Drama

Fourth year- the second semester

The second lecture: د.ليلى باطوق

The doctor commented on the presentations of the students:

Two groups did the early history of America. With the groups of early history, do you think you should have added something? What did you write about the points of the early history of American drama or American theater? First of all, you talked about Lewis Hallam that he was the first who formed American theater in 1752, is it true? The birth of professional theater in America may have begun by **Lewis Hallam** troupe that arrives in 1752. They did not establish the American theater in 1752 but they arrived in American at this time. This is a group of actors that have certain dramatic activities in Europe. When they came to America, they started to do as they used to do in Europe. It is not that they have performed the first theater. So, the professional theater in America may have begun with the troupe of Lewis Hallam. A theater was built in 1716. Before that, there were theaters in parts of America.

If you go to lines bellow (The Hallams were the first to organize a complete company of actors in Europe and bring them to the [colonies](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thirteen_Colonies).). So, who are the members of Lewis Hallam troupe? They are a company of actors. They are in Europe. Originally they are established in Europe and when they came to the colonies of the United States, they have brought with them what they used to perform there. (They brought **a repertoire** of plays popular in London, including [*Hamlet*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hamlet), [*Othello*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Othello), [*The Recruiting Officer*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Recruiting_Officer), and [*Richard III*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_III_(play))). >>> repertoire = مسرحيات مخزنة So, repertoire is like a store; it means a number of plays. It is as if they brought with them a store that consists of different plays like ‘[Hamlet](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hamlet)’ and ‘[Othello](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Othello)’ and other plays.

-(Lewis Hallam initiated the company of actors ) >> this sentence is correct.

-( In the 18th century, plays were banned during the [American Revolutionary War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Revolutionary_War)) >>>> this is a very important point that you have mentioned. So, playwrights were writing and performing plays. Drama in general was considered immoral and it was banned in America. These groups of actors who came from Europe were opposed and they were banned from performing their plays. They were banned by religious organizations. If you notice the history of English drama, it was originally banned religious church. Here it is the same. People at that time were conventional and religious and that is why plays in general were banned.

The basis of American drama was Western Europe; it was not originally American. So, they imitated or re-performed the western culture and in all parts of the world, when drama was initiated, it was banned and opposed by religious organizations.

-You talked about president of the college of Yale and how he considered that drama was considered immoral and people involved in drama work are immoral people. This is an example of the traditional thinking about drama writing and drama activities at that time.

-what it is important and you did not mention is: go to the bottom paragraph of the first page >> (In spite of such laws, however, a few writers tried their hand at playwriting.) >>> as usual, drama is banned and opposed. It is prohibited but then still you find some writers who go against the law and who performed plays. That is why drama continued throughout centuries. What is important is that few playwrights continued writing in spite of such laws.

-Then you mentioned that the first plays were written by European born authors. So, most of the authors came from Europe originally to the colonies. So, they are originally European.

-Then you talked about that >>> (There were no professional dramatists until [William Dunlap](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Dunlap) the "Father of American Drama"). This is a very important point. The father who is considered the father of American Drama is a person called [**William Dunlap**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Dunlap) because he is the first one to write professional plays. Plays were written and performed by many, but professionally speaking, this man is the father of American Drama. The father of English drama is Henrik Ibsen. Although he is Norwegian but because he has established the features of modern drama and modern drama was continental, he was called the father of modern English drama.

- you said that (the professional theater started by Lewis Hallam). We said that Lewis Hallam came in 1752; does this mean that there was no drama before that in America? No, the colonies established in the early 17th century (in 1607). What kind of drama did they have? In the early 17th century, the European started to come to British colonies (there was no America at that time). Before that, were not there any people in this place which is called the United States? Yes, there were. Who are the natives of America? They are the natives Indian tribes. Did not they have dramatic activities? Even primitive people have dramatic activities. Whatever is imitated mostly/ things related to tradition and to religion mostly, so the first activities of drama in America were by the natives Americans. You ignored the first line of the early history (Before the first English colony was established in 1607, Spanish dramas and Native Americans tribes performed theatrical events). There are theatrical events; there are events and not plays, but as we said that all drama starts like imitating some events and this can be a sort of dramatic activity in America. So, the really early one was done by the Native Americans (The Indians), and Spanish drama also because of Spanish existence in America before the British colonies.

