



**THE 541: SEMINAR IN STAGE DIRECTION
COURSE SYLLABUS: SPRING 2015
THURSDAY 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:

Great Directors at Work: Stavislavsky, Brecht, Kazan, Brook, David Richard Jones
The Director's Voice, v. 2, ed. Jason Loewith
Directors in Rehearsal: A Hidden World, Susan Letzler Cole

Required Viewing:

Rabbit Hole

Directed by Dr. Carrie Klypchak
Produced in the Main Stage Theatre by the University Playhouse at A&M Commerce
Feb. 24-28 at 8 p.m. and March 1 at 3 p.m.

The Further Adventures of Tom and Huck and Other Plays

Directed by the THE 497: Special Topics in Stage Direction students
Produced in the Studio Theatre by the University Playhouse at A&M Commerce
April 28-May 2 at 8 p.m. and May 3 at 3 p.m.

Tickets are available for a nominal fee from the University Playhouse Box Office (PAC 101) from 1:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. on weekdays. Or, you may make advance reservations by phone at any time by calling 903-886-5900 or by email at playhouseboxoffice@tamuc.edu.

TAMU-C One-Act Play Festival

Thursday, March 12 and Friday, March 13

As part of this course, each student is required to successfully work at least one position shift in TAMU-C's One-Act Play Clinic/Festival on Thursday, March 12 or Friday, March 13. Most work shifts last approximately four to six hours and are scheduled throughout the day and evening hours.

**Note: Please understand that viewing a performance of both of the University Playhouse shows listed above and working at the One-Act Play Festival are absolute requirements of the course. Part of becoming a skilled director is viewing other directors' successes and challenges. Clear your schedule now! If you cannot attend all of these events, for whatever reason, you must consult with the instructor in advance in order to receive an alternate written assignment(s) for these portions of your overall grade in the course.*

Course Description:

The goal of this course is to examine the evolution of the director's role during the course of the 20th century and beyond. Such study should lead you to consider new perspectives and approaches in your future directing endeavors. Students will engage with written materials as a point of departure for considering issues relating to staging, performance, and the shifting roles of theatre artists. They will engage with these materials through in-class discussion, oral presentations, exercises, research, and written work.

**Note: Although not a formal prerequisite for this course, it is expected that all students enrolled have had some sort of practical directing experience (either through undergraduate coursework or otherwise) to serve as a point of departure in these theoretical studies. If you have not yet practically engaged in directing, it is recommended that you wait to take this course until you have had sufficient experience.*

Student Learning Outcomes: By the end of this course, the student will be able to:

1. display a learned knowledge of influential theatre directors' artistic approaches.
2. critically, knowledgably, and professionally evaluate varying approaches to actor training and directing.
3. synthesize academic/artistic research into cohesive scholarly writing and oral presentation.

Course Objectives:

1. To appreciate the range of approaches to stage direction in the contemporary theatre through discussions of the work of modern theatre artists.
2. To examine the role of the director in the contemporary theatre
3. To consider the director's role as an artist, responding to stimuli from the past and present, both within and outside the theatre, and affecting the future

4. To provide stimuli for developing further the students' creative approach to directing
5. To explore effective means of teaching directing methods.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Instructional / Methods / Activities Assessments:

Active Participation (10 pts): Your Active Participation will play a substantial role in acquiring your final grade – for good reason! This graduate course is structured to support a “community of learners.” In order to contribute to the community, you must come to class fully alert, prepared, and ready to actively participate in discussions of assigned readings or engagement in determined activities, etc. **Please be advised that your attendance at both University Playhouse productions and assistance with the UIL Festival will be considered part of your Active Participation grade.** Be aware that the “participation” aspect of your grade requires more than simply being present or arriving to class on time (although absences and late arrivals/early departures will significantly reduce your Active Participation grade). *Please keep in mind that you must be present in order to participate.* Lack of demonstrable preparation will have a substantial negative impact on your course grade.

