TEXTS. Please do not use downloaded texts. In the case of out of copyright plays, these often replicate variant texts; in all cases, their in-class consultation is alienating. Please avoid Samuel French or Dramatists Play Service editions. These are “acting editions”—an imprecise designation that usually signals substantial differences from the first published edition, on which subsequent editions will tend to be based. Exception: Albee’s The Goat seems now to be available only in a DPS edition, which I’ve duly ordered. Egri’s Art of Dramatic Writing is required only for creative writing students who plan to submit mixed creative and critical projects.

ATTENDANCE POLICY. I expect perfect attendance from graduate students. That having been said, I allow one unexplained absence without consequence. Students who miss two classes will not be eligible for the grade of “A.” If a student misses a third class, I will, per UNT attendance policy (posted), request the Registrar to drop them from the course with the grade of “WF.” For information on absences that “may be excused,” see the UNT policy statement.

GRADING (PER SE). Your final grade will generally be identical to the grade of your seminar paper or critical-creative project, although on occasion I will reward superior in-class performance by converting a high C+ or B+ paper-grade to a B or an A for the class.

PROPOSAL FOR SEMINAR PAPER / ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY (CRITICAL-ONLY OPTION). On or before Friday, March 29, 8:00 a.m., submit a 300–500-word proposal for your seminar paper. The proposal should identify the play or plays on which you will write, posit a working thesis.
that makes sense to you at this point in your research, and identify the probable main lines of
your argument. Of course your interests and strategies will shift as your work advances; indeed,
by reading and commenting on your proposal, I’ll hope to help them do so in a useful manner.
Append a working bibliography of 5–8 secondary sources, with each entry comprising a proper
MLA or Chicago citation and a 100–150 word summary of the essay or book-chapter under
consideration. The paper and bibliography are not graded but are prerequisites for the
submission of the seminar paper, thus for completion of the class.

SEMINAR PAPER (CRITICAL-ONLY OPTION). The paper must present an original argument based
on extensive primary reading and considerable secondary reading. The allowable length is
6,000–8,000 words, including notes and bibliography; these are parameters and stipulations,
not suggestions. The paper’s conformity to either MLA style (3rd ed.) or Chicago style (16th ed.)
will be factored into the grade, as of course will considerations of style and correctness. (See
also “Writing and Grading,” below.) The deadline of Monday, May 8, 8:00 a.m. is generous and
inflexible: I need to file grades by the following Monday.

PROPOSAL FOR SEMINAR PROJECT / ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY (CRITICAL-CREATIVE
OPTION). On or before Friday, March 29, 8:00 a.m., submit a 300–500-word proposal for your
critically introduced one-act play. The completed critical introduction should situate your play in
the tradition of modern American or global drama as you presently understand it. The idea of
the proposal is to give me a lucid, particularized preview of your influences, inclinations,
endorsements, debts, departures, and contributions, and of course to introduce the main lines
of the play itself. Append a working bibliography of 5–8 secondary sources, with each entry
comprising a proper MLA or Chicago citation and a 100–150 word summary of the essay or
book-chapter under consideration. Some entries should concern plays and playwrights that you
are finding particularly useful to your own practice; some should to concern the art and craft of
playwriting, above and beyond Egri. (Interviews with and memoirs by playwrights and other
theater workers stand to be helpful in this regard.) The paper and bibliography are not graded
but are prerequisites for the submission of the seminar paper, thus for completion of the class.

SEMINAR PROJECT (CRITICAL-CREATIVE OPTION). As noted above, “the completed critical
introduction should situate your play in the tradition of modern American or global drama as
you presently understand it.” This is baggy, which isn’t necessarily a problem but might
constitute an invitation for the creative writers to huddle with me in order to hammer out a
clearer conceptualization. That’s your call, but I’d be open to it. The allowable length for the
critical introduction is 4,000–5,000 words, including notes and bibliography; these are
parameters and stipulations, not suggestions. Conformity to either MLA style (3rd ed.) or
Chicago style (16th ed.) will factor in my evaluation of your introduction, as of course will
considerations of style and correctness. (See also “Writing and Grading,” below.) The one-act
play should be neither longer nor shorter than it needs to be: there’s an ideal range for each
play, on either side of which lurks a cranky reader. The deadline of Monday, May 8, 8:00 a.m. is
generous and inflexible: I need to file grades by the following Monday.

