

Principles of Scenery THEA 2301
The University of Texas at El Paso
Department of Theatre and Dance

COURSE INFORMATION

THEA 2301: Principles of Scenery

Term: Fall 2025

Meeting Day and Time: MW 9:00-10:20, Fox Fine Arts D075

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Cynthia Esparza

E-mail: cesparza12@utep.edu

Office hours: 13:00- 16:00 M - F (office, on stage or by appointment)

Course Description

Principles of Scenery (3-0) A survey of scenic practices and procedures used in modern theatre production. The class will serve as an introduction to theatre architecture, stage rigging, scenic construction, painting, hardware, shop tools, safety.

Course Goals

To study and comprehend the technical problems of a play production through the standard classroom and the UTEP scene shop, June and Wise Theatre. Learning about theatre architecture. Areas of focus include: tools and materials for scenery construction, construction techniques of scenery and properties; rigging and safety. Knowledge/experience of stage properties and scenic painting.

Text book:

Illustrated Theatre Production Guide: John Holloway: ISBN 2-240-80493 (suggested not required)

Other reading:

Ana in the Tropics by Nilo Cruz (required)

Anna Karenina by Leon Tolstoi (Suggested)

Films:

Anna Karenina. Directed by Joe Wright, performances by Keira Knightley, Jude Law, and Aaron Taylor-Johnson, Working Title Films, 2012.

Course Policies

1.Attendance: Regular attendance is expected. You cannot learn/participate if you are not here and your fellow students are deprived of your insights and contributions. You are responsible for material communicated while you are absent. When, in the judgment of the instructor, a student has been absent to such a degree as to impair his or her status relative to credit for the course, the instructor can drop the student from the class with a grade of W before the course drop deadline and with a grade of F after the course drop deadline. In accordance with the university policy this course will excuse a student from attending classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day. The student shall also be excused for time necessary to travel to said Holy day. An institution may not penalize the student for the absence and allows for the student to take an exam or complete an assignment from which the student is excused.

Participation in official university business must be documented by a written notice from the sponsoring faculty or staff member prior to the event. Such students must present their related plans to the instructor in writing by the end of the second week of class.

2. Student Conduct and Discipline: The University of Texas at El Paso expects its students to maintain complete honesty and integrity academic pursuits. I expect all our discussions, including any that may occur outside of class, to be conducted in a respectful and professional manner.

Any student who commits an act of academic dishonesty is subject to discipline. Academic dishonesty includes, and is not limited to cheating, plagiarism, collusion, the submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person, taking an examination for another person, and any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student or the attempt to commit such acts.

Proven violations of the detailed regulations, as printed in the Handbook of Operating Procedures (HOP) can result in sanctions ranging from disciplinary probation, to a failing grade on the work in question, to a failing grade in the course, to suspension or dismissal, among others.

Grade breakdown and scale:

Grading:

Grades are based on overall achievement, understanding, improvement, and your level of engagement in class. You will be exploring and discovering the various areas of the Scenic design process throughout the semester, and will be required to present your discoveries. It is important that you have your work completed on time in a presentable manner.

Final grades will be calculated using the following scale:

A 100% - 90% Exceptional

Provides imaginative and thorough solutions to problems. Produces work that transcends the expected and shows continuous and exceptional growth. Exhibits timely preparation and submission of classwork, and regular constructive participation in critiques and discussions.

B 89.9% - 80% Above Average

Provides good workable solutions to problems showing some insight into problem-solving. Shows continuous above-average growth. Exhibits timely preparation and submission of classwork, and regular constructive participation in critiques and discussions.

C 79.9% - 70%. Average

Provides appropriate solutions to problems showing some growth and understanding of basic ideas and methods. Most classwork is prepared and submitted in a timely manner. Participates in some critiques and/or discussions.

D 69.9% - 60% Below Average Work

Provides inconsistent solutions to problems, shows little growth, does not show a consistent understanding of basic ideas and methods. Classwork is often not prepared or submitted in a time manner. Rarely participates in critiques and/or discussions.

F < 60%. Unacceptable Work

Will not meet requirements for degree fulfillment. Shows little or no growth. Shows little or no understanding of the basic ideas and methods taught in class. Work is not prepared and presented on time or at all. Rarely participates in discussion.