As graduate students you should realize the importance of acquiring skill in voicing your opinions during discussion in positive and respectful ways. Realize that sometimes you will have to agree to disagree with other members of the class. As I know that you all can do: avoid “knee-jerk reactions” and frame your comments respectfully, with scholarly intelligence, and as a point of academic discourse. *Disrespect, rudeness, or offensive language of any kind has no place in the classroom. If such an instance occurs (either toward another student or the instructor), I will ask the student to leave and/or substantial points will be reduced from the student's Active Participation grade.*

Participation grades will be calculated daily and reflected upon/tabulated at the end of the semester. *Each student will begin with a mid-passing Participation grade of 8 points.* Strong effort or lack of effort during each class and over the course of the semester as a whole will either raise or lower that grade.

- **TAMU-C One-Act Play Festival Participation:** As mentioned above, as part of this course, each student is required to successfully work at least one position shift in TAMU-C's One-Act Play Clinic/Festival on Thursday, March 12 or Friday, March 13. Students are welcome to sign-up for more shifts should s/he so desire and availability allow. You will be allowed to request preferences for your position/time slot closer to the festival (graduate clinician, host, technical crew, etc.) in order to avoid conflict with your classes, etc. Either in your designated position or otherwise during the festival, each student *must* view at least one of the visiting schools' performances in order to observe another director's work with actors. *Clear your schedule now!* Specific requirements for successful participation/grading will be discussed in further detail during class.

Talking Points (10 @ 2): Each student will complete ten lucid and cogent talking points for each class meeting. These can be in whatever format you choose (bullet points usually work best) but should be questions and/or comments (anything that can assist with a class discussion) that struck you while reading.

Precise (4 @ 5 pts): Each student will complete four **organized** summaries of each chapter in the Jones text (Weeks 3-6). These summaries should cover the major points made in the chapter and should be anywhere from 3-10 pages in length. You may use bullet points, write in prose, make an outline, or a combination. If done correctly, these should be useful references/guides for our discussions of the chapters (notate page numbers in MLA format).

Reading Presentation (20 pts.): Over the course of the semester, you will be asked to make a formal, oral presentation over assigned readings, as well as to lead discussion for a portion of the class. Each presentation/discussion should last thirty to forty-five minutes. Although you are welcome to use a power point presentation as support for your ideas, please understand that you are responsible for leading and facilitating the class discussion as well – not just summarizing points and lecturing to the class. You should plan your presentation very carefully as you are developing a thirty to forty-five minute lesson plan (shorter/significantly longer presentations will receive substantial grade deductions.) **You should provide each person in the class (including the instructor) with a handout or study guide**, which will include, but will not be limited to: relevant biographical information and professional accomplishments garnered through outside research, an outline of major points in the reading, suggestions for additional reading, etc. **You must also come prepared with questions and topics to stimulate class discussion.** One of the goals of this assignment is to give you an opportunity to hone your teaching and presentation skills. Be imaginative in your presentational strategies, including audiovisual material, activities, etc. The student that is presenting is in charge of arranging for any equipment to be present in PAC 112 that is necessary for the day's activities. You will be graded on the content of your presentation/handout, the structure/construction of your presentation/handout, ability to lead class discussion effectively, ability to field your peers' questions, and the overall professionalism/preparedness exhibited.

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. You should spend considerable time and effort in developing your abstract. The abstract should include an introduction to your proposed topic, primary research question and/or thesis statement, your primary method(s) of research, relevancy of the study, etc. After your topic has been approved, you may prepare your final essay for presentation. Your research proposal will be graded on both content and construction. I will provide you with a sample abstract proposal as a guide and discuss requirements in more depth during class.

Research Paper (20 pts.): You will be required to write and present a conference-length research paper (12-15 pages) on a topic of your own selection that is informed by theoretical and/or historical work in the fields of theatre and/or performance and that intersects with the topic of this course in some way, falling within the timeframe of 1880-present. *You may not choose to focus on a director for which you have provided a readings presentation in this class.* Your paper should be comprised of original, focused research on a selected topic which could

eventually lead to a formal conference presentation or be built upon for publication. You are strongly encouraged to develop a paper that could inform your thesis or 595 paper. Your essay should use acceptable quality writing practices, and you should utilize an acceptable number (and variety) of *scholarly* sources. You are required to present a fifteen minute formal reading of your research essay in a mock conference format; you may incorporate visual aids if you so choose.

