

Core Course Syllabus



Course	THEA 1310.hn1
Course Title	Understanding Theatre - Honors
Professor	Dr. Maiza Hixson, MA, MFA, PhD
Term	Fall 2025
Meetings	Mon./Wed. 11:30am - 12:45pm, PHY Small Ensemble

Professor's Contact Information

Office Location	5.203 Erik Jonsson Academic Center (JO)
Email Address	Maiza.Hixson@utdallas.edu (I will reply within 24 hours, M-F)
Office Hours	In-person or Teams on Mondays, 2:00 pm-3:00 pm

General Core Area 050 Creative Arts

Description: Lectures, discussions, and performances designed to explore artistic, philosophical, social, historical, and psychological dimensions of the theatrical experience. Topics include analysis of scripts, the nature of the theater compared to the other performing arts, and the nature of popular entertainments.

Objectives:

- Critical Thinking (CT)**—to include creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation, and synthesis of information
- Communication (COM)**—to include effective development, interpretation, and expression of ideas through written, oral, and visual communication
- Teamwork (TW)**—to include the ability to consider different points of view and to work effectively with others to support a shared purpose or goal
- Social Responsibility (SR)**—to include intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to engage effectively in regional, national, and global communities

Specific Objectives:

Analyze theater and dramatic literature through discussion, written text such as essays or posts, performance, observation, and other mediums (**CT, TW**)

Identify and utilize appropriate performance-related theoretical and practical terminology (**COM**)

Engage with larger questions of genre, form, technique, intercultural and historical context, and inclusivity in relation to text and performance practice (**CT, SR**)

Develop individualized, critical commentary associated with the course materials and convey those ideas with textual and/or performance-based evidence (**CT, COM**)

Expectations

Be Present and on time to class

You may not miss more than one class; Notify instructor in advance of the absence.

Participate in the course discussion, whether verbally or through other modes of active participation (nodding, thumbs up/down, taking notes, etc.)

No food or drink in class (classroom not equipped to accommodate food or drink)

Come Prepared with all copies and knowledge of relevant readings, including information discussed in the main course lectures

Maintain Mutually Supportive, Respectful, and Appropriate Behavior (which includes language, gestures, mannerisms, etc.) towards all other members of the course, including the professor

Bring Questions and An Open Mind about the course and the materials
Follow all UTD, Department, and course guidelines

Course Breakdown: 100 Points Total

- 1. Class Participation: 10 points.** Attendance, punctuality, weekly acting exercises, active listening, thoughtful vocal engagement, weekly readings and viewings posted on Blackboard unless otherwise specified
- 2. Solo Basic Object Exercise Assignment: 10 points.**
- 3. Two-Person Scene Assignment: 10 points.**
- 4. Acto Writing Assignment: 10 points** (10 pages, double-spaced)
- 5. Group Acto Performance: 10 points.** (Groups of 4-5 people will write and perform a short play)
- 6. Performance Art Project: 10 points.** (Solo or ensemble)
- 7. Write Two Performance Reviews: 10 points** (2 double-spaced page reviews of *SHREK* and *CHIMERA*, 5 points each)
- 8. Readings: 10 points**
- 9. Attend Two Live Performances:** 10 points: *SHREK THE MUSICAL* Week of October 20; *AND CHIMERA: A ONE-ACT TRAGICOMEDY*, Nov. 20, 7:30-9:00 p.m., UTD Theatre
- 10. Final Exam: 10 points** (multiple choice on Blackboard)

Required Materials:

When asked, bring printed copies of plays/course readings
Bring pens, lined notebook/paper to take notes and to write weekly in-class writing assignments
Comfortable clothes and shoes for rehearsals and acting warmups

Course Schedule is Tentative and Subject to Change

Course Runs August 26-Dec 9, 2025

University Closings Labor DayMonday, Sept 1

No Classes: Fall breakNov 24-30

Week 1: Monday, Aug 25, Wednesday, Aug 27 – Introduction to ACTING

1. Monday: Intro to the course, syllabus
2. Monday Introductory Lecture & Discussion: Acting & Directing: Objectives, Methods, Histories: Stanislavski, Uta Hagen, The Group Theatre
3. Monday: Ice Breakers, Acting Warm-Ups
4. Wednesday: Warmups
5. Due Wednesday: Read Uta Hagen, *Respect For Acting*
6. Wednesday: Intro to Assignment: Solo Object Lesson

Week 2: Mon, Sept 1 (NO CLASS!), Wed, Sept 3 – Introduction to ACTING

1. Wednesday: Warmups, Solo Object Lessons Due in Class
2. Wednesday: Warmups, Solo Object Lessons Continued, Introduction to Neutral Scene Performance Assignment