-Then your point about professional theater in America by Lewis Hallam troupe. (The Lewis Hallam troupe brought a repertoire of continental plays. They encountered opposition. They were banned, especially at the time of American Revolution war but still there were some attempts related to dram. With the Revolutionary War and after that the post-war of the Americans, American social drama started to exist and the father of American drama is [William Dunlap](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Dunlap" \o "William Dunlap).

-This is briefly about the early dramatic existence in America. Then it continues in the early 19th century onwards with what is called the pre-war theatre. What war is meant here? There is a mention of two kinds of war here that affected American drama. The first one here is **the American Revolutionary War**. The American Revolutionary War was in 1776 – 1783 / in the middle of the 18th century. This is not the World War I or Words War II that existed in the 20th century. This is something else. It is very important to know about this war (American Revolutionary War). What was this war about? Who were the parties of this war? America was a number of colonies governed by the Great Empire of Britain. The people who inhabited these colonies were people coming from Europe in general, not only from England. Maybe most of them were from England but they were from Europe in general. Britain was governing them and they were not given certain rights as given to the people in Britain. That is why these people started to rebel against this government. They started to call for certain rights. Britain opposed to that. And they rebel and established the American Revolutionary War against Britain. You can imagine the suffering of war and you can imagine what kind of culture and literature that existed during that time. It must be something that will talk about their war. They would portrait themselves as heroes against the enemy. They would see themselves as victims of that governing enemy.

-You missed two things. When we talk about the 19th century drama in America or what is defined here as pre-war (the pre-war as we said is the American Revolutionary War), drama in general in this period (which is 19th century) was imitating the drama of Europe because most of the inhabitants were originally from there because they have already a repertoire of plays from Europe. Except that they imitated European tradition of drama, but with a native content. The themes and the subjects they are talking about are related to their living/ to their life in America. They were talking about their nationalism/ their love to the new country that they have got. They talked about heroism. They are talking about their life in America, their struggle against the dominant government. ("[The Walnut Street Theatre](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Walnut_Street_Theatre)," is the oldest theater in America. (**Provincial theaters**)>>> the other districts and provinces have small theaters, but these theaters were not with all things that can help performing plays, for example, they did not have electricity. So, people started thinking in inventing new kinds of theaters such as floating theaters. Floating theaters are theaters performed on boat. There were floating on the water or the sea or whatever. This kind of floating theater was typical of America in certain provinces. There is a new kind of theaters that were established.

[William Shakespeare](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Shakespeare)'s plays were always performed by actors. A very important kind of drama that appeared at this time (19th century) was the **African American Theater**. You should not skip this kind of theater. This is a very important theater that is existed in America. It started early in the 19th century. What can you guess this kind of theater is? About slaves (slaves-like). It is African American (Americas who were originally Africans). So, it is about black drama/ drama of the black people in America. Look at the end of the paragraph that talks about African American Drama >> (African-American theatre was relatively dormant, except for the 1858 play The Escape; or, A Leap for Freedom by [William Wells Brown](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Wells_Brown), who was an ex-slave. African-American works would not be regarded again until the 1920s [Harlem Renaissance](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harlem_Renaissance)). So, it started early in the 19th century, but it could not survive. The African American playwrights were trying to perform their own drama talking about their own suffering and mostly they were slaves, but it did not exist as a professional drama, except in the 1920s. It means early in the 20th century with what was called [Harlem Renaissance](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harlem_Renaissance). So, this kind of drama revived the cultural heritage of black Americans in America.

