focus on the areas of theatre, history, and political science of the time.

XIDS refers to the cross- and interdisciplinary nature of courses with this prefix. XIDS courses can be taught by a team or by a single professor. Their purpose is to offer, through special topics, an integrative learning experience that results in a new and enhanced perspective.

### Course Objectives:

Students will be exposed to the only national theatre the U.S. has ever had.

Students will develop an understanding of how the arts reflect society.

Students will develop an interest in political theatre.

Students will gain knowledge of an important era in American history.

### Core Area C1 Learning Outcomes:

The Thirties and the Theatre supports Core Area C1 Learning Outcomes: To develop the ability to recognize and identify achievements in literary, fine, and performing arts (analysis of contemporary and classic films, fine art, music, theatre, and poetry); To develop the ability to apply, understand and appreciate the application of aesthetic criteria to "real world" circumstances (how a piece of art, theatre, music, or literature can reflect the time period in which the piece was written; how the art can be used as a metaphor for its time).

### Responsibilities:

- Be on time. Students will not be allowed entry into, and will be counted as absent for, the class if they arrive more than five minutes late.
- Be a courteous listener—do not attend class if your intention is to sleep or read material other than course work.
- As the texts of this class are plays, the class lectures will consist of background of the period. You will be responsible for the notes on the lectures that will be included on the tests.
- Be aware that the syllabus schedule may change—it is your responsibility to make sure you are aware of those changes.
- **Do the reading! There may be pop quizzes on the days plays or other readings are due.**

**Assignments:**

- **Two 2-3 page response papers to live performances** (worth 15% each) **30%**
  - **The definition of a live performance:**
    - A theatrical play or musical
    - A concert
    - A gallery show of fine art (paintings, photography, sculpture)
  - **Live art is NOT:**
    - An athletic event
    - A staged athletic event (like the WWE)
    - A lecture
    - A cultural panel discussion
    - A film
    - A television show
    - Recorded music or concert
  - These papers are about your responses to **Art**. The definition of art for the purposes of this course is that which incorporates music, dance, theatre and/or fine art. **Art is aesthetic.**
  - Think in terms of reacting to the piece; don't give a synopsis of it.
  - Use what you learn in class and apply it to the work.
  - For example, how is the work structured? Does it have a climax? How does it build to this climax?
  - **These papers are to examine your ability to critically think and analyze. Answering the above questions is just the minimum work needed. 'A' work should go above and beyond the questions and examine the work viewed.**
  - **Don't just answer the above questions, but make the paper cohesive with a smooth flow. Give the paper an introduction, body, and conclusion.**
  
- **4 Multiple choice exams** (worth 15% each) **60%**
  - Must use the pink scantron (#229629).
  
- **Events & Project folder** **10%**
  - You will be responsible for viewing three additional events (other than the two events needed to write the above response papers). **These events must be from or about the 1930s.**
    - They may be live concerts of music from the time period, play performances, art gallery viewings, film viewings all outside of class **and during this semester**. If you have a question about an event, please see me before you attend. Extra credit events will not count as one of the three events.
    - Folders will contain paragraphs describing and analyzing these events. Papers should be a minimum of 250 words and a maximum of 500. One of the questions you should answer is how this event reflects current society (or society of its time). **DO NOT WRITE A PLOT SUMMARY OF THE EVENT.**
  - Folders will contain your propaganda project. You will find an instance of propaganda from a magazine and explain the propaganda device(s) used. You should also discuss the targeted audience.
  - Folders will contain your *Our Town* project. Explanation of this project will occur in class on the day *Our Town* is discussion.
  - Folders will contain our *Communist Manifesto* project. Read the document, which is on our MyUWG Files page, and answer the following questions: What does it mean? To whom are Marx and Engel directing the manifesto? What does communism in this sense mean?
  - **Extra credit may be awarded at the discretion of the instructor.**

- Grading:                   100-90       A  
                                  89-80        B  
                                  79-70        C  
                                  69-60        D  
                                  59-50        F

- ◆ **Grading may take 2-3 weeks. Please be patient.**
- ◆ **All email communication about this course must be conducted through MyUWG.**
- ◆ **This syllabus and its schedule are subject to change.**

