



**THE 543: DEV OF AMERICAN THEATRE
COURSE SYLLABUS: SPRING 2015
TUESDAY 4:30 p.m. - 7:10 p.m.
ART #111**

Instructor: Rebecca Worley, MFA, Assistant Professor of Theatre
Office Location: Performing Arts Center #105
Office Hours: M/W 9:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m., T/R 3 p.m. – 4 p.m. or by appointment
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COURSE INFORMATION

Required Textbooks:

Early American Drama, ed. Jeffrey Richards
Entertaining the Nation, Tice Miller
Assorted Hand-outs (distributed in class and/or posted online)
PDFs of plays

Plays Covered:

The School for Scandal (pdf)
The Contrast (1787) in Richards
Metamora. . . (1829) (pdf)
Fashion (1845) and Prologue in Richards
Uncle Tom's Cabin (1852) in Richards
The Octoroon (1859) in Richards
Held By the Enemy (1888) (pdf)
The Great Divide (1906) (pdf)
The Verge (1921) (pdf)
Peace on Earth (1933) (pdf)
Bury the Dead (1936) (pdf)

Recommended Reading:

Performing America: Cultural Nationalism in American Theater, ed. Jeffrey D. Mason and J. Ellen Gainor

Interrogating America through Theatre and Performance, ed. William H. Demastes and Iris Smith Fischer

An Outline History of the American Theatre, Walter Meserve

American Drama: Colonial to Contemporary, ed. Stephen Watt & Gary A. Richardson

Course Objectives:

To develop a working background on the history of the American theatre, its plays and players, that will assist students in making intelligent assessments regarding the American theatre of the twenty-first century.

The organizing principle of this course will be the question of what it means to be *American*. We will critique the loaded term *American* and interrogate notions of *history* and *theatre* as well. We will study plays from the accepted American drama canon in light of marginalized groups who rightfully claim a place in the American theatre, tracing flagrant stereotypes (race, ethnicity, class, gender). We will study the historiography of the American theatre as well as its history. In this course, the emphasis is on traditional “scripted” plays. We will also hone the skills of the working theatre historian.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Instructional / Methods / Activities Assessments:

Conceptual Frameworks (10 plays @ 3 pts): (CF on Class Schedule) are statements of the lens(es) through which you might view a particular play – in essence, approaches to analyzing the piece(s) or production(s). They might utilize a particular theory, social practice, thematic concern, etc. These should be ONE paragraph long, typed, written in complete sentences. You can think of them as mini-abstracts. We will practice in class.

Article Presentations (4 @ 5 pts): Each presentation will summarize two articles found in either a) peer-reviewed Theatre journals or b) book chapters. Presentations can be informal. Students will also provide a short (one-page, front and back) handout **outlining** the main ideas of two articles for myself and their classmates (please include article citations in MLA format). The articles can relate to anything we are covering in class, including the organizing principle “What is American?” and our other questions but, they should be about the period at hand. While these articles may HELP you form conceptual frameworks, they do not have to (it would, however, save you time later if they did!).

Abstract (10 pts): Students will submit a short (250-300 word) abstract that summarizes their paper topic and the critical lens(es) they will use. We will discuss how to write an abstract in class.

Rough Draft (10 pts): Students must turn in a rough draft of their paper. Rough drafts need not have formal “scholarly apparatus” as in proper formatting of Endnotes and Works Cited, **but be forewarned.** These are not to be slap-dash efforts. These must be coherent, fully formed papers, 12-15 pages in length. They must be well-organized and draw a conclusion. You have to give me a paper that is ready for editorial comments, not stream-of-consciousness. PLAN AHEAD.

Polished Paper (15 pts): Each student will turn in a conference length paper (12-15 pages) analyzing a particular performance (**note:** performance does not necessarily denote “traditional” theater) or play, applying a theoretical lens(es)/concepts covered in class (particularly the questions: What is American? Who is featured? Who is left out? Who is implied?). The paper should give the critical history of the performance and provide an original argument on this topic. Examples of this type of analysis will be present in many of the readings for the class, and I will point them out as we read them. This project is to familiarize students with the research process and to prepare them for future, more extensive research.

In-Class Final (15 pts): Students will present the final draft of their research papers during our final exam period. The final paper must include the topic’s critical history, the student’s analysis of this history and an original argument about the topic itself. We will approach this final presentation in the manner of an academic scholarly panel.

