

SUL ROSS STATE UNIVERSITY THEA 4304-001 DIRECTING II

Spring 2024
Tues/Thurs
12:30 – 1:45 pm
FAB 105 (Studio Theatre)
Office hours: Tues/Thurs 2:00 – 3:00 pm

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Course Description

This class is the second half of a one-year study in directing for the stage. Students will select, analyze, and breakdown scripts in preparation for rehearsal and production in addition to getting practical experience in auditioning, casting, scheduling rehearsals, blocking, guiding actors through performance, diagnosing problems, and directing a 20-minute sequence to be performed for a live audience.

To you, the student: The skills you learn in this class are intended to help you effectively lead a team of artists in creating a theatrical production. These skills will prove useful in other positions of leadership. I look forward to working with each of you as you continue to develop your craft.

Required Text *(available at Amazon)*

- 1) Clurman, Harold, *On Directing*, 1997, Fireside
- 2) Mitchell, Katie, *The Director's Craft: A Handbook for the Theatre*, 2009, Routledge
- 3) Hauser, Frank and Reich, Russell, *Notes on Directing*, 2018, RCR Creative Press

Materials Required

- 1) A working e-mail account. **You are required to check your Sul Ross email account regularly.**
- 2) A working Blackboard account.
- 3) The Zoom app (for the first week or two)
- 4) Writing utensil and paper for notetaking
- 5) A tablet or computer to view required video content. Viewing the content on smart phones not recommended.
- 6) Access to Digital Theatre+ (may be accessed through the SRSU library)

MARKETABLE SKILLS

Strong oral and written communication skills.

Strong analytical skills.

Strong teamwork and collaboration skills

Through a combination of coursework and laboratory work, i.e., theatrical productions, our students will gain the opportunity to explore and develop all three marketable skills. Specifically, students will learn how to analyze scripts, and communicate their findings via written assignments. They will also be encouraged to support their analysis orally through classroom discussion and their Comprehensive Oral Exam at the end of the senior year. Theatrical productions will provide the opportunity for actors and technicians to problem solve and work collaboratively, developing strong teamwork skills.

Student Learning Outcomes *The graduating student will demonstrate:*

1. knowledge of the various theatrical genres, styles, and works made throughout theatre history;
2. the ability to analyze scripts;
3. the ability to analyze all technical aspects of a theatrical production;
4. describe the theatre process and compose a functional definition for the theatre event;
5. name the basic responsibilities and roles of the playwright, director, actor and designer in the theatre production;
6. have a basic understanding of the difference between tragedy, comedy, melodrama, farce, epic and absurdist theatre and be able to apply them to productions;
7. describe the uniqueness of the theatre art;
8. understand and describe the elements necessary to bring about a unified production;
9. identify a variety of theatre spaces; and
10. know the names and works associated with key figures (playwrights, directors, designers, performers) in the theatre

Course Objectives

- Articulate a working vocabulary of directing techniques
- Demonstrate intermediate-level mastery of script analysis
- Demonstrate an understanding of the principles of blocking and staging
- Develop beginner-level mastery of directing actors in a believable and dynamic scene.
- Demonstrate beginner-level mastery of diagnosing problems in performance and determining potential solutions
- Demonstrate understanding the function of design elements in delineating dramatic action.

Course Requirements

Attendance & Participation: I expect you to come to class and to participate fully. This includes participation in discussion and analysis as well as classroom activities. After two

(2) unexcused absences, your overall course grade will go down by one full letter grade for each unexcused absence.

The following is the Absence Policy, from the Sul Ross State University 2020 - 2022 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.”

Excused Absences: Excused absences from class include: a university event for which you are required to attend, 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 project deadline or presentation 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.**

Assigned Reading: Directors read lots of plays and books about plays and books about directing, so get used to reading **a lot**. All assigned reading for this class is required. The readings are intended to expand your knowledge and skills, so give yourself a gift and do the reading.

Script Analysis/Directing Practice: We will read, analyze, and direct scenes from short play *The Man in a Case* by Wendy Wasserstein.

Viewing: I will be assigning viewing of plays on Digital Theatre+ which we will discuss in class. All viewing available on the SR library database.

Directing Practice: In this class you will have the opportunity to practice your directing skills through in-class scenes and blocking exercises. I strongly and compassionately encourage you to take risks. Dare to do your best and to make mistakes. My hope is that you’ll learn to diagnose and solve problems in a scene. I hope you will learn to talk with actors and collaborate with them in a positive and productive way. Each actor is an individual with a unique heart and brain and should be treated accordingly. You will practice giving notes to actors – there is an art to it. Rome wasn’t built in a day and this same concept applies to directing actors. One thing at a time, or you may overwhelm or

discourage your actors. Practice kindness and empathy. When we direct, we share intimate and important stories about the human experience all while in collaborating with other artists. What a gift! We must handle each other with care.

Audition: We, as a class, will host auditions for the directing finals. The goal of this audition is to provide you with further practical experience with the audition and casting process. Auditions are open to the entire SRSU and Alpine/Marfa community.