Another form that really flourished at that time as you said is **the** [**minstrel show**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Minstrel_show). This is very typical to American drama. The minstrels in general are plays enacted by actors. They were white actors and when they want to play the role of a slave, they used to color their body and their face in order to do that. Then later on real slaves were brought. What is so special about minstrel show? What kind of play was it? Beside the issues and the themes of these plays, what kind of plays were they? And they were mostly given in songs. They were a little bit musical. The actors are like singers giving their ideas through singing. And American drama is very typical of this kind.

-(Throughout the 19th century, theatre culture was associated with [hedonism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hedonism)). One of the themes or issues was **hedonism**. It is a belief that people live for pleasure/ enjoyment, entertainment. So, most of the plays were relevant to this kind of belief of pleasure.

-Violence was also a typical of the plays of the time, but generally speaking, the theater was condemned at that time and it was considered as a place of **evil repute**). Even Abraham Lincoln who was the president of the United States assassinated in the theater itself when he was watching a play after the end of the civil war in America.

-Plays or theaters developed, especially, after the war (the post-war theater/ the theater after the Revolutionary War). So, it is in the late 19th century. In the late 19th century, there was transformation in drama plus in theater. The American rail transportation helped a lot in developing drama. It was easy for troupes of actors, for example, to transform from one place to another. It means large numbers of performance were enacted in many districts and many provinces. So, rail transportation influenced the development of drama late in the 19th century in America. The [electric lighting](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Electric_light) also helped in the increase of number of plays as well as in the development in the structure of the theater itself.

-Also as in Europe emphasis was on in theatrical aspects. Realism as it spread in Europe, it also existed in America, but their approach to realism was not only to the stage itself. It was realism in theatrical aspects as well as in characterization and theme. So, they were concerned early with the inner character. This also happened in Europe, but when realism started in Europe, it was in the theatrical aspects and then it developed into characterization.

-In the 20th century, another typical American kind of play was established. It was called [**Vaudeville**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vaudeville). ([Vaudeville](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vaudeville) was common in the late 19th and early 20th century). It is musical in a way. [Vaudeville](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vaudeville) is a play. It is all in singing and dancing reflecting a certain issue or a certain theme مسرحية استعراضية.

-(Amateur performing groups have always had a place alongside professional acting companies.) >> Although professional drama and professional theaters existed, other groups who were not professional (they were amateurهواة ) added to the American flavor of drama at that time.

With the development of time, life changes. So, social life changes again. All these changes are depicted in drama. As happened with western drama that it reflected modern life, again with American drama, drama started to represent everything that existed in life. Social changes are like immigration and unemployment, etc. All these are typical themes in their plays. The Great Depression is a very important issue, not only in American drama, but in the whole World. It really appeared in American drama. What is the Great Depression? The economy deteriorated in America and in all of the world. It was so influential in America. Many rich people became and many people suffered and starved and there was depression everywhere. Depression is when you feel depressed that there is no hope for you. For example, Arthur Miller has suffered from economical and financial issues and this was reflected in the plays of Arthur Miller himself.

-Then you have an example of people who were really American mature dramatists. (The years between the World Wars were years of extremes). [**Eugene O'Neill**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eugene_O%27Neill) is a very important figure that we should remember in American drama.

-(1940 proved to be a pivotal year for African-American theatre). The African American theater started to become so strong now at the beginning of the 20th century. We have a number of African American dramatists.

- ([American Negro Theater](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Negro_Theater)) it performed plays related to Negros or black people in America.

-(Post-World War II theater) >>> this is our period that we are studying now. We are talking about America after the World War II. It is America in the 1950s. Our playwright Arthur Miller belongs to this period of time. (After World War II, American theatre came into its own.). It became a real mature American theater. (Several American playwrights, such as [**Arthur Miller**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arthur_Miller) and [**Tennessee Williams**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tennessee_Williams), became world-renowned). Then you have a number of other playwrights.

-Musicals remain popular as well. The [minstrel shows](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Minstrel_show) and [Vaudeville](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vaudeville) remain typical of America.

-Emphasis is in inner characters (in character’s inner state/ in plays of this period).

