RATIONALE: This is a course about the nature of violence as a focus of drama from the post-World War II era to the present. What is meant by “violence” can seen in fairly broad terms. It is not limited to physical or overt violence, although that may be part of it. It is about violence to the spirit or the mind as much as to the body. It may reflect traumas of a personal or a social kind. It can be read as personal in nature as well as allegorized and read as symptoms of issues that are cultural or social. We begin with plays identified with what was called “the theater of the absurd”: plays by Beckett, Pinter, and Albee. In these plays there is an implicit sense of threat or violence already done to the individual psyche that seems out of tune with what we normally associate with realistic portrayals of characters and their behavior. And yet there is a recognizable realism to the actions and reactions of the characters, however absurd their situational frameworks. Violence in its different forms can sometimes have some reasonable motivation to it that we are left to judge, but it also easily exceeds reason and explanation, and hence appears to us as not just absurd, but as frightening, leaving us wondering how to respond. We can also be seduced by it as well, forming our own explanations or rationalizations of it, whether in moral or stylistic terms. Not least the reason for this seduction may have something to do with our desire to find the good in others, when it is difficult to find, or because we see its relation to its presumed opposite, which is love or compassion. Absurd, arbitrary, gratuitous, condemnable, or understandable, forgivable, even necessary? We will spend our time parsing out the ethical and aesthetic aspects of these complex characterizations.

ASSIGNMENTS: Class Presentation and Final Paper.

* Class Presentations should be 10-15 minutes in length, and an abstract of the presentation, of no more than 250 words, should be turned in at time of presentation. Student should feel free to discuss with me beforehand possible focus of the presentation. Class presentations will take place every Wednesday.

* Final papers will be 8-10 pages in length. Longer papers are negotiable. Possible final paper topics will be discussed in due course.

GRADING: Breakdown: 60% Final Paper, 30 % Presentation, 10% class participation and teacher discretion.

ATTENDANCE: Class attendance and participation is necessary for the success of this course. More than 4 absences will result in a lowered grade, each absence after that contributing significantly to greater deflation of the final grade. If the student finds it necessary to miss an upcoming class, he or she should see me about it beforehand.
ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT AND PLAGIARISM
Plagiarism is the representation of another’s works or ideas as one’s own. It includes the unacknowledged word for word use and/or paraphrasing of another person’s work, and/or the inappropriate unacknowledged use of another person’s ideas. All cases of suspected plagiarism, in accordance with university rules, will be reported to the Committee on Academic Misconduct. If COAM determines that you have violated the University’s Code of Student Conduct, the sanctions for the violation could include a failing grade in this course and suspension or dismissal from the University. For more information about academic misconduct, see the section “3335-23-04 Prohibited conduct” at http://studentaffairs.osu.edu/resource_csc.asp.

ACCESSIBILITY
The Office for Disability Services, located in 150 Pomerene Hall, offers services for students with documented disabilities. Contact the ODS at 292-3307, or visit http://www.ods.ohio-state.edu/.

TEXTS (Available from OSU Books/Barnes and Noble)
Beckett, Waiting for Godot; Endgame
Pinter, The Homecoming
Albee, Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?
Shepard, Buried Child
Hwang, M Butterfly
Parks, The America Play
Shawn, The Designated Mournner
LaBute, The Shape of Things
Carr, By the Bog of Cats
McDonagh, The Pillowman
Kane, Blasted

WEEK ONE
W Aug 22 Introduction
F Aug 24 Carmen Documents on the Absurd: Esslin, Camus, Bergson.

WEEK TWO
W Aug 29 Samuel Beckett, Waiting for Godot
F Aug 31 Beckett, Waiting for Godot

WEEK THREE
W Sept 5 Samuel Beckett, Endgame
F Sept 7 Beckett, Endgame

WEEK FOUR
W Sept 12 Harold Pinter, The Homecoming
F Sept 14 Pinter, The Homecoming

WEEK FIVE
W Sept 19 Edward Albee, Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?
F Sept 21 Albee, Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?

WEEK SIX
W Sept 26  Sam Shepard, *Buried Child*
F Sept 28  Shepard, *Buried Child*

**WEEK SEVEN**
W Oct 3  David Henry Hwang, *M Butterfly*
F Oct 5  Hwang, *M Butterfly*

**WEEK EIGHT**
W Oct 10  Suzan-Lori Parks, *The America Play*
F Oct 12  Parks, *The America Play*

**WEEK NINE**
W Oct 17  Wallace Shawn, *The Designated Mourner*
F Oct 19  Shawn, *The Designated Mourner*

**WEEK TEN**
W Oct 24  Neil LaBute, *The Shape of Things*
F Oct 26  LaBute, *The Shape of Things*

**WEEK ELEVEN**
W Oct 31  Edward Bond, *Saved*
F Nov 2  Bond, *Saved*

**WEEK TWELVE**
W Nov 7  Marina Carr, *By the Bog of Cats*
F Nov 9  Carr, *By the Bog of Cats*

**WEEK THIRTEEN**
W Nov 14  Martin McDonagh, *The Pillowman*
F Nov 16  McDonagh, *The Pillowman*

**WEEK FOURTEEN**
W Nov 21  THANKSGIVING
F Nov 23  COLUMBUS DAY

**WEEK FIFTEEN**
W Nov 28  Sarah Kane, *Blasted*
F Nov 30  Kane, *Blasted*

**WEEK SIXTEEN**
M Dec 3  Conclusions

**FINAL PAPER DUE:** Tuesday, December 11, 5 pm.
In my box, English Office, Denney 421, or under my office door, Denney 505.

This syllabus is subject to change at any moment.