

English 3490F 001 American Drama: Home Sweet Home Fall 2022

Prof. Alyssa MacLean

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Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays 1:30-3 or by appointment

Class Time: Mondays 12:30-2:30 pm, Wednesdays 12:30-1:30 pm

Class Location: SH 3345 (note recent room change)

Delivery type: in-person, synchronous

Antirequisite(s): English 2460F/G.

Prerequisite(s): At least 60% in 1.0 of English 1020-1999 or permission of the Department.

Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

Course Description:

This course will focus on the idea of home in the United States. The living room is perhaps the most ubiquitous of settings in American drama, but it is a complex space, a battleground upon which larger conflicts in American culture are staged. Derived from the eighteenth-century parlor (a room that was named after the French word *parler*), the living room's purpose in the twentieth century was to receive guests and support the moral growth of the family by encouraging discussion and self-improvement. The living room's emergence as the center of the middle-class household in the nineteenth century happened at the same time that theatre became a popular form of middle-class entertainment in the United States.

Over the course of the semester, we will read plays, novels, and secondary readings that will help us consider such questions as: how does the home define the concepts of work and leisure, male and female, old and new, poor and rich, foreign and domestic, public and private, reality and fantasy, comfort and danger? How are larger national or social ideologies (for example, the American dream or the concept of race) articulated through the home? What conflicts are staged in the home in different periods of American history? We will begin by analyzing meditations on nineteenth- and early twentieth-century American life by playwrights such as Eugene O'Neill (*Beyond the Horizon*) and Thornton Wilder (*Our Town*). We will study Louisa May Alcott's novel *Little Women*, attend a performance of *Little Women* at the Stratford Festival, and



produce an assignment analyzing its adaptation of the novel. The other works on our reading list will allow us to analyze different genres and periods of American theatre, including metatheatre (*Our Town*), realism (*A Raisin in the Sun*), expressionism (*Death of a Salesman, A Streetcar Named Desire*), and postmodernism (*Clybourne Park, The Piano Lesson*). By the end of the course, students will have a strong introduction to some of the most influential playwrights in U.S. theatre and will be able to explain the importance of the home as a symbol of contested American values.

Course format: this is an in-person synchronous course.

Use of recordings: Participants in this course are not permitted to record the sessions, except where recording is an approved accommodation, or the participant has the prior permission of the instructor.

By the end of the course, successful students will be able to:

- Identify dramatic traditions and texts in the US, noting their key literary characteristics, their historical period, their intellectual tradition, and their relation to each other
- Analyze dramatic texts, in both oral and written contexts, using appropriate textual evidence, literary and dramatic terms, scholarly criticism, theoretical concepts, historical contexts, and insights from class discussions
- Analyze how different elements of performance work in different productions; work in teams to produce short performances for the class
- Conduct specialized research using library databases
- Display academic integrity in all research processes—i.e. demonstrate an awareness of how new knowledge is created in the discipline, cite sources ethically and transparently, acknowledge the ideas that are theirs and not theirs, and make that difference clear to their readers. Students will contribute to the larger research community as they create connections among researchers and themselves, and protect the ideas of others and of ourselves.
- Read, summarize and cite primary and secondary sources responsibly; use scholarly
 analyses of plays to situate ideas within the context of an existing critical discussion and
 generate new insights into texts and performances
- Develop an original, incisive, and unified argument using multiple scholarly sources in a longer research paper

Course Materials:

Eugene O'Neill, Beyond the Horizon. ISBN 9780822201120



Thornton Wilder, Our Town: A Play in Three Acts (1938). ISBN 978-0063003996

Louisa May Alcott, Little Women (ISBN TBA)

Arthur Miller, Death of a Salesman (1949). ISBN 978-0140481341

Tennessee Williams, A Streetcar Named Desire (1947). ISBN 978-0811216029

Lorraine Hansberry, A Raisin in the Sun (1959). ISBN 978-0679755333

Edward Albee, Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? (1962). ISBN 978-0451158710

Bruce Norris, Clybourne Park (2010). ISBN 978-0865478688

August Wilson, The Piano Lesson. ISBN 978-0452265349

n.b. this play is currently out of print, but it is available in a digital Kindle format and it's on order at the bookstore. More details TBA but you're welcome to purchase a second-hand copy of the Plume edition (use the ISBN above).