I expect grading the critical-creative projects to pose a healthy challenge. No doubt I’ll grade the
critical introduction as I would a critical essay; then, presumably, I’ll move the grade up or down,
or leave it as is, in response to my sense of your play’s merit. It is safe to assume that some
measure of informed, responsible subjectivism will enter into my evaluation of your plays, as it
does, inevitably, in my ongoing evaluations of the work of playwrights like those represented on
our reading list. My inclinations in this respect, however, are generous. In cases where grading the plays risks feeling arbitrary, I will rely heavily on my evaluation of the introductions. Comments on this, writers?

**GRADING (AND WRITING).** I do not grade only ideas and arguments. I grade writing, the medium through which your ideas and arguments will reach me. I dislike clutter, jargon, pseudo-jargon, obscurantism, obliquity, posturing, grandstanding, carping, hectoring, sanctimoniousness, smugness, ugly words, crap syntax, and faulty punctuation. Style is rhythm, and rhythm is felt (or not). Read with your ears and learn. That’s hard. But the nuts and bolts (and commas)—that’s easy. Buy a primer and do drills. See the final section of my “Notes on Writing Persuasive Papers” for a short bibliography of helpful sources on grammar, syntax, and punctuation, any or all of which you can read on the sly when you’re reasonably confident that no one is watching you. (That handout is principally for undergraduate students, but I’ve found that graduate teaching assistants often find it helpful in their own teaching.) I recognize that creative projects are more hospitable to and indeed often demand the indulgence of stylistic choices that would ill suit scholarly work. Obliquity, obscurantism, &c., are not among the indulgeables, however.

**BLACKBOARD.** Course information, including this syllabus, UNT policy statements, AP policy statements, handouts (to resort to metaphor), links to Turnitin (see below), and miscellaneous oddments, will be posted on Blackboard. Emergency cancellations and other dated notices will be posted on Blackboard / Announcements and transmitted thence by email.

**A FINE INTRODUCTORY BOOK ON BLACKBOARD.** Years after the fact, Gerald Weales’s *A Play and Its Parts* (1964) remains the best introductory study. It’s on Blackboard, and I recommend its perusal before or during the early days of the class. Here and in his more specialized work, Weales models incisive criticism and lucid prose, making it all look almost comically easy.

**A FINE PRECURSIVE & INTRODUCTORY BOOK NOT ON BLACKBOARD.** Brenda Murphy’s *American Dramatic Realism and American Drama, 1880–1940* (1987) covers what it promises to cover with predictable intelligence and scholarly acumen. The writing is occasionally clotted but usually crisp and often inviting. Murphy has written on a number of the playwrights we’ll study this term and is always worth reading.

**TURNITIN.** Papers must be submitted on Turnitin, via Blackboard. This requirement does not imply doubts about the integrity of our graduate students; rather, Turnitin is a neat and convenient program that allows me to return your work promptly and in a format that students seem to like. Please submit all work in Calibri, 12-pt. with a filename modeled thus: [lastname]_5650Proposal.docx. As the file-extension suggests, the paper must be submitted in Word; I will not convert (thus will not read or grade) files in other programs.

**PLAGIARISM.** To amplify my previous comment: in 25.5 years at UNT, I have never had cause to suspect a graduate student of plagiarism. But in the interest of clarity, I direct your attention to *Policy Manual*, 18.1.16 (posted) on plagiarism as “the knowing or negligent use by paraphrase or direct quotation of the published or unpublished work of another person without full and clear acknowledgement or citation” (p. 4). Students who plagiarize will be assigned a grade of “F” for the class, per an option authorized in *Policy Manual*, 18.1.16, pp. 4-5. And my heart will break.
OFFICE HOURS/SKYPE. I conduct scheduled office hours via Skype. Among the advantages of this system I note particularly the freedom it allows me to meet with students at irregular times and the relief from the horrors of I-35 it offers all of us save those who live in Denton proper. On or before the first day of the term, please download Skype (not Skype for Business), at https://www.skype.com/en/. (It’s free.) Then look up my address (alexpettit, cleverly) and add me to your list of contacts. In order to outmaneuver the several pretenders who use various iterations of this name, I have decorated my address with UNT’s logo, for which you should therefore look. For more information, see my handout on Skype. If you have a practical objection to Skype, I’ll schedule an in-person appointment with you, probably right before or after our class. But please do give it a chance; surprisingly, I’ve become something of a convert.


ELECTRONIC DEVICES. No. Real people, real place, real time, real intellectual communion. That’s precious, so let’s cherish it. The break at mid-point is also an e-free time. If you want to use your telephone, curling iron, convection oven, or any other appliance during the break, please do so outside the classroom. Most days, I’ll stay in or near the classroom during the break, hoping to enjoy some casual chat with smart and interesting folks like (indeed identical to) all y’all. (Check out an op-ed piece by Fr. Joshua Whitfield that I’ve posted on Blackboard. I now distribute this to undergrads, some of whom find it engaging.)

