

Course Syllabus

DRAM 1310.002

Understanding Theatre

Course Information

Professor: Shelby-Allison Hibbs, MFA

Term: Fall 2016

Meetings: Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays 3:00pm to 3:50pm

Location: AH2 1.204

Professor's Contact Information

Office: JO 5.608A

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Office Hours: 2-5pm Tuesday and Thursday, 12pm to 3pm Monday, Wednesday, Friday
Please set up an appointment with the instructor, other times are available as well.

Course Description

This course provides students with information and activities needed for a comprehensive understanding of the way theatre creates and reflects meaning in society. Students will explore theatre through the lenses of culture, performance, the voice of the artist, and creative participation. Students will also read and analyze plays and performances during our discussions and projects.

Student Learning Objectives and Outcomes

1. **Critical Thinking Skills** - Students will engage in creative thinking and inquiry as they analyze and discuss the major elements of theatre including acting, playwriting, and design (assessed via performance review papers and midterm play paper).
2. **Communication Skills** - Students will implement effective written, oral and performative communication by responding to works of theatre with thoughtful critiques, collaboration on social projects, and performance an original play (assessed via performance reviews and final collaborative project).
3. **Teamwork** – Students will demonstrate the ability to work effectively with others to produce a shared artistic product and actively consider different points of view (assessed via the final collaborative project).

4. **Social Responsibility** - Students will illustrate knowledge of significant theatre artists and how their culture influences their artistic expression (assessed via midterm paper and “Why is Performance Important?” paper).

Required Materials

All materials including reading assignments and plays will be distributed via eLearning.

Assignments and Calendar

Students are expected to complete each reading assignment on the due date assigned. We will discuss each reading in class and have a few pop quizzes through the semester.

Week 1

Introduction to Theatre and Performance
“Better Know a DFW Theatre”

Week 2

The Playwright Crafting Action –
Read August Wilson’s *Joe Turner’s Come and Gone*

Week 3

Thinking like an Actor
Improvisation and Creating Characters
Read – William Shakespeare’s *The Winter’s Tale*

Week 4

The Director’s Process

Week 5

The Designer’s Role in Performance: Creating Worlds

Week 6

The Power of Realism
Read Ayad Akthar’s *Digressed*

Week 7

Theatricalism

Week 8

Theatricalism Continued
Read Naomi Iizuka’s *Good Kids*

Week 9
Theatre of the Oppressed

Week 10
Plot Structure and Theory
Read Quiara Alegria Hudes' *Water by the Spoonful*

Week 11
Genre – Aristototele and Tragedy, Comedy, Tragicomedy
Read sections of Sophocles and Aristophanes in class

Week 12
Musical Theatre
Read sections of *Avenue Q* in class

Week 13
Intro to Final Project

Week 14
In Class Rehearsal – Sign up for times
Part A of Final Project Due

Week 15
In Class Rehearsal – Sign up for times
Part B of Final Project Due

Final Exam TBA
Performance of New 10 minute plays and peer critiques

Grading Criteria

Active Participation: (35%) Each student is expected to attend class, participate in discussions and actively participate in creative projects required in class. Four quizzes given through the semester also fall under this category. Each day, students will earn up to 5 participation points. Students who are observed browsing the internet or playing on their phones will immediately lose all participation points for that day.

“Why is Performance Important?” Paper: (5%) Students will write a one to two page paper on the significance of performance in the student’s life, it should reflect your own opinion and current knowledge of live theatre and performance.

Performance Reviews: (20%) Each student will attend two live theatrical productions and write a 2-3 page response to each, following guidelines provided in class. One of the

plays will be UTD's production of *subUrbia* (Running Feb 18-27) or *Woyzeck* (running April 14-23).

Midterm Play Analysis: (10%) Students are required to choose one of the contemporary plays posted on eLearning and write a 5-7 page analysis of it. Specific requirements will be given in a handout during class.

Final Collaborative Project: (30%) A final collaborative group project will take the components of theatre and put them into practice. Students will work with peers to create a brand new ten minute play and perform it for their Final Exam. Every member of the group must participate in the performance. Students will have a month to develop and rehearse this project. Each group will also follow a "workbook" due in segments before the Final.

Instructor Policies

Attendance: Every student has three excused absences, no questions asked. Beyond that, absences will be unexcused unless official documentation explaining the reason for the absence is presented. Each unexcused absence will lower the student's overall semester average by half of a letter grade. Three tardies will also equate a drop of one half of a letter grade.

Make-Up Work: Make-up work will only be accepted in the event that a student has an excused absence. Papers will not be accepted after their due date for any reason (With exception to late enrollers on the first "Why is Performance Important?" Paper).

Extra Credit: Extra credit assignments may be made available at the professor's discretion. They could include an extra play analysis paper or performance review paper.

UT Dallas Syllabus Policies and Procedures

The information contained in the following link constitutes the University's policies and procedures segment of the course syllabus.

Please go to
<http://go.utdallas.edu/syllabus-policies>

for these policies.

The descriptions and timelines contained in this syllabus are subject to change at the discretion of the professor.