

Sul Ross State University
THEA 1310-2W1 Introduction to the Theater

Summer II 2024
Web-delivered course
Office hours by appointment only
This course satisfies the creative arts core requirement.

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Course Description

Through the readings, viewings, discussions, and writing assignments in this course, students will develop an appreciation and understanding of theatre, including its origins, formal elements, and the development of its genres throughout history.

The readings and viewings for this course will introduce students to dramatic texts, provide them with fundamental knowledge of dramatic principles and theatrical styles, and address a range of contemporary social issues.

This course is intended as an introduction to theatre and does not require prior theatrical experience.

Required Texts

No textbook is required for this class. All readings will be provided and posted to Blackboard by the instructor. There will also be required viewings, including plays.

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) Access to Digital Theatre + (use the SRSU Library Database)
- 4) A device used for viewing – preferably a computer or tablet. It’s difficult to view recorded plays on a phone because the screen is so small. Do the best you can to access a computer or tablet.

Program Learning Outcomes *The graduating student will:*

- 1) Demonstrate knowledge of the various theatrical genres, styles, and works made throughout theatre history;
- 2) demonstrate the ability to analyze scripts;
- 3) demonstrate 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) demonstrate an understanding of the elements necessary to bring about a unified production;
- 9) identify a variety of theatre spaces; and
- 10) list and describe of the names and works associated with key figures (playwrights, directors, designers, performers) in the theatre.

Student Learning Objectives (SLOs)

Among other topics, students will:

- Articulate a working vocabulary of theatre terminology
- Evaluate a theatre performance for its formal qualities
- Demonstrate beginner knowledge of script analysis, including given circumstances, idea, character, plot, rhythm, language, and spectacle.
- 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, race, ethnicity, sexuality, and class.

Marketable Skills (B.F.A. in Theatre)

1. Students will acquire strong oral and written communication skills.
2. Students will acquire strong analytical skills.
3. Students will acquire strong teamwork and collaboration skills.

Course Requirements

Discussion Board Topics and Written Assignments: Throughout the term, you will view videos of staged productions and to write short critical analyses in response to these viewings. Your responses will be evaluated on the following criteria:

- 1) Clarity of response. Are responses clear and well-organized?
- 2) Thoroughness of response. Does the response answer the question completely?
- 3) Effective use of language. Did you use correct grammar, syntax, punctuation, and vocabulary?
- 4) Quality and relevance of supporting materials (i.e., examples or citations, if appropriate). Are the examples cited relevant to the question? If used, are citations credible and relevant to the question?

Readings and Viewings: I'll provide selected readings on theatre history and play analysis, as well as pdfs of some play scripts. You will also view several productions (recordings of live plays) and short videos on topics we'll be discussing throughout the term. Do your best to keep up with these readings and viewings.

Sherwood: The Adventures of Robin Hood Analysis Paper: If you are local to Alpine (or can come out to Alpine), you are required to see a performance of Theatre of the Big Bend's *Sherwood: The Adventures of Robin Hood* by Ken Ludwig at the Kokernot Outdoor Theater in Alpine. Performances run Thursdays, Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays at 8:00 pm through July 28. Admission is free for Sul Ross students with valid student ID. Get tickets at the door. Watch at least one performance and write an analysis paper. Assignment details on Blackboard. **This paper is due, Tuesday, July 30 by 10:00 pm.**

The Wind in the Willows Analysis Paper: You will write a 2-page critical analysis paper on a musical production of *Wind in the Willows* (2017, London Palladium, Directed by Rachel Kavanaugh and Tim Van Someren). **This paper is due Wednesday, August 7th by 10:00 pm.**

Final Reflection Paper: Due Wednesday, August 14 by 12:00 pm (noon). For your final, you will write a 2-3-page typed, double-spaced paper responding to the following questions:

- 1) Is theatre for entertainment only? Or does it serve another purpose in modern society? Explain, providing examples from the plays you watched in this class to support your argument.
- 2) What was your favorite production you viewed this term? Why? Explain and reference **at least two examples** from the production in your response.
- 3) What purpose do the design elements (costume, lights, sound, scenic, props) serve in a live production? Explain using **at least two examples** from productions you viewed this term.
- 4) Each of the plays you viewed this term expressed a theme or idea about the current state of the world or humanity. What issues (political or social) do you think need to be addressed on the stage in 2024? Choose at least one issue (think theme or idea) and explain why you think it would make an important subject for a play.