Course Schedule:

Week 1

August                   TH13                   Overview: Responsibilities and Expectations  
Great Events of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Video  
***The Communist Manifesto* assignment**

Week 2

T18                   Great Depression Vol. 1 Video and Discussion  
Handout: *The War of the Worlds*  
TH20                   Media of the 1930's: Radio  
Discuss Response Papers

Week 3

T25                   The Radio Play  
*The War of the Worlds*  
TH27                   The Great Depression Vol. 2 Video & discussion

Week 4

September           T1                   Vaudeville  
TH3                   Finish Vaudeville

Week 5

T8                   ***The Communist Manifesto* discussion**  
The Marxist influence on art and culture  
Theatre  
Diego Rivera

Week 6

TH10                  Exam #1  
T15                   Propaganda discussion  
TH17                  Propaganda discussion

Week 7: Tickets are available at the Townsend Center for *Lady Windermere's Fan* on Monday, September 21 at 10:00a.m.

T22                   The Great Depression Vol. 3 & discussion  
TH24                  Stanislavski/psychologically motivated acting  
The Group Theatre  
**Read: *Waiting for Lefty***  
**Study Guide questions due for *Waiting for Lefty* (to be put in folder)**

Week 8: *Lady Windermere's Fan* performs Wednesday, September 30—Saturday, October 3 at 7:30p.m. and Sunday, October 4 at 2:30p.m. in the Townsend Center main stage.

T29                   TBA

October TH1 The Great Depression Vol. 4 & discussion  
The New Deal Alphabet Soup

**Week 9: October 6 is the last day to withdraw from class with a grade "W"**

T6 The New Deal  
Refresh response paper discussion?

TH8 The Dust Bowl & The Migrants

Week 10

T13 Exam #2

TH15 Fall Break, no class

Week 11

T20 The Federal Theatre Project  
***Power***

**Study Guide questions due for *Power* (to be put in folder)**

TH22 ***One-third of a Nation*** video

Week 12

T27 Marcus Garvey  
**Response Paper #1 due**

TH29 The Black Federal Theatre  
Theodore Ward  
***Big White Fog***  
**Study Guide questions due for *Big White Fog* (to be put in folder)**

Week 13: Tickets are available for *In the Blood* on Monday, November 2 at 10:00a.m. at the Townsend Center.

November T3 The Harlem Renaissance  
**Paul Robeson** video (if time permits)

TH5 Langston Hughes: The Voice of the Harlem Renaissance (video)  
Continue discussion on Marcus Garvey, the Harlem Renaissance, The Black Federal Theatre

Week 14: *In the Blood* performs Wednesday, November 11—Saturday, November 14 at 7:30p.m. and Sunday, November 15 at 2:30p.m. in the Townsend Center Black Box Theatre.

T10 ***Don't You Want to Be Free?***  
Langston Hughes discussion  
**Study Guide questions due for *Don't You Want to Be Free* (to be put in folder)**

Week 15

TH12 Exam #3

T17 Expressionism Discussion  
Marita Bonner & ***The Purple Flower***  
**Study Guide questions due for *The Purple Flower* (to be put in folder)**

TH19 McCarthyism: American communism 20 years after the depression  
Lillian Hellman & ***The Children's Hour***

Week 16

T24 Thornton Wilder & ***Our Town***  
***Our Town*** Assignment (should be included in events folder)  
**Response Paper #2 due**

TH26 Happy Thanksgiving! No class

Week 17

December

T1 Last day of class  
***You Can't Take It With You***  
Comedy  
Student evaluations

Week 18

Final Exam Day

T8 2:00—4:00 Exam #4

Response papers should adhere to the following criteria:

**The essay will receive a grade of A** if it has mature, thoughtful, original, clearly expressed and well-developed ideas; it concentrates on a strong central idea, is well organized, and has a well-developed thesis. The major ideas are developed logically and supported by concrete, specific evidence. The essay has an effective style and uses a sophisticated, appropriate vocabulary; it has appropriate topic sentences, transitions, a consistent tone; it addresses a clear audience. The prose is apt and sometimes memorable. Finally, it contains few errors, none of which seriously undermines the effectiveness of the paper for educated readers.

