

# DIRECTING I

## Syllabus

THEA 3325/Spring 2021

M/W: 12:00-1:20

**Instructor:** Georgina Hernández Escobar, MFA

she/her/hers uses: (G. Escobar)

**E-mail:** ghernandez9@utep.edu

**Office & Hours:** F 9:00 am -11:00pm. 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 with and by hands-on prompts, engaging with readings, activating discussions, performing in-class exercises, and discourse about nowness, liveness, and the future of performance. In this class you are a DIRECTOR and an INNOVATOR. In the first half of the semester, we will cover fundamental concepts to orient the director's approach to the chosen material, move through aspects of effective communication and collaboration, and practice methods for creating inspired concepts and facilitating creative work from designers. The second half of the course will focus on practical aspects of stagecraft—in this particular case, creating and directing from concept to finish, working with actors, implementing logistics and in class/outside class projects to culminate in a Final Project.

### Course Objectives:

- To direct a successful project for an online or live format (adherent all necessary precautions *see About COVID-19 Precautions*) by 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 our available online and in-class content and other readings 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.

**Course Design:** This course is designed using a class [WEBSITE \(https://utepdirectors.weebly.com\)](https://utepdirectors.weebly.com) alongside Black Board for easy access to all reading materials, assignments, lecture notes, and other course materials. These are broken down into modular formats where each week is "packaged" as a single module (specifically on Black Board.)

**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 rest of the class agree, we will take a vote and move forward accordingly.

## REQUIRED TEXTS

- [Innovations In Social Distance Performance](#)
- [American Theatre Magazine](#)
- “Education for Socially Engaged Art” by Pablo Helguera (Excerpt PDF on blackboard)
- Other readings as they become available and always provided by professor, or to you via common domain.

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

## GRADING

Assignments (that are not in-class assignments) will be assessed according to rubrics. You can find these rubrics at the end of each assignment guideline sheet the professor provides.

Grade Distribution:

1000-900 = A                  899-800= B                  799-700 = C                  699-600 = D                  599 and Below = F

100 points: Participation (in class)

50 points: Oral Quiz (in class)

50 points: Scene Statement

50 points: Visual Spine (in class)

200 points: Director’s Concept

50 points: Rehearsal Calendar

200 points: Music Video

300 points: Final Project

## TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

The course content is delivered via the Internet through [Zoom](#), Blackboard, our [WEBSITE](#) 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](http://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](mailto: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](http://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.

Please note that if COVID-19 conditions deteriorate in the City of El Paso, all course and lab activities may be transitioned to remote delivery.

### ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION

Attendance in this course is determined by participation in the exercises, discussions, readings, and other in-class learning activities. Your participation is important to building a community of art makers. Participation will be determined by completion of the following activities:

- Reading/Viewing all course materials to ensure understanding of assignment requirements
- Oral Quiz on Syllabus and other prompts to discuss our reading/viewing materials.
- Participation in the IN CLASS Open Scene exercises and Vision Spine projects.

Because these activities are designed to contribute to your learning each week, they cannot be made up after their due date has passed.

## EXCUSED ABSENCES AND/OR COURSE DROP POLICY

This is a theatre course. Your participation is crucial. I expect participation with webcam and microphone. The sessions will NOT be recorded for your privacy. Try to be there! You will grow and learn from being present at each of our classes. Do know that lack of participation and unexcused or previously discussed absences WILL have an effect on your grade. IT IS NOT MY RESPONSIBILITY TO DROP YOU, you must do that yourself.

Make-up work will be given *only* in the case of *documented* emergency. Note that make-up work may be in a different format than the original work, given the theatrical dynamic of liveness, this may require more intense preparation.

## CLASS POLICIES

**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 one's 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](mailto: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.

## 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](http://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.

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## Tentative Class Schedule:

UPDATED: 1/11/2021

### WEEK 1: SHAPE

W 1/20: Syllabus Review, Course Orientation + Introductions  
Explore: [Innovations In Social Distance Performance](#)

**HW:** Watch “Mixfest Double Bill” directed by Dominique Rider at the Atlantic Theatre’s Mixfest Friday January 22 @ 4 pm MT (link to come); or

Read and prepare to discuss one (1) article on directing for the stage

### WEEK 2: PHASE 1—VISION

M 1/25: **ORAL QUIZ** on Syllabus. On Directing: Role, Taboos, Evolving Place; + Mixfest/art. discussion.