Finals Rehearsal: We will have a dress rehearsal on a date TBD. All actors and directors must be available for final dress.

Final Scene: Final Scene: Your final project for this class is to direct a 20-minute sequence from a play of your choosing. I recommend rehearsing with your actors for 5-6 weeks, at least 3 times a week. **Each director must arrange a visit from the instructor to at least two rehearsals.** You are free to use any actors you wish but try to use students first. All actors need to be available and present for rehearsals and for the final performances at the end of the term.

Additionally, submit the following written work:

- 1) A packet or binder of your inspiration and ideas for lighting, sound, costumes, props, and set designs. Include images, colors, textures, playlists, anything that expresses the mood, tone, period, feel, and look of the play. You do not have to be literal in your depictions. Plan for about 10-15 images total.
- 2) Your director's concept statement.
- 3) A written document that addresses the following: A) How do your design choices support the idea, time-period, and overall tone of the play? B) What kind of stage configuration(s) do you think would work well for this play and why? C) How did arrive at your casting choices? Explain.
- 4) Pre-production and rehearsal notes (may be hand-written or typed)
- 5) A copy of your selected sequence scored for events, beats, actions, and titles for each event.
- 6) A 2-3-page reflection paper detailing your experience directing. What challenges did you face? How did you overcome them? Explain in detail. What did you learn about yourself as a director? As a person? What are a few ways in which you would like to improve as a director? Be as detailed and specific as possible. **Due on May 8 at 10:15 am.**

Casting: While SR theatre students should be given first dibs on the roles in your final scenes, you are free to use any actors who are available for ALL rehearsals and for the final performance. Cast the most experienced actors possible.

Late Work: We all get behind or overwhelmed sometimes. If you anticipate being late on an assignment, please inform me before the assignment due date. I am less inclined to

help you if you wait to contact me until after the deadline has passed. I urge you all to take charge of your schedule and assignments early in the semester, and plan accordingly.

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.

Grading

Assignments are valued as follows:

1) Required viewing and discussion	10%
2) Audition for finals	10%
3) Director's concept statement	15%
4) Final Scene (supplemental)	20%
5) Final Scene (Performance)	30%
6) In-Class Exercises	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 Schwartz Grisham 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: [432-837-8203](tel:432-837-8203). E-mail: mschwartz@sulross.edu or erzulie.clarke@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	IN-CLASS TOPICS/EXERCISES	READING/ASSIGNMENT DUE IN CLASS
Thurs	Jan 18	Review syllabus and expected outcomes.	
Tues	Jan 23	Read <i>Man in a Case</i> in class (scripts provided). Discuss the play and assign research.	
Thurs	Jan 25	Discuss research and floor plan for set. Assign costume and set research.	Bring assigned research
Tues	Jan 30	Share and discuss research about set (location) and costume. Discuss casting.	Bring costume and set research
Thurs	Feb 1	Direct scenes from <i>Man in a Case</i>	
Tues	Feb 6	Direct scenes from <i>Man in a Case</i>	Selected play for final due. (Bring copy of script to class)
Thurs	Feb 8	Direct scenes from <i>Man in a Case</i> **Schedule Auditions for Final (must happen in Feb)	
Tues	Feb 13	Read selected sequences and arc of change. How does the sequence begin and how does it end? Explore contrast.	Selected sequence from play for final due. (Bring copy to class)
Thurs	Feb 15	Read selected sequences and arc of change. How does the sequence begin and how does it end? Explore contrast.	
Tues	Feb 20	Breaking down the script (bring your entire sequence to class)	
Thurs	Feb 22	Breaking down the script (bring your entire sequence to class)	Director's Concept DUE

Tues	Feb 27	Scheduling rehearsals (bring your entire sequence)	Cast for final must be finalized and names of actors given to instructor.
Thurs	Feb 29	Running rehearsals and blocking (bring your entire sequence)	
Tues	Mar 5	Blocking (bring your entire sequence)	
Thurs	Mar 7	Blocking (bring your entire sequence)	
Tues	March 12	SPRING BREAK	
Thurs	March 14	SPRING BREAK	
Tues	March 19	Scenic/Properties design	Bring images to class
Thurs	March 21	Costume design	Bring images to class
Tues	March 26	Lighting design	Bring images to class
Thurs	March 28	Sound design	Bring files to class
Tues	April 2	Intimacy Coordination/Combat	
Thurs	April 4	The Stage Manager	
Tues	April 9	The Producer	
Thurs	April 11	Review logistics for directing finals	Bring typed list of all props and set pieces needed for final to class
Tues	April 16	Check in. How are rehearsals going? Discuss diagnosing and issues.	
Thurs	April 18	In-class exercise on conflict resolution and diagnosing issues.	
Tues	April 23	Tech and dress rehearsal protocol	
Thurs	April 25	TBD	

Tues	April 30	Review logistics for directing finals	
TBD	TBD	Directing Finals Rehearsal	
TBD	TBD	Directing Finals Performance	
TBD	TBD	Directing Finals Performance	
FINAL	Wednesday, May 8 10:15 am – 12:15 pm – Postmortem discussion and written materials due.		