Look at the bottom of the paragraph: >> (In the late 1990s and 2000s, American theatre began to borrow from cinematic and operatic roots.) >> This is another development in American theater. They took techniques from cinemas, operas and they added them to the performance of their plays. This is a new technique for drama/ for plays.

-In the last page that talks about drama, you will see that it repeats the same issues that have been said before emphasizing the maturity of American drama/ emphasizing the work of [Eugene O'Neill](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eugene_O%27Neill), [Tennessee Williams](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tennessee_Williams) and Arthur Miller/ emphasizing the role of the musical theater. So, it is repetition mainly of what has been said before. Look at the last paragraph >> ( The period beginning in the mid-1960s, with the passing of Civil Rights legislation and its repercussions, came the rise of an "agenda" theatre comparable to that of the 1930s.) >>> So, it is the issue of the Civil Rights Movement in America. This movement started 1955 until 1968. What is the effect of the Civil Rights Movement to American drama? Freedom of speech. If we have freedom of speech, it means that many people are going to dare to write plays. What kind of plays did we have before (Plays that are common to the European drama because the people of the colonies are originally from Europe)? A new drama which is the African American. Who lives in America? Is it only black and European people? No, there are also Asian. So, this kind of drama started to exist with this civil world. They started to have their own movement as did the black that time. so, this paragraph talks about these kinds of plays that started to exist a movement.

Go to the line which starts with >>> (The growth of ethnic pride movements) >> who are the ethnic people who are called the minorities? It means the different people like the blacks, the Asians that are living in there, and the Arabs. All these people established their own theater that contributed to the diversity of the American theater. So, each ethnic minority started to be proud of its own culture and heritage and that is why the American literature is very diverse and it consists of different flavors and types. (The growth of ethnic pride movements led to more success by dramatists from racial minorities, such as black playwrights) (Asian American theatre is represented in the early 70s by [Frank Chin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frank_Chin))>> Are all the minorities related to social nations or to certain countries? No. There are religious minorities also/ people who are very much restrict in their practice in their religion. And opposed to that if you go to the last page, line 4 >> (Finally, the rise of the gay rights movement and of the AIDS crisis led to a number of important gay and lesbian dramatists ) >> minority means people, for example, coming from other countries, so we have the African, we have the Asian Movement. Other minorities are people who see themselves as different from the other people. They started to call for their rights.

(the rise of the gay rights movement) >> You know gay people. These plays are immoral and you should not concentrate on them. It is just to show you that how American Drama is typical because of these movements that established at the history of the American drama. The AIDS crisis and all these things added to the American drama.

-Now the second group is going to present something about Arthur Miller and we will see where we can put him in this history of America.

(Dr. Laila commented on the presentation of the second group):

A student: what is the Cold War and what are the causes of the Cold War? First of all, The [Cold War](http://www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/cold.war/), a hostile rivalry between the United States and the [Soviet Union](http://soviethistory.org/index.php), lasted from the late 1940s until the [collapse](http://soviethistory.org/index.php?action=L2&SubjectID=1991end&Year=1991) of the Soviet Union in 1991. Each side viewed the Cold War as a battle between civilizations; in the worldwide clash between American capitalism and Soviet Communism. Why was it called war? >> The war was "cold" only in that the United States and [Soviet Union](http://soviethistory.org/index.php) never fought each other in a direct military confrontation, but both superpowers threatened each other with [nuclear](http://teachpol.tcnj.edu/amer%5Fpol%5Fhist/fi/000001a0.jpg) army. Lastly, I will talk about the causes of a Cold War: 1-competing ideologies between United States and Soviet Union, 2-deep-seated feeling of mistrust between Soviet Union and the United States, 3-Poor relationship between Soviet Union and the United States before and after the World War II, 4- impact of World War II (the Soviet Union and the United States became superpowers). These reasons form the basis of Cold War and the events surrounding it.