W 1/27: Creating the collective pool of materials, + OPEN SCENE EXERCISE [PART 1]

### WEEK 3: PHASE 1—CONCEPT & SPINE

M 2/1: OPEN SCENE [CONT’D], “A Spine, a Metaphor, A Vision”; lecture and IN CLASS visual spine assignment.

W 2/3: NO CLASS **HW:** Pick a 5-10 minute scene, project, play, or thing to direct as your final project, **and** Prepare a statement to introduce your final project, its spine, and its vision.

### WEEK 4: PHASE II—PRE-PRODUCTION DIRECTOR WORK

M 2/8: Present **SCENE STATEMENT** to class, “Concept v. Vision” lecture; sharing your **VISUAL SPINE** + discussion

**HW:** Select a Shakespearean Sonnet

W 2/10: In-Class Exercise: Affect and Effect of Language; identifying Tone and Mood for concept; examples of Director’s Concepts.

**HW:** Finalize your Director’s Concept.

### WEEK 5: PHASE II—PRE-PRODUCTION DIRECTOR WORK

M 2/15: **DIRECTOR’S CONCEPT PRESENTATION due in class;** where you will present your production concept for your final Project.

**HW:** START CASTING ASKS

W 2/17: Identifying Character, Immediate Circumstances, Active Journey, and Through Line in your piece + In-Class beat work.

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

M 2/22: Rehearsal Calendar Overview + Casting Discussions.

W 2/24: Telling your story creatively—Sonnet exercises CONT'D.

**REHEARSAL CALENDAR DUE SUNDAY FEBRUARY 28<sup>th</sup> at 11:59 pm MST**

WEEK 7: PHASE III—TABLE WORK

M 3/1: READING YOUR SCENES W. CAST + Discussion

W 3/3: READING YOUR SCENES W. CAST CONT'D + Discussion; On MUSIC VIDEO assignment...  
**HW:** Direct a music video.

WEEK 8: PHASE III— TACTICS AND BLUEPRINTS

M 3/8: Actors; working with actors, talking to actors, directing actors; discussion.

W 3/10: Storyboard; composition, frame, movement, focus; discussion.

**MUSIC VIDEO DUE SUNDAY MARCH 14<sup>th</sup> at 11:59 pm MST**

WEEK 9: SPRING BREAK

M 3/15 SPRING BREAK

W 3/17 SPRING BREAK

WEEK 10: PHASE III— BLOCKING

M 3/22: Share and discuss MUSIC VIDEOS w. Peers.

W 3/24: In the room Blocking v. Pre-Blocking + Cinematic Blocking; On Notes & Giving Notes (using the golden rule, language and constructive feedback)

IN-CLASS: How Kubrik, Spielberg and Inarritu Stage their Scenes.

WEEK 11: PHASE III — REHEARSALS

M 3/29: In-Class blocking breakdowns and exercises in picture, tableaux, transitions and the in-between.

W 3/31: The Director and The Stage Manager, lecture + discussion.

WEEK 12: REHEARSALS

- M 4/5: IN CLASS BLOCKING REHEARSALS (TBD)  
HW: Discussion board questions to peers in RE rehearsals
- W 4/7: IN CLASS BLOCKING REHEARSALS (TBD)  
HW: Discussion board questions to peers in RE rehearsals

WEEK 13: WORKS

- M 4/12: IN CLASS REHEARSALS w. Notes & Feedback
- W 4/14: IN CLASS REHEARSALS w. Notes & Feedback

WEEK 14: SHARPENS

- M 4/19: NO CLASS – REHEARSALS ON YOUR OWN
- W 4/21: On DESIGNERS, Production Meetings, and Tech.

WEEK 15: TECH

- M 4/26: IN CLASS “DRESS” REHEARSAL & TECH
- W 4/28: IN CLASS “DRESS” REHEARSAL & TECH

WEEK 16: FINAL PROJECT

- M 5/3: **FINAL SCENE PRESENTATIONS**
- W 5/5: **FINAL SCENE PRESENTATIONS**