

LITT 2145-001 Fall 2006

Domestic Dramas

MW 6pm-7:50pm, Room WQ-224

Instructor: Dr. Kristin Jacobson

Office phone: (609) 626-5581 **Office Location:** J-236

Email: Please use our WebCT email

Office Hours: Mondays 1-3pm; Wednesdays 2pm-3pm; and by appointment

Mailbox: Arts and Humanities, K-150

Course Description: This course surveys various kinds of “domestic dramas,” such as plays, soap operas, novels, and films. We will examine how the various popular and literary texts use the domestic sphere to reflect and shape individual and national identities. We will consider, for example, what defines a domestic drama—its generic characteristics. We will also examine the politics of domesticity. Are these stories merely entertaining, sentimental family dramas or can we learn something more from them? What criterion should we use to evaluate them? These questions and more will frame our discussions and research projects. Students will take away from this class a stronger critical awareness of their own and others’ domestic spheres as well as enhanced research and close reading skills. The course readings, assignments, and grading rubric are designed to help students achieve these academic goals as well as provide opportunities for students to engage as members of Stockton’s Arts and Humanities community.

In particular, this course has two essential goals to develop students’

- **Expressiveness:** *to develop skills in expressing oneself orally and in writing*
 - All the written and oral presentation assignments give students practice in these skills
- **Intellectual Development:** *to gain a broader understanding and appreciation of intellectual-cultural activity (the range of texts we classify as “domestic dramas”)*
 - Our class discussions will prepare you to showcase this skill in your formal written and oral presentation work.

Required Texts:

- ***House of Sand and Fog***. Andre Dubus III. (Vintage 1999) ISBN 0-375-72734-5
- ***Boston Marriage***. David Mamet. (Vintage 2002) ISBN 0-375-70665-8
- ***Seven Plays***. Sam Shepard. (Dial Press 2005) ISBN 0-553-34611-3
- ***A Home at the End of the World***. Michael Cunningham. (Picador) ISBN 0312202318
- ***Geographies of Home***. Loida Maritza Perez. (Penguin) ISBN 0140253718
- ***Sent for You Yesterday***. John Edgar Wideman. (Mariner Books) ISBN 0395877296
- **WebCT:** If you have questions about using WebCT, consult a lab assistant or your instructor.

Additional Resources:

- **Stockton Libraries:** <http://library.stockton.edu/>
 - **Periodical Databases:**
http://library.stockton.edu/Library_Databases/Dbases_table.html
 - **Language and Literature links:**
http://library.stockton.edu/Web_Resources/lang.html
- **MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, 6th Edition** (recommended text)

Accommodation for Students with Special Needs: Stockton College complies with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act. Students with disabilities who seek accommodations should contact the Learning Access Program located in the West Quad Building, Suite 110 or by call 652-4988. Additional information on the program may be obtained from Stockton web site <http://www2.stockton.edu/wellness/lap.html>.

Academic Honesty: Dishonesty of any kind will not be tolerated in this course. Dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarizing, fabricating information or citations, facilitating acts of academic dishonesty by others, having unauthorized possession of examinations, submitting work of another person or work previously used without informing the instructor, or tampering with the academic work of other students. Students who are found to be dishonest will receive academic sanctions and risk failing the course. Other sanctions may also apply. For more information, see <http://intraweb.stockton.edu/eyos/page.cfm?siteID=14&pageID=62>

Course Requirements: You will be expected to:

- (1) **Attend class meetings and be prepared.** That means DO THE READING; this is a discussion-based class and if you haven't done the reading, you won't be able to contribute and the class (as well as your grade) will suffer accordingly;
 - a. **Attendance**—Where else would you want to be? You are allotted four absences during the semester for fatigue, burnout, cocktail flu, personal reasons, sick family members, car problems, malfunctioning alarm clocks, etc. For each absence after your first four, your final grade **will be reduced five points per additional absence**, down to and including "F." (Note: I do not distinguish between excused or unexcused absences. If you miss four days and then get the flu and miss another day, you will lose 5 percentage points for the fifth absence.) Regular, spirited class attendance is a crucial component to passing this course.
- (2) **Participate in large and small group class discussions.** This course is what you make of it and will work *only* if everyone participates;
- (3) **Complete all assignments.** Passing the course requires timely completion of ALL of the assignments, long and short, in-class and out-of-class. No assignments will be accepted after the last day of class.

