

Welcome to the OLLI Spring term class 403, "Let's Study a Play Together." The selection of the play to study with the class is "An Ideal Husband" by Oscar Wilde. The selection of plays was made based on several factors.

It is a drawing room play, set in London in an upper-class home. Our plot revolves around a young married wealthy couple; he is an under-Secretary in the British government, she is a socialite. A scandal from his past surfaces, threats of blackmail swirl around, and a number of very interesting moral questions are raised. A clever friend of the couple is also involved both as an observer and at the same time engaged in a humorous "battle of the sexes", which sometimes resembles a romantic Victorian courtship. There is also a great "femme fatale" role. It has lots of witty lines from the playwright, who is well known for his epigrams. So it is both humorous and yet poses a number of moral dilemmas for discussion.

This play is out of copyright and therefore publicly available. The full text of the play is available via a download from the Internet and we have put it directly on the OLLI doc-store for members to download and print one act at a time (our thanks to John West for his expertise in making this possible.) It is also available from the Fairfax County Public Library system or may be purchased from Amazon.com or your preferred book seller.

Directions for printing from the OLLI Docstore: access to the Docstore is available as a choice on the left frame of the OLLI Home Page. Click on Docstore, look for the section marked Current or Spring Classes, and then Class 403. You will see the four acts of the script. Highlight the desired act (note: act one is about 35 pages long!), click the right mouse button, then click on the Print option.

I would expect that everyone should be able to obtain a copy of the script before the term begins. (If that is not possible, please let the OLLI Office Staff know and they should be able to assist you.) It would be optimal and strongly encouraged if everyone could read Act 1 before our first class on Tuesday March 23.

When we meet on March 23, I intend to give a brief introduction to the class, repeating the goals of the course, and a very abbreviated biography of the playwright's early years. I can't resist also sharing with you just a very few of his notable witticisms. But THEN, we will begin to read the first act together.

I plan to cast the first act of the play this week. There are 16 parts and 17 class members, and I expect that we will be rotating parts each week. There are five major characters; if anyone feels uneasy about reading a part aloud, please let me know and I will assign you to either a minor character or give you a bye on week one, but I suspect that you will all warm up to the idea of reading by week two. I will let you know by March 19 which part will be yours for act one. However, not to worry; we are not professional actors, there will be absolutely no memorization required, and all I ask is that you read with understanding (no need for accents, histrionics, etc - unless you want to do so!) Remember - this is supposed to be fun!!! It will be fun and I am looking forward to sharing and enjoying this play with you!

From Doris Bloch (dbloch50@hotmail.com)