

SUL ROSS STATE UNIVERSITY
THEA 1310-002 INTRODUCTION TO THE THEATRE

Spring 2017
Mon/Wed/Fri
11:00 am – 11:50 am
Fine Arts Building
(FAB) Room 105/Studio Theatre

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Communication & Theatre
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Office: FAB 203A
Office Hours: MWF 10:00 am – 11:00 am
All other times by appointment

Course Description

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

This course offers students an opportunity to collaborate with their peers as actors, directors, and designers. Students will work together to rehearse, design, and perform scenes from culturally significant plays. This course is intended to be an introduction to theatre, and therefore no prior theatre experience is required.

Required Text

None, but I will be giving you scripts and plenty of handouts. Please keep all handouts in a binder or folder and please bring the binder/folder to every class meeting.

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.

Student 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

Among other topics, students will:

- Articulate a working vocabulary of theater terminology
- Evaluate a performance for its formal qualities
- Demonstrate basic knowledge of reading and analyzing scripts
- Articulate the jobs of different types of theater professionals
- Analyze the role that theater plays in contemporary culture, particularly the ways in which theater addresses issues of gender, religion, race, ethnicity, sexuality, and class.

Course Requirements

Attendance & Participation: Regular attendance is expected and you should come to class prepared to offer thoughtful comments and ask questions about the material.

Your participation grade is 15% of your overall grade. We will be reading plays aloud in class and if you volunteer to read a role (more than once!), this will definitely help your participation grade. Attendance does not equal participation. So, speak up.

After two (2) unexcused absences, I will start deducting one-third of a letter grade from your overall participation grade for each subsequent unexcused absence. If you miss more than eight (8) classes, you must withdraw from the course or I will drop you with the grade of "F."

The 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 this class are all strictly prohibited during class time. If I see you using your cell phone during class, I reserve the right to ask you to leave and you will be marked absent. Repeat offenders may be asked to drop the class.

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 to the instructor), or court dates (an official notice from the court must be submitted to the instructor). If you miss an assignment 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 four hours of building/painting time on one of our Saturday build days from 9:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. I will pass around a sign-in sheet

and you must choose one time slot, fill in your name, and then show up at the theater or scene shop at your allotted time.

Critical Analysis Responses: Throughout the semester we will read three plays aloud in class, and view one filmed production. The play titles are: *Disgraced*, *Zoot Suit*, *A Raisin in the Sun*, and *The Grapes of Wrath*. I will post questions about each play to Blackboard and you are required to email your answers to mscott3@sulross.edu no later than 5 p.m. on their respective due dates. See the calendar section of this syllabus for specific due dates.

Performance Attendance & Analysis: You are required to attend at least one performance of *Cabaret* (opening Saturday, March 25th). See Blackboard for a full list of performance dates and times as well as a detailed assignment. You are required to write a 2-3 page critical analysis of the production. The analysis for *Cabaret* is due on **Wednesday, April 19th** at the beginning of class. **I do not accept late papers.** You must also staple your signed program to your paper. Programs must be signed by the director of the play (Dona Roman) or by the House Manager.

Group Project: You will work in groups of four (4) for your final project. Each group must select a scene from one of the plays we read or view this semester. Scenes must be of 5-7 minutes in length and presented to the class on the day of the final. 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 each group rehearse as many times as possible but you must rehearse a minimum of 6 times before the final performance on Tuesday, May 9th. **All directors must provide the instructor with a detailed rehearsal schedule signed by the actors no later than Friday, February 10th.** Actors must be off-book (lines memorized) and work collaboratively with the director to develop the scene as fully as possible. The designer's job is to discuss the images, language, and ideas of the play with the director, create sketches or collages of the costumes for each character, and design a set for the scene. Designers are strongly encouraged to attend **at least one** 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 Assignments: Papers must be submitted as soon as class begins on the day that they are due. I do not accept late work.

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.**

Grading

Assignments are valued as follows:

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|---|-----|
| 1) Saturday Build Day (4 hours) | 10% |
| 2) <i>Disgraced/Zoot Suit/A Raisin in the Sun</i> | 20% |
| 3) <i>Cabaret</i> Critical Analysis Paper | 15% |
| 4) <i>The Grapes of Wrath</i> Critical Analysis | 10% |
| 5) Group Project (FINAL) | 30% |
| 6) Participation | 15% |

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

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 Schwartze in Counseling and Accessibility Services, Ferguson Hall, Room 112. The mailing address is P.O. Box C-122, Sul Ross State University, Alpine, Texas 79832. Telephone: [432-837-8698](tel:432-837-8698). E-mail: mschwartz@sulross.edu.