On reserve at the Film Library in the basement of AHB:

Our Town (Dir. Sam Wood, 1940)

Our Town (Dir. James Naughton, 2003)

Death of a Salesman (Dir. Volker Schlondorff, 1985)

Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? (Dir. Mike Nichols, 1966)

A Streetcar Named Desire (Dir. Elia Kazan, 1951)

Little Women (Dir. Gillian Armstrong, 1994)

Available on *Criterion* database:

Our Town (Dir. Sam Wood, 1940)

Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? (Dir. Mike Nichols, 1966)

A Streetcar Named Desire (Dir. Elia Kazan, 1951)

Methods of Evaluation:

The final mark for the course will be arrived at as follows:

Class participation and engagement	10%
Company presentation	10%
Company adaptation assignment	15%
Short essay (5 pages)	20%
Research paper proposal	pass/fail
Research paper (8-10 pages)	25%
Final exam (cumulative)	20%

Students are fully responsible for looking at and being familiar with the information posted on the department website at http://www.uwo.ca/english/undergraduate/Student%20Information.html.

GENERAL INFORMATION



Land acknowledgement: Western University is situated on the traditional territories of the Anishinaabeg, Haudenosaunee, Lunaapeewak and

Attawandaron peoples, who have longstanding relationships to the land and region of southwestern Ontario and the City of London. The local First Nation communities of this area include Chippewas of the Thames First Nation, Oneida Nation of the Thames, and Munsee Delaware Nation. In the region, there are eleven First Nation communities and a growing Indigenous urban population.

Western values the significant historical and contemporary contributions of local and regional First Nations and all of the Original peoples of Turtle Island (North America).

COVID-19 vaccine information:

As part of a strengthened COVID-19 vaccination policy, all members of our community – including students, employees, and visitors – who plan to be on campus this fall will be required to demonstrate proof of vaccination (2 vaccines plus a booster), except under rare exemptions. All members of the community must upload proof of vaccination by September 8. Those who have not provided proof that they are fully vaccinated have until October 13 to submit proof of vaccination.

COVID-19 mask protocol in class: When required by Western policy and public health directives, students will be expected to wear masks

that meet or exceed Western's recommendations at all times in the educational spaces on campus. Students who are unable to wear a mask for medical or religious reasons must seek formal accommodation through Accessible Education at aew@uwo.ca.

Students are expected not to eat or drink while in class to ensure masks stay in place. Students will be able to eat and drink outside of the classroom during scheduled breaks.

Students unwilling to wear a mask as stipulated by Western policy and public health directives will be referred to the Department, and such actions will be considered a violation of the Student Code of Conduct.

Contact information: I will normally respond to emails within 48 hours. I'm happy to discuss your ideas anytime during office hours. I hold my office hours in my office, with the ability to hold them on Zoom from there. Please sign up for an appointment slot via the link provided on OWL and indicate whether you want to come inperson or via Zoom. If you just want to drop by, please do, but understand that I'll have to attend to scheduled students first. If you can't attend my regularly-scheduled office hours,

contact me and we can set up an appointment.

Intellectual Property/Copyright:

All instructor-written materials (e.g. PowerPoints, lecture notes, oral lectures) for this course are created solely for students'

personal use within the course, and remain the instructor's intellectual property. Further reproduction, fixation, distribution, transmission, dissemination, communication, or any other uses,



without securing the consent of the copyright owner (the course instructor) may be an infringement of copyright. You may not distribute, email, or otherwise communicate these materials to any other person. These limitations extend to recording, photographing, or sharing lectures (online or inperson) and lecture material without permission. Posting the instructor's content from this course to online course sharing sites like OneClass or Course Hero without permission is both an infringement of intellectual property law and a violation of academic integrity guidelines. The instructor will pass these cases on to the Western University Ombudsperson or their Department Chair as appropriate.

A note on our class content:

Our course readings and discussions will often focus on serious, difficult, and potentially challenging topics that may ask you to step out of your normal comfort zone. Almost every work on our syllabus depicts mature, provocative, or even deliberately offensive content of some kind, such as trauma and gender-based violence, racist ideology, racial epithets, suicide, substance abuse, and forms of self-harm.

Readings and discussions might trigger strong feelings—anger, discomfort, anxiety, confusion, excitement, humor, and even boredom. Some of us will have emotional responses to the readings; some of us will have emotional responses to our peers' understanding of the readings. Nonetheless, we are all responsible for creating a space that is both intellectually rigorous and respectful, and I ask all students to come to class and participate in discussions in a spirit of intellectual curiosity, honesty, and empathy. Above all, be respectful (even when you strongly disagree) and be mindful of the ways that our identities position us in the classroom.