Grades

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|---|--------------------|
| • Stockton Play Review & Analysis | 100 |
| • Class Presentation (15-20 mins) | 100 |
| • Critical Reading Journal (100 points per collection period) | 400 |
| • Final Paper Draft Work & Class Participation | 100 |
| • Final Research Paper (8-10 pages) | 300 |
| | Total– 1000 |
| • Regular, spirited class participation may assist borderline final grades. | |

Grading Scale

100-95: A	89.9-87: B+	79.9-77: C+	69.9-67: D+
94.9-90: A-	86.9-83: B	76.9-73: C	66.9-63: D
	82.9-80: B-	72.9-70: C-	62.9-60: D-
			59.9 & below: F

Assignments:

- **Stockton Play Review & Analysis** (100 points; 3-4pages): This short paper will review and analyze one of the fall Stockton theatre performances. You will attend one of the following plays, either *Crumbs from the Table of Joy* by Lynn Nottage (October 4-8 in the Experimental Theatre), or *Arm and the Man* by George Bernard Shaw (November 15-19) in the PAC. The paper you write should discuss the performance's successes and weaknesses. You may discuss, for example, set design, the actors' performances, the interpretation of the play, costumes, etc. A paper of this length, however, should not try to evaluate the entire performance and play. Select one or two topics for focused analysis.
- **Class Presentation w/ Visual Aid** (15-20 minutes; 100 points): This presentation will inform the class about an assigned literary, historical, or cultural element significant to our understanding of the assigned reading. You may sign up in a group of 2 students or do

the presentation by yourself. Each presentation must use some type of visual aide (for example, a PowerPoint presentation and/or handout) and provide to the class and instructor with a bibliography of at least 3 credible sources on the topic. All group members should speak during the course of the 15-20-minute presentation.

- **Critical Reading Journal** (100 points per collection period; 400 points total): You will keep a reading journal for each day's assigned reading. Each entry should be about 1-2 double-spaced, 12-point font, typed pages (approximately 500 words) and specifically respond to some aspect or aspects of the day's assigned reading. While a thesis statement is not required for these entries, each should demonstrate a critical engagement or focus with the assigned day's reading. For example, typical
 - **F/D-level responses:** These readings frequently rely too heavily on plot summary or simply list reasons why the author liked/disliked/did not understand the reading. Such responses do not move much beyond summary, praise, or complaint. They frequently do not focus clearly on the assigned reading and may be a jumble of sentences that skip from topic to topic. The responses frequently contain grammatical and spelling errors that inhibit clarity, may be too short, and may be written as large paragraphs without a clear structure. Missing entries will also result in a D-level evaluation. Students missing several entries risk failure.
 - **C-level responses:** These readings clearly explain some aspect(s) of the reading. They clearly focus on each day's assigned reading. The author provides evidence for his/her reaction to the readings. The entries use clear topic sentences and employ lucid prose.
 - **B-level responses:** These responses not only clearly focus on the assigned reading, but they also craft a clear analysis of the reading that bridges individual and wider audience's concerns. The responses explain or explore significance beyond the author's own individual importance, frequently expanding and developing class discussion. Clear evidence is provided for each piece of the analysis and reflection. The author's prose is clear and engaging.
 - **A-level responses:** This author consistently goes the extra mile. For example, s/he might not only craft clearly written and persuasive responses to the reading assignments, but s/he also incorporates outside research. Such entries are rarely written "off the cuff." Rather, they demonstrate sustained thought and deep engagement in the course material. They take discussion in new or unexplored directions and do so with grace and eloquence.

