

EN 4990/6990: The American Play from 1945-Present
Dr. Catherine Pierce
T/Th, 3:30-4:45

The immediacy of theatre has always made it a powerful vehicle for both enacting and reflecting social change. The latter half of the twentieth century saw a shift in the landscape of American drama, as playwrights reinvented the norms of both subject and form and broadened their intended audiences. Questions we will consider: what social or political circumstances begat these particular plays? What literary devices are available to writers of drama, rather than of fiction or poetry or non-fiction, and how might these devices allow a playwright to reflect or change society in a way that writing in another genre might not? How do these plays address the issue of what it meant to be an American approaching the new millennium? We will also consider thematic underpinnings that reappear throughout these plays, including the family, the American dream, and taboo.

Texts will include:

Tennessee Williams, *A Streetcar Named Desire*

Arthur Miller, *Death of a Salesman*

Edward Albee, *The American Dream* and *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*

Lorraine Hansberry, *A Raisin in the Sun*

Beth Henley, *Crimes of the Heart*

Sam Shepard, *Fool for Love*

David Henry Hwang, *M. Butterfly*

Wendy Wasserstein, *The Heidi Chronicles*

David Mamet, *Glengarry Glen Ross*

John Guare, *Six Degrees of Separation*

...and a few others to be determined...

Requirements: two papers, a mid-term and final, and regular, active participation in class discussions. There will also be several screenings of film versions of these plays.

