

## Course description

### Descriptif du cours

**Department : Department of English**

**Instructor (s): Dorra Touzri**

**Academic year: 2020-21**

**Level: 2<sup>nd</sup> Year Prepa**

**Course title: Post-World War II American Drama: Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* (Semester 2)**

**Course outline:** This course aims at offering third-year students with an insight into post-World War II American drama through the study of Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*, one of the most famous American plays of its period. Thus, a clear account of the historical, philosophical and cultural context in which the dramatic genre thrived will guide students to a richer understanding and appreciation of the dramatic text. The course will be centered around the close reading of a play which is deeply anchored in the harsh realities of the Great Depression, and in which Miller brilliantly combines social awareness with a searching concern for the individuals' psyche.

Extracts from the play are chosen on the basis of their dramatic importance, philosophical pertinence, and relevance to the spirit of the period. Students are requested not only to read and analyze them, but also to comment on them and enrich class discussion. The close reading of the selected extracts should help the students assimilate the dramatic genre and its purposes, and appreciate Miller's significant contribution to modern theatre.

### **Course Outline**

Weeks 1&2: Introduction: Historical Context and Intellectual Background.

Week 3: Extract One: Opening scene. Act One, pp.7-10.

Week 4: Extract Two: Act One, pp.14-19.

Week 5: Extract Three : Act One, pp.28-32.

Weeks 6&7: Extract Four : Act Two, pp.61-65.

Week 8&9: Extract Five : Act Two, pp.82-87.  
Week 10: Extract Six : Act Two, pp.99-101.  
Week 10: Extract Seven: Final scene, pp.104-105 .  
Week 11: Extract Eight: Requiem.  
Week 12: Evaluation  
Weeks 13&14: Correction and Round up session.

**Course objectives:** The course's main objective is to show students how a text's meaning is informed by the cultural and historical contexts in which it is produced and received; and help them articulate how literature both reflects and shapes culture, society and history.

The course offers a deep insight into Post-World War II America through Miller's conception of what the theatre should do. He is both a psychological and a social dramatist. As a psychological dramatist he studies character, the motives and reasons behind the behavior of individuals, and presents them as convincingly alive. As a social dramatist, he comments on the nature of society and exposes its ills (Man in society, capitalism, McCarthyism, the family unit, the American dream, etc.).

**Method of evaluation: Presentations / Term papers / Final exams**

As part of the study of the play, students are asked to write essays, either under examination conditions or for coursework (term papers). Students are expected to set out their thought on a particular aspect of the play, using evidence from the text. They should be able to develop an argument, in an organized, coherent and persuasive way.

**References:**

- Field, Jr, B.S. "Hamartia in *Death of a Salesman*." *Twentieth Century Literature*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (1972), pp.19-24.
- Jacobson, Irving. "Family Dreams in *Death of a Salesman*." *American Literature*, Vol. 47, No. 2 (1975), pp.247-258.
- Lawrence, Stephen A. "The First Dream in Miller's *Death of a Salesman*." *College English*, Vol. 25, No. 7 (1964), pp.547-549.

Martin, Robert A. "The Nature of Tragedy in Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*." *South Atlantic Review*, Vol. 61, No. 4 (1996), pp.97-106.

Tracy, Jessica L., and Robins, Richard W. "Death of a Narcissistic Salesman: An Integrative Model of Fragile Self-esteem." *Psychological Inquiry*, Vol.14, No.1 (2003), pp.57-62.