Drama

Fourth year- the second semester

The first lecture: د.ليلى باطوق

**American Drama**

Drama 7 and drama 8 is related to modern drama. Modern drama has certain features related to that age different in a certain extent to the features of drama of earlier ages. Having studied two plays of the modern drama, you are familiar with the features and characters of that age. In this semester, we will continue with the modern drama, but it might be different a little bit because we will start with **American drama** which will seem different in themes maybe, but not in characteristics. When you were studying drama 7 and studying the modern age and modern drama, I am sure you have encountered the fact that what is so interesting about modern drama is that the features of modern drama are the same everywhere in the western world whether in Europe or in the States. So, American drama is not going to e different from what you have already studied in drama 7. It is all almost the same but it is very typical to the American life. You have studied ‘A Doll's House’ which is an English drama but it is written by Norwegian playwright. So, he represented the life of the Norwegian people. It was not different from the life of the European people at that time. All feelings were almost the same. You have studied ‘Waiting for Godot’ and you found it different from ‘A Doll’s House’. Its technique is the absurd theater. It was strange for some of you. If you are familiar with Arabic drama, we have Saudi drama but we do not have the chance to watch it. In ‘Al Yaum’ newspaper, there is one page in one day in the week that talks about drama of Saudi Arabia. When you read the reviews about these plays, you find that the techniques that they are using and relating the themes to these techniques are similar in a way to European or American drama. You find that the techniques of the absurd theater are very obvious in some contemporary modern Saudi plays. They are using the same techniques. Of course the themes are related to life here but using the techniques makes it similar to western drama. What I want to emphasize here is that studying drama for whatever nation should not make you limited to that nation and it should not give you a feeling that you are wasting your time studying something that is not related to life. On the contrary, drama in particular is very much related to life because what is expressed in the plays you are studying is really related to life. What use can we make of that? It can make you think in a critical way that might help you to solve things in your life. It is not necessary to make you just imitate what is in these plays. Sometimes most of the plays represent things that we do not accept morally or religiously speaking but when the playwrights express such views, they do not want people to imitate these things but they want them to think before doing such mistakes.

So, this course should e really understood as a course that will help you in life meaning that it can broaden your way of thinking that can help you in life. So, do not look at the plays that we are studying as something that is not related to our life and if you have this feeling that this is not interesting, this is something that make us rebellious people to our traditions, for example. So, do not think of it in this way; think in a positive way. You have to know the cultures and the ideas of others in order to appreciate your culture as well as your themes, ideas, traditions, and your own culture.

As I said this semester, we are going to study the American drama. It is not that different but the themes are typically American. Before we start, we should have an introduction about American drama. Today we are going to start with the American theater in the United States in general but next week we will concentrate on certain political and social events that are obvious in the play.

**Doctor laila asked the students in groups to write about the following topics:**

-(The first group) >>>> You are going to concentrate America in the 1950s. So, you are going to concentrate on Cold War, McCarthyism, Anti-communism, Capitalism, and Committee on Un-American Activities. These are the political issues to America in the 1950s. And it is very important to know at least an idea about these things because the play that you are going to study is considered something that presents these issues of America. So, we have this political background in order to be able to understand the critical issues that are in the play. The play that you are going to study is by **Arthur Miller**. Arthur Miller is a representative of American drama. The play is entitled ‘**The Crucible’** by Arthur Miller. I will send you a soft copy of the play. So, someone can present something on the **Cold War** era and someone can present something on **McCarthyism**. McCarthyism is very important in the play. This name comes after whose name? It must be related to a certain person who has relation to this topic that has taken his name. So, who is what person and what does it mean? I do not you to give me a full history of that political issue. I just want what it means and the main idea about it. And also someone will prepare on **Anti-communism** and one will prepare on **Capitalism**. And someone will prepare something on **Committee on Un-American Activities**. So, these are issues that will be presented in the plays.

-(The second group) >>>> you will work on the relationship between Miller and these things. It means that you will concentrate on Miller’s reaction to McCarthyism and Miller’s relation to these things. One of you will give us a brief production of Miller as a playwright. It is important to know what his origin is and it is not necessary to know everything about his private life. So, you will talk briefly about Miller’s life and his education and his works. And you will talk about the play ‘The Crucible’ itself (a brief summary of the play/ what ‘The Crucible’ is about). Just give us what is the story about/ brief plot. By plot, I do not mean critically speaking the structure of the plot. I want just brief incidents.

This is for next week. If you cover this for next week, that would be fine.

(At the end of the lecture, Dr. Laila asked the student to read about the history of American drama at class.)

This is history of American drama. It is very long but if you read it, you can point out ideas in it. I want you now to work as groups. The first group will do early history and try to summarize it. The second group will read about 19th century pre-war theater and the third group will read about post-war theater.