NOTE: Several of the required readings and viewings in this course contain profanity, violence, nudity, and mature themes. There are some recordings that contain flashing lights. If this poses a risk to you, please contact the instructor.

Grading

Assignments are valued as follows:

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| 1) Discussion Board Topics | 30% |
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2) Written Assignments	20%
3) <i>Robin Hood</i> (or alternative) Paper	20%
4) <i>Wind in the Willows</i> paper	15%
5) Final Paper	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. Work is of better-than-expected quality, but not quite professional. High level of scholarship.

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

D = Below Average. Less than proficient with material. 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.

ADA Statement

SRSU Disability Services. Sul Ross State University (SRSU) is committed to equal access in compliance with Americans with Disabilities Act of 1973. It is SRSU policy to provide reasonable accommodations to students with documented disabilities. It is the student's responsibility to initiate a request each semester for each class. Alpine students seeking accessibility/accommodations services must contact Mary Schwartz Grisham, M.Ed., LPC, SRSU's Accessibility Services Coordinator at 432-837-8203 (please leave a message and we'll get back to you as soon as we can during working hours), or email mschwartz@sulross.edu Our office is located on the first floor of Ferguson Hall (Suite 112), and our mailing address is P.O. Box C-122, SUI Ross State University, Alpine, Texas, 79832.

Libraries

The Bryan Wildenthal Memorial Library in Alpine. Offers FREE resources and services to the entire SRSU community. Access and borrow books, articles, and more by visiting the library's website, library.sulross.edu. Off-campus access requires logging in with your LobolD and password. Librarians are a tremendous resource for your coursework and can be reached in person, by email (srsulibrary@sulross.edu), or phone (432-837-8123).

The Southwest Texas Junior College (SWTJC) Libraries at Uvalde, Del Rio, and Eagle Pass. Offer additional access to library spaces and resources. Del Rio, Eagle Pass, and Uvalde students may also use online resources available through SWTJC website, library.swtjc.edu. The SWTJC Libraries serve as pick-up locations for InterLibrary Loan (ILL) and Document Delivery from the Alpine campus.

Academic Integrity

Students in this class are expected to demonstrate scholarly behavior and academic honesty in the use of intellectual property. A scholar is expected to be punctual, prepared, and focused; meaningful and pertinent participation is appreciated. Examples of academic dishonesty include but are not limited to: Turning in work as original that was used in whole or part for another course and/or professor; turning in another person's work as one's own; copying from professional works or internet sites without citation; collaborating on a course assignment, examination, or quiz when collaboration is forbidden.

Classroom Climate of Respect

Importantly, this class will foster free expression, critical investigation, and the open discussion of ideas. This means that all of us must help create and sustain an atmosphere of tolerance, civility, and respect for the viewpoints of others. Similarly, we must all learn how to probe, oppose, and disagree without resorting to tactics of intimidation, harassment, or personal attack. No one is entitled to harass, belittle, or discriminate against another based on race, religion, ethnicity, age, gender, national origin, or sexual preference. Still, we will not be silenced by the difficulty of fruitfully discussing politically sensitive issues.

(See the following page for the course calendar.)

