

Directing
THEA 3325.001
Syllabus

Instructor Information

Professor: Shelby-Allison Hibbs, MFA
Term: Fall 2017

Meeting Time: Tuesday and Thursday 2:30-3:45pm
Place: JO 1.216

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Office Hours: TBA

Please send an email or set up an appointment to meet.

Course Description

This course is designed for those interested in the process of directing plays. Class sessions will cover topics in style, analysis, rehearsal methods, design choices, and tech/dress rehearsals. The course projects include a scene project and a one act play of student's choosing.

This class requires work outside of class, taking the form of rehearsals for individual projects.

Required Materials

Play Directing: Analysis, Communication, and Style by Francis Hodge and Michael McLain (6th or 7th edition)

Plays and other supplemental readings will be distributed through the course.

Student Learning Outcomes and Objectives

1. **Describe and apply methodology processes**
 - a. Students will be able to describe and apply basic methods regarding the practice of directing plays. Students will gain insight in analyzing a script, developing a design concept, and bring a playwright's words to life. Assessed through **Scene Analysis and One Act Project**.
 - b. Students will describe directing methods in the **Production Review** project, in which they will attend a professional production and write a review on the director's choices.
 - c. **The Production Binder** culminates the collection of methods learned through the course, as it will document student's experience crafting a new production.
2. **Demonstrate effective communication skills**
 - a. Students will develop a diverse set of communication skills as a director through real practice in the Scene Project and One Act Project. Students will gain experience working with actors, helping them to interpret characters and dialogue.
 - b. Students will demonstrate effective visual storytelling in these projects as well as they will think critically about how spatial relationships can communicate a story.
3. **Gain experience and expertise**
 - a. Students will get hands on experience directing plays through the course. They will learn how to effectively run a rehearsal and collaborate with actors – assessed through the **Scene Project** and **One Act Project**.

HODGE/MCLAIN

The textbook utilized for this course (*Play Directing: Analysis, Communication, and Style*) is the most utilized academic book as an introduction to directing. Frances Hodge and Michael McLain outline in great detail the foundations of analyzing a play and working with actors to make a director's vision come to life.

It is important to keep up with the reading, particularly for the first few weeks of the course. At times, the reading may seem a bit "dry," but I encourage you to push through and take out the concepts which Hodge/McLain address. The book covers all the bases of text analysis, and it is good for emerging directors to keep these ideas in their minds as they work in the rehearsal room.

Remember, these techniques and outlines that are in this book are springboards. You are not going to direct a play with a 30 point outline in your hand about character motivation. The outline does not dictate the result. It is there to make sure that you have examined all of the avenues of the play BEFORE you walk into the rehearsal room and PLAY.

SCENE PROJECT

For the first major project of the course, directors will select a 3-5 minute scene from a contemporary play (written between 1975 and now) to direct with student actors. This must be a somewhat realistic scene that does not depend on significant tech elements. Scenes should be chosen by **September 5th**.

This scene should have two to three actors.

The purpose of this project is to foster the following learning outcomes:

Clear Analysis of the Script: Directors should gain proficiency in understanding the given circumstances of a script, character relationships, meaning and intention of dialogue, and the arc of the scene.

Communication with Actors: Directors will gain experience in collaborating with young actors regarding issues such as blocking, motivation, character interpretation, and picturization.

Visual and Temporal Storytelling: Directors will gain experience in visually telling a story by crafting a series of stage pictures and the rhythm and movement of the scene.

Time Management: Directors will gain experience working under a clock on a project, motivating their performers and sticking to a deadline.

This scene will be presented during class, so please select actors who are available during our class period. You may use fellow directing students in this project.

Due to the number of students in this course, not all scene presentations will occur on the same day. Directors will be broken up into groups of 3 to present on a specific class session, and they should rehearse accordingly in preparation for that specific day.

