
INTRODUCTION TO THEATRE



Introduction to Theatre | THEA 1313 04 | CRN: 12741 | Fall, 2018

Tuesday/Thursday, 9:00-10:20am

Undergraduate Learning Center, Room 216

Instructor: Greg Beam

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Office Hours: Tuesday/Thursday, 12:00-2:00pm, Location TBA

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course covers a variety of topics relating to the history, production, and theory of theatre, including the nature of performance, the relationship between performers and audience, and the elements of theatrical design and aesthetics. You will learn the components of theatre craft and production, how to watch plays with a critical eye and articulate your observations clearly, and how to view plays in their social and historical contexts.

The principal goal of this course is to help you view, discuss, and write about theatre as an informed observer—and hopefully develop a better appreciation and enjoyment of the medium along the way. You will also learn the basics of how theatre is produced (and the roles of the various artists and technicians who collaborate on a production) to give you better insight into the medium.

While we will get into the history of theatre as an art form, the course will be arranged topically and thematically rather than chronologically. Each week will feature a lecture and discussion focused on a different aspect of theatre or topic in theatre scholarship.

MATERIALS

Textbook: *The Theatre Experience* (13th Edition), by Edwin Wilson, ISBN: 978-0-07-351427-7

On-line: You must have an UTEP email address and check it regularly. And you should have regular access to Blackboard. These will be my primary means of communicating with you outside of class. Please note that I will not respond to emails sent from personal email accounts. If you want to contact me, use your UTEP email address.

You should make sure that you are able to access Digital Theatre Plus.

DISABILITY STATEMENT

The Center for Students with Disabilities at UTEP provides students with disabilities accommodations and support services to help them pursue their academic, graduation, and career goals. If you are dealing with a mental, physical, emotional, or sensory disability—whether permanent or temporary—you are encouraged to contact them for a confidential



consultation. For more information, visit <http://www.UTEP.edu/CSD/Pages/default.aspx> or see pages 5-12 of the Student Handbook.

ATTENDANCE

A sign-in sheet will be distributed at the beginning of each class. If you arrive more than five minutes late, you will have to see the TA at the end of class to be credited with a tardy attendance. While attendance and participation are not assigned a percentage of your final grade, I do expect you to be present, and it will be to your benefit to be here and be attentive.

We will be going over upcoming assignments on a regular basis, and much of the information for the Reading Guides (a.k.a. exams) will be discussed in class. Persistent absence, as well as severe or consistent tardiness or early departures, may have a negative impact on your grade or result in your being dropped from the course. The same goes for evidence of distraction or inattention (see electronic device policy).



If you are absent for more than three class sessions in the first four weeks, you may be dropped from the course.

If you are absent for more than three class sessions over the course of the semester, your final grade will be lowered by one point for each absence in excess of three, up to twelve absences. (Tardies and early departures count for half of an absence.) Absences in excess of twelve will result in automatic failure.

On the flip side, you may be rewarded extra credit for exceptional participation. If you know you will need to be absent during a class when an assignment is due, please inform me as soon as possible to inquire about possible accommodations.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Any incident of academic dishonesty will result in a grade of zero on the assignment and possible disciplinary action. This includes cheating and plagiarism. Please check the UTEP Student Handbook for more information on academic dishonesty, and if you're in doubt about whether your use of a source is acceptable, don't hesitate to check with me.

SUBJECT MATTER

Some of the performances and readings used in this course may touch on mature subject matters, including violence, abuse, sexual activity, and verbal obscenity. Consequently, much of the discussion in class will require discussion of adult subject matter and language. I will do my best to give you a heads up about any troubling material that may appear.

If you have concerns about viewing or discussing specific subjects, please see me as soon as possible to discuss possible accommodations. I expect all discussions—including any that may occur outside of class—to be conducted in a respectful and professional matter.

ELECTRONIC DEVICES

The use of cell phones/smart phones/iPads/tablets/lap tops is distracting for you, me, and your classmates and is therefore forbidden. Please take notes on paper.

ASSIGNMENTS & GRADING

Reading Guides [a.k.a. Exams] (45%)

Three times during the semester, you will receive a set of questions to accompany your reading. Each reading guide will be posted in the Assignments folder on Blackboard two weeks prior to the due date. You may print them out to complete them or simply write the answers on a sheet of paper with your name at the top.

Don't wait until the last minute to complete these. For the second and third reading guides in particular, some of the questions require that you process the information and apply the concepts in the text to given examples; you may have a difficult time with these questions if you try to finish them under a time crunch.

While the questions in the reading guides will refer specifically to the assigned reading, we will cover much of the relevant material in class... so your notes from the lectures might just come in handy.

Reading Guide 1 is due at the beginning of class on Tuesday, September 24; Reading Guide 2 is due at the beginning of class on Tuesday, November 12; Reading Guide 3 is due at the beginning of class on Tuesday, December 4.

Performance Attendance (10%):

Over the course of the semester, you are expected to attend two live performances from either the UTEP Department of Theatre and Dance or the UTEP Dinner Theatre. Eligible performances this semester are:

Bless Me, Ultima (UTEP Theatre and Dance)

Dance Show (UTEP Theatre and Dance)

Young Frankenstein (UTEP Dinner Theatre)

For each production you attend, you will receive 5 points. If you attend a third production off campus—BOOM!—5 points extra credit. Just like that. Magic. Simply bring me the ticket and program, along with a paragraph reaction to the production. Please note, however, that you cannot receive credit for attending an additional production if you have not attended two productions on campus.

You should verify your attendance by signing the sign-in sheet provided at the performance. Make sure that you locate the sheet for the correct section.

