

**SUL ROSS STATE UNIVERSITY**  
**THEA 1310-001 INTRODUCTION TO THE THEATRE**

Spring 2016

MWF

10:00 am – 10:50 am

Briscoe Administration Building  
(BAB) Room 304

Marjorie Scott, Assistant Professor of  
Communication & Theatre

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Office Hours: MWF 1:00 pm – 2:00 pm &  
T/TH 11:00 am -12 pm, or by appointment

Office: FAB 203A

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### Course Description

The readings and viewings for this course will introduce you to dramatic texts and provide you with fundamental knowledge of dramatic principles and theatrical styles. This course also teaches you how to become a knowledgeable audience member and to appreciate the significance that theatre holds in a given cultural context.

This course offers the experience of collaborating with your peers in performing/directing/set designing scenes from culturally significant plays. As this course is intended to be an introduction to theatre, no prior theatrical experience is required.

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### Required Text

Brook, Peter, *The Empty Space: A Book About the Theatre: Deadly, Holy, Rough, Immediate*, Touchstone (reprint edition 1995).

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### Materials Required

- 1) A working e-mail account. You are required to check your Sul Ross email account daily.
- 2) A working blackboard account.
- 3) I strongly suggest you bring paper and a writing utensil to every class meeting.
- 4) A binder in which to keep the copious pages I will be distributing throughout the term. It is your responsibility to keep track of your script pages and handouts. You must bring all assigned reading to class with you.

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### Program Learning Outcomes *The graduating student will demonstrate*

- 1) Knowledge of eras and contributions made throughout Theatre History and Musical Theatre History.

Additionally, the graduating student with a concentration in Acting/Directing will demonstrate:

- 2) The ability to express themselves creatively through appropriate theatrical performance
- 3) The ability to analyze a script.
- 4) The ability to work creatively with actors and technicians in mounting a laboratory theatrical production.
- 5) The ability to apply standard requirements to all aspects of technical production.

Additionally, the graduating student with a concentration in technical/design will demonstrate:

- 6) The ability to apply all approaches to the theatrical design and rendering of the design.
- 7) The ability to address all technical aspects of a theatrical production.

Additionally, the student will be able to:

- 8) Describe the theater process and compose a functional definition of the theatre event.
- 9) Describe the close link between theatre and religion.
- 10) Name the basic responsibilities and roles of the playwright, director, actor, and designer in the theatre production
- 11) Have a basic understanding of the difference between tragedy, comedy, melodrama, farce, epic, and absurdist theater.
- 12) Describe the uniqueness of the theatre art.
- 13) Understand and describe the elements necessary to bring about a unified production.
- 14) Identify a variety of theater spaces.
- 15) Know the names and works associated with key figures in the theatre.
- 16) Demonstrate an understanding of acting, directing, playwriting, or design in the areas of set, sound, or makeup.

## **Course Objectives**

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Among other topics, students will:

- Articulate a working vocabulary of theatre terminology
- Demonstrate beginner knowledge of basic stagecraft
- Evaluate a performance for its formal qualities
- Demonstrate how to read and analyze stage plays
- Articulate the jobs of different types of theatre professionals
- Analyze the role that theatre plays in contemporary culture, particularly the ways in which theatre addresses issues of gender, religion, race, ethnicity, sexuality, and class.

## **Course Requirements**

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**Attendance & Participation:** Regular attendance is expected and you should come to class prepared to offer thoughtful comments and questions about the material. Your participation grade is 20% of your overall grade. If you're not present, you can't participate so show up! But attendance does not equal participation. So, speak up, too! After two (2) unexcused absences, I will deduct one half-letter grade for each unexcused absence.

Absence Policy, from the Sul Ross State University 2012-2014 Course Catalogue:

*“Regular class attendance is important to the attainment of the educational objectives of the University. Each instructor will keep class attendance records, and the instructor's policy on class attendance will be explained at the beginning of the semester or term.*

*The instructor will drop a student from a course when the student has a total of nine (9) absences.*

*An absence is defined as non-attendance in fifty minutes of class; for example, non-attendance in a one and one-half hour class will constitute one and one-half absences and non-attendance in a three-hour class will constitute three absences. An absence because of participation in an official University activity is considered to be an authorized absence.”*

**Cell phones, texting, and engaging in activities unrelated to class on your computer are all strictly prohibited while you are in this class. IF I CATCH YOU USING YOUR CELL PHONE OR THE COMPUTER FOR ACTIVITIES NOT RELATED TO CLASS, first I will belittle you, and then I will lower your overall participation grade by 20%.**

**Excused Absences:** Excused absences from class include: religious holidays, an illness (a doctor's note must be submitted to the instructor), a death in the family (an obituary or funeral program must be submitted), or court dates (an official notice from the court must be submitted). If you miss a quiz or project deadline due to illness you must provide written documentation from the Health Center (or an outside health care provider), verifying dates of treatment and the time period during which you were unable to meet academic responsibilities. All other absences will be marked as unexcused.

