

**Course Syllabus**  
**DRAM 1310.002 Understanding Theatre**

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**Course Information**

**Professor:** Brad Hennigan

**Term:** Fall 2016

**Meetings:** Tuesday & Thursday 8:30am - 9:45am, AH2 1.204

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**Professor's Contact Information**

**Office Location:** JO 3.534

**Email Address:** bhennigan@utdallas.edu

**Office Hours:** by appointment only

**General Core Area 050 Creative Arts**

Courses in this category focus on the appreciation and analysis of creative artifacts and works of the human imagination. Courses involve the synthesis and interpretation of artistic expression and enable critical, creative, and innovative communication about works of art.

**Core 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

**Course Description**

This course provides students with the 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 theatre artist, and creative participation, including reading and analyzing plays, attending and responding to performances, group discussions of lecture topics, and a group performance project.

## DRAM 1310.001 Course Objectives

The student will learn:

- **Critical thinking skills;** to analyze the significance of theater, to explore why it has survived, and to examine its influence on society (assessed via the Why Is Theater Important? paper, the live performance Play Response paper, and class discussions)
- **Communication skills;** to describe and interpret artistic events, and to participate in meaningful discussions about theatre and its societal impact (assessed via the live performance Response Paper and class discussions)
- **Teamwork;** to perform in a collaborative group project that takes the components of theater and puts them into practice (assessed via the final collaborative project)
- **Social responsibility;** to demonstrate knowledge of significant actors and playwrights and how culture influenced/influences their artistic expression; and knowledge of theatre's past and potential future impact on social change (assessed via the 4 periodic quizzes, the midterm exam, and the final exam)

## Required Materials

Arnold, Stephanie. *The Creative Spirit: An Introduction to Theatre, 5th Edition*. McGraw-Hill, 2010.

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## Assignments & Academic Calendar

Students are expected to have completed each reading assignment (**RA**) and to be ready to discuss during the following class session.

### WEEK 01

Tue Aug 23 - Course Introduction

No RA

Thu Aug 25 - Writing Boot Camp

RA - Chapter 1: The Impulse to Perform

**Due Tue Aug 30 - Why is Theatre Important? Paper**

### WEEK 02

Tue Aug 30 - Discussion: The Impulse to Perform

RA - Chapter 2: Theatre as a Mirror of Society

**DUE TODAY: Paper, Why is Theatre Important?**

Thu Sep 1 - Discussion: Theatre as a Mirror of Society

RA - Chapter 7: Understanding Style: Realism

### WEEK 03

Tue Sep 6 - Discussion: Understanding Style: Realism

RA - Chapter 8: Expressing a Worldview through Realism (play not required)

Thu Sep 8 - Arthur Miller's *All My Sons*

No RA

**WEEK 04**

Tue Sep 13 - Arthur Miller's *All My Sons*

RA - Chapter 9: Understanding Style: Theatricalism

Thu Sep 15 - Discussion: Understanding Style: Theatricalism

RA - Chapter 10: Expressing a Worldview through Theatricalism; *Angels in America*