REQUIREMENTS

Rehearsal Log. Directors must maintain a rehearsal log, keeping notes on when they rehearsed and what they accomplished within that session. The total rehearsal time for this project should be between at minimum 8 and at maximum 16 hours. I encourage you to keep each rehearsal session between 90 and 120 minutes.

Full Preparation of Performers. The actors must be completely memorized in terms of dialogue and blocking. After the scenes are performed, we will critique the directors' work as a group; we can only judge by what we see in the room on that performance.

Clear Storytelling. Directors should feel responsible for every gesture, movement, stage picture, and word spoken for this 3-5 minute presentation. It should be appropriate for the characters and the story you are telling.

Ground Plan. Directors should submit a rough drawing (hand drawn or computer drawn) of the basic scenic design from a bird's eye view.

Scene Analysis. Along with the presentation, directors will also create a shortened version of Hodge's scene analysis for this scene. This will demonstrate that the directors know the story of their scene backwards and forwards.

Between 3-5 minutes. No more. No less.

ONE ACT PROJECT

The culminating project for Directing is the successful completion of directing a one act play with design elements.

For this course, a one act is defined as a play that spans between 10 and 25 minutes. If you find a lengthier play that you really want to do, you may approach the instructor about making cuts. This one act should have between 1 and 6 actors (preferably 2-4).

Due to the number of directors in this course, the performances will be divided between 3-4 days. Directors may choose to either perform in the theatre or in a found space around campus. If directors choose to utilize a found space, they must secure that location by Oct. 20th.

Since this project will take up time outside of class, we will not meet regularly during the rehearsal period for these one acts. But you may use that hour for rehearsal or consultations with the instructor.

REQUIREMENTS

Rehearsal Observations. The instructor must observe one rehearsal in your process (preferably somewhere in the middle). Afterwards, the instructor will give some feedback and questions. Directors must also have one of their fellow directing students observe a rehearsal as well.

Rehearsal Log. Directors must maintain a rehearsal log, keeping notes on when they rehearsed and what they accomplished within that session. The total rehearsal time for this project should be between at minimum 20 and at maximum 35 hours. I encourage you to keep each rehearsal around 2 hours.

Creation of a Design Concept. Directors must create a unifying vision and statement that will inspire performers and designers.

Full Preparation of Performers. The actors must be completely memorized in terms of dialogue and blocking. In order to achieve an “A” on this project, the performers must completely master the material.

Appropriate Design Choices. These plays must utilize tech elements including scenic, lighting, sound, and costumes. Directors must also explain how they have used them in their production binder.

Clear Storytelling. Directors should feel responsible for every gesture, movement, stage picture, and word spoken for this presentation. It should be appropriate for the characters and the story you are telling.

Tech Rehearsals. Each group will have one tech rehearsal to implement design elements: set light and sound cues, spike furniture, and work on entrances

and exits in the space. It is imperative that directors and performers attend this rehearsal. Directors are also required to create a cue sheet before this rehearsal so that the light and sound board operators can move the rehearsal quickly. Directors should locate their own sound cues.

Dress Rehearsal. This will take place a day or two prior to the performance. All of your performers must attend and participate in this rehearsal.

Between 10 and 25 minutes. No more. No less.

Performance Review of a Theatre Production

Students will be able to evaluate a theatre production through the concepts explored in course: director's analysis, stage picturization and blocking, design choices, and actor's performances. Students must select a theatre production to review (preferably a professional theatre and a traditional play, meaning not a musical).

Checklist for Production Review

- _ Between 900 and 1200 words
- _ Turned in on time as a physical copy to the instructor
- _ No spelling or grammar errors
- _ Review is structured well
 - An introductory paragraph that addresses your overall evaluation of the director's work.
 - Subsequent paragraphs that address topics like:
 - Stage Pictures
 - Overall collaboration between areas like costumes, lighting, sound, scenic, and the performers.
 - A discussion on the pace or rhythm of the play
 - The actor's work as they breathe the play to life
 - Use of the set or the physical space of the theatre
 - Choices in performance style (realism vs. expressionism for example)
 - A conclusion paragraph that solidifies your observations and explains your evaluation of the musical

PRODUCTION NOTEBOOK

After completing the One Act project, directors must submit a production notebook as their “Final Exam.” This notebook should include the following (hint, most of these you should **already** have by the time the project is over.)

