

THA 2A – Introduction To Theatre: From Page to Stage – Summer 2021

Alex Jacobs, Lecturer in Theater Arts

amjacobs@brandeis.edu - Office hours virtually by Zoom TBA

Syllabus

Course Description:

This is a page to stage experiential course, dissecting the complex art of theatre. This course hopes to endow students with a greater knowledge and love of theatre, helping them to become more informed audience members as well as artists themselves through an exploration of theatre history, performance and the complex dynamic relationships of theatre professionals. This will be achieved through:

Assigned readings, video lectures and discussions.

Play readings and discussion.

Watching, discussing and writing about theatrical productions.

Individual and group presentations with a performance element on the plays we read.

Please be aware that some of the texts and plays we will cover bring forth sensitive material, topics, and language. We will discuss this regularly as a class community.

Global Goals:

- Introduce the student to a basic history of the emergence of the art and craft of theatre.
- Introduce the student to five chief components necessary in the preparation and presentation of a theatrical experience; audience, playwright, director, designer(s) and/or technicians and the actor.
- Introduce the student to the importance of identifying the social, political and economic climates of the specific period of time a script is written and how this effects interpretation, concept and production.
- Introduce the student to the specific stages of work involved in the details with the mounting of a play to theatrical presentation and the many personnel and their duties in this process.
- Introduce the student to the theatre landscape of today in exploration of Global Theatre, Non-Traditional, Musical Theatre, Contemporary American Theatre and Theatre of Diversity, Political Theatre and Performance Art.

Class requirements:

Students must log onto LATTE at least once a week to undertake and submit assignments. These will be released once a week through the announcement section of our course (date and time may be subject to change). Theatre is by its nature an experiential and I will endeavor to honor that in our class learning, therefore students will be asked to virtually collaborate, complete practical exercises and video that work for peer review.

Equipment needed: -

- A laptop capable of streaming video content.
- A basic video recording device (phone or laptop with webcam) in order to upload our more experiential assignment responses to LATTE.
- Access to google apps (including YouTube).

If you don't have access to one of the above, please contact me AS SOON AS POSSIBLE so accommodations can be made.

Written Work

There will be a 1500 word critical response paper to a pre-recorded live theatrical event, details will be posted on LATTE. A final collaborative design project with written components as well as smaller response assignments, discussion forums and research tasks throughout the semester.

Written work must be typed proofed and written with care and effort. You will be graded on depth of content but also on form and efforts in writing. Spelling errors and lack of proofing will result in a lowered grade. Please write in a professional manner, without abbreviations and text-speak.

Quizzes:

Quizzes will be multiple choice, or true or false questions, based on reading material, videos, or independent research.

Grading:

Each week is equally weighted unless otherwise noted.

Presentations

Throughout the semester there will be short video assignments that the student will be expected to share on LATTE for possible peer review.

Students will be placed into equal groups that will be expected to prepare a design presentation on one of the plays we will be reading in class. Individuals will choose a role of one the theatre professionals that would be involved in an imagined staging of one of the plays we will read (any role may be chosen except the playwright). They will collaborate with the other group members to create a cohesive well-prepared vision of the production that will be presented and recorded over Zoom for peer review.

You must be available to attend group organized virtual meetings, be respectful of other people's time, and show up when you agree to meet.

Late work will be penalized. If extreme personal circumstances cause you to need an extension, make sure you discuss it with me ***before the deadline***.

I respect and uphold University policies and regulations pertaining to the observation of religious holidays; assistance available to physically, visually and hearing impaired students; plagiarism; sexual harassment; and discrimination. I am available to discuss appropriate academic accommodations that may be required for students with disabilities or special needs.

Communication with me:

I want to be as available as possible to each of you, please feel free to email me at anytime, and will endeavor to answer within 24hrs (48 on weekends). I am also available for face to face Zoom meetings. Given the community we are creating, remember that your classmates are also your partners in this course, check with a classmate and rely on each other as well as on me for questions.