Production Review (25%):

Along with attending two performances, you will write a brief newspaper-style review of ONE of the theatre productions: either *Bless Me, Ultima* or *Young Frankenstein*. See the Assignments folder on Blackboard for a detailed description of the assignment and the grading rubric. Have these handy and refer to them when you are writing your review.

Bring a pen or pencil and small notebook with you to the performance and hang on to your program. Both your notes and the information in the program will prove essential in writing your review.

The review is due one week after the final scheduled performance of the production. So if you choose to review *Bless Me, Ultima*, your review is due by end of day on Saturday, October 20. If you choose to review *Young Frankenstein*, your review is due by end of day on Sunday, November 4.

Buy your tickets early. Both department productions and Dinner Theatre shows often sell out, and telling me at the last minute that you failed to get a seat is not grounds for an extension.

If, however, you are unable or unwilling to review one of these productions for a valid reason, we can make other arrangement, provided that you approach me well in advance.

Submit your review in the Assignments folder on Blackboard on October 20 for *Bless Me, Ultima* or on November 4 for *Young Frankenstein*.

Final Project (20%):

In groups of three or four, you will prepare a presentation on a subject in the theatre not covered in depth in class. Examples of topics that have worked in the past: musical theatre, a particular playwright or director, a significant era in theatre history, a major theatre company, the theatrical styles and traditions of another culture.

Alternatively, you may give a creative presentation, such as performing a scene or giving a design concept and presentation for a play we've discussed in class.

The sky is the limit with regard to the subject matter. If you have any doubts about your chosen topic, simply approach me during office hours or send me an email to ask about your idea.

Projects will be presented during the final week of classes and the final exam period. A detailed rubric will be given in advance of the due date.

GRADING	
ASSIGNMENTS	POSSIBLE POINTS
Reading Guides (a.k.a. exams):	45
Performance Attendance:	10
Performance Review:	25
Final Project:	20
TOTAL:	100

Grading Scale

A = 90-100 points

B = 80-89 points

C = 70-89 points

D = 60-69 points

F = 0-59 points

COURSE SCHEDULE FOR INTRODUCTION TO FILM (Subject to Change)

Week Meeting	Reading	Assignments
Week 1: What is Theatre? Tuesday, Aug. 28 Thursday, Aug. 30	Chapter 1 of <i>The Theatre Experience</i> (pages 7-26)	
Week 2: Why Do We Go to the Theatre? Tuesday, Sept. 4 Thursday, Sept. 6	Chapters 2 of <i>The Theatre Experience</i> (pages 27-44)	
Week 3: How Plays Get Made Tuesday, Sept. 11 Thursday, Sept. 13	Chapters 3 of <i>The Theatre Experience</i> (pages 45-70)	
Week 4: Truth & Entertainment - The Challenge of Performance Tuesday, Sept. 18 Thursday, Sept. 20	Chapter 4 of <i>The Theatre Experience</i> (pages 71-94)	
Week 5: Truth & Entertainment - The Challenge of Performance Tuesday, Sept. 25 Thursday, Sept. 27	Chapter 4 of <i>The Theatre Experience</i> (pages 71-94)	Reading Guide 1 (on chapters 1-3) due at the beginning of class on Tuesday, Sept. 25.
Week 6: Truth & Entertainment - The Challenge of Performance Tuesday, Oct. 2 Thursday, Oct. 4	Chapter 4 of <i>The Theatre Experience</i> (pages 71-94)	
Week 7: Word & Action - The Playwright and the Script Tuesday, Oct. 9 Thursday, Oct. 11	Chapter 6 of <i>The Theatre Experience</i> (pages 125-142)	
Week 8: Word & Action - The Playwright and the Script Tuesday, Oct. 16 Thursday, Oct. 18	Chapter 7 of <i>The Theatre Experience</i> (pages 143-168)	Production review for <i>Bless Me, Ultima</i> due by end of day on Saturday, Oct. 20. Submit in the Assignments folder on Blackboard.
Week 9: Interpretation & Creation - The Role of the Director Tuesday, Oct. 23 Thursday, Oct. 25	Chapter 5 of <i>The Theatre Experience</i> (pages 95-124)	
Week 10: Interpretation & Creation - The Role of the Director Tuesday, Oct. 30 Thursday, Nov. 1	Chapter 5 of <i>The Theatre Experience</i> (pages 95-124)	Production review for <i>Young Frankenstein</i> due by end of day on Sunday, Nov. 4. Submit in the Assignments folder on Blackboard.

Week Meeting	Reading	Assignments
Week 11: Interpretation & Creation - The Role of the Director Tuesday, Nov. 6 Thursday, Nov. 8	Chapter 9 of <i>The Theatre Experience</i> (pages 199-220)	
Week 12: Sight & Sound - The Elements of Theatrical Design Tuesday, Nov. 13 Thursday, Nov. 15	Chapter 10 of <i>The Theatre Experience</i> (pages 221-240)	Reading Guide 2 (on chapters 4-7) due at the beginning of class on Tuesday. Complete in Assignments folder on Blackboard.
Week 13: Sight & Sound - The Elements of Theatrical Design Tuesday, Nov. 20 NO CLASS THURSDAY, NOV. 22	Chapter 11 of <i>The Theatre Experience</i> (pages 241-266)	
Week 14: World Theatre Tuesday, Nov. 27 Thursday, Nov. 29	Additional Reading on Blackboard	
Week 15: Presentations Tuesday, Dec. 4 Thursday, Dec. 6	None	Reading Guide 3 (on chapters 9-11 and additional reading) due at the beginning of class on Tuesday, Dec. 4. Complete in Assignments folder on Blackboard. PRESENTATION OF FINAL PROJECTS DURING CLASS
Finals Week Final: Tuesday, Dec. 4 - Presentations Continued	None	PRESENTATION OF FINAL PROJECTS DURING EXAM PERIOD