Please consider approaching me ahead of time if you'd like spoilers for certain kinds of content or other information that would help you feel more able to appreciate the readings or class discussion. If you think a particular reading or topic might be especially challenging or unsettling, I encourage you to reach out to campus counselling services; if need be, your counsellor can contact me to discuss the situation.

Timetable (tentative):

You are expected to have completed the assigned reading prior to the first class in which a work is being discussed. Please bring assigned readings to class. Readings may be modified with consent of the class during the semester, but they will not vary significantly in page length if they are changed.

Mon Sept 12:	Introductions	
	O'Neill, Beyond the Horizon	
Wed Sept 14:	Beyond the Horizon	
N.B. Sept 16: Last day to drop a fall course and have it removed from your transcript		
Mon Sept 19:	Wilder, Our Town	
	Download this essay on the MLA database:	



	Klaver, Elizabeth. "The Cemetery as Public Space: Spoon River Anthology and Act 3
	of Our Town." Genre 48.1 (2015): 99-118.
	 Good example of an argument about setting. What is Klaver's argument about the graveyard's importance in <i>Our Town</i>?
Wed Sept 21:	Wilder, Our Town
Mon Sept 26:	Company 1 presents on Beyond the Horizon or Our Town Alcott, Little Women
Wed Sept 28:	Little Women
Mon Oct 3:	Little Women; come prepared today to brainstorm with your group about your
	project
Little Women wi	ill be showing at Stratford in September and October. We will be attending the
	a class on Tues Oct 4 at 8 pm
Wed Oct 5:	Little Women wrap-up, discussion of live production
Mon Oct 10:	Thanksgiving holiday (no class)
Wed Oct. 12:	A Streetcar Named Desire
Mon Oct 17:	A Streetcar Named Desire
	Little Women pitch due; present pitches in class
Wed Oct 19:	Company 2 presents on Streetcar
	Death of a Salesman
Mon Oct 24:	Death of a Salesman
	SHORT ESSAY DUE
Wed Oct 26:	Death of a Salesman
	Company 3 presents on Death of a Salesman
Oct 31-Nov 6	No class: reading week
Mon Nov 7:	Make-up date for Company Assignments 1-3 (if needed) Death of a Salesman
Wed Nov 9:	Death of a Salesman
Nov 12: last day	y to withdraw from a Fall term half-course without penalty
Mon Nov 14:	Hansbery, A Raisin in the Sun
Wed Nov 16:	Albee, Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? (please finish the play. Spoiler alert. Also, warning: it's long) Discussion about the research paper
Mon Nov 21:	Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?
	Secondary reading TBA
	Group 4 presents on Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?
	Research paper proposal due
Wed Nov 23:	Bruce Norris, Clybourne Park
Mon Nov 28:	Bruce Norris, Clybourne Park
	Make-up date for Company assignments 4 (if needed)
Wed Nov 30:	Wilson, The Piano Lesson
Mon Dec 5:	The Piano Lesson
	RESEARCH PAPER DUE



Wed Dec 7:	Review
Dec 10-22	Exam period; exam date TBA

OVERVIEW OF COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND ASSIGNMENTS:

Attendance and illness policy:

Attendance is mandatory in all classes and tutorials. In cases of excessive absenteeism (e.g. more than 9 unexcused hours for a

half course, 18 for a full course), which are not accounted for by either academic consideration or accommodation, students may be debarred from taking the final examination, and will receive an official warning to this effect by or before the course drop date (see Senate policy). In classes with or without final exams, students who do not attend class will receive 0% for course participation grades. Unless other policies dictate a different set of penalties in specific English and Writing Studies programs, this will apply to all department programs.

If there is a reason why you're not attending our class, please speak to me about it. The process for requesting academic accommodation on medical or other grounds is described in the "Accommodations" section near the end of this syllabus.

Please do not come to in-person class if you're feeling ill or if you can't pass the COVID-19 screening survey. I will be giving students 4 classes' worth of grace days for participation, to accommodate common colds and other illness. I will consider providing live-streamed classes in cases where students anticipate being unable to come to class for more than two consecutive classes. Please consult the COVID flowchart under "Lessons" on OWL for more instructions. [N.B. if you're staying home because you've failed a COVID-19 self-assessment, you always have the option of going to Academic Counselling for formal academic considerations.] If you were supposed to present on a day when you can't come to class, your group presentation will be rescheduled to the make-up date later in the semester. Note that this flexibility of grace days of class participation does not extend to other assessments in the course, which would require academic consideration or an extension request made in advance.