The doctor: the Word War is the conflict between America and Russia. It is cold because there is no real war. Both of them were super countries, especially, in nuclear affairs. Both of them were threatening each other, but it was cold because there is no real conflict between them.

A student: I will talk about McCarthyism. McCarthyism as a definition is the practice of making accusations of disloyalty, subversion, or treason without proper regard for evidence. It is related to an American Senator who is [Republican](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Republican_Party_(United_States)) called Joseph McCarthy. On February 9, on national television, he announced that he has a list of 205 of members of the Communist Party........ .

The doctor: In brief what is this McCarthyism? We should have taken the definition of capitalism and communist before to understand the idea of McCarthyism. McCarthyism is an issue that a person is accused of being a communist. Communism is related to Russia and capitalism is related to America, for example. We have said in the Cold War that there is a struggle between the two countries Russia and America. So, if people believe in communism, it means that maybe they have feelings for Russia which is the enemy of America and maybe they are spies. Such people were accused of being disloyal. This person Senator Joseph McCarthy is a capitalist. He blacklisted these people. He just came and said I have names of 205 people who are communist, it means that they may spy for Russia/ they are disloyal for American ideology. They threaten the American society. He encouraged the government against such people. Sometimes he just gives names without having proof. What is so important about McCarthyism is that accusing people without evidence. And as you said it is accusing people, bringing these people and starting sever investigations with them. May be at the end they do not come with an evidence but still they accuse that person and they punished that person. A very important point that you have mentioned is that what happened at that time is relevant to what is happening nowadays. You know the war against terrorism. Originally Muslims might be accused of being terrorists without having evidence against them. It is the same. For example, in the airport, when the person comes, they suspect that person, accuse him of being a terrorist and start having a very sever investigation with that person and coming out with no evidence. But still he is being accused and he will be punished for that and may be expelled from the States. So, it is parallel and a relevant. It is very important to understand the idea of McCarthyism because Arthur Miller is going to represent that in a different way.

-This Committee or this House is the one that carries on the investigation. It was abolished in 1975. Nowadays, we have other committees for other purposes.

-In one sentence, what is the meaning of communism and anti-communism? Communism = the idea of classless society/ moneyless society. Anti-communism = there should be classes and there should people who own money/ materialism. Classless means >> no classes in the society/ all the society should be equal. The ownership of material and the ownership of production in society should be equal. This is what the communist believe that all people should share their profit. There should be no classes; no rich and poor. Anti-communism is negating all these issues. It is opposite of this.

-Communism and capitalism are opposite. One concentrates on, in the society in general, having no classes and the individual has no right at all to do anything and in capitalism, it is the opposite; the individual has all rights to do whatever he can in order to increase his own private benefit. Thanks God, our religion cares of this and this. May be it is a combination of both. The society has rights as well as he individual has rights. There should be no class distinction. Our religion orders us to try to eliminate this class distinction to help the others so that we cannot see this kind of a very high class distinction and if it is there, people will not die out of hanger or out of poverty. But in communist countries and in capitalist countries, this issue is not balanced at all and that is why they have anti of this and anti of his.

Anti-communism is similar to capitalism. It is not the same. Capitalism gives complete freedom to the individual. Communism is social contribution. There were people who were against it but then it developed into capitalism which was worse also.

-Arthur Miller is originally from a Jewish family. His family was rich and wealthy and then due to Bankruptcy, he became poor and he was married to famous actress Marilyn Monroe. He has related to a great depression due to the economic destruction. He started writing even when he was student.

He was against McCarthyism. He suffered from it. He was accused of being a communist and there was no evidence against him. They wanted him to give names of partners/ of people who are communist in order to release him. He refused and he and other playwrights were against giving any names of other innocent people. What is his relation to communism? He is not a communist but he was affected by the depression that occurred and that is why he reflected that depression in his plays. People thought that he was a communist and that is why he was talking about the rights of people. ‘The Crucible’ in particular is written to focus on the idea of McCarthyism and the suffering of McCarthyism during his life. So, he was against McCarthyism and he was blacklisted as a communist.