**The essay will receive a B** if it has clearly stated ideas in the form of a thesis and topic sentences and is logically and concretely developed. It should contain an effective introduction and conclusion. The ideas are presented in a thorough, complex manner and in logical, organized order; sentence structure is clear and varied; finally, it has no serious sentence errors such as comma splices, fragments, fused sentences, or errors in agreement. It may, however, lack the sophistication, vocabulary, or maturity of thought of an A paper.

**The essay will receive a grade of C** if it demonstrates average, college-level proficiency. It adequately conveys a thesis, supports the central idea by some evidence, and is organized clearly and logically. The evidence is perhaps obvious and lacks originality. Paragraphs are clearly divided; although the transitions may be mechanical, they do foster coherence. The sentence structure may be correct but shows limited competence with sentence variety. The paper may have few serious but some mechanical errors that betray an inadequate sentence sense. Finally, it may contain grammatical errors that reveal unfamiliarity with the conventions of edited American English.

**The essay will receive a grade of D** if it fails to convey or sustain a central idea. The ideas may be poorly chosen or insufficiently limited. There may be no sense of a particular audience addressed, evidenced by inconsistent vocabulary and tone. Organization may be seriously flawed in the following areas: paragraphs may not be logically divided or appropriately developed; topic sentences may be unclear or missing; transitions are missing or incorrect; introductions are misleading, and conclusions may stray off the argument or are simply nonexistent. Frequently, it may have consistent and numerous mechanical or grammatical errors. The syntax and diction may be so flawed that sentences become incomprehensible. **Lack of proofreading can turn an otherwise adequate paper into a D paper.**

**The essay will receive an F** if it does not deal with an assigned topic, even if it is coherently and correctly written. It may have not stated or may not have sustained a central idea; it goes off in several directions. The paper may read choppy, lack sentence variety, is not developed adequately and so falls seriously short of minimum length requirements. It may be plagiarized. It is plagued by one or more of the organizational deficiencies of the D paper. It will most probably contain numerous and consistent errors in grammar or mechanics that hamper understanding by the reader.

**All response papers should answer the following questions in a clear, succinct way and within the style of the paper (this means that the paper should contain an introduction, a body and a conclusion and that within these parts should answers to these questions be included):**

- Why did you choose this art work?
- What does the work of art say to you? What does it mean to you?
- How does it reflect society?
- Does the piece of work speak to people of present time, that is, does this work speak to you now or is it dated? Why does it relate to you? Or Why does it not relate to you?
- Does the work of art incorporate metaphor(s)? If so, what is the meaning of the metaphor(s)?

**Essay Grading Criteria**

Your essay will be graded on a 100 point scale.

A=90-100

B=80-89

C=70-70

D=60-69

F=59 and below

Each of the following elements is worth 10 points.

**Introduction**

1. The opening paragraph provides specific information needed for the reader to understand the paper's topic. (Answer the questions Who, What, When and Where)

\_\_\_\_\_

2. A clearly stated thesis is presented in the introduction of the essay.  
(BE SPECIFIC)

\_\_\_\_\_

**Body**

3. The body of the paper develops the writer's ideas in a thoughtful, collegiate fashion.

\_\_\_\_\_

4. Specific concrete example/evidence is provided to support each point.

\_\_\_\_\_

5. The ideas progress smoothly and in a clearly organized, logical fashion.

\_\_\_\_\_

**Conclusion**

6. The conclusion answers the question, argument or problem posed in the thesis.

\_\_\_\_\_

7. The conclusion is adequate in length to bring the argument to completion.

\_\_\_\_\_

**Mechanics/Overall Impression**

8. The grammar, punctuation, and spelling are correct.

\_\_\_\_\_

9. The sentence structure is sophisticated and varied and to the point.

\_\_\_\_\_

10. The paper is insightful and interesting.

\_\_\_\_\_

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Remember to ask yourself the following questions:

What was attempted?

Was the attempt successful?

Was it worth doing?