

# DIRECTING I Syllabus

THEA 3325/Fall 2019

T TR: 12:00-1:20 pm

FOX D 071

**Instructor:** Georgina Hernandez Escobar, MFA

**E-mail:** TBA (e-mail is a much better method).

**Office & Hours:** BY APPOINTMENT ONLY. Please send me an e-mail, make sure that you identify yourself and CLEARLY state your concern.

## Course Description

This course is designed to be an introduction to the art and craft of directing for the theatre. We will do this through hands-on workshops, readings, discussions, working with actors, and analyzing performances. In the first half of the semester, we will cover fundamental concepts to orient the director's approach to the material, move through aspects of effective communication and collaboration, and practice methods for facilitating inspired creative work from actors. The second half of the course will focus on practical aspects of stagecraft, the development of dynamic blocking, and the rehearsal process.

## Course Objectives

- To direct a successful two-person scene or short play no longer than 10-minutes, focusing on character and communication with actors.
- To present a director's concept and vision for your chosen scene or play.
- To apply effective use of preparation, pre-production, and rehearsal techniques for your chosen scene/play.
- To communicate effectively, both verbally and in writing, about your own work and the work of peers.

## Class Requirements

Participation, imagination, and a **DIRECTING JOURNAL** (to be graded). All of our in-class writing assignments are to be completed on your personal writing journal. Please make sure to bring this to every class, and bring writing tools (pens, pencils, et al.) NO LAPTOPS will be allowed except on WRITING DAYS or otherwise specified by the instructor.

## REQUIRED TEXTS

You must find a 7-10 minute scene or play of your choosing that you will direct in class. **This play or scene must only have two characters.** Once this scene is chosen, you must bring a hard copy of this scene to class at all times. Electronic copies are not allowed. Recommended play/scene books for you are below.

- "Scenes for Latinx Actors: Voices of the New American Theatre," Edited by Micha Espinosa & Cynthia De Cure, Smith & Krause Publishing
- "Funny, Strange, Provocative: Seven Plays from Clubbed Thumb," Playscripts INC.
- Shorter, Faster, Funnier: Comic Plays and Monologues: Eric Lane and Nina Shengold
- Any volume from the Humana Festival, The complete plays collections

## Recommended Texts

- *Collaborative Stage Directing* by Jean Burgess
- *A Director Prepares; Seven Essays on Art and Theatre* by Anne Bogart.
- *Directing for the Stage* by Terry John Converse
- *The Director's Vision: Play Directing from Analysis to Production* by Louis E. Catron.

## GRADING\*

Directing Journal: 20%

Class Participation: 20%

Assignments: 40% (Production Concept: 20%, Rehearsal Calendar: 10%, Blocking: 10%, Topics: 10%)

Directing Final Scene: 20%

**\*I DO NOT DROP STUDENTS FROM A CLASS— THAT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY.**

## GRADE BREAKDOWN

90-100: A

80-89: B

70-79: C

60-69: D

0-60: F

- **LATE WORK IS NOT ACCEPTED**—IT IS THE STUDENT’S REponsibility TO PLAN IN ORDER TO GET WORK IN ON TIME. COMPUTER ISSUES ARE NOT YOUR INSTRUCTOR’S RESPONSIBILITY; PLAN AHEAD.
- ASSIGNMENTS ARE DUE AT THE **BEGINNING** OF CLASS.
- **GRADES WILL NOT BE DISCUSSED OVER E-MAIL.**

## ASSIGNMENT BREAKDOWN

### The Directing Journal

(20%)

A small, compact notebook (a marble Composition notebook would be best) will be required for every student. This will serve as your Directing Journal. All class notes, and in-class writing will live in your Directing Journal; all others as indicated will be typed and turned in (Times New Roman, 12pt, single spaced). NOTE that ALL typed assignments will happen outside of class. You will NOT need to use a laptop during our class unless otherwise specified for a particular assignment. Please make sure to always have your journal and note that you WILL turn in your notebook *for grading* mid semester. DO NOT use loose pages, binders, or other journals where the sheets detach. Due on **December 3**.

### Participation

(20%)

It is expected that all students participate in class discussions, presentations, feedback, and overall collective creation. This is a directing laboratory. **YOU ARE PART OF THE TEAM.** It is your responsibility to be present, ready, activated, and ready to work and play at all times during our class time. If you show up, ready to work, and ready to contribute your thoughts via your Directing Journal or in the class—this part of your grade is golden.

