



**THE 497 – SPECIAL PROJECTS IN DIRECTING
 COURSE SYLLABUS: SPRING 2015
 M 4:30-6:30 p.m., W 4:30-5:30 p.m. (1/21-3/11)
 Rehearsal/Performance Periods as Scheduled (3/23-5/3)
 PERFORMING ARTS #126**

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
Office Phone: 903-886-5339
Office Fax: 903-468-3250
University Email Address: Rebecca.worley@tamuc.edu

COURSE INFORMATION

Required Textbook:

A Director Prepares: Seven Essays on Art and Theatre by Anne Bogart
Thinking Like a Director by Michael Bloom
Further Adventures of Tom and Huck and Other Plays by Don Nigro (copies provided)

Required Special Supplies:

In addition to standard classroom supplies (pens, pencils, paper for daily notes/assignments, a folder for those notes/assignments, computer paper, etc.), you will need the following supplies for this class.

- 2 hard-cover, three-ring binders with pockets
- dividers
- highlighters
- "TAMU-C Production Handbook"

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.

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.

**Note: Please understand that viewing a performance of both of the University Playhouse shows listed above is an absolute requirement of the course. Part of becoming a skilled actor is viewing other actors' successes and challenges. Clear your schedule now! If you cannot attend both of these events, for whatever reason, you must consult with the instructor in advance in order to receive an alternate written assignment for this portion of the participation grade in the course.*

Course Description:

The procedure and the problems involved in directing a play from selection of the script, auditions, and conducting rehearsals to the final production. The principle focus of the course is on practical work and discussion and criticism of ongoing projects, specifically our work with Don Nigro's *Further Adventures of Tom and Huck and Other Plays*.

Course Objectives:

- To give students further experience in theatrical directing through lab work and criticism
- To appreciate the range of approaches to stage direction in the contemporary theater through discussions of the work of modern theater artists
- 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
- To probe the role of collaboration, imagination, spontaneity, and risk in direction: to play
- To provide stimuli for developing further the students' creative approach to directing

Course Introduction:

Welcome! This course provides a practical introduction to directing techniques. This is a class that will be challenging, invigorating, and participatory. Please consider yourself to now be a part of a production rather than a classroom as it is usually understood.

Although there is a lecture/discussion component to this course, the nature of our work as directors requires substantial outside work – both inside and outside of the classroom. We will meet **formally as a class twice a week for eight weeks**. During this time, please consider yourself part of a learning community where members support one another with suggestions and constructive criticism. Learning, observing, and sharing are central to this course. *Attitudes*

of awareness and openness are essential to your development and your contribution to the development of the other members of this class. Please leave your worries, frustrations, competitiveness, and negativity outside the classroom door as much as possible.

*Active participation in discussion and presentation of projects within the class is not only welcome; it is an essential requirement. Positive, helpful and constructive attitudes are also required! Presentations must be well prepared and shared with the understanding that questions and discussion will follow. The ongoing critique of our work as directors is crucial to everyone's learning process. You should be aware that the vast majority of class time is composed of activities in which you are REQUIRED to actively participate. *If you have no plans or interest in sincerely exploring directing techniques and accomplishing significant growth as a director, this is not the class for you.**

In this course, I will serve as your teacher, director, guide, and outside eyes/ears as we work very specifically on your individual directorial efforts. I ask that you trust me and approach the work with an open mind, an open heart, discipline and commitment, and a willingness to try new things. Then, we can work through our artistic challenges together!

Upon our return from Spring Break, we will no longer meet formally as a class. Instead, your time will be spent working with your cast in **outside rehearsals**. It is a requirement of the course that you rehearse with your cast a **minimum** of five hours a week. Note: It is required that I am invited to **at least two** outside rehearsals, after which we will schedule a meeting to discuss my observations. I will also drop in to rehearsals unannounced from time to time. It is mandatory that you attend **ALL** production meetings (times TBA), technical rehearsals (4/20-4/27) and **ALL** performances (4/28-5/3).

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Instructional / Methods / Activities Assessments:

Participation (10 pts.): *Note that attendance alone does not constitute participation.*

Participation is a large portion of your grade in this course – for good reason! As mentioned above, participation is vital in this class. This is an interactive environment and students must not only attend, but must also actively contribute to each class.

Furthermore, the completion of miscellaneous homework assignments will also be considered part of your participation grade. There will be quite a few of these short assignments and they are all important in the development of your skills as director.

Positive, respectful and helpful attitudes are mandatory. *I would like to make this very clear: I will make every effort to treat you with the respect that I believe you deserve. You are also expected to treat your peers and myself with that same respectful attitude.* If I believe that a student is disrespectful, I will ask that person to leave the classroom. In this event, the student

will receive a zero for any activities conducted that day in class and receive a zero for his/her participation grade for the day (no matter how long you have been in class). Disrespect, rudeness, disruptive behavior, or negative attitudes will *NOT BE TOLERATED*. It should go without saying that refusal to participate in any activity or part of an activity during class will result in a substantial and appropriate loss of participation points for the student.

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 and Growth grade of an 8.* 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.

Play Attendance (2 @ 10 pts): Students are required to attend performances of both Playhouse productions. Students will submit a critical analysis of some aspect or part of the production relating to the direction (not including your own show for ...*Tom and Huck*).

Directing Proposal (10 pts): Students will submit a proposal to direct **three** of their favorite plays from Don Nigro's *Further Adventures of Tom and Huck and Other Plays* (from which **one** will be assigned as the student's final play). Each proposal will include a brief reason for the selection, a synopsis of the play, Vision, Concept, special technical requirements, and special casting requirements (if any).