Please plan all elements of your presentation carefully and offer it to the class in a formal, well-rehearsed manner. You should dress appropriately for a conference presentation in business attire as well. You will be graded on the content and construction of your essay (you *must* use your very best writing skills to develop a tight, well-researched, well constructed, and well-written essay for presentation – this is absolutely *not* “stream of consciousness writing” – this absolutely *is* writing a formal research essay to the *very* best of your abilities and then taking the project one step further and preparing it for oral presentation!!!), your preparedness, your ability to knowledgeably respond to questions from the audience, and the professionalism exhibited in your formal presentation and as an audience member. We will have additional in-depth discussion about the requirements of this assignment during class sessions.

***In addition to the directors we study in class, here are some other names that would provide rich material for theoretical study:

-David Belasco	-Vsevolod Meyerhold
-Ingmar Bergman	-Ariane Mnouchkine
-Augusto Boal	-Mike Nichols
-Joseph Chaikin	-Erwin Piscator
-Martha Clarke	-Richard Schechner
-Jerzy Grotowski	-Andrei Serban
-Tadeusz Kantor	-Megan Terry
-Judith Malina (& Julian Beck)	

You are not limited to the directors studied in class or listed above. Other topics WILL BE CONSIDERED!

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. If you can't make my office hours due to a scheduling conflict, please set up an appointment with me. 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@tamuc.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.

WEEK ONE

Jan 22 Introduction to course & assignments
Introductory Discussion: A Director's Vision, The Role of the Director

WEEK TWO

Jan 29 **NO CLASS – TETA**
Library Day – Independent Research/Reading Presentation Development

(TETA Convention 1/29-2/1)

WEEK THREE

Feb 5 **Reading:** Jones: Intro-Stanislavski
Talking Points #1 due
Precise #1 due

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

WEEK FOUR

Feb 12 **Reading:** Jones: Brecht
Talking Points #2 due
Precise #2 due
Determine Reading Presentation assignments

WEEK FIVE

Feb 19 **Reading:** Jones: Kazan
Talking Points #3 due
Precise #3 due
Students should have spoken to me individually and decided on their paper topic

WEEK SIX

Feb 26 **Reading:** Jones: Brook
Talking Points #4 due
Precise #4 due
Address best practices for writing an abstract/look at examples

(Rabbit Hole 2/24-3/1)

WEEK SEVEN

Mar 5 **Reading:** Cole: Renfield, Fornes, Akalaitis, Foreman
Reading Presentation: _____
Talking Points #5 due
Rabbit Hole discussion (Dr. Klypchak possible guest speaker)

WEEK EIGHT

Mar 12 **NO CLASS – UIL OAP CLINIC**

(UIL OAP Clinic 3/12-13)

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

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

WEEK NINE

Mar 26 **Reading:** Cole: Wilson, Ciulei, Sellars, Breuer
Reading Presentation: _____
Talking Points #6 due
Abstracts for papers due! Bring copies to class to distribute and share aloud.

WEEK TEN

Apr 2 **Reading:** Loewith: Bogart, Brokaw, Brosius, Chong
Reading Presentation: _____
Talking Points #7 due

WEEK ELEVEN

Apr 9 **Reading:** Loewith: Esbjornson, Eustis, Galati, Kaufman
Reading Presentation: _____
Talking Points # 8 due

WEEK TWELVE

Apr 16 **Reading:** Loewith: Lapine, LeCompte, Mann, McClinton
Reading Presentation: _____
Talking Points # 9 due

WEEK THIRTEEN

Apr 23 **NO CLASS – UIL OAP REGIONAL CONTEST**

WEEK FOURTEEN

Apr 30 **Reading:** Loewith: Taymor, Theatre de la Jeune Lune, Wolfe, Zimmerman
Reading Presentation: _____
Talking Points # 10 due
Wrap-up/Discuss Final

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

WEEK FIFTEEN

May 7 **Mock Conference – Day 1**

WEEK SIXTEEN – FINALS WEEK – May 11-15

FINAL EXAM: THURSDAY, May 14th 4:30 p.m. – 7:10 p.m.