

The London Stage: Honours Section (ENGL379H)

The Honours assignment is in lieu of the 8-10 page essay-review required of other students. Honours students will explore **a single topic** in at least three of the plays they will have seen.

The topic, which must be agreed with the course lecturer, can be a theme, character type, genre, dramatic technique or theoretical perspective.

The selected plays must be agreed with the course lecturer, but they can be by different playwrights or by the same playwright. The choice will depend on productions available during the semester. Students might need to see plays additional to those they see on the course.

While students' principal approach to the Honours assignment will be literary critical, they will also be required to draw on production aspects whenever they help to illuminate or reinforce their literary critical points, on the grounds that a production is after all one interpretation of the text. Students will therefore not write a purely literary critical essay, but use their experience of the London stage to give an additional dimension to their exploration of the texts.

As an example, students on the spring 2008 semester attended 13 plays. Of those thirteen, Neil LaBute's **Land of the Dead** and **Helter Skelter**, Harold Pinter's **The Homecoming**, Patrick Marber's **Dealer's Choice**, David Mamet's **Speed the Plow** and Thomas Babe's **A Prayer for my Daughter** all dealt with masculinity issues. If an Honours student had undertaken this topic s/he would first have been required to select at least three plays to analyse. S/he would need to have acquired some theoretical knowledge on gender by reading the appropriate chapters in say Judith Butler's **Gender Trouble** or David Gilmore's **Manhood in the Making**. The student would also have read selected criticism on the plays, if available. Finally, s/he would have been expected to include textual analysis as well as an interpretation and assessment of production aspects that illuminated the essay topic.