Grading:

The following grading scale will be used to determine all individual grades as well as the student’s overall grade in the course:

90-100 =	A
80-89=	B
70-79=	C
60-69=	D
59 and below=	F

Please note: A grade of “A” will not be assigned to an individual who has not completed ALL outside of class assignments, regardless of average.

TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

WORKING EMAIL REQUIREMENT: It is a course expectation that you have a working email address that you check daily. If you have not already acquired an email address through the university or otherwise, please make arrangements to do so before the next class meeting. There WILL be times that I need to contact you with important information and email is often the speediest and easiest way of doing so. Additionally, I WILL provide electronic copies of the plays and supplemental reading through email.

WRITTEN WORK: Unfortunately, papers/projects do occasionally get lost. Please, for your sanity, save your work on a disc or thumb drive, etc. Do not depend on your paper staying on the hard drive of any university computer, as it will be deleted, altered, or worse – turned in by someone else as their work! Be aware that it is a course expectation that you keep copies of your assignments until you receive your final grade for the semester.

COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT

Contacting Me:

Please feel free to visit me during my office hours at any time during the semester. I am here to help! If you can't make my office hours due to a scheduling conflict, please set up an appointment with me. It is not an imposition. Communicate, communicate, communicate! If something is occurring that is presenting you with difficulties in this class, let me know. I cannot help you if I don't know what is going on. The easiest and most reliable way to contact me is **via email**. I check it almost constantly. Please do not leave a message for me in the main department office.

Student Resources:

Department of Theatre

Performing Arts Center (PAC) #101

Phone: 903-886-5346 (Main Office)

<http://www.tamu-commerce.edu/mmct/default.asp>

Communication Skills Center

Hall of Languages #103

<http://www.tamu-commerce.edu/litlang/CSC/index.htm>

COURSE AND UNIVERSITY PROCEDURES/POLICIES

Attendance Policy:

Attendance is mandatory and grades will be lowered ½ letter grade per absence. That being said, I do understand that there are unavoidable, *emergency* situations in life. You are allowed two *emergency* absences in this course with no attendance grading penalty (although you are still responsible for all work during said absences).

Late Arrivals:

To further foster a high level of commitment—and because the work we will be doing this semester will involve intensive focus—the class will adopt the following late entry policy. Students must be on time for every class. Entering a class late or leaving early is disruptive to

the flow of the class and indicative of a less than disciplined/committed artist. Please be on time out of consideration to your learning process and the processes of others. If you are late for class, your participation grade will reflect this. The class will begin promptly at 4:30 p.m.! If you arrive after 4:40 p.m., please do not enter the classroom (you will be marked absent regardless). If you arrive within the ten minute grace period, please do so discretely in order to avoid disrupting the class activities/discussions. *It is your responsibility to make sure that you find me after class and document your late attendance for the day—otherwise, your initial marked absence documented during roll will remain.* Also, you are expected to stay until you are dismissed from class. An early departure will significantly reduce your participation grade as well. **Two late arrivals (within the ten-minute grace period) or early departures (or any combination of the two) may be counted as one absence in the class.**

Cell Phones and Laptops:

Please turn off all cell phones upon entering the classroom. Please do not check messages or engage in text messaging during class. This is disruptive to the flow of the course. Further, you are welcome to take class notes on a laptop or other electronic device. However, these devices should only be used for taking notes over the current discussions/activities – and you must type very quietly and turn off all sound so as not to disturb other class members. If I suspect that laptops are being used for other purposes, I will ban them from the classroom.

Late Work:

I do not accept late work.

Extra Credit:

As a general rule, there is no extra credit offered in this class – please, do not even ask.

Incompletes:

Under normal circumstances, an Incomplete (I or X) will NOT be given for a final grade in this course.

University Specific Procedures:

Academic Dishonesty:

This course adheres strictly to the college's guidelines for Academic Dishonesty printed in the *Student's Guide Handbook*. Plagiarism, cheating, or otherwise representing another's work or ideas as your own without proper attribution will not be tolerated. All work must be new and created for this class during this semester by you. It is your responsibility to ensure that you understand the definition of Academic Dishonesty at Texas A&M-Commerce. If such an instance occurs, the student will receive an automatic zero for the work in question, and I will immediately report the incident to the Head of the Department. *(You should be aware that this could result in dismissal from school without credit for the semester.)*

Students with a Disability:

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact:

Office of Student Disability Resources and Services

Texas A&M University-Commerce

Gee Library 132

Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835

Fax (903) 468-8148

StudentDisabilityServices@tamu-commerce.edu

[Student Disability Resources & Services](#)

Student Conduct:

All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment. (See *Code of Student Conduct from Student Guide Handbook*).