**WEEK 05**

Tue Sep 20 - Robert Wilson's *Einstein on the Beach*

No RA

Thu Sep 22 – Robert Wilson *Absolute Wilson*

RA – Chapter 11: The Musical Theatre

**WEEK 06**

Tue Sep 27 - Discussion: The Musical Theatre; *Jesus Christ Superstar*

No RA

Thu Sep 29 - *Jesus Christ Superstar*

RA – Chapter 3: The Playwright's Vision; *Joe Turner's Come and Gone*

**WEEK 07**

Tue Oct 4 - Discussion: The Playwright's Vision; *Joe Turner's Come and Gone*

No RA

Thu Oct 6 – August Wilson: *The Ground on Which I Stand*

RA – Chapter 4: The Art of the Actor

**DUE TUE Oct 11 - Play Attendance 1**

**WEEK 08**

Tue Oct 11 – Discussion: The Art of the Actor

No RA

**DUE TODAY: Play Attendance 1**

Thu Oct 13 – Midterm Exam

RA - Chapter 5: The Director

**WEEK 09**

Tue Oct 18 – Discussion: The Director

RA – Chapter 6: The Designers

Thu Oct 20 – Discussion: The Designers

No RA

**WEEK 10**

Tue Oct 25 – *Avenue Q* Director Shelby Hibbs

RA - Chapter 12: The Elements of Drama and Dramatic Structure

Thu Oct 27 – Discussion: The Elements of Drama and Dramatic Structure

RA - Chapter 13: Genre

**WEEK 11**

Tue Nov 1 – Discussion: Genre

No RA

Thu Nov 3 – *Romeo and Juliet*

No RA

**DUE TUE Nov 8 - Play Response Paper**

**WEEK 12**

Tue Nov 8 – *Romeo and Juliet*

**DUE TODAY: Play Attendance 2; Play Response Paper**

No RA

Thu Nov 10 - In-Class Final Project Preparation

No RA

**DUE Tue Nov 15: Final Project Character Analysis**

**WEEK 13**

Tue Nov 15 – In-Class Final Project Preparation

No RA

**DUE TODAY: Final Project Character Analysis**

Thu Nov 17 - In-Class Final Project Preparation

No RA

**Due Tues Nov 29: Play Attendance 2**

**WEEK 14**

**THANKSGIVING BREAK!**

**WEEK 15**

Tue Nov 29 - In-Class Final Project Preparation

No RA

**DUE TODAY: Play Attendance 2**

Thu Dec 1 - Final Presentations Round 1

No RA

**Week 16**

Tue Dec 6 - Final Presentations Round 2

No RA

**FINALS DAY**

We will not meet in person, students will take a final exam via E-Learning. (see description in Grading Criteria)

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## Grading Criteria

All assignments will be graded on a 100 point scale, and will be weighted according to the following percentages:

**Active Participation: (10%)** Each student is expected to attend classes, participate in discussions, and participate in creative projects required in the class.

**Reading Assignment Quizzes: (5% Each)** BRING YOUR LAPTOP TO CLASS! Quizzes will be administered via eLearning.\* Four quizzes will be administered throughout the semester based on the concepts, vocabulary, and techniques **found in the reading assignments**. Each of the quizzes will cover one or more reading assignments, and will be administered at the instructor's discretion. \*If you do not have a laptop please let me know and a paper copy will be provided.

**Why is Theatre Important?: (5%)** Students will write a 1 page paper on the significance of theatre in the student's life, and should reflect his/her own opinion and current knowledge of live theatre. While writing in 1<sup>st</sup> person is acceptable *for this paper*, all other academic writing guidelines must be followed.

**Play Attendance: (5% Each)** Each student will attend two live theatrical productions: one **must be** the UTD production of *Avenue Q*; one **must be** a professional production at a local Dallas area theater. Ticket stubs and/or playbills must be submitted.

**Midterm Exam: (15%)** BRING YOUR LAPTOP TO CLASS! The midterm will be administered via eLearning.\* The midterm will cover all material studied in class to date, and will include multiple choice, true/false, and fill-in-the-blank questions. DO NOT MISS THIS EXAM, no makeup will be allowed (extraordinary circumstances notwithstanding). \*If you do not have a laptop please let me know and a paper copy will be provided.

**Play Response: (10%)** Each student must write a 2-3 page response to ONE of the productions attended, following guidelines provided in class.

**Final Project Character Analysis: (5%)** Each team member will submit a 1 page character analysis for their final performance project.

**Final Performance Project: (10%)** A final 2-person scene will take the components of theatre and put them into practice. Each team member must participate in the performance. Each team will choose a scene from one of the plays read in class *or* from an approved play/film/TV show and perform it. The final presentation must be 3-5 minutes long. If each member of the team does not fully participate, the final grade will be affected. Be prepared to meet with your team outside of class for rehearsals, and be warned: if you miss the final, you may not make it up.

**Final Exam: (15%)** The Final exam will be administered via E-Learning. The exam will be available Friday Dec 9 – Tuesday Dec 13, and the student may take the exam any time during that period. Once the student begins the exam, he/she will have 3 hours to complete it.

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## **Instructor Policies**

### **Grade Scale:**

The following grade scale will be applied:

97+	A+
93 – 96.9	A
90 – 92.9	A-
87 – 89.9	B+
83 – 86.9	B
80 – 82.9	B-
77 – 79.9	C+
73 – 76.9	C
70 – 72.9	C-
67 – 69.9	D+
63 – 66.9	D
60 – 62.9	D-
59.9 – below	F

### **Class Attendance:**

Each student has two 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 participation grade by ten points. You can track absences in eLearning under My Grades. 3 tardies (5 or more minutes late) is equal to 1 unexcused absence.

### **Make-up Work:**

Make-up work will only be accepted in the event that a student has an excused absence on the day of a reading assignment quiz. It will be the student's responsibility to schedule a time with the instructor to take a make-up quiz.

### **Extra Credit:**

Extra credit assignments may be made available at the professor's discretion.

### **Late Work:**

Barring extreme circumstances, assignments will not be accepted after the due date.

#### **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.*