Students who demonstrate a pattern of routinely missing coursework due to self-reported COVID symptoms, and therefore do not demonstrate mastery of the learning outcomes of the course, will not receive credit for the course.

Participation and engagement:

This class depends upon regular and active engagement and participation from all students: this involves reading

the course texts carefully before class, preparing questions for class discussion, listening actively, responding thoughtfully to other students, and coming to office hours. You must bring your assigned text to class so that you can participate fully in our discussions. Readings should be completed in their entirety before our first class on them, even if we're covering them over multiple days.



Your participation mark is designed to measure your attendance, participation, and evidence of consistent preparation and active learning. Short in-class writing assignments or quizzes may be given during the semester to ensure that all students are contributing to the conversation. Failure to come to class prepared enough to ask a question, complete an in-class assignment, or participate in a discussion will negatively affect your participation grade.

Company Assignments: The Company assignments are modelled after ones designed by Kim Solga in Theatre Studies. In some classes, we will forgo the formalities of a traditional university lecture and get down to the business of performance. I will be dividing the class into groups with roughly six students each. In select weeks you, the students, will run roughly 45 minutes of the class.

Our performance will begin with a scene study presentation by the group designated, for that week, as THE COMPANY. Each Company will be required to do two presentations over the course of the term.

Presentation 1: Company Production

- It will be the Company's job to stage a scene based on one from that week's play, and to take up such roles as actors, director, A/V and costume designers. The scenes you perform will be "poor" theatre in the best sense of the word: nor a formal, heavily rehearsed performance, although you are free to bring props and costumes as you choose. Your primary task will be to work together to select a specific approach to the scene/play, and then be prepared to explain and explore your choices in class. This "thought work" is the most important component of your presentation!
- Those who aren't acting or directing in any given week must select a role that will
 enable them to contribute behind the scenes, by helping to imagine potential visions for
 the scene, by imagining a design (be prepared to explain and discuss it!) or by applying
 dramaturgical (that is, critical, close-reading) skills to the text and then offering options
 to the actors and/or director.
- Please try different roles over the course of the term: if you are shy, challenge yourself to
 try acting once; if you're a raging extrovert, challenge yourself to pull back a bit and let
 the quieter members of your group shine.
- After each performance, and a short break, the Company will be asked to get back on stage and participate in a question-and-answer period. Each member of the Company should try to contribute something to the Q&A, especially those whose work has been primarily behind the scenes. This is the time for you to explore in depth, with your colleagues, the terrific thought work that has gone into your presentation!
- The final part of the class will involve a post-performance "talk-back" or discussion, in which your classmates will be able to prepare challenging questions about the Company's performance choices.
- After the Company performance, you will be asked to write a brief reflection on the assignment and explain how each member contributed to the success of the group. In cases where it is clear that the contributions of the group members were wildly uneven or unfair, I reserve the right to assign grades individually (including assigning grades of



0 to students who did not do the work).

Presentation 2: Company Adaptation assignment on Little Women:

- As a Company, you will be asked to design a new staging of *Little Women* (we will be attending a production of the adaptation at Stratford). The adaptation assignment is composed of three components:
 - 1. The pitch report: you will need to prepare a "pitch" (2-3 pages) explaining the approach that your Company would take if you were to stage a new production of *Little Women*. Identify the key themes you'd want to emphasize and the stylistic approach that you would like to take towards the novel. For example, what scenes or moments in the text would you want to include, and which ones would you omit? What strategies would you use to communicate character, conflict, place, etc. in your production? How could you help contemporary audiences understand and value this text in a new way? In your report, find a way to reference the Stratford production briefly for example by explaining what you're doing in relation to its approach, or analyzing something that it didn't do, etc.
 - 2. The sample adaptation: your assignment must also include a script for one SHORT scene or chapter in the novel so that we can see how you'd transform the novel into a play with stage directions and dialogue. Give us a brief example of how your production would work! You may include pictures, sketches, scores, storyboards, or any other appendices that you like. Recommended length: 3-4 pages of script or other materials per person working on the sample adaptation part of the project (or consult with me about length if you have questions).
 - 3. The live pitch: at least one member of the Company must present your ideas to the class in a brief 5-minute presentation, with time for 5 minutes of Q&A afterwards. You can include slides but keep the presentation brief! (Generally speaking, 5 minutes of presentation = 2 written slides or 3-4 design images, max.)

