

AJ25056: Arthur Miller, Playwright (Spring 2017)

a series of seminars on Mondays, 2,10–3,40pm, room G22
on the following dates: 20 February, 6 and 20 March, 3 April, and 15 May;
and a (compulsory) special guest lecture, which will be held on
Wednesday, 3 May, 10,50am-12,20pm, room G316

Instructor: Dr. Tomáš Kačer

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Office hours: Thursday 11am-12pm and by appointment

Course description:

This course aims to give a brief overview of dramatic works and other writings by Arthur Miller, one of the most influential and distinguished American playwrights of the second half of the 20th century. Capitalizing on previous acquaintance with his classics, it will look at Miller's plays in various stages of his writing and personal development. The seminars will deal with at least two plays each, which will be discussed in the context of Miller's life and within the frame of current criticism. Besides drama, the course will also look at plays for the Radio, film scripts, autobiographical writing, social commentary and critical essays. Having always in mind Miller's biography, the course serves as introduction into the drama of Arthur Miller.

Prerequisite requirements (things to be done BEFORE the course begins):

Given the tight schedule, some existing knowledge of the following will be required before the actual beginning of the course:

1. Read three classics: *All My Sons*, *Death of a Salesman* and *The Crucible* and their (1) most important interpretations, (2) staging history and (3) film adaptations. Students interested in taking the course must make sure they are familiar with typical views of the main characters (Joe Keller, Willy Loman, and John Proctor) – what they stand for and how their interpretations may have changed over time.
2. Write two position papers as a prerequisite of acceptance to the course: A brief overview of your understanding of at least two of the three main characters (Keller, Loman, and Proctor); each position paper must have 200-250 words. The deadline for this task is on 19 February.
3. Possess a detailed knowledge of Bigsby's "Arthur Miller: The Moral Imperative," *Modern American Drama, 1945-2000*, pp. 69-123 (2nd ed., CUP 2004). This will be checked at the beginning of the first meeting by direct questions.

Course objectives:

It aims to give an understanding of the artistic development of Arthur Miller, thus presenting a focused knowledge of developments of the American drama in the second half of the 20th century. Students will learn to critically evaluate dramatic works by one of the most important modern American playwrights and analyze them in context.

Assessment:

Attendance is compulsory.

The final grade will consist of the following:

1. Class participation (up to 5 points per seminar; up to 25% of the final grade).
2. A group biographic research (a bio-based analysis of a text; up to 25%).
3. Research paper (up to 50%).

Syllabus:

The list below only includes the main topic of the class. Keep in mind that some weeks are reading-only (no class), and that compulsory secondary readings, recommended secondary readings and audio-visual materials are NOT listed in the syllabus.

Typically, the secondary readings consist of:

1. A chapter from Bigsby, C.W.E. (2005) *Arthur Miller: A critical study*.
2. A chapter from Bigsby, C.W.E. (ed.) (1997) *The Cambridge Companion to Arthur Miller*.

Prerequisites, deadline 19 February

Two position papers on Keller, Loman, and Proctor (200-250 words each, i.e. 1 page)

Seminar 1, 20 February

A View from the Bridge

A Memory of Two Mondays

Seminar 2, 6 March

Incident at Vichy

The Price

Seminar 3, 20 March

The Archbishop's Ceiling

The American Clock

Seminar 4, 3 April

The Last Yankee

Broken Glass

Biographic research, deadline 2 May

A group work, which positions Miller's work into the context of his life. Output: a 10 minute presentation (2-3 pages of text, up to 5 slides)

Guest Lecture, Week 5, 3 May

Followed by presentations

Seminar 5, 15 May

The Misfits (film)

Timebends (excerpts)

On Politics and the Art of Acting (essay)

Attendance policy: Your attendance to the seminars is compulsory and you are expected to actively participate in class discussions, which make up to 25% of your final grade. One absence for a serious reason will be accepted.

Essay: The final essay will be 8-10 pages long; the expected citation format is MLA (the latest edition). The topic of the essay should cover a play by Arthur Miller and analyse it in close reading, and with a good knowledge of the context. Submit your essays into a Homework vault (odevzdávárna) in the IS.

Essay deadlines:

21 May (early regular), 7 June (regular), 21 June (regular and 1st resit), 4 July (2nd resit)