

DIRECTING I

Syllabus

THEA 3325/Fall 2020

T/TR: 9:00-10:20

Instructor: Georgina Hernández Escobar, MFA

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Office & Hours: MW 11:30-1:30pm. 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 online prompts, 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—in this particular case, creating and directing an online scene to be presented as a final project for the class.

Course Objectives:

- To direct a successful two-person scene for an online format focusing on a strong concept, and shaping strong characters through effective communication with actors.
- To present a director's concept and vision for your chosen scene or play.
- To apply effective use of "The Director's Craft" to guide your research, concept, and director choices.
- To communicate effectively, both verbally and in writing, about your own work and the work of peers.

Transparency in Flexibility: The times are changing and so is our craft. I believe in decolonizing our classroom as much as possible and with that in mind, nothing that I put forth is set in stone. As we progress through the course, be prepared to change direction of reading assignments or shape of the overall course. If we collectively agree to focus our attention elsewhere, we can actively reformat the shape of this course. You cannot demand to change the shape of the course based on your sensibilities alone, rather, you can exercise your analytical skills to justify why we *should*. Should your argument be fact-rich and evidence worthy and should the class agree, we will take a vote and move forward accordingly.

REQUIRED TEXTS

- Weekly readings from online sources, our bible will be [Innovations In Social Distance Performance](#)
- "The Director's Craft" by Katie Mitchell (textbook)
- "Fifty Professional Scenes for Student Actors" (two-person scenes) from Garry Michael Kluger.
- "Education for Socially Engaged Art" by Pablo Helguera (professor has PDF)

Any additional reading(s) of online articles will be posted on BlackBoard and available to you with enough time to complete the reading assignment.

ONLINE REQUIREMENTS

The course content is delivered via the Internet through [Zoom](#), Blackboard, and email. Here are some things to remember:

- Ensure your UTEP e-mail account is working and that you have access to the Web and a stable web browser.
- Google Chrome and Mozilla Firefox are the best browsers for Blackboard; other browsers may cause complications. When having technical difficulties, update your browser, clear your cache, or try switching to another browser.
- You will need to have access to a computer/laptop, a webcam, and a headphone/microphone combo. You will need to download or update the following software: Microsoft Office, Adobe Acrobat Reader, Windows Media Player, QuickTime, and Java. Check that your computer hardware and software are up-to-date and able to access all parts of the course.
- If you do not have a word-processing software, you can download Word and other Microsoft Office programs (including Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook and more) for free via UTEP's Microsoft Office Portal. Click the following link for more information about [Microsoft Office 365](#) and follow the instructions.

IMPORTANT: If you encounter technical difficulties beyond your scope of troubleshooting, please contact the UTEP [Help Desk](#) as they are trained specifically in assisting with technological needs of students. Please do not contact me for this type of assistance. The Help Desk is much better equipped than I am to assist you!

STATEMENT REGARDING COVID-19 PRECAUTIONS

You must **STAY AT HOME** and **REPORT** if you

1. Have been diagnosed with COVID- 19
2. Are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, or
3. Have had recent contact with a person who has received a positive coronavirus test.

Reports should be made at screening.utep.edu. If you know anyone who should report any of these three criteria, encourage them to report. If the individual cannot report, you can report on their behalf by sending an email to COVIDaction@utep.edu.

For each day that you attend campus—for any reason—you must complete the questions on the UTEP screening website (screening.utep.edu) prior to arriving on campus. The website will verify if you are permitted to come to campus. Under no circumstances should anyone come to class when feeling ill or exhibiting any of the known COVID-19 symptoms. If you are feeling unwell, please let me know as soon as possible, and alternative instruction will be provided. Students are advised to minimize the number of encounters with others to avoid infection.

Wear face coverings when in common areas of campus or when others are present. You must wear a face covering over your nose and mouth at all times in this class. If you choose not to wear a face covering, you may not enter the classroom. If you remove your face covering, you will be asked to put it on or leave the classroom. Students who refuse to wear a face covering and follow preventive COVID-19 guidelines will be dismissed from the class and will be subject to disciplinary action according to Section 1.2.3 *Health and Safety* and Section 1.2.2.5 *Disruptions* in the UTEP Handbook of Operating Procedures.

GRADING*

The components of your grade are....

