

For April the Ascension Book Group will read two of the plays from Four Major Plays by Henrik Ibsen (1828-1906), *Ghosts* (1881) and *Hedda Gabler* (1891). The Ascension Book Group will meet to discuss these plays in Wheeler Hall on Sunday, May 5 at 1:00 p.m. Refreshments will be provided.

Ghosts: This play has its own Chicago connection. The first stage performance of *Ghosts* took place in Chicago on Saturday, May 20, 1882 at the Aurora Turner Hall at the corner of Milwaukee Avenue and Huron Street to a packed house. It was presented in its original Norwegian by a cast of Norwegian and Danish actors and was the only American premiere of any Ibsen work. (Chicago Tribune, February 4, 1990). Ibsen chose the title, not to refer to this play as a ghost story, but as a way of communicating how the ghosts of our past can have a direct effect on our future lives. Like many of Ibsen's plays, this one does not shy away from controversy. *Ghosts* is a scathing commentary on 19th-century morality and its subject matter includes religion, venereal disease, incest, and euthanasia, most of these being unspeakable subjects in that day. Unlike most tragedies that reflect on the results of breaking the moral code, *Ghosts* reflects on tragedy that results from not breaking the moral code. Ibsen chose the title, not to refer to this play as a ghost story, but as a way of communicating how the ghosts of our past can have a direct effect on our future lives.

Hedda Gabler: Equal parts idealistic heroine and callous antagonist; victim of circumstance and master manipulator, Hedda Gabler finds herself trapped by society in a world that does not fit her. To survive, she sets in motion an array of schemes, sowing seeds of calculated destruction in an attempt to make an impact on her husband, friends and lovers. The result is a journey of impulse and emotion that is both achingly desperate and wildly passionate. In her desperation to be in control of her own life and to control the world surrounding her, she creates the environment that may lead to her own demise.

Ghosts: Oxford World's Classics
ISBN 978-0199536191