

350:363 Black Drama

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Office Hours: Friday at noon in 033 Murray Hall

11:30-12:50

### **01-The History of African American Theater**

In the Spring of 1998 at Dartmouth College, a plethora of African-American theater's most distinguished scholars and practitioners participated in the National Black Theatre Summit "On Golden Pond." Chief among their objectives was to grapple with three questions that surrounded the African-American stage from its inaugural moments. Does African American theater have a defining aesthetic? And, if so, what are its tenets and how can we account for them? After several days of conversation and debate, The Committee on Aesthetics, Standards, and Practices drafted "The Aesthetics Declaration." The declaration not only provided a sixteen point list of aesthetic principles unique to Black theatre in the United States, but also served, and continues to serve, as a programmatic manifesto for "authentic" Black plays.

This course provides a broad survey of canonical African-American plays and playwrights that shine light on the manifesto's critical achievements and pitfalls, and offers a panorama of African American theatrical production spanning from (1850 to 2002). Issues addressed will include: the place of "plantation performances" in the development of minstrelsy and its mimetic inversions, the central role played by the pulpit (or African American Christianity) in determining the function of performance before and after Civil War, the manifestation of so-called "African retentions" in Black theater, the reworking of these retentions by playwrights associated with the Black Arts Movement, and the various manners in which African American theater has ritualized theatrical spaces to preserve and create African-American identity and its cultural values, affinities, and affiliations throughout the course of its existence.

#### **Reading Assignments by Week:**

- 1) January 19- Course Introduction  
January 22: Introduction- Black Aesthetics on Golden Pond
- 2) January 26<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup>- William Wells Brown's *The Escape, Or, a Leap for Freedom in Black Theatre USA Revised and Expanded Edition, Vol. 1 : Plays by African Americans from 1847 to Today* by Ted Shine, James V. Hatch (Editor)

**Or: Purchase e-text online at Amazon**

- 3) February 2<sup>nd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>- Paul Lawrence Dunbar's *In Dahomey*, contained in Black Theatre USA Revised and Expanded Edition, Vol. 1 : Plays by African Americans from 1847 to Today by Ted Shine, James V. Hatch (Editor)
- 4) February 9<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup>-Selections for Loftin Mithell's Black Drama
- 5) February 16<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>- Langston Hughes' *Mulatto* in Black Theatre USA Revised and Expanded Edition, Vol. 1 : Plays by African Americans from 1847 to Today by Ted Shine, James V. Hatch (Editor)
- 6) February 26<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> -Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun*
- 7) March 2<sup>nd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>-James Baldwin's *Blues for Mr. Charlie*
- 8) March 9<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup>-Amiri Baraka's *Dutchman*

#### SPRING BREAK

- 9) March 16<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>- Charles Gordone's *No Place to be Somebody*
- 10) March 23<sup>rd</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> Selections from Paul Carter Harisson's Classic Plays from the Negro Ensemble
- 11) March 30<sup>th</sup> and April 2<sup>nd</sup> April Ntozake Shange's *for colored girls who have considered suicide/ when the rainbown is 'enuf...*
- 12) April 6<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>- Charles Fuller's *A Soldier' Play*
- 13) April 13<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup>- August Wilson's *Joe Turner's Come and Gone*
- 14) April 19<sup>h</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup>- George C. Wolfes's *The Colored Museum*
- 15) April 27<sup>th</sup> and April 30<sup>th</sup> Suzan Lori Parks' *TopDog/ Underdog*

#### Grading Breakdown

Attendance-10%

Participation-20%

Paper #1-20% (5 pages) due Friday of Week 8 at 11:59 pm

Paper #2-20% (5 pages) due Friday of Week 15 at 11:59 pm

Take Home Final-20%- TBA

Take Home Midterm-10 % (short answer) due Friday of Week 7 at 11:59pm

#### Book List

<b>Author(s)</b>	Lorraine	<b>ISBN</b>	9780679755333
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<b>Title</b>	Hansberry	<b>Edition</b>	N/A
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<b>Author(s)</b>	HATCH	<b>ISBN</b>	9780684823089
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<b>Title</b>	BLACK THEATER USA:...1847- 1938,REV+EXP	<b>Edition</b>	REV 96
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<b>Author(s)</b>	BALDWIN	<b>ISBN</b>	9780679761785
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<b>Title</b>	BLUES FOR MISTER CHARLIE	<b>Edition</b>	95
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<b>Author(s)</b>	JONES	<b>ISBN</b>	9780688210847
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<b>Title</b>	DUTCHMAN+THE SLAVE	<b>Edition</b>	64
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<b>Author(s)</b>	SHANGE	<b>ISBN</b>	9780684843261
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<b>Title</b>	FOR COLORED GIRLS...CONSIDERED SUICIDE	<b>Edition</b>	77
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<b>Author(s)</b>	FULLER	<b>ISBN</b>	9780374521486
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<b>Title</b>	SOLDIER'S PLAY	<b>Edition</b>	81
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<b>Author(s)</b>	WOLFE	<b>ISBN</b>	9780802130488
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<b>Title</b>	COLORED MUSEUM	<b>Edition</b>	88
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<b>Author(s)</b>	WILSON	<b>ISBN</b>	9780452260092
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<b>Title</b>	JOE TURNER'S	<b>Edition</b>	88
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COME+GONE

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**Author(s)** PARKS **ISBN** 9781559362016

**Title** TOPDOG/UNDERDOG **Edition** 01

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**Author(s)** HARRISON **ISBN** 9780822955603

**Title** CLASSIC PLAYS FROM  
NEGRO ENSEMBLE... **Edition** 95