15% Participation

20% Directing Journal

30% Midterm (Production Concept (10%), Rehearsal Calendar (10%), Beat & Character Sheet (10%))

35% Final (two-person scene online)

***I DO NOT DROP STUDENTS FROM A CLASS—THAT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY. ALSO, KEEP TRACK OF YOUR OWN ATTENDANCE AS I CERTAINLY WILL.**

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 RESPONSIBILITY TO PLAN IN ORDER TO GET WORK IN ON TIME. COMPUTER ISSUES ARE NOT YOUR INSTRUCTOR'S RESPONSIBILITY; **PLAN AHEAD.**

ASSIGNMENT BREAKDOWN

Participation

(15%)

This is a synchronous course. In order to earn full credit you must complete all reading assignments and attend our **online class** prepared to discuss them. The classes in the first half of the semester consist of lectures, prompts, exercises and discussions which require your active participation. Throughout the semester I will call on you to answer questions about various reading assignments or to participate in an exercise. This is how I will hold you accountable for the assigned readings and your overall participation. If our in-class interactions reveal that you have not sufficiently read the texts, or you fail to actively engage with your fellow directors, (or you exceed (3) online absences), your grade will be affected.

Directing Journal

(20%)

A digital directing journal will be required for every student director. This will serve as your Directing Journal. All class notes, and in-class writing will live in your Directing Journal. After you have picked your scene, your character work, beat by beat, rehearsal calendars and other assignments will be part of your digital journal. Please make sure to always have your journal ready during each class—the more you can add to it as we go the better chance at an A. Note that you WILL turn in your notebook *for grading* mid semester.

Midterm

(30%)

For the midterm assignment, you will create a multi-modal dossier which will include: Your Director's Concept, a Rehearsal Calendar and a Beat & Character Sheet.

Final

(35%)

For the final assignment, you will successfully present for the class your 5-7 minute two-person scene.

INSTRUCTOR BIO

Georgina H. 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

ABOUT THE NAME

UTEP has me as Georgina Hernandez because that is my legal name. As of 2012, I have adopted my mother's maiden name, Escobar, to honor her death and legacy. Until 2022 when I can officially change my name on my passport, I am legally Hernandez, but professionally and to everyone in the arts I am Escobar. ☺

A NOTE ON DIFFICULT SUBJECTS

Let us agree that when difficult subjects arise in work that we read, watch, and write, we will lean into exploring these issues, rather than shutting the discussion down. **YOU ARE IN A SAFE SPACE.** If the subject matter should ever arise concern for you or your wellbeing my goal is that we can discuss it in a circular fashion, with peer leadership, and with collective generosity.

Tentative Class Schedule:

UPDATED: 8/17/2020

WEEK 1: THE SHAPE OF THE CLASS

- T 8/25: Syllabus Review, Course Orientation + Introductions
Explore: [Innovations In Social Distance Performance](#)
- TR 8/27: The Director's Challenge—Creating, managing and executing a vision. Creating a collective do's and don'ts towards a healthy creative environment.
Read: *The Director's Craft Chapter 3* (pp. 45-52)

WEEK 2: PHASE 1—VISION

- T 9/1: Initial exploration & Inspiration: Identifying Theme/Idea.
IN-CLASS: OPEN SCENE EXERCISE.
Explore: [Innovations In Social Distance Performance](#)
- TR 9/3: The Director's Vision Board and multi-modal organization.
IN-CLASS: OPEN SCENE EXERCISE.
Read: From a scene book or existing play, select a **two-person 5-7 minute scene** (roughly around 5-7 pages)

WEEK 3: PHASE 1—CONCEPT

- T 9/8: Presenting our chosen scene to the class + pitching theme & vision + Audience Experience—On displacement, juxtaposition, immersive experiential, et al.
IN-CLASS: Journal writing— What is the script about in three sentences? What is this production? What is your concept?
- TR 9/10: Actors: Identifying & Breaking “bad” actor habits & positive reinforcement/action driven notes.
IN-CLASS: [There Will Be Blood](#) + [Nights of Cabiria](#) + [Un Chien Andalou](#) + [Battleship Potempkin](#)
Read: *Education for Socially Engaged Art* (PDF)

WEEK 4: PHASE II—PRE-PRODUCTION DIRECTOR WORK

- T 9/15: **PRODUCTION CONCEPT PRESENTATION DUE at 11:59 pm MST**: Presenting your final and revised production concept for the final (this will go on your midterm Dossier).
Homework: START CASTING ASKS
- TR 9/17: Identifying Character Immediate Circumstances and Active Journey in your piece + Beat work exercise.
Read: *The Director's Craft Chapter 2* (pp. 31-42)

WEEK 5: PHASE II—PRE-PRODUCTION DIRECTOR WORK

- T 9/22: Rehearsal Calendar Overview + Casting Discussions.
Homework: Pick a Shakespearean Sonnet & bring to next class.
- TR 9/24: Telling your story creatively—exercises w. music, focus, tempo, mood & atmosphere.

