

## Seminar in Theory and Research: THORNTON WILDER

### Texts

Thornton Wilder: *Collected Plays and Writings on Theater* (ed. J. D. McClatchy, Library of America, 2007)  
*The Cabala and The Woman of Andros; The Bridge of San Luis Rey; Heaven's My Destination* (HarperCollins)

### Assignments & Percentage of Course Grade

- 15% -- 1 paper (no research) a minimum length of 5-full pages
- 20% -- conference assignment
- 20% -- scholarship assignment (oral presentation (10 to 15 minutes) & an annotated bibliography of sources)
- 25% -- a research paper (minimum 10 full pages on a topic approved by instructor)
  - 5% -- a 3-5 minute "oral abstract" of your research paper during the final exam period
- 10% -- class participation
  - 5% -- 20 SOCS postings on Wilder work(s) and/or theory reading (in red print on schedule)
- 0% -- serve as group spokesperson at least once

In addition, a topic proposal for the research paper will be submitted in advance of the due date

### Attendance, Grading and Other Policies

Come to class having read and thought about the reading assignment, underlining important passages and making notes in the margins, and be prepared to talk about it. You will receive one of three grades for class participation if you attend at least 90% of the class meetings: "A" (spoke up at least a few times every class), "C" (never or rarely spoke up in class), or "B" (somewhere in between "A" and "C"). If you do not attend class, you obviously are not participating. If you have a death in the family or are too ill to come to class one night, contact me before the class or as soon after as possible to see about making it up, if that is possible. If you turn in an assignment late without prior consultation with me, it will be graded down in proportion to how late it is. (If you're having problems with a particular assignment or have three exams that week or whatever, talk to me beforehand and we'll see what we can work out for an extension. I'm a reasonable person; I know how relentless the demands on your time can get.) Each writing or speaking assignment will receive a letter grade (A, A-, B+, ...). The most important criterion in determining the grade on paper assignments is the quality of thought. What I look for is if you are intellectually engaged with the subject and if you support your interpretative argument with analysis of specific textual evidence. Other criteria for papers include overall essay form (introduction/thesis, body, conclusion), organization (logical progression of points, arrangement of the content of each paragraph), style (sentence structure, diction), mechanics (punctuation, grammar, spelling), and editing (proofreading for errors missed by the computer, and MLA format). I reserve A's for those assignments that demonstrate not only outstanding effort, but also outstanding quality of work. If we all do our part, this should be an interesting course in which all of us learn about the great American writer **Thornton Wilder**.

## Schedule

Theory readings are in one of the following books on reserve: Robert Corrigan *Comedy: Meaning and Form (CMF)*  
Barrett Clark *European Theories of the Drama (ETD)* Wilder essays from *Collected Plays and Writings on Theater (LOA)*  
Robert Corrigan *Tragedy: Vision and Form (TVF)*

**Boldfaced dates indicate when a SOCS posting is due.**

- 8/26 Intro to course  
**8/29** *The Skin of Our Teeth*; Eric Bentley "Farce" (Corrigan, CMF)
- 9/2 **MONDAY CLASSES**  
**9/5** *The Angel That Troubled the Waters and Other Plays*; LOA 651; Aristotle, from *Poetics* (in Clark, ETD)
- 9/9** *Our Town* **9/12** *Our Town*; LOA 657, 660, 661, 682; Nietzsche, from *The Birth of Tragedy* (Clark, ETD)
- 9/16** *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*  
**9/19** *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*; Foreword, Afterword; Kierkegaard, "Ancient..." from *Either/Or...* (in Corrigan, TVF)
- 9/23** *The Long Christmas Dinner*; Pullman *Car Hiawatha*; *The Happy Journey to Trenton and Camden*; LOA 655, 656  
**9/26** LOA 694; Christopher Fry "Comedy" (Corrigan CMF); "The Warship" (short story in *Wilder Society Newsletter*)
- 9/30** *The Woman of Andros*; Hegel, from *The Philosophy of Fine Art* (Corrigan, TVF)  
10/3 **No Class; Wilder Conference**
- 10/7** *Shadow of a Doubt* script; Murray Krieger "Tragedy and the Tragic Vision" (Corrigan, TVF)  
10/10 view *Shadow of a Doubt* film in class; **1st paper due**
- 10/14 **Mid-semester break, NO CLASS!!!**  
10/17 **NO CLASS!!!**
- 10/21** *Heaven's My Destination*  
**10/24** *Heaven's My ...*; Foreword, Afterword; George Meredith "An Essay on Comedy" (Clark, ETD)
- 10/28** *The Matchmaker*  
**10/31** *The Matchmaker*; LOA 691; Northrop Frye "The Mythos of Spring: Comedy" (Corrigan, CMF)
- 11/4** *The Alcestiad Acts I & II*; LOA 710; Richard B. Sewall "The Vision of Tragedy" (Corrigan, TVF)  
**11/7** *The Alcestiad Act III*; *The Drunken Sisters*; LOA 689; W. H. Auden "The Christian Tragic Hero..." (Corrigan, TVF)  
**Mike Krahel**
- 11/11** *Bernice*; *In Shakespeare & Bible*; A Miller, "Tragedy & Common Man" (Corrigan TVF); **Research Proposal due**  
**11/14** *Wreck on the 5:25*; *Ringing of Doorbells*; Henri Bergson "The Comic Element" (Clark, ETD)
- 11/18** *Infancy*; *Childhood*; Freud "Oedipus and Hamlet" (in Clark, EDT)  
**11/21** *Youth*; *Rivers Under the Earth*; Freud "Jokes and the Comic" (Corrigan CMF)
- 11/25 **conferences**  
11/28 **NO CLASS!!! Happy Thanksgiving!**
- 12/2 **conferences**  
12/5 course evaluations; **Research Paper due**
- 12/? final exam period; **Research Paper Oral Abstracts**