Director's Breakdown (20 pts): Once plays are assigned, students will submit a director's breakdown of that play. The style of this breakdown should be pragmatic: an organized compendium of information that would be useful to you as a director. Among the categories of information that would likely be useful: historical and critical material; themes; style; ground plan and blocking; pacing; key moments; problematic aspects; set pieces; metaphors; sound; colors; lighting; resonances; analogies.

Director's Notebook (15 pts): Students will submit an organized notebook that contains the following:

- Rehearsal Calendar: Prior to the first rehearsal, students will create and submit a rehearsal calendar. I will compile all calendars into a master calendar and will provide a copy for everyone.
- Rehearsal Journals: After each rehearsal, students should take a few moments to reflect upon the rehearsal and write a brief journal entry. Topics can include what was on the schedule for that rehearsal, what was actually accomplished, discoveries made, changes made, etc.
- Production Meeting Notes/Journals: Students are responsible for preparing talking points prior to and writing notes during all production meetings. Additionally, after each production meeting, students should take a few moments to write a brief journal entry to reflect upon items discussed, changes made, the collaborative process, etc.
- Cast List
- Contact List

- Working script: should include any and all blocking, notes, scoring, etc.
- Anything else that you find useful as a director: Research, articles, images, etc.

Final presentation (30 pts): Each student in this course will be responsible for casting (we will hold a single audition for the entire production – date TBD), arranging and preparing rehearsals, and directing the play; and for arranging for the instructor to visit a two rehearsals. In lieu of a final exam, we will hold a post mortem following the close of the production (time TBD).

- *Graduate Students:* Each graduate student actor will also be expected to submit a formal paper (8-10 pages) that details and reflects upon your directorial process. Sections should include: Pre-Production (Compiled from Directing Proposal and all Research), Auditions/Callbacks, Rehearsals (including tech/dress), Production Meetings, Performance/Feedback, and Final Thoughts

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.

WRITTEN WORK: Unfortunately, papers/projects do occasionally get lost. Please, for your sanity, save your work on an external source (thumb drive, external hard 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
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Course Specific Procedures:**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.

Food, Drink:

Please do not bring food or drinks into the classroom at any time (exception: you may bring bottled water with you to class).

Incompletes:

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

University Specific Policies and 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.

****Due to the nature of this course, some assignments/scheduling may need to be adapted.
All changes will be announced prior to implementation****

WEEK ONE

W Jan 21 Introduction to Course
Discussion: What is the Role of the Director?
Review: Types of Stages, Stage Directions, etc.

WEEK TWO

M Jan 26 Discuss Directing Proposals
Directing techniques: Composition/Picturization
Proxemics/Gestus

W Jan 28 Directing techniques, cont.: Focus & Composition

(TETA Convention 1/29-2/1)

WEEK THREE

M Feb 2 **Reading:** Bogart, Intro-Chpt. 1 (“Memory”)
Discuss Reading
Vision and Concept exercises

W Feb 4 **Reading:** Bogart, Chpts. 2 & 3 (“Violence” & “Eroticism”)
Discuss Reading
Vision and Concept cont.
Directing Activity: Open Scenes assigned

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

WEEK FOUR

M Feb 9 **Due:** Directing Proposal – Final Play
Reading: Bogart, Chpts. 4 & 5 (“Terror” & “Stereotype”)
Discuss Reading
Open Scene Rehearsal

W Feb 11 **Due:** Vision & Concept for Open Scene
Reading: Bogart, Chpts. 6 & 7 (“Embarrassment” & “Resistance”)
 Discuss Reading
 Open Scene Rehearsal

WEEK FIVE

M Feb 16 Final Plays Assigned
Reading: Bloom, Intro-“Reading and Researching,” and “External Analysis”
 Discuss Reading
 Discuss Director’s Breakdown
 Open Scene Rehearsals

W Feb 18 **Reading:** Bloom, Chpt. II – Pre-Production
 Discuss Reading
 Directing Activity: The Production Meeting
 Open Scene Rehearsals

WEEK SIX

M Feb 23 **Due:** Open Scene Director’s Breakdown
 Directing activity: Auditions
 Open Scene Rehearsals

W Feb 25 **Reading:** Bloom, “The Early Rehearsals”-“Staging”
 Discuss Reading
 Open Scene rehearsals

(Rabbit Hole 2/24-3/1)

WEEK SEVEN

Proposed Week for Auditions

M Mar 2 **Reading:** Bloom, “The Middle Rehearsals”-“The External Perspective in Rehearsals”
 Discuss Reading
 Open Scene rehearsals

W Mar 4 Discuss: How to Create a Rehearsal Calendar
 Open Scene rehearsals

WEEK EIGHT

M Mar 9 **Due:** *Rabbit Hole* response paper
Open Scene Performance – turn in “Director’s Notebook” for Open Scene
 Discuss *Rabbit Hole*

W Mar 11 **Due:** Rehearsal Calendar – Final Play
 Open Scene Feedback
 Discuss Rehearsal Process

(UIL OAP Clinic 3/12-13)

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

WEEKS NINE – FOURTEEN

Due by 5 p.m. on Friday, March 27th: Director’s Breakdown – Final Play
 INDIVIDUAL REHEARSALS

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

WEEK FIFTEEN

FINAL POST-MORTEM: DAY/TIME – TBD

Due: ...*Tom and Huck* Response Papers

Due: Director’s Notebook

WEEK SIXTEEN – FINALS WEEK – May 11-15