Class Dates: Assignments and Deadlines

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

| Day | Date | Topics and Assignments |
|-----|--------|---|
| Wed | Jan 18 | Review syllabus, assignments, and deadlines. Expected outcomes. Writing assignment in class: What is the role of theater? |
| Fri | Jan 20 | Script Analysis/Read: <i>Disgraced</i> by Ayad Akhtar |
| Mon | Jan 23 | Read: <i>Disgraced</i> |
| Wed | Jan 25 | Read: <i>Disgraced</i> |
| Fri | Jan 27 | Read: <i>Disgraced</i> |
| Mon | Jan 30 | Read: <i>Disgraced</i> |
| Wed | Feb 1 | Read: <i>Disgraced</i> /Assign groups for final |
| Fri | Feb 3 | NO CLASS – Meet with your group (Homework: Finish reading <i>Disgraced</i>) |
| Mon | Feb 6 | Discuss: <i>Disgraced</i> |
| Wed | Feb 8 | Theatre Design |
| Fri | Feb 10 | Theatre Design |
| Mon | Feb 13 | Acting (<i>Disgraced</i> responses due by 5:00 p.m.) |
| Wed | Feb 15 | Acting |
| Fri | Feb 17 | Acting |
| Mon | Feb 20 | Acting – Work on group scenes in class |
| Wed | Feb 22 | Acting – Work on group scenes in class |
| Fri | Feb 24 | Acting – Work on group scenes in class |
| Mon | Feb 27 | Read: <i>Zoot Suit</i> by Luis Valdez |
| Wed | Mar 1 | Read: <i>Zoot Suit</i> |
| Fri | Mar 3 | Read: <i>Zoot Suit</i> |
| Mon | Mar 6 | Read: <i>Zoot Suit</i> |
| Wed | Mar 8 | Read: <i>Zoot Suit</i> |
| Fri | Mar 10 | Read: <i>Zoot Suit</i> |
| Mon | Mar 13 | SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS |
| Wed | Mar 15 | SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS |
| Fri | Mar 17 | SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS |
| Mon | Mar 20 | Read <i>Zoot Suit</i> |

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| Wed | Mar 22 | Read <i>Zoot Suit</i> |
| Fri | Mar 24 | Discuss <i>Zoot Suit</i> (Homework Due: Finish reading <i>Zoot Suit</i>) |
| Mon | Mar 27 | Musical Theater (<i>Cabaret, Oklahoma, Hamilton</i>) |
| Wed | Mar 29 | Musical Theater |
| Fri | Mar 31 | Watch: <i>Grapes of Wrath</i> (Reading due: Steinbeck handout) |
| Mon | Apr 3 | Watch: <i>Grapes of Wrath</i> (<i>Zoot Suit</i> responses due by 5:00 p.m.) |
| Wed | Apr 5 | Watch: <i>Grapes of Wrath</i> |
| Fri | Apr 7 | Discuss: <i>Grapes of Wrath</i> |
| Mon | Apr 10 | Read: <i>A Raisin in the Sun</i> by Lorraine Hansberry |
| Wed | Apr 12 | Read: <i>A Raisin in the Sun</i> |
| Fri | Apr 14 | Read: <i>A Raisin in the Sun</i> (<i>Grapes of Wrath</i> responses due by 5 p.m.) |
| Mon | Apr 17 | Read: <i>A Raisin in the Sun</i> |
| Wed | Apr 19 | Read: <i>A Raisin in the Sun</i> /(<i>Cabaret</i> papers due in class) |
| Fri | Apr 21 | Read: <i>A Raisin in the Sun</i> |
| Mon | Apr 24 | Read: <i>A Raisin in the Sun</i> |
| Wed | Apr 26 | Read: <i>A Raisin in the Sun</i> |
| Fri | Apr 28 | Discuss: <i>A Raisin in the Sun</i> |
| Mon | May 1 | Who's Who in Theater |
| Wed | May 3 | Theater Venues/Evaluations (<i>A Raisin in the Sun</i> responses due by 5 pm) |
| Fri | May 5 | NO CLASS |

FINAL EXAM: TUESDAY, MAY 9th from 10:15 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.