I may provide suggested topics in class for your entries; however, you are not required to write on the suggested topics.

Your entries should be complete **before** you arrive to class. You will write **24 entries** for a total of at least 24 and no more than 48 typed pages.

I will collect the journals four times during the course of the semester for formal evaluation. **Please label each entry** and keep them in a folder or staple them together to pass in on the assigned collection dates. *Journals that are not typed or otherwise collected haphazardly will be penalized 10 percentage points.*

- **Final Paper Draft Work and Class Participation** (100 points): In addition to your daily class participation, this category evaluates your comprehensive approach to the research preparation, rough draft, peer review, and revision process. Additionally, *to receive a "C" or better participation grade you are required to attend at least one of the Visiting Writers readings. Dr. J will remind you of dates and times.*
- **Final Research Paper** (8-10 pages; 300 points): This research paper will focus on some aspect of our theme, "domestic dramas." It should incorporate analysis of at least one of the texts we've worked with this term. The paper must incorporate at least two peer-reviewed journal articles or books. Peer-reviewed articles and books are available in the library stacks, via the MLA bibliography, JSTOR, and ProjectMUSE. See Assignment Description for more information

Email Policy:

1. Please use WebCT email for all course-related correspondence.
 2. I usually check email each day in the morning. Please plan your email questions accordingly.
 3. Visit my office hours with specific questions about course material. If you miss a class, contact a classmate about missed material and then visit my office hours if you have more questions.
 4. I do not discuss grades over email. Grades should be discussed in person during office hours or other arranged meetings.
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Late Assignment Policy:

I understand that life is full of surprises and sometimes those surprises influence your coursework and your ability to complete assignments. As a community of learners, we also recognize that we have a responsibility to the group, to our instructor, and to ourselves. We understand that every action has a consequence—even when circumstance may limit our power to act. To balance individual and community needs, we have the following guidelines for late assignments.

Written Assignments: *Papers are due at the beginning of class.* Late papers will be docked 5 percentage points per day late. So, if a B (85%) paper due on Monday at 3:35pm is passed in on Tuesday at 8:30am, the recorded grade would be B- (80). If it is passed in on Wednesday, the paper would earn a 75. And so on and so forth.

Paper Extensions: Any student who asks the instructor **prior to** the due date may receive a 2-day extension from the due date listed on the syllabus. After 2 days the late paper penalty will go into effect. No exceptions. *Due to the College's grade submission deadline for graduating seniors, no graduating senior may receive an extension for the final research paper.*

Of course, the extension policy will only help students who have drafted a paper and follow the expected practice of backing up documents. Back up all your files and you will be a much happier and successful individual. You may not be happy when your computer explodes or your flash drive crashes, but at least you will not be despondent. I also strongly encourage all students to keep a personal copy of every assignment and to keep all returned assignments with my feedback until the end of the term.

No assignments will be accepted after the last class meeting.



Syllabus—LITT 2145—Fall 2006¹

Unit 1—Domestic Dramas

Week 1: Introductions, Themes and Questions

- **Sept 6:** Introduction to course, WebCT, assignments, students and instructor. Sign up for Group Presentation.

Week 2: Defining Family

- **Sept 11:** Mamet's *Boston Marriage*
 - Presentation: Historical Context, Boston Marriages (Model Presentation by Dr. J)
- **Sept 13:** Shepard's *True West*
 - Presentation 1: Study in Setting, The West

Week 3: Domestic Politics

- **Sept 18:** Shepard's *Buried Child*
 - Presentation 2: Cultural Context, Family Values
- **Sept 20:** Shepard's *Curse of the Starving Class*
 - Presentation 3: Play to Film, *Curse of the Starving Class*