E-MAIL. My address (again cleverly) is Alex.Pettit@unt.edu; I check this account on weekdays, holidays and breaks excepted. Please use this address sparingly: do not send chatty memos, bulk memos, or memos informing me of the obvious (for example, stating that you won’t be in class on such-and-such a date). E-mails must identify the course-number and topic in the subject line (e.g., “ENGL 5530: Inge biography?”). E-mail is not an appropriate medium for intellectual discussion; visit me during office hours (see above) for discussions of the material.

RUDENESS / DISRUPTION. Please not use profanity in class (I’ll do my best, too); please do not wander in and out of class whimsically (I promise not to do so). UNT’s “Code of Student Conduct” (posted) defines “disruptive behavior” as “behavior that interferes with the learning and teaching environment and/or the administrative student services function of the university.” Wandering in and out of class whimsically counts.

SENATE BILL 11 (“CAMPUS CARRY”). Students must read UNT’s policy on concealed handguns on campus (posted). Here I note that 1) only licensed persons may legally carry handguns on campus, and 2) this right only authorizes the licensed carrying of “handgun[s], the presence of which is not openly noticeable to the ordinary observation of a reasonable person.” Per policy, if a gun is “partially or wholly visible, even if holstered,” it is not legal on campus, whether or not it is licensed. I report all illegal activities to the UNT police, regardless of their nature.

“ACTIVE SHOOTER SITUATIONS.” Please read UNT’s guidelines for responding to “active shooter situations” and examine their classrooms with these in mind. This exercise will engender the wry recognition that our guidelines and our classrooms are by and large incompatible. This, in turn, will or at least should inspire meditations on irony, bureaucracy, and perhaps mortality as well. See http://emergency.unt.edu/get-prepared/Active-Shooter. (UNT has yet to address the problematic category of the “passive shooter,” no doubt because defending oneself against oxymorons requires more or less equal measures of expertise in tactical policing and rhetoric.)
FROM THE OFFICE OF DISABILITY ACCOMMODATION. “The University of North Texas makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide you with an accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course. You may request accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. For additional information see the Office of Disability Accommodation website at http://www.unt.edu/oda. You may also contact them by phone at 940.565.4323.”

Please know that I am committed to working with the ODA in order to ensure the equitable treatment and “reasonable accommodation” of all UNT students. Per the ODA’s website, further examination of a request for accommodation may be necessary when “a faculty member determines that he/she cannot provide a reasonable accommodation that does not fundamentally or substantially modify course, program or degree standards.” I review requests on a case-by-case basis and will contact you and/or the ODA for clarification if need be.

SCHEDULE. The tenor and rhythm of the discussion will determine how much time we devote to each play. It’s possible that we will not discuss all the plays I’ve assigned. My goal has been to provide students with good basic coverage of the standard primary sources. Be sure to read all supplementary materials (introductions, prefaces, notes, appendices) when they are present. I’ll recommend secondary sources (often biographies and memoirs) ad hoc, and of course you’ll work with plenty of secondary sources in your final project.

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>1/17</td>
<td>From Barlow, ed.: selections by Boyce, Wellman, Glaspell, Rostetter, Millay, Barnes</td>
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<td>1/31</td>
<td>O’Neill: Long Day’s Journey into Night</td>
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<td>2/7</td>
<td>Odets: Waiting for Lefty, Rocket to the Moon</td>
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<td>2/14</td>
<td>Hellman: The Children’s Hour, The Little Foxes</td>
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<td>2/28</td>
<td>Miller: All My Sons, Death of a Salesman, A View from the Bridge (two-act version)</td>
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<td>3/7</td>
<td>Inge: Come Back, Little Sheba; Picnic; The Dark at the Top of the Stairs</td>
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<td>3/14</td>
<td>Spring Break</td>
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<td>3/21</td>
<td>Hansberry: Raisin in the Sun, The Sign in Sidney Brustein’s Window</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fri. 3/29</td>
<td>Proposals and annotated bibliographies due via Turnitin (8:00 a.m.)</td>
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<td>4/4</td>
<td>Kushner: Angels in America (Millennium Approaches and Perestroika)</td>
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<td>4/11</td>
<td>Wilson: Joe Turner’s Come and Gone, Two Trains Running</td>
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<td>4/18</td>
<td>Parks: Venus, The Red Letter Plays</td>
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<td>4/25</td>
<td>Ruhl: Passion Play, In the Next Room</td>
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<td>5/2</td>
<td>Hudes: Water by the Spoonful, The Happiest Song Plays Last</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tues. 5/9</td>
<td>Final project due, 8:00 a.m.</td>
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