### Written Assignments

40% (10% each)

There will be 3 typed papers due in class: (all in 12 pt Times New Roman, single spaced and in standard script formatting).

- The first “paper” will be a presentation on Production/Director’s Concept (10%) due **September 17**
- The second will be a Rehearsal Calendar (10%) due on **October 3**
- The third will be your Blocking Breakdown (10%) due on **October 22**
- The fourth will be a community engagement directorial proposal (10%) due on **November 5**

### Directing Final Scene

(20%)

Your final directing scene will consist of a previously discussed scene from our sources or other approved sources not to exceed 10 minutes (roughly 10 pages). Like a professional director, you will be in charge of scheduling your rehearsals, casting, and gathering any necessary design materials. With the help of your instructor you will identify the total needs for your scene and be ready to present your directed final on **December 10** for an audience.

## EXTRA CREDIT

### UTEP Play Attendance (5% each)

This is a THEATRE course and theatre is a vital component; in order to understand the element of performance, students should experience the theatre. As you ARE required to purchase books for this course productions are EXTRA CREDIT and highly encouraged and are produced by the Department of Theatre and Dance (*Real Women Have Curves*, *University Dance Company*, and *A Christmas Carol, en la Frontera*). All other shows you might see such as student shows, the Dinner Theater, or the community, will also be counted as extra credit. There are ushering opportunities for every show (ushers see the show for free) and specific discounted nights for every production.

EXTRA CREDIT will also be given for being an usher at a UTEP show (Dinner Theatre, Wise Family Theatre, or Studio Theatre), OR attending other productions around the city—you MUST provide a ticket stub and a program with your name in order to receive credit!!!! All extra credit ticket stubs/programs must be turned in by DECEMBER 6<sup>th</sup>.

### **PLEASE NOTE FOR ALL EXTRA CREDIT SHOWS AT UTEP:**

**You are required to sign an attendance sheet at the end of the performance you attend. If you do not sign this sheet at the end of the performance you will not get credit for attendance. The house manager will have the sign out sheet available at the end of each performance.**

### **SUBJECT MATTER:**

**The performing arts have a power to stir strong emotions, or possibly touch on subjects you might not feel comfortable seeing on stage. If you have concerns about viewing or discussing specific subjects, please see me as soon as possible to discuss possible accommodations. As I will respect your individual's rights to choose what shows you want to see, I expect all our discussions—including any that may occur outside of class—to be conducted in a respectful and professional matter.**

## COMMITMENTS & CONSIDERATIONS

- **RECIPROCITY:** Treat this course as you would any intensive in a conservatory setting. Everyone is here because they absolutely want to be. Admit that you know nothing, and also know everything necessary to create something *new*. There is no right or wrong in playmaking. In order for us to create a safe, thriving, and productive writing environment, we must gear our commentary and be receptive from a place of abundance and not scarcity. Generosity of spirit is key to new play creation, especially in a collective environment. Also, please remember that everyone's time is money. Anyone who disrupts can expect that the instructor will take the appropriate steps to ensure that all students interact in a safe classroom that is conducive to the learning process.
- **GENEROSITY:** Remember that your instructor is also a human being. She is also a working, commissioned playwright whose home and artistic base remains New York City: She is **BUSY**. Please know that as a practicing artist she has many other responsibilities outside of this class, just as the student has several responsibilities outside of this one class, however she is well-versed in the creation of new plays. Trust that your best interests are **ALWAYS** at the center of her teaching and focus and know you can always reach out to her as someone who is in the interest of, and a champion of your artistic growth.
- **ACCOUNTABILITY:** Please read the syllabus, stick to class/university policies, utilize common etiquette and respect, and know that your instructor wants you to succeed in this course, but she is not responsible for that, you are. In addition, do not expect the instructor to make exceptions for you.
- **ABUNDANCE:** When participating in class discussions, feedback, and creation, make sure that you access all the things you've listened to, thought about, and considered, from a place of abundance. This means, think about what you can **ADD** to the discussion rather than thinking of it as lacking in something. It's the "yes, and" version of the writers room. Participate freely and know that you are in a safe environment where no question is a 'stupid' question.

- **RESPECT:** Like in the movies—Please make sure that you turn your cell phone OFF prior to the beginning of class. Also, please DO NOT text during class. If this becomes a reoccurring issue, the instructor will take the appropriate steps necessary.