- _ A copy of the script with all blocking notated.
- _ A written director’s analysis of the one act, modeled on Hodge’s outline.
- _ A design concept statement.
- _ A rehearsal calendar
- _ A contact sheet of all people involved with the production
- _ The design concept statement and inspiration images
- _ Any historical research used for the production
- _ Cue sheets for sound and lighting
- _ Ground plan with any research images
- _ Costume plot
- _ Rehearsal Log
- _ A reflection on the experience

A Note on Auditions and Casting

We will hold auditions for the one acts on an agreed date in October.

Directors are responsible for selecting sides from their particular play to give to actors.

Directors should have a list of their characters with noted qualities for each one that they are looking for.

This is what I propose for the auditions:

Directors will be in groups of 3-4 in separate rooms (the theatre, rehearsal hall, etc.) and auditioners will travel from room to room, reading monologues or scenes. If a director in that room wants to see someone read something specific, they can.

In this way, multiple directors can see what a particular actor has to offer, and it may not be necessary to see each actor read something from your script in particular. Once you've seen enough, send the actor on to the next group.

After auditions, directors should make a list of their "first choice" in the cast along with second and third options. In class, we will go through each director and negotiate the casting, starting with everyone's first choice, and so on.

Depending on the plays selected, some people may need to be double cast. If there is a small role in any one act, another member of the directing class may step in for

Schedule

Week 1

August 22nd

Welcome to the Course. What does it mean to be a director?

August 24th

Read chapters 1 and 2 of Hodge

Week 2

August 29th

LIBRARY DAY! Search for a Scene!

August 31st

Chapter 3 of Hodge on Given Circumstances, **SHORT PLAY TBA**

Week 3

September 5th

Chapter 4 and 5 of Hodge on Dramatic Action and Idea, , **SHORT PLAY**

TBA

SCENE SELECTED

September 7th

Chapter 7 of Hodge on Working with Actors.

Week 4

September 12th

SCENE CAST

Chapter 9 of Hodge on Ground plan

September 14th

GROUND PLAN SET

Chapter 10 of Hodge on Composition

Week 5

September 19th

Chapter 12 of Hodge on Picturization

September 21st

SCENE ANALYSIS DUE

Chapter 15 and 16 on Working with Actors

Week 6

September 26th

Check in on Rehearsals

Hodge Pages 181-184 on Diagnostic Criticism

September 28th SCENE PRESENTATIONS
GROUP A

Week 7 - SELECT ONE ACTS
October 3rd SCENE PRESENTATIONS
GROUP B

October 5th SCENE PRESENTATIONS
GROUP C

Week 8
Oct. 10th SCENE PRESENTATIONS
GROUP D

Oct. 12th - Discussion on Auditions

Week 9 - AUDITIONS/CASTING FOR ONE ACTS
***Possible Audition Dates: Oct. 15th, 16th, or 17th
Oct. 17th
Casting

Oct. 19th

Week 10 - REHEARSALS
Oct. 24th

Oct. 26th

Week 11 -REHEARSALS
Oct. 31st - CLASS MEETING CHECK IN

Nov. 2nd
PRODUCTION REVIEW DUE

Week 12 - REHEARSALS
Nov. 7th

Nov. 9th - CLASS MEETING CHECK IN

Week 13 - TECH REHEARSALS
Nov. 14th
Nov. 16th

Week 14 - PERFORMANCES

Nov. 28th

Nov. 30th

Week 15 - PERFORMANCES

Dec. 5th

FINAL EXAM: Turn in Production Binder