Week 4: Kitchen Politics

- **Sept 25:** Handout: *Crumbs from the Table of Joy*
 - Presentation 4: Critical Responses to Lynn Nottage
- **Sept 27:** Handout: *Crumbs from the Table of Joy* **Critical Reading Journal Due** (6 entries, 9/11-9/27)
 - Special Class Session: Meet in Experimental Theatre

Week 5: Defining Romanic Love

- **Oct 2:** Shepard's *La Turista*
 - Presentation 5: Pedagogy, Strategies for Teaching/Writing About Drama
- **Oct 4:** Shepard's *Savage Love* **Final Research Paper Topic Due**
 - Presentation 6: Critical Responses to Sam Shepard

Unit 2—Domestic Fictions

Week 6: Domestic Geographies

- **Oct 9:** *Geographies of Home* (Prologue & Chapters 1-10)
 - Presentation 7: Cultural Context, Dominican Republic
- **Oct 11:** *Geographies of Home* (Chapter 11-21)
 - Presentation 8: Cultural Context, "Good Women"

Week 7: Domestic Geographies

- **Oct 16:** *Geographies of Home* (Chapter 22-31)
 - Presentation 9: Cultural Context, Domestic Violence
- **Oct 18:** *Geographies of Home* (Chapter 32-end) **Critical Reading Journal Due** (6 entries, 10/2-10/18)
 - Presentation 10: Critical Responses to Loida Maritza Perez

Week 8: Imaginary Homes

¹ Class Schedule subject to changes with notice. Readings and assignments are listed on the day they are due.

- **Oct 23:** *Sent for You Yesterday* (1-86)
 - Presentation 11: Cultural Context, African American Homeownership
 - **Oct 25:** *Sent for You Yesterday* (87-126)
 - Presentation 12: Setting, Pittsburg and Homewood
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Week 9: Remembering Home

- **Oct 30:** *Sent for You Yesterday* (127-155)
 - Presentation 13: Theme, Memory
 - **Nov 1:** *Sent for You Yesterday* (156-208)
 - Presentation 14: Critical Responses to John Edgar Wideman
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Week 10: Redefining Family

- **Nov 6:** *A Home at the End of the World* (1-79)
 - Presentation 15: Cultural Context, Gender Roles
 - **Nov 8:** *A Home at the End of the World* (80-180) **Critical Reading Journal Due** (6 entries, 10/23-11/8)
 - Presentation 16: Cultural Context, Model American Family
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Unit 3—Domestic Media

Week 11: Redefining Family

- **Nov 13:** *A Home at the End of the World* (181-255)
 - Presentation 17: Cultural Context, Model Domestic Masculinity
 - **Nov 15:** *A Home at the End of the World* (256-343)
 - Presentation 18: Critical Responses to Michael Cunningham
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Week 12: Fixing Family Life

- **Nov 20:** Contemporary Media and Domestic Dramas Discussion. **Stockton Play Review and Analysis Due** (Begin *House of Sand and Fog*, 1-94)
 - Presentation 19: *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition* Phenomenon
 - **Nov 22: No Classes. Thanksgiving Holiday**
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Week 13: “As the World Turns”

- **Nov 27:** Soap Opera Discussion Part 1. Homework: Watch a soap opera. Continue Reading *House of Sand and Fog* (94-183)
 - Presentation 20: Soap Operas
 - **Nov 29:** Soap Opera Discussion Part 2. Continue *House of Sand and Fog* (183-275)
 - Presentation 21: *Desperate Housewives* Phenomenon
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Week 14: Propriety—Property

- **Dec 4:** *House of Sand and Fog* (275-265) **Critical Reading Journal Due** (6 entries, 11/13-12/4)
 - Presentation 22: Critical Responses to Andre Dubus III
 - **Dec 6:** Final Paper Rough Draft Workshop
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Week 15: Domestic Life on the Big Screen

- **Dec 11:** *House of Sand and Fog* Screening
- **Dec 13:** *House of Sand and Fog* Discussion. **Final Research Paper Due**