## CLASS POLICIES

**Punctuality/Attendance:** Punctuality is a necessity in theatre. As such, punctuality is necessary in this course. TEN minutes after the class start time, the doors will close; please DO NOT interrupt the class after the doors have been closed. Do not knock or try the door; chances are someone will be talking at that time and it is very disrespectful to interrupt. Also, if you need to leave class early, please let the instructor know—notification does not equal excuse, but it is the respectful thing to do. Attendance will not be taken regularly. It is each student's responsibility to attend class. All class/group activities will count towards the final grade. **Every student may miss two classes without providing an explanation and without suffering repercussions (i.e. I neither want nor need to know why you were not able to come to class).** Choose your freebies wisely and plan ahead; emergencies with family, cars, and health may happen later in the semester. If there are extenuating circumstances, make sure that you notify your instructor immediately. As your two lowest class participation/quiz grades are dropped there is NO make-up work in this class. Class should only be missed due to EMERGENCIES; you signed up for the course with full knowledge of the date/time.

**Academic Dishonesty:** Academic dishonesty is prohibited and is considered a violation of the UTEP Handbook of Operating Procedures. It includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, and collusion. Cheating may involve copying from or providing information to another student, possessing unauthorized materials during a test, or falsifying research data on laboratory reports. Plagiarism occurs when someone intentionally or knowingly represents the words or ideas of another person's as ones' own. Collusion involves collaborating with another person to commit any academically dishonest act. Any act of academic dishonesty attempted by a UTEP student is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Violations will be referred to the Office of Student Life for possible disciplinary action. Students may be suspended or expelled from UTEP for such actions (<http://issweb.utep.edu/home/media/SampleOnlineCourseSyllabus.pdf>). **Any form of academic dishonesty will NOT be tolerated in this course. I do read all of your papers and expect the work you submit to be ORIGINAL work.**

**Students with disabilities:** I will make any reasonable accommodations for students with limitations due to disabilities, including learning disabilities. Please see me personally before or after class in the first two weeks or make an appointment, to discuss any special needs you might have. If you have a documented disability and require specific accommodations, you will need to contact The Center for Accommodations and Support Services in the East Union Bldg., Room 106 within the first two weeks of classes. The Center for Accommodations and Support Services can also be reached in the following ways:

Web: <http://www.utep.edu/cass>  
Phone: (915) 747-5148 voice or TTY  
Fax: (915) 747-8712  
E-Mail: [cass@utep.edu](mailto:cass@utep.edu)

**Tentative Class Schedule:**  
UPDATED: 8/26

**WEEK 1—INTRO TO DIRECTING**

- T 8/27 Syllabus Review, Course Orientation + Introductions
- TR 8/29 The Director’s Challenge—Creating, managing and executing a vision. Creating a collective do’s and don’ts towards a healthy creative environment. HOMEWORK: Find a scene or 10-min play/scene that speaks to you from our sourced text (or otherwise if approved by instructor)

**WEEK 2—PHASE I: PREPARATION**

- T 9/3 **Phase I: Prep**—Initial exploration & Inspiration. Mood & Atmosphere, Genre, Style i.e. Representational v. Presentational (or both?) IN-CLASS: OPEN SCENE EXERCISE. HOMEWORK: UPLOAD selected scene/play to Blackboard **DUE by 9:00 PM on 9/6** COLLECT images, stories, songs, props, etc. that you can bring to your first “production meeting.”
- TR 9/5 **Phase I: Prep**—CONTINUE exploration w. open scenes. Add: Themes, Ideas, and Metaphors: The physical space v. literal space and “why now?”

**WEEK 3—PHASE I: COMMUNICATION**

- T 9/10 **Phase I: Comm**—The People (Actors & Audience.) Character, Setting, and Audience Experience—On displacement, immersive theatre, experiential, and other non-traditional ways to present a text. HOMEWORK: Character, Setting, Audience Experience Concept.
- TR 9/12 Secrets on Talking to Actors and making the audience connection. HOMEWORK: Director’s Vision/Production Concept Presentation, prep. What is the script about in three sentences? What is this production? What is your concept? Pick 3 highlights from your “Image Board” and share with your “design team” for Tuesday.

**WEEK 4—PHASE II: ENTERING THE WORLD OF THE PLAY**

- T 9/17 **PRODUCTION CONCEPT PRESENTATIONS DUE** + Discussion.
- TR 9/19 **GROUP REFLECTION**: On identified challenges, obstacles, and other discoveries.

**WEEK 5—PHASE II: PRE-PRODUCTION SCRIPT & DIRECTOR BREAKDOWN**

- T 9/24 **Phase II: Pre-Production**—Script Analysis, casting breakdowns, and other critical factors of your selected play—overview.
- TR 9/26 **Phase II: Pre-Production**— Final Scene/Play Cast Approved in class + casting discussion.