Deadlines:

I understand that sometimes life makes it difficult for you to complete all of your assignments on time, but learning to manage your time so that you can meet deadlines is an important skill for any theatre practitioner. **No late work will be accepted without prior authorization.** Arrangements must be made 48 hours in advance when possible.* If you encounter an emergency which prevents you from completing your work, please notify me promptly.

Course Requirements

1. All homework, projects, and selected additional course material will be completed in class or assigned as homework. Additionally, all homework and projects must be presented in class, and photo evidence of the work must be uploaded to the Blackboard platform as part of the submission process.
2. Students are required to attend **two** University Theatre Productions (I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter and The River Bride).
3. Students are required to **submit written responses for the shows attended** by the UTEP Dept. of Theatre & Dance Productions.

Attending Productions

To earn the 10 points per show you must do the following:

- Buy a ticket
- Attend the production
- Sign in after the production (a QR code will be provided for you to do a digital sign in or a sign in sheet)
- Write a 2-3 page paper. Paper requirements are a review of the production (focus on the scenery) . These are your thoughts and opinions written in Times New Roman, 12 point, double spaces with 1" margins. Written at a collegiate level using proper grammar and spelling. See ticket information, show schedule and paper due dates below.

WHERE TO PURCHASE TICKETS FOR A SHOW:

The UTEP Ticket Center – Main Location

2901 N. Mesa El Paso, Texas 79902 Monday-Friday: 8 A.M.-6 P.M. Saturday: 10 A.M.-4.PM. Closed on Sundays

(915) 747-5234

UTEP Ticket Center – Union East Location

Union Building East, Room 111 (1st Floor)

Hours of Operation

Open only Fall & Spring Semesters Monday - Friday: 9am - 2pm (Hours subject to change)

FALL 2025 PRODUCTION DETAILS

“I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter”

Julia Reyes isn't your perfect Mexican daughter, she's a brave, sharp Chicago teen torn between her immigrant parents' expectations and her dream to write. After her sister's tragic death, Julia's world unravels as she faces grief, mental health struggles, and the pressure of tradition. Navigating high school and poverty, she turns to her journal to share her truth and survive, it reminds us our dreams are real—and they matter. Raw and powerful, I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter challenges us to speak up, seek help, and keep going even when it feels impossible.

Wise Family Theatre

Tickets on Sale: September 2

7:30 PM Performances

October 24, 25, 30 & November 1, 2025

2:00 PM Performance

October 26 & November 2, 2025

Paper due December 7th at 5pm on Blackboard

“The River Bride”

Set in a Brazilian fishing village along the Amazon, *The River Bride* unfolds like a haunting fairytale—two sisters, Helena and Belmira, who struggle to be true to each other and themselves, are thrown when a mysterious man is drawn from the water's depths, pulling them into a dance of risk, hope, and long-held secrets. Exploring themes of regret, missed opportunities, and love, *The River Bride* offers no promises - it demands a silent surrender, a leap into the unseen, where trust may falter. But what if the ever-changing current hides more than it reveals? What is left behind?

June Sadowski Kruszewski Studio Theatre

Tickets on Sale: September 2

7:30 Performances

December 3, 4, 5 & 6, 2025

2:00 PM Performances

December 6 & 7, 2025

Paper due December 10th at 5 pm on Blackboard

For this class we will be doing hands on learning in the Scene shop:

You are required to purchase one set of protective eyewear and one set of reusable protective earplugs when in the scene shop. **You are also required to wear closed toed shoes and no shorts are allowed in the theatre for safety reasons.** If your clothes are not to standard, we will send you home to change. Do not wear any dangling jewelry, and any long hair must be tied back out of the way from your face.

Required materials:

- Architectural scale ruler
- Mechanical pencils 0.5
- Erasers
- Flipchart 33" x 46" approx (5 sheet)
- Black sharpie
- Fine point pen (black and blue)
- Sketchbook 11"x 9" (or similar, you can replace it for recycle paper)
- Protective eyewear (if you don't want to share)
- Reusable protective earplugs
- Bristol Paper/watercolor paper
- Paint Brushes
- Acrylic paint (Primary colors, brown, white and black)
- Exacto Knife with blades
- Black Foam board
- Illustration Paper
- Glue
- Pins
- Drafting tape (optional)

Extra Credit Options:

Students may come in and volunteer hours in the scene shop and earn extra credit points. Each hour worked is 1 point, for example: if you volunteer 10 hours, you will receive 10 pts. The shop hours are Monday through Friday from Friday at 12:30 pm - 5:00 pm at the scene shop.