Course Calendar

(Please note: this calendar is subject to change at instructor's discretion)

Date	Assignment Due	Reading/Viewing Due
Mon, July 8		Read the course syllabus carefully. Contact instructor with any questions.
Tues, July 9	<p>Discussion Board #1: Share your experiences with live theatre. Have you ever seen a play? Have you ever been in a play? Explain in a few sentences. Due by 10:00 pm.</p> <p>And then read what your classmates wrote and respond to at least one classmate by Thursday, July 11 at 10:00 pm.</p>	<p>Reading #1: Chapter 1 of <i>The Creative Spirit</i> (on Blackboard)</p> <p>View: Unlocking Greek Theatre</p> <p>https://edu-digitaltheatreplus-com.wmlrsu.idm.oclc.org/content/workshops/unlocking-greek-theatre</p> <p>View: Spotlight On: The Playwright</p> <p>https://edu-digitaltheatreplus-com.wmlrsu.idm.oclc.org/content/workshops/spotlight-on-the-playwright</p>
Wed, July 10	<p>Written Assignment #1: Respond to the questions about Reading #1. Due by 10:00 pm</p>	
Thurs, July 11		<p>View: <i>Medea</i> (2013, Rose Theatre, Actors of Dionysus) https://edu-digitaltheatreplus-com.wmlrsu.idm.oclc.org/content/productions/medea</p>
Fri, July 12	<p>Discussion Board #2: Do you side with Jason or Medea? Explain your reasoning using examples from the production.</p> <p>Due by 10:00 pm</p>	<p>View: Spotlight On: The Actor and Spotlight On: The Director</p> <p>https://edu-digitaltheatreplus-com.wmlrsu.idm.oclc.org/content/workshops/spotlight-on-the-actor</p> <p>https://edu-digitaltheatreplus-com.wmlrsu.idm.oclc.org/content/workshops/spotlight-on-the-director</p>

Mon, July 15		<p>View: <i>Purlie Victorious</i> by Ossie Davis</p> <p>The comedic play starring Leslie Odom Jr. tells the story of a Black preacher's scheme to reclaim his inheritance and win back hi church from a plantation owner. Please note this viewing expires on July 20.</p> <p>https://www.thirteen.org/programs/great-performances/purlie-victorious-mitjay/</p>
Tues, July 16	<p>Written Assignment #2:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Did you enjoy watching <i>Purlie Victorious</i>? Explain using at least two moments or examples from the production. 2. Were the actors' performances in the play believable? Did you their characters seem like real people to you? Why, or why not? Explain using examples from the production. Be sure to differentiate between the character and the actor playing the character. 3. Describe the costume design of the play. Did it support the time-period and theme of the story? Why, or why not? Explain, using at least examples from the production. 4. What do you think is the idea, or theme, of the 	

	<p>play? Explain, using at least two moments from the production to support your argument.</p> <p>Due by 10:00 pm</p>	
Wed, July 17		<p>Read: Chapter 6 of <i>The Creative Spirit: The Designers</i></p> <p>View: Spotlight On: The Costume Designer</p> <p>https://edu-digitaltheatreplus-com.wmlrsu.idm.oclc.org/content/workshops/spotlight-on-the-costume-designer</p> <p>View: Spotlight On: The Set Designer</p> <p>https://edu-digitaltheatreplus-com.wmlrsu.idm.oclc.org/content/workshops/spotlight-on-the-set-designer</p> <p>View: Spotlight On: The Lighting Designer</p> <p>https://edu-digitaltheatreplus-com.wmlrsu.idm.oclc.org/content/workshops/spotlight-on-the-lighting-designer</p> <p>View: Spotlight On: The Sound Designer</p> <p>https://edu-digitaltheatreplus-com.wmlrsu.idm.oclc.org/content/workshops/spotlight-on-the-sound-designer</p>
Thurs, July 18	<p>Written Assignment #3: Submit responses to <u>BOTH</u> questions # 1 <u>and</u> #2 at the end of chapter 6 of <i>The Creative Spirit</i>.</p> <p>Due by 10:00 pm</p>	
Fri, July 19		<p>Read: Chapter 7 of <i>The Creative Spirit: (Understanding Style: Realism)</i></p>