COURSE OUTLINE / CALENDAR

Reading and Assignments are due on the days on which they are listed below. **Bring scripts (and on appropriate days Miller text) to class!**

WEEK ONE

T Jan 20 Discuss: Early theatre of the Americas – Whose America? This historiography of [American] theatre history; New Historicism; the nature of assignments, etc.
In-Class Handouts: Declaration of Independence, Historiography, etc. Journals

WEEK TWO

T Jan 27 **Reading:** Miller, Chapter One; Sheridan's *School for Scandal* and Royall Tyler's *The Contrast* with Prologue
In-Class Hand-Out: "Dialogues," Mercy Otis Warren
Discuss Restoration Theatre in England and What is American?
Discuss "American" Characters
Discuss *The Contrast*
Discuss and practice forming a conceptual framework, finding a lens

(TETA Convention 1/29-2/1)

WEEK THREE

T Feb 3 **CF #1 on *The Contrast* due in class!**
Reading: Miller, Chapters 2 & 3, and *Metamora*
Discuss CFs
Discuss play; Jacksonian Democracy, Edwin Forrest; Images of "Indians" onstage; Romanticism
In-Class Hand-Out: Chapter 1 in *Interrogating America* . . . Rosemarie Bank

Thurs, Feb. 5th – Last day to drop course with 100% refund

WEEK FOUR

T Feb 10 **CF# 2 on *Metamora* due in class!**
Article #1 presentation due
Reading: Miller, Chapter 4, and *Fashion*
Discuss *Fashion* in Cultural Context: What is Mid-19th Century American Theatre?
Discuss Melodrama

WEEK FIVE

T Feb 17 **CF# 3 on *Fashion* due in class!**
Reading: *Uncle Tom's Cabin*
In-Class Handout: Chapter 2 in *Interrogating America...* Amy Hughes; Changing images of race and genre

WEEK SIX

T Feb 24 **CF# 4 on *Uncle Tom's Cabin* due in class!**
Article #2 presentation due
Reading: *The Octoroon* and Chiles' article "Blackened Irish and Brownfaced Amerindians"
In-Class Handout: Bill Condee article
Discuss reading; American Identity

(*Rabbit Hole* 2/24-3/1)

WEEK SEVEN

T Mar 3 **CF# 5 on *The Octoroon* due in class**
Reading: *Held by the Enemy* and Fletcher, "Romancing the Civil War"
Discuss readings; Use of primary documents
Discuss Abstracts

WEEK EIGHT

T Mar 10 **CF# 6 on *Held by the Enemy* due in class**
Article #3 presentation due
Images of the Civil War

(UIL OAP Clinic 3/12-13)

(Mid-America Theatre Conference 3/19-22)

*****Spring Break March 16-20*****

WEEK NINE

T Mar 24 **Abstracts for papers due!** Bring copies to class to distribute and share aloud.
Reading: Miller, Chapter 5 and *The Great Divide*
Discuss readings

WEEK TEN

T Mar 31 **CF#7 on *The Great Divide* due in class**
Article #4 presentation due
Reading: *The Verge*
Discuss play and the Provincetown Players, Glaspell

WEEK ELEVEN

T Apr 7 **CF#8 on *The Verge* due in class!**
Reading: *Peace on Earth*
Discuss Theater Union and play
Using Primary Documents: Black/Fletcher Theatre Union Project

WEEK TWELVE

T Apr 14 **CF#9 on *Peace on Earth* due in class!**
Discuss *Peace on Earth*, cont. and drama in the Great Depression

WEEK THIRTEEN

T Apr 21 **Rough Drafts of Papers due in Class!**
Reading: *Bury the Dead*
Discuss reading

(UIL OAP Regional Contest 4/23)

WEEK FOURTEEN

T Apr 28 **CF#10 on *Bury the Dead* due in class!**
Rough Drafts of Papers Returned – Discuss papers
Review

(*Further Adventures of Tom and Huck and Other Plays* 4/28-5/3)

WEEK FIFTEEN

T May 5 **Discuss Final**
Wrap-up: What is “American” “Theatre” “History”?
Application of material studied to modern and contemporary American plays
and/or productions

WEEK SIXTEEN – FINALS WEEK – May 11-15

FINAL EXAM: TUESDAY, May 12th 4:30 p.m. – 7:10 p.m.