IF YOU ARE A STUDENT WITH A DOCUMENTED DISABILITY ON RECORD AT BRANDEIS UNIVERSITY AND WISH TO HAVE A REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION MADE FOR YOU IN THIS CLASS, PLEASE CONTACT ME AT THE START OF THE TERM TO DISCUSS WHAT PROVISIONS ARE POSSIBLE.

Grading:

70% Weekly assignments (Quizzes, presentations, research projects, responses).

10% Response paper

20% Group project

Assignments / Assessment (Subject to change)

Week 1 – Why Theatre?

Objective: Be able to chart the basic historical development of theatre and the audience relationships to the theatre through major periods of theatre.

Assignments:

- Introductions – Forum
- Video lecture & Quiz
- Discussion forum
- Identifying elements of Greek drama - Watch Oedipus on The Theatre+ platform – Submit a short written response.

Week 2 – Theatre as a Mirror

Objectives: Be able to identify the different types of theatre in today's global theatrical landscape, including theatre for social change.

Assignments:

- Video Lecture & Quiz
- Discussion Forum
- “Types of Theatre” – Internet Research Project. Students will research different types of theatre and create their own definitions for each, providing weblinks to companies specializing in that specific type of theatre.

Week 3 – The Theatre Practitioners: The Vision of the Playwright

Objectives: Be able to define the major tasks for the playwright in creation of a play.

Assignments:

- Reading – “Joe Turners Come & Gone”
- Video and Quiz.
- Discussion forum

Week 4 - The Theatre Practitioners: The Actor & Director

Objective: Be able to describe the role of the actor and the major styles and methods of acting. Be able to describe the role of the director in a theatrical production – Be able to practically apply some of the skills of the director & Actor.

Assignments:

- Readings, video lecture and Quiz.
- Discussion forum
- “Stage Pictures”
- The Actor – Scene scoring

Week 5 – The Designers

Objectives: Be able to identify the role and major tasks associated with designers (scenic, costume, lighting, sound and special effects) and theatre technicians. Be able to identify the five major types of theatrical spaces and explain their differences when dealing with theatrical experiences.

Assignments:

- Video lecture & Quiz
- Discussion forum
- Mini design exercise based on interpreting stage directions
- Compare & contrast two interpretations of the same scene (from Digital Theatre+) from a design point of view, with specific prompt questions.

Week 6 – Style: Realism Vs. Theatricalism

Objectives: Be able to understand and relate to the difference between Realistic Theatre and Non-Realistic Theatre.

Assignments:

- Video Lecture & Quiz
- Discussion forum
- Creative assignment based on Brechtian Theatre – Collaborative video submission.
- Play reading – TBA – Response with prompts.

ASSIGN FINAL PROJECT

Week 7 – The American Musical –

Objectives: Be able to re-count the origins of musical theatre in America and understand the role of the producer, director and choreographer in mounting a Musical production.

Assignments:

- Reading - PBS Articles
- Discussion forum
- Watching a musical TBD
- Quiz
- Response paper

Week 8 – The dramaturg and the critic

Objectives: Be able to identify the roles and actions of the reviewer and the critic

Assignments:

- Video Lecture – Quiz
- Write a theatrical critique after viewing a “Live” (well prerecorded in our current situation) play
- Quiz

Week 9 – The Structure of Drama – Dramatic Theory –

Objectives: To be able to describe and apply dramatic theory in the analysis of a play.

Assignments:

- Video lecture –
- Play reading (Glass menagerie) and analysis.
- Peer review of analysis and graded forum.

Week 10 – Final project - Production Design/Concept project –

Objective – The synthesis and practical application of the students knowledge and understanding of the process of producing theatre.

Assignment:

- Students will be placed into equal groups that will be expected to prepare a design presentation on one of the plays we will be reading in class. Individuals will choose a role of one the theatre professionals that would be involved in an imagined staging of one of the plays we will read (any role may be chosen except the playwright). They will collaborate with the other group members to create a cohesive well-prepared vision of the production that will be presented and recorded over Zoom for peer review.