**Build Hours:** You are required to sign up for five hours of build time on one of our build days for *The Miser* and *Spring Awakening*. I will pass around a sign-in sheet and you must choose one time slot, fill in your name, and then show up for your five hours at that allotted time. If you are a theatre major, then you are not required to complete five additional hours for this class as you are already required to participate on the build days. In lieu of these five hours, theatre majors will each give a 15-minute presentation to the class on one of the five plays we'll be reading/discussing throughout the course. Each major will be assigned one of the plays during the first week of the semester.

**The Empty Space Papers:** You must read Peter Brook's *The Empty Space: A Book About The Theatre: Deadly, Holy, Rough, Immediate*, and for each section, write a one-page

analysis of Mr. Brook's thesis about theatre. What is he saying about theatre and how do his ideas pertain to our readings and class discussions?

**Performance Attendance & Analysis:** You are required to attend one performance *each* of The Sul Ross University's productions of *The Miser* and *Spring Awakening*, both in the Studio Theatre. See Blackboard for performance dates and times. You are required to write a two-page critical analysis for *each* production. The analysis for *The Miser* is due on Wednesday, March 9<sup>th</sup> at the beginning of class. Papers for *Spring Awakening* are due Wednesday, May 4<sup>th</sup> (the last day of class). Emailed or late papers will not be accepted. You must also turn in a signed program for each production. Programs must be stapled to your paper and must be signed by the director of the play or by the House Manager. I will not accept programs if they are not signed.

**Group Project:** You will work in groups of four (4) for your final project. Each group will be given a play script from the instructor and each group must select a scene of 5-7 minutes in length to present to the class. Each group will have two actors, a director, and a designer. The director of each group must meet with his/her actors to rehearse the scene before the final performance. I recommend rehearsing as many times as possible but you must rehearse a minimum of 6 times before the final performance on Monday, May 9<sup>th</sup>. All directors must provide the instructor with a detailed rehearsal schedule signed by the actors. The actors must be off-book and work collaboratively with the director to develop the scene fully. The designer's job is to discuss the images, language, and ideas of the play with the director, create sketches of the costumes for each character, and design a set for the scene. Designers are strongly encouraged to attend a rehearsal. All members of the group are required to read the full play from which their scene is selected. **This project will serve as the final exam for this course.**

**PLEASE BE AWARE THAT MANY OF THE REQUIRED READINGS, VIDEOS, AND PLAYS CONTAIN MATURE CONTENT, EXPLICIT LANGUAGE, DIFFICULT THEMES, AND/OR NUDITY.**

**Format:** All assignments must be typewritten in 12-point type, Times New Roman or Arial font, double-spaced with 1-inch margins, and free of errors. **You will be graded on both the content of your ideas and the clarity and accuracy of your writing, so I strongly suggest that you visit the Writing Center in MAB 102 before turning in your papers.**

**Late Papers:** Papers must be submitted as soon as class begins on the day that they are due. For every day that a paper is late, I will deduct 20% of the total grade. After three days late, the paper will be an "F" no matter how brilliant it is. Unless you make specific arrangements with me **PRIOR TO THE DUE DATE**, papers are due at the start of class in hard copy only.

**Academic Integrity:** The University has a Code of Academic Integrity, which prohibits, among other things, cheating on exams, plagiarizing papers or portions of papers, submitting the same paper for credit in two courses without authorization, buying papers,

submitting fraudulent documents, forging signatures, and using unauthorized study aids (including old quizzes and exams). This class abides by that code.

**Challenges:** If you have a concern about a grade on an assignment you must present the graded assignment and one paragraph explaining your comments on the grade (including any supporting evidence) to the instructor no later than one week after the grade is posted. **After one week, questions about grades will not be considered. This policy applies to ALL grades – including quiz grades and missing grades.**

## Grading

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Assignments are valued as follows:

1) Build Day (5 hours)/Student Presentations	15%
2) The Empty Space papers (worth 5% each)	15%
3) <i>The Miser</i> Critical Analysis	10%
4) <i>Spring Awakening</i> Critical Analysis	10%
5) Group Project	30%
6) Class Participation	20%

### Grading Criteria:

A = Exceptional. Demonstrates mastery of material beyond expectation. Professional quality of work. Highest level of scholarship.

B = Above average. Demonstrates mastery of material. High level of scholarship.