Your last day to complete any hours for extra credit is December 4th, the last day of class.

If you attend the Dinner Theatre performance of the musical “Cats” and submit a 2-3 page report, you will receive 10 extra credit points.

“Cats”

Tickets on Sale: October 6 & 7, 2025

Step into the enchanting world of CATS, where the Jellicle Cats gather for the magical Jellicle Ball. Each cat tells their story, hoping to be chosen by Old Deuteronomy for a new life in the mysterious Heaviside Layer. From the playful Rum Tum Tugger to the mystical Mr. Mistoffelees, every moment dazzles with music and movement. But when outcast Grizabella returns and sings the unforgettable “Memory,” the tribe must decide if redemption is possible. With breathtaking dance, iconic characters, and Andrew Lloyd Webber’s legendary score, CATS is a musical experience like no other.

The Dinner Theatre

November 12- 30 - possible extension into December, 2025

Tickets on Sale: October 6 & 7, 2025

Paper due December 5th at 5 pm on Blackboard.

Course Communication:

In addition to utilizing the instructor's office hours and appointments, students are encouraged to ask questions by email.

In accordance with FERPA, we will only use your UTEP email address for electronic communication. You are expected to check your email and BlackBoard at least once a day and will be held responsible for all emails or announcements through BlackBoard posted by 9 pm the day before a project is due.

Most assignments in this course will be due at 11:59 on Mondays and Wednesday, giving students an opportunity to ask last minute questions by email or during office hours. For the most part, I will probably not be answering class related emails on the weekends. Detailed feedback on assignments can be expected within a week of the due date.

Chosen Names and Personal Pronouns:

Everyone has the right to be addressed by the name and pronouns that correspond to their gender identity, including non-binary pronouns, for example: they/them/theirs, ze/zir/zirs, etc. Rosters do not list gender or pronouns so you may be asked to indicate your pronouns and chosen name. Chosen names and pronouns are to be respected at all times in the classroom. Mistakes in addressing one another may happen, so I encourage an environment of openness to correction and learning. I will not, however, tolerate repeated comments which disrespect or antagonize students who have indicated pronouns or a chosen name. If at any point during the semester you would like to be addressed differently, please let me know.

Accommodations:

The University is committed to providing reasonable accommodations and auxiliary services to students, staff, faculty, job applicants, applicants for admissions, and other beneficiaries of University programs, services and activities with documented disabilities in order to provide them with equal opportunities to participate in programs, services, and activities in compliance with sections 503 and 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 and the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA) of 2008. **Students who become pregnant or have parenting responsibilities may also request reasonable accommodations.** Reasonable accommodations will be made unless it is determined that doing so would cause undue hardship on the University. Students requesting accommodation based on a disability must register with the UTEP Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS). Contact the Center for Accommodations and Support Services at 915-747-5148, or email them at cass@utep.edu, or apply for accommodations online via the CASS portal.

Course Resources:

UTEP Technology Support Center: The Technology Support Center (TSC) offers UTEP students access to state of the art computing equipment and specialized software for academic needs. The TSC is also home to the PC Clinic, which offers computer software repair services to students at no cost. The center is located in the library, room 300 (747-5257).

Student Health Center: UTEP Student Health Center is here to meet the health care needs of all students so they can focus on their studies. As a student you have paid a medical service fee that allows you to be seen at the clinic as often as needed. Office visits are low cost as well as medications, supplies and any needed lab tests (747-5624).

University Counseling Center: The UTEP University Counseling Center located at 202 Union West can assist you to decide on a career or work through personal concerns. They provide confidential counseling services, assist with stress management, and offer an after-hours crisis support line (747-5302).

Disclaimer:

This syllabus is subject to change if the instructor finds it is necessary for student success. Any changes and adjustments will be communicated with students.