Week 3: Mon, Sept 8, Wed, Sept 10 – Introduction to Two-Person Scene REHEARSALS

1. Monday: Warmups, Neutral Scene Rehearsals
2. Wednesday: Warmups, Neutral Scene Performances Due

Week 4: Mon, Sept 15, Wed, Sept 17 - Introduction to THEATRE and DRAMATIC LITERATURE

1. Lecture: Theatre Origins & Sources: Ancient Greece, Ancient India, Western & NonWestern
2. Lecture & Discussion: Words, Words, Words: Elements & Vocabulary of Theater and Performance
3. Assigned Readings: Aristotle, *Poetics* (ca. 335 BCE) & Elinor Fuchs' "Visit to A Small Planet"
4. Write/Respond: What is Theatre? Where is Theatre? Define Aristotle's six elements

Week 5: Mon, Sept 22, Wed, Sept 24 - Introduction to POLITICAL THEATRE & PLAYWRITING

1. Lecture & Intro: Brecht and Non-Aristotelian Drama
2. Lecture: Black, Feminist, Queer, and Chicano Political Theatre
3. Watch Acto: *Los Vendidos (The Sellouts)*
4. Performed Reading: Luis Valdez's Acto, *The Two Faces of The Boss*
5. Read: Chicano Civil Rights & Theatre History (reading on Blackboard)
6. Intro to Writing an Acto (assignment)

Week 6: Mon, Sept 29, Wed, Oct 1 – ONE ACT PLAYWRITING

1. Mon: In Class Writing Assignment: Group Acto Writing
2. Wed: In Class Writing Assignment: Group Acto Writing

Week 7: Mon, Oct 6, Wed, Oct 8 - PLAYWRITING & REHEARSALS

1. Acto Scripts Due
2. Acto Rehearsals in Class

Week 8: Mon, Oct 13, Wed, Oct 15 – MEMORIZATION, BLOCKING, DRESS REHEARSALS

1. Mon. Acto Dress Rehearsals—work on memorizing lines
2. Wed. Acto Dress Rehearsals—bring costumes and props

Week 9: Mon, Oct 20, Wed, Oct 22 – Introduction to BROADWAY, MUSICALS, ADAPTATIONS

1. Due: Acto Final Performances w/ Lines Memorized, Costumes, and Props
2. Lecture: Intro to Broadway, Musicals, Adaptation
3. Readings: How to write a performance review
4. Discussion of How to write a performance review
5. Go see *Shrek*
6. Write: 2-page review of *Shrek*

Week 10: Mon, Oct 27, Wed, Oct 29 - Introduction to NON-WESTERN THEATRE & PERFORMANCE

1. Review of *Shrek* Due
2. Guest Lecture TBA
3. Read: Bharata's *The Natyasastra* (Indian theater treatise on Blackboard)
4. In-class performance inspired by *The Natyasastra*
5. In-class discussion of *The Natyasastra* reading

Week 11: Mon, Nov 3, Wed, Nov 5 - Introduction to PERFORMANCE ART, Immersive/Environmental/Site-Specific Theatre, EMBODIMENT

1. Lecture on Performance Art, digital & social media-based Performance Art
2. Discussion – Compare/Contrast Theatre & Performance Art
3. Tentative Field Trip to Atheneum/Architectural Site-Visit
4. Assignment – Create a Site-Specific Performance Artwork (solo or ensemble)

Week 12: Mon, Nov 10, Wed, Nov 12 - Introduction to POSTHUMAN THEATRE, EMBODIMENT, Cyborg, Eco-Theatre

1. Due: Performance Artwork
2. Lecture: Posthuman, Cyborg, Eco-Theatre
3. Assigned Readings
4. Guest Lecture TBA

Week 13: Mon, Nov 17, Wed, Nov 19 – Introduction to CHIMERA

1. Performed Reading of *CHIMERA*
2. Discussion of *CHIMERA*
3. Attend *CHIMERA*, NOVEMBER 20, 7:30-9:00 PM, University Theatre
4. Write Review of *CHIMERA*

FALL BREAK: NO CLASS: Mon, Nov 24, Wed, Nov 26

Week 14: Dec 1 & 3

1. Discussion of *CHIMERA* Reviews & Live Performance
2. *CHIMERA* Review Due

Week 15: Monday, Dec 8

1. Final Exam “Bingo” Review

- **COMPREHENSIVE FINAL EXAMS BASED ON WEEKS 1-14**