

## **AN AMERICAN INJUSTICE: HOUSE UN-AMERICAN ACTIVITIES COMMITTEE VS. PLAYWRIGHTS AND FILMMAKERS**

**Coordinator:** Barbara Salant

We study the evolution of the House UnAmerican Activities Committee and how it impacted the lives and works of Clifford Odets, Arthur Miller, and Elia Kazan. In the historical time frame, we also include the study of the Hollywood Ten, the Blacklist, and Red Channels, all of which are manifestations of the injustices of the period. We aim to probe this particular time period in American history and to understand how HUAC negatively affected the lives of so many creative people.

### **Readings:**

*Thirty Years of Treason: Excerpts from Hearings Before the House Committee on Un-American Activities 1938-1968* by Eric Bentley, Thunders Mouth Press/Nation Books 2002, ISBN 1-56025-368-1}.

*Elia Kazan: A Life* by Elia Kazan, {Da Capo Press, 1997, ISBN 13: 978-0-306808043}.

*The Portable Arthur Miller, Revised edition* {Penguin, 1995, ISBN 978-0-14-243-755-1}.

*Waiting for Lefty and Other Plays* by Clifford Odets {Grove Press, 1994, ISBN 10 080213220-0}.

*Real Life Drama* by Wendy Smith, {Grove Press, 1994, ISBN – 10:080213300-2}.

**Barbara Salant** has coordinated courses dealing with American theatre, Spanish literature and culture, Greek art and architecture, Renaissance art, and New York City literature.

\* \* \* \* \* **Syllabus – A Work in Progress** \* \* \* \* \*

### **Week One:**

Historical background- the Great Depression, political unrest, Federal Theater Project, precursors of and the birth of HUAC

Read: Bentley pp.xxiii-xxiv; 3-47

**Week Two:**

Overview of the Group Theater (Part One)

Read: Smith pp.3-33; 297-315

**Week Three:**

The Group Theater (Part Two) Activism, Communism, HUAC

Read: Smith pp. 124-138; 157-159; 252-253; 265-275; 352-353; 395-429

**Week Four:**

Clifford Odets (Part One)

Read: Bentley 498-531

Odets "Waiting for Lefty"

**Week Five:**

Clifford Odets (Part Two)

Read: Smith pp. 202-210

Odets "Awake and Sing"

OPTIONAL: Read Odets "Golden Boy" Act II Sc 2; Act III Sc 2, 3  
or entire play if you have time.

Smith 316-323

**Week Six:**

The Hollywood Ten

Read: Bentley pp. 153-165; 165-168; 376-406

**Week Seven:**

Dalton Trumbo- A PBS documentary to be viewed in class.

Assignment: Watch the film "Trumbo" available from Net Flix before the week seven class.

**Week Eight:**

The Blacklist and Red Channels

Read: Assigned articles on the Internet

**Week Nine:**

Arthur Miller (Part One)

Read: Bentley pp.790-795; 801-806;

Portable Arthur Miller- "The Crucible"

Hand-outs: "Why I Wrote the Crucible" from The New Yorker; "After the Fall"

**Week Ten:**

Arthur Miller (Part Two)

Read: Portable Arthur Miller- "Death Of A Salesman"

Hand-out: "Arthur Miller, 'Are You Now Or Were You Ever?'"

**Week Eleven:**

Elia Kazan (Part One)

Read: Bentley pp. 482-495

Kazan pp. 127-136; 231; 432-476

**Week Twelve:**

Elia Kazan (Part Two)

Film: "On the Waterfront" THIS SHOULD BE VIEWED BEFORE THE CLASS FOR DISCUSSION PURPOSES. Available on Net Flix

Read: Kazan pp. 484; 499; 514-531; 782-825

Hand-out: "Long Bitter Debate from the 50's: Views of Kazan and Critics" from NYTimes