REHEARSAL CALENDAR DUE SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 27th at 11:59 pm MST

WEEK 6: PHASE III—CASTING * Casting Finalized and Confirmed.

- T 9/29: READING YOUR SCENES W. CAST + Discussion
Explore: [Innovations In Social Distance Performance](#)
- TR 10/1: READING YOUR SCENES W. CAST CONT'D + Discussion

WEEK 7: PHASE III—TABLE WORK

- T 10/6: What is table work? Do you need it? Who is it for? Rules for Mock Table Work Rehearsals Game.
IN-CLASS: [Tortilla Curtain Table Work](#), [Theatre of War](#) + Discussion
- TR 10/8: Mock Table Work Rehearsal Game (a la Mystery Dinner Party).
Read: *The Director's Craft* Ch. 4 (pp. 53-67)

WEEK 8: PHASE III— BREAKDOWNS & ORGANIZATION

- T 10/13 Mock Table Work Rehearsals CONT'D
- TR 10/15 NO CLASS — **BEAT & CHARACTER SHEET DUE at 11:59 pm MST**

WEEK 9: PHASE III—BREAKDOWNS & ORGANIZATION

- T 10/20 The Stage Manager, The Assistant Director and your organization.
IN-CLASS: [Stage Managing](#), etc. Read: *The Director's Craft* Ch. 8 (pp. 106-112)
- TR 10/22 Identifying Rehearsal Goals, formulating breakdowns and production team communication + read p. 142

WEEK 10: PHASE III— BLOCKING

- T 10/27 In the room Blocking v. Pre-Blocking + Cinematic Blocking
IN-CLASS: [How Kubrik, Spielberg and Inarritu Stage their Scenes](#). + read pp. 178-181
- TR 10/29 NO CLASS— BLOCKING REHEARSALS
Read: *The Director's Craft* Ch. 9 (pp. 117-126)

WEEK 11: WORKING WITH DESIGNERS

- T 11/3: Communicating with designers and technical team + read pp. 136-138
Read: *The Director's Craft* Chapter 12 (pp. 199-212)
- TR 11/5: IN CLASS REHEARSALS w. Notes & Feedback

WEEK 12: REHEARSAL TEMPERATURE AND PROGRESS MARKERS

- T 11/10: NO CLASS—BLOCKING REHEARSALS CONT'D
Read: *The Director's Craft* (pp. 159-168)
- TR 11/12 Giving Notes Game (using the golden rule, language and constructive feedback)

DIRECTING JOURNAL DUE SUNDAY NOVEMBER 15 at 11:59 pm MST

WEEK 13: WORKS

- T 11/17 IN CLASS REHEARSALS w. Notes & Feedback
TR 11/19 IN CLASS REHEARSALS w. Notes & Feedback

WEEK 14: SHARPENS

- T 11/24 IN CLASS “DRESS” REHEARSAL & TECH
TR 11/26 NO CLASS — THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY

WEEK 15: FINAL PRODUCT

- T 12/1 **FINAL SCENE PRESENTATIONS**
TR 12/3 **FINAL SCENE PRESENTATIONS**

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. **Be aware that freebies ONLY apply to class participation/quiz grades!**

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 taken seriously and will be referred to the Office of Student Life for possible disciplinary action. Students may be suspended or expelled from UTEP for such actions. Academic dishonesty is an assault on the basic integrity and meaning of a university. Cheating, plagiarism, and collusion in dishonest activities are serious acts which erode the university's educational and research roles and cheapen the learning experience not only for the perpetrators, but also for the entire community. It is expected that UTEP students will understand and subscribe to the ideal of academic integrity and that they will be willing to bear individual responsibility for their work. Materials (written or otherwise) submitted to fulfill academic requirements must represent a student's own efforts. 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. 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

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 even if I have the letter from CASS.

Title IX

The Department of Theatre and Dance is dedicated to providing its students with a learning environment that is rigorous, respectful, supportive and nurturing so that they can engage in the free exchange of ideas and commit themselves fully to the study of their discipline. To that end this course is committed to enforcing University policies prohibiting all forms of sexual misconduct as well as discrimination on the basis of sex and gender. Detailed information regarding these policies and the resources that are available to students through the Title IX office.