		<p>View: <i>All My Sons</i> by Arthur Miller (Apollo Theatre, Directed by Howard Davies).</p> <p>https://edu-digitaltheatreplus-com.wmlrsu.idm.oclc.org/content/productions/all-my-sons-digital-theatre</p>
Mon, July 22	<p>Discussion Board #3: Respond to all questions about the production of <i>All My Sons</i> by Arthur Miller:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Do you think Joe is a hero or villain? Why? Explain in a paragraph. 2) What personal responsibility do each of us in society have in keeping others safe from harm? Explain in a paragraph or two. 3) Describe the sound design in the play? Was it effective in telling the story of what was happening to the characters? Why, or why not? Explain using at least two examples from the production. 	
Tues, July 23		<p><u>Read</u> your classmates' Discussion Board responses to <i>All My Sons</i>.</p>
Wed, July 24	<p>Discussion Board #4 (follow up):</p> <p>Reply to <u>at least one</u> classmate's responses to the questions about <i>All My Sons</i>.</p> <p>Due by 10:00 pm</p>	
Thurs, July 25		<p>Read: <i>Pipeline</i> by Dominique Morisseau</p>

		<p>View: <i>Pipeline</i> (2019, Lincoln Center’s Mitzi E. Newhouse Theatre, Directed by Habib Azar, Lileana Blain-Cruz)</p> <p>https://edu-digitaltheatreplus-com.wmlrsu.idm.oclc.org/content/productions/pipeline</p>
Fri, July 26	<p>Discussion Board #5:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Was Nya (the mom in <i>Pipeline</i>) helping or hurting her son Omari? Explain using specific examples from the production. 2) Why do you think Omari was so angry with his father? Explain. 3) Was the acting believable in the production? Why or why not? Explain. <p>Due by 10:00 pm CDT</p>	
Mon, July 29		<p>Read your classmates’ Discussion Board responses to <i>Pipeline</i>. Write <u>at least one</u> detailed response to a fellow classmate’s response to the <i>Pipeline</i> discussion.</p> <p>Due by 10:00 pm</p>
Tues, July 30	<p><i>Sherwood: The Adventures of Robin Hood</i> response paper due by 10:00 pm.</p>	
Wed, July 31		<p>Read: Chapter 11 of <i>The Creative Spirit</i></p> <p>View: Unlocking Musical Theatre</p> <p>https://edu-digitaltheatreplus-com.wmlrsu.idm.oclc.org/content/workshops/unlocking-musical-theatre</p>
Thurs, Aug 1	<p>Written Assignment #4: After you read chapter 11, respond to BOTH questions #1 and #3 at the end of chapter 11</p>	

	of <i>The Creative Spirit</i> . You do <u>NOT</u> need to respond to question #2. Due by 10:00 pm	
Fri, Aug 2		View: <i>The Wind in the Willows</i> (2017, London Palladium, Directed by Rachel Kavanaugh and Tim Van Someren) https://edu-digitaltheatreplus-com.wmlrsu.idm.oclc.org/content/productions/the-wind-in-the-willows
Mon, Aug 5	Work on <i>The Wind in the Willows</i> critical analysis paper	
Tues, Aug 6	Work on <i>The Wind in the Willows</i> critical analysis paper	
Wed, Aug 7	Submit critical analysis paper of <i>The Wind in the Willows</i> Due by 10:00 pm	
Thurs, Aug 8		Read the show options and descriptions on https://www.broadway.com
Fri, Aug 9	Written Assignment: Once you've read through the show options and descriptions on www.broadway.com , choose three shows you would like to see and in one paragraph for each , explain why that show appealed to you. Disregard cost of tickets for this assignment. Imagine money were no object. Due by 10:00 pm.	
Mon, Aug 12	Work on final paper.	
Tues, Aug 13	Work on final paper.	
Wed, Aug 14	Last Day of Class! FINAL PAPER – Submit a 2-3-page typed, double-spaced reflection paper. Assignment details on Blackboard.	