You may divide your roles up for the adaptation assignment as you see fit. My suggestion would be to designate roles of director, sample adaptation playwright (who writes the 3-4 page adaptation), pitch writer/presenter (who writes the script for the pitch and delivers it) at a minimum, and assign extra roles depending on the nature of your ideas. For example, you could have someone making illustrations for set design or costumes, or someone who will function as a dramaturg and research the literary scholarship on *Little Women* in a way that informs the project, etc.

Essays: There are 2 essays due for this class: one short essay (4-5 pages) and a final research paper (8-10 pages) which will require a proposal (graded pass/fail) and a draft exchange. Papers in English should be written in MLA format. Submit all material in 12-point font on 8.5" x 11" paper, double-spaced and 1" margins. Number each page in the top right corner with your name followed by the page number, as in "Smith 9." Do not include a title page. The top left of your first page you should include a) your name and student number; b) course title; c) professor's name; d) essay submission date. After this, include the assignment's title, centred.



Papers in English should be written in MLA format; this method of documentation is described in the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, 9th ed, which is available as a digital download on the university's library website. It's also available for purchase at the bookstore. The OWL at Purdue website also has an abbreviated guide to MLA guidelines at http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/.

Further details of these papers will be announced later in the course. I encourage you to discuss your papers with me in office hours as you work on them. On the day the essay is due, please upload a copy of it under "Assignments" on OWL.

Late policy: The penalty for late papers will be 2% per day. Extensions may be granted in the case of a documented personal or medical emergency. Late penalties will be applied for each day of the week, including weekends and holidays.

Exam: This course will have a closed-book, 3-hour in-person final exam that will cover all of the material of the course. Further details will be provided later in the course.

MORE COURSE POLICIES

Contingency plan for an in-person class pivoting to 100% online learning:

In the event of a COVID-19 resurgence during the course that necessitates the course delivery moving away from face-to-face interaction, all remaining course content will be delivered online. The grading scheme will not change. Any remaining assessments will also be rescheduled, modified for digital submission, or conducted online as determined by the course instructor. In the event that online learning is required, a stable internet connection with working microphone and webcam will be required. As has been the case in the past, the decision to pivot to online learning will be made by Western, and not individual instructors or departments (excepting temporary online instruction in the event of instructor illness). If any changes in delivery format are necessary, I will communicate with you via Announcements on OWL to explain the new format for the class.

Accommodation Policies:

Students with disabilities work with Accessible Education (formerly SSD) which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive testing. The accommodation policy can be found here: Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities.

Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments worth (either alone or in combination) 10% or more of their final grade must apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Academic accommodation cannot be granted by the instructor or department.



Documentation shall be submitted, as soon as possible, to the Office of the Dean of the student's Faculty of registration, together with a request for relief specifying the nature of the accommodation being requested. The Student Medical Certificate (SMC) can be found at https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf.

The full policy is set out here:

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf.

Religious Accommodation:

Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays, and should give reasonable notice in

writing, prior to the holiday, to the Instructor and an Academic Counsellor if their course requirements will be affected by a religious observance. Additional information is given in the Western Multicultural Calendar.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AT WESTERN

Statement on Academic Integrity

We (i.e. students in this course, Professor MacLean, the Department of English and Writing Studies, Western

University, and the scholarly community at large) share an understanding of the ethical ways that we use to produce knowledge. A core practice of this shared value of academic integrity is that we acknowledge the contributions of others to our own work. However, it also means we produce our own contributions that add to the scholarly conversation: we don't buy or copy papers or exams, or have someone else edit them. We also don't falsify data or sources, or hand in the same work in more than one course.

One of the learning outcomes of this course is to cultivate a clear sense of what academic integrity is: what academic integrity means for this discipline, why it matters, and how to practice it in our research. Please come and see me any time you have questions about how or why we engage in the practices of attribution and citation. See "Tips for Avoiding Plagiarism" from UBC's Chapman Learning Commons, and bookmark the Purdue OWL website for how to use MLA citation style.

Academic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what

constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

Plagiarism:

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea or passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence.



Plagiarism Checking:

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com http://www.turnitin.com.

All instances of plagiarism will be reported to the Chair of Undergraduate Studies. Proven cases of plagiarism will result in a grade of zero for the assignment. Subsequent offences will result in failure for the course.

Support Services

Registrarial Services http://www.registrar.uwo.ca
Student Support Services

https://student.uwo.ca/psp/heprdweb/?cmd=login

Services provided by the USC http://westernusc.ca/services/ Academic Support & Engagement http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/

If you need help:

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to MentalHealth@Western: http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/ for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.