

THTR 490 - Directed Research with Paula Cizmar, Professor of Theatre Practice

For Noah MacDonald

RESEARCH SUBJECT, ASSIGNMENTS, TIMELINE, GRADING

This THTR 490 - Directed Research will investigate a part of America that is often ignored—the lives of people who live with daily poverty and how this intersects with various factors such as identity, sexuality, mental health, education, opportunity (or lack of), etc. The research will be focused on generational poverty and its effects on an individual's world and will explore how impoverishment and an area's culture are portrayed in media; in particular, we will look at how American playwrights bring forth the issue of poverty and the subsequent issues that arise from it in theatre. This is an area that isn't often explored. Though there have been many plays focusing on gender, race, sexuality, immigration, etc., the long-lasting effects of generational poverty on specific people are rarely the focal point of American plays. Therefore we will take a deeper look at how poverty complicates the lives of LGBTQ community members, particularly in the American South; we will explore how economic circumstances of pockets of poverty in the South often cause LGBTQ people to hide their identity, how religion often condemns the poor, and how an ongoing cycle of poverty leads to despair, fear, and frequently hate. Because this is not a frequent topic in American theatre, we will include a study of plays from Europe and the UK, as well as nonfiction works that reveal the challenges of growing up poor. Ultimately, the research will be used to create a piece that uses various media, including an original play, to tell the story.

READING LIST

1. Plays and Performance Pieces:

- a. Paula Cizmar. THE DEATH OF A MINER
- b. Tennessee Williams. TALK TO ME LIKE THE RAIN AND LET ME LISTEN
- c. Harold Pinter. THE DUMB WAITER
- d. Franz Xaver Kroetz. THROUGH THE LEAVES
- e. Dorota Masłowska. NO MATTER HOW HARD WE TRIED
- f. John Osborne. LOOK BACK IN ANGER
- g. Lucy Thurber. SCARCITY

2. Films:

- a. PRICK UP YOUR EARS

- b. WHERE THE CRAWDADS SING
 - c. THE FLORIDA PROJECT
 - d. AMERICAN HONEY
3. *Nonfiction:*
- a. Barbara Ehrenreich. NICKLE AND DIMED
 - b. J. Dana Trent. BETWEEN TWO TRAILERS
4. *Articles*
- a. Oscar Lewis. THE CULTURE OF POVERTY
 - b. Plus additional articles, journals, essays, books to be used as sources as they come up in the research.

ASSIGNMENTS

Critical Analysis Responses (5)

- Critical Analysis Responses are short assessments of five plays or films from the reading list. You may select which to include for a total of five.

Research Activities (2)

- Research Activities are interviews, questionnaires and/or surveys. Those surveyed will include persons from the American South who would be considered beneath the poverty line. Conduct at least two.

Literature Research Report

- Literary Research Report analyzes two or more plays or movies and their portrayal of poverty. This report compares and contrasts stories and finds issues that persist across

various lives. A minimum of three academic articles, journals, essays, and books should be used as evidence.

Reading and Presentation

- Reading and Presentation is a workshop of pages from the play being written toward the completion of the Final Project.

Final Project

- The first draft of a full-length play which may include both fiction and documentary sections, as well as other media.

The goal of the Independent Research course is to be exposed to the perception of poverty in theatre, film, and academic research. This is where you will build your foundation of knowledge through deep analysis of media and literature and conducting interviews about poverty, the culture of the American South, and the issues that persist. That research will be used as inspiration for the Final Project.

SCHEDULE

Week 1-2

- Read or watch one of the four plays or one film from the list. A Critical Analysis Response is due by the end of week two
- Begin brainstorming ideas for the Final Project

Week 3-4

- Read or watch one of the four plays or one film from the list. A Critical Analysis Response is due by the end of week four
- A Reading and Presentation toward the Final Project

- Prepare interview questions for the Research Activities

Week 5-7

- Read or watch one of the four plays or one film from the list. A Critical Analysis Response is due by the end of week six
- Conduct two Research Activities by the end of week seven
- A Reading and Presentation toward the Final Project

Week 8-10

- Read or watch one of the four plays or one film from the list. A Critical Analysis Response is due by the end of week eight
- Share findings from Research Activities
- Reading and Presentation toward the Final Project

Week 11-14

- Read or watch one of the four plays or one film from the list. A Critical Analysis Response is due by the end of week twelve
- Reading and Presentation toward the Final Project

Week 15

- Literary Research Report due at the beginning of week 15
- Reading and Presentation toward the Final Project

Final Project Due: TBD

GRADING

Grading criteria: The quality of work in this Independent Research course is determined by the thoroughness of the effort, the ongoing process, and the imagination/critical thought displayed.

Critical Analysis Responses (30% of overall grade)

The CARs will be graded using the following evaluation model:

Content – 45 percent

Quality of language (style, grammar, punctuation) – 20 percent (Be sure to proofread!)

Evidence – 35 percent (Remember to back up your statements/ideas with evidence!)

Research Activities (10% of overall grade)

The Research Activities will be graded using the following evaluation model:

Content - Quality of questions - 60 percent

Assessment of participants' responses – 40 percent

Literary Research Report (15% of overall grade)

The Literary Research Report is graded using the following evaluation model:

- Content – 30 percent
- Critical Thinking/Quality of Ideas and Research – 20 percent
- Documentation – 20 percent
- Quality of language – 20 percent (Be sure to proofread!)
- Overall effort – 10 percent

Reading and Presentation (15% of overall grade)

The Reading and Presentation is graded using the following evaluation model:

- Progression of writing - 50 percent
- Language (distinct character voice; rhythm, pace, metaphor) – 25 percent
- Story/structure/theatricality – 25 percent

Final Project (30% of overall grade)

The Final Project is graded using the following evaluation model:

- Character development - 25 percent
- Language (distinct character voice; rhythm, pace, metaphor) – 25 percent
- Story/structure/theatricality – 25 percent
- Overall achievement (includes how well script works as a whole, plus professional appearance of script) – 25 percent.

GRADING SCALE FOR SDA

A indicates work of excellent quality; **B** of good quality; **C** of average quality; **D** of below average quality; and **F** indicates inadequate work.

Excellent: A (4) = 100-94; A- (3.7) = 93-90

Good: B+ (3.3) = 89-86; B (3) = 85-84; B- (2.7) = 83-80

Average: C+ (2.3) = 79-76; C (2) = 75-74; C- (1.7) = 73-70

Poor: D+=69–66;D=65-64;D=63-60(1.3)=60s;F(0)=59andbelow

•“Excellent” indicates that the student couples clear understanding of the class material with original and creative insight; “Good” means that the student demonstrates a clear understanding of the material; “Average” indicates that the student demonstrates a general understanding of the material but with some gaps; “Poor” indicates that there are identifiable gaps in the student’s understanding of the class material; “Failure” is the result of the student not having completed his or her assignments coupled with poor understanding of the material.

•When the average falls between two grades, the final grade will be weighted toward the positive end of the scale for students whose attendance and participation in class have been good and will

be weighted toward the negative end of the scale for those with poor attendance and participation.

GRADING TIMELINE

Please bear in mind that you earn your grade based on the timely completion of your work, plus the quality of your work. Late assignments are marked down due to missed deadline.

Assignments are accepted only within one week of due date. After that, they are considered a missed assignment, which counts as zero.