C = Average. Demonstrates proficiency with material. Work is of amateur quality. Ordinary level of scholarship.

D = Below Average. Work shows errors, careless mistakes, or is just plain wrong. Poor scholarship

F – Failure. Material incomplete. Work grossly negligent or incomplete. No evidence of scholarship present.

### Students with Disabilities

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Sul Ross State University is committed to equal access in compliance with the Americans With Disabilities Act of 1973. It is the student's responsibility to initiate a request for accessibility services. Students seeking accessibility services must contact Mary Schwartz in Counseling and Accessibility Services, Ferguson Hall, Room 112. The mailing address is P.O. Box C-171, Sul Ross State University, Alpine, Texas 79832. Telephone: [432-837-8203](tel:432-837-8203).

### Class Dates: Assignments and Deadlines

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*Note that these dates and the details of each class are subject to change at the instructor's discretion*

Day	Date	Topics and Assignments
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Wed	Jan 20	Review syllabus, assignments, and deadlines. Expected outcomes. Assign short writing assignment (P. 40 of <i>The Empty Space</i> )
Fri	Jan 22	Read: <i>Disgraced</i> by Ayad Akhtar
Mon	Jan 25	Read: <i>Disgraced</i>
Wed	Jan 27	Read: <i>Disgraced</i>
Fri	Jan 29	Read: <i>Disgraced</i>
Mon	Feb 1	Student Presentation/Discussion: <i>Disgraced</i>
Wed	Feb 3	Areas of the Stage/Theatre Venues
Fri	Feb 5	Who's Who in the Theatre
Mon	Feb 8	Attending a Play
Wed	Feb 10	Acting (Stanislavsky/The Method/Casting/Blocking/Rehearsal) <b>ASSIGN GROUPS &amp; SCENES</b>
Fri	Feb 12	<b>Papers on the 1st section of <i>The Empty Space: The Deadly Theatre</i> DUE IN CLASS</b>
Mon	Feb 15	Read: <i>A Streetcar Named Desire</i> by Tennessee Williams
Wed	Feb 17	Read: <i>A Streetcar Named Desire</i>
Fri	Feb 19	Read: <i>A Streetcar Named Desire</i>
Mon	Feb 22	Read: <i>A Streetcar Named Desire</i>
Wed	Feb 24	Student Presentation/Discussion: <i>A Streetcar Named Desire</i>
Fri	Feb 26	Watch: <i>A Streetcar Named Desire</i> (1951, Dir. Elia Kazan)
Mon	Feb 29	Watch: <i>A Streetcar Named Desire</i>
Wed	Mar 2	Watch: <i>A Streetcar Named Desire</i>
Fri	Mar 4	Acting
Mon	Mar 7	Acting
Wed	Mar 9	Acting/ <i>The Miser</i> papers <b>DUE IN CLASS</b>
Fri	Mar 11	Acting
Mon	Mar 14	SPRING BREAK. NO CLASS.
Wed	Mar 16	SPRING BREAK. NO CLASS.
Fri	Mar 18	SPRING BREAK. NO CLASS
Mon	Mar 21	<b>Papers on 2nd section of <i>The Empty Space: The Holy Theatre</i> DUE IN CLASS</b>
Wed	Mar 23	First Presentation of Scenes
Fri	Mar 25	First Presentation of Scenes
Mon	Mar 28	First Presentation of Scenes

Wed Mar 30 First Presentation of Scenes  
Fri Apr 1 TBD  
Mon Apr 4 Read: *The Cherry Orchard* by Anton Chekhov  
Wed Apr 6 Read: *The Cherry Orchard*  
Fri Apr 8 Read: *The Cherry Orchard*  
Mon Apr 11 Read: *The Cherry Orchard*  
Wed Apr 13 Student Presentation/Discussion: *The Cherry Orchard*  
Fri Apr 15 **Paper on the 3rd & 4th sections of *The Empty Space*: The Rough & Immediate Theater DUE IN CLASS**  
Mon Apr 18 Read: *Lysistrata* by Aristophanes  
Wed Apr 20 Read: *Lysistrata*  
Fri Apr 22 Read: *Lysistrata*  
Mon Apr 25 Student Presentation/Discussion: *Lysistrata*  
Wed Apr 27 Musical Theatre: *Hamilton* by Lin-Manuel Miranda (Act One)  
Fri Apr 29 Musical Theatre: *Hamilton* (Act One)  
Mon May 2 Musical Theatre/Student Presentation & Discussion: *Hamilton*  
Wed May 4 ***Spring Awakening* papers DUE IN CLASS**  
**FINAL EXAM: Monday, May 9<sup>th</sup> 10:15 a.m. -12:15 a.m.**