**WEEK 6—PHASE III: TABLE WORK + REHEARSALS**

- T 10/1 **Phase III: Table**—Table Read Group Workshop of Selected Scenes/Plays HOMEWORK: Assess & create your rehearsal calendar and your goals for each day.
- TR 10/3 **REHEARSAL CALENDAR DUE** + Discussion. IN CLASS: Reading on the Rehearsal Process, Rehearsing for Production and other materials.

### **WEEK 7—PHASE III: REHEARSALS**

- T 10/8: **Phase III: Rehearsals**—Blocking & Rehearsal Plans. Blocking Techniques: Pre-Blocking v. In-Rehearsal Blocking. Select Groups for In-Class Rehearsals.
- TR 10/10: **Phase III: Rehearsals**—In-Class Rehearsals *Blocking* Groups 1-5

### **WEEK 8—PHASE III: REHEARSALS**

- T 10/15 **Phase III: Rehearsals**—In-Class Rehearsals *Blocking* Groups 6-10
- TR 10/17 **Phase III: Rehearsals**—In-Class Rehearsals *Blocking* Groups 11-16

### **WEEK 9—PHASE III: REHEARSALS & ACTOR CHOICES**

- T 10/22 GUEST LECTURER: Jeff Wallace on “Ways of Exploring a Scene”  
**BLOCKING BREAKDOWN DUE via BLACKBOARD** + Feedback & Discussion.
- TR 10/24 GUEST LECTURER: Jeff Wallace on “Ways of Exploring a Scene”

### **WEEK 10—PHASE III: REHEARSALS & ACTOR CHOICES**

- T 10/29 OBSERVE: Kim’s Directing Class in the STUDIO  
HOMEWORK: Work on your Community Project Proposal pitch.
- TR 10/31 OBSERVE: Kim’s Directing Class in the STUDIO

### **WEEK 11—PHASE III: REHEARSALS & DETAILS**

- T 11/5 In-Class Rehearsals “On-Details” Group 1-5  
**COMMUNITY PROJECT DIRECTORIAL PROPOSAL DUE**
- TR 11/7 In-Class Rehearsals “On-Details” Group 6-10

### **WEEK 12—PHASE III: REHEARSALS & DETAILS**

- T 11/12 In-Class Rehearsals “On-Details” Group 11-16
- TR 11/14 **REFLECTIONS and Gearing Towards “WORKS”**

### **WEEK 13—PHASE III: REHEARSALS & WORKS**

- T 11/19 Works & Sharpens—Discussion + IN CLASS Reading: On Sharpening the works.
- TR 11/21 In-Class Rehearsals “Works” Group 1-5 + Notes

### **WEEK 14—PHASE III: WORKS**

- T 11/26 In-Class Rehearsals “Works” Group 6-10 + Notes
- TR 11/28 No class, Thanksgiving

## **WEEK 15—PHASE III: WORKS**

- T 12/3 In-Class Rehearsals “Works” Group 11-16 + Notes  
**DIRECTING JOURNAL DUE**
- TR 12/5 “Run-Thru” Italian Final Rehearsals + Notes
- T 12/10 **DIRECTING LAB PRESENTATIONS/FINAL SCENES (TBD)**

**PLEASE NOTE THAT THIS IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE as per your instructor’s discretion.**

### **INSTRUCTOR BIO**

Georgina Escobar is a playwright and director who employs multiple mediums to create and define the Latinx aesthetic as Sci-Femme and Frontera Funk in creating impossible narratives for the stage. She has participated in residencies including the MacDowell Colony, the Djerassi Artists Residency and is a recipient of the Theatre For Young Audiences National Award from the Kennedy Center. Her work has been exhibited throughout the USA and participated in festivals internationally (Denmark, Sweden). Her plays have made Steppenwolf's "The Mix" List, the Kilroy's List, Finalist at the National Playwrights Conference at the O'Neill and the Clubbed Thumb Biennial Commission. Artistic partners and presenters have included Gregory Hancock Dance Theatre, Primary Stages, Two River, INTAR, Clubbed Thumb, Lincoln Center, Milagro, Aurora Theatre, and Bushwick Starr, among others. She serves on the Board of Marfa Live Arts, is on Advisory Committee for the Latinx Theatre Commons, and an active steering committee member for the Climate Commons for Theatre and Performance. [www.georginaescobar.com](http://www.georginaescobar.com)