

The University of Texas at El Paso
 Department of Theatre & Dance
 Syllabus
 THEA 3325-003: Directing I (3 credits)

COURSE INFORMATION

CRN: 27956

Term: Spring 2026

Delivery Method: In-person

Meeting Day and Time: Mondays and Wednesdays 3:00 – 4:20 pm.

Location: Fox Fine Arts Center - Music M404

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Henry MacCarthy, Ph.D.

Written Communication: Email is the best way to reach me hwmaccarthy@utep.edu

Phone Number: 915.747.7848

Office Location: Fox Fine Arts Center. Theatre wing D371 A (inside the main Department of Theatre & Dance Office).

Office Hours: Face-to-face only Wednesdays 4:30 – 5:30 pm

COURSE DESCRIPTION¹

In this course we will explore the basic principles of stage direction from various theoretical, historical and practical perspectives. Our work will include a series of exercises designed to develop critical observation skills, tools for translating ideas into visual narratives, basic composition concepts and editing skills, text analysis, casting, reception and other pre and post production procedures.






Course Learning Objectives and Edge Advantages

- 1) Students will further their skills to discuss and analyze creative work. Edge Advantages: Critical Thinking, Confidence, and Problem Solving.
- 2) Students will develop their own directorial concepts, through various projects and exercises. Edge Advantages: Critical Thinking, Leadership, Teamwork, Communication, Confidence, and Problem Solving.
- 3) Students will develop the capacity to research, articulate and implement a directing creative project. Edge Advantages: Leadership, Communication, Teamwork, and Confidence.

EDGE ADVANTAGES

This course is designed to equip students with essential Edge Advantages that contribute to their professional and personal development. Through the completion of course requirements and assignments, such as team projects, presentations, and essays, students will develop the following Edge Advantages:

¹ Parts of this syllabus are taken directly from Prof. Adriana Dominguez' THEA 3325 syllabus in order to align all Directing I sections.

	Problem-Solving	Assignments will challenge students to identify and address complex issues using innovative and analytical approaches.
	Communication	Class discussions and written assignments will improve students' skills in articulating ideas clearly and persuasively in both oral and written forms.
	Social Responsibility	Through community engagement opportunities and course content that encourages ethical considerations, students will foster a sense of responsibility towards their community and society at large.
	Confidence	By actively participating and successfully completing assignments, students will build self-assurance in their abilities to tackle academic and real-world challenges.
	Critical Thinking	The course's emphasis on analysis and synthesis of information will strengthen students' abilities to think critically and make informed decisions.

REQUIRED MATERIALS

All required articles, plays and audiovisual materials will be provided by the instructor. Students are responsible for printing the articles, plays and any other written material to bring to class. Please always bring a notebook and a writing utensil to all sessions. In addition, we will be using our cellphones for recording of still and moving image during certain class sessions. If you do not own a cellphone with recording/photo capabilities please let me know during the first week of class so that I can plan ahead of time.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Class Participation and Discussions.....	15 points
In-class exercises and assignments.....	35 points
Ushering.....	10 points
UTEP Performance reviews.....	10 points
Final Directing Project.....	30 points
Total.....	100 points

Grade Distribution:

100-90 = A 89-80 = B 79-70 = C 69-60 = D 59 and Below = F

Choose wisely when making decisions about what to miss; do not use participation in the performing arts as an excuse for not submitting quality work on time. Late work is not accepted, and all work must be submitted in the proper format; anything that is a written submission must be typed and double-spaced.

Incomplete grades may be requested only in exceptional circumstances after you have completed at least half of the course requirements. Talk to me immediately if you believe an incomplete is warranted. If granted, we will establish a contract of work to be completed with deadlines. **All points are earned; students earn their grade.**

Class Participation, Critiques and Discussions.

In order to participate in class, you have to be here—it is impossible to “make up” a directing class. While I recognize that the assessment of creative work is subjective, and everyone is entitled to their own pace; your attitude, commitment and disposition for the discussions and critiques will determine a significant part of this portion of your grade. Keep in mind that the growth you make as a director is directly related to your willingness to experience, explore and experiment. The discussions are designed to provide you with that opportunity.

Discussions are a crucial component of the course. These will take the form of critiques, (providing self-critiques and the work of your peers) and conversations about the articles and screenings (*unpacking* the readings and screenings together in class). The quality of your contributions to the in-class discussion is determined by the investment you make in reading the assigned articles and screening the videos. Take notes while you read, so that you come prepared to participate.

After the first absence during the semester, 3 points will be deducted from your final grade every time you do not show up to class, unless a written medical excuse is submitted to me no later than ONE week after your absence.

Ushering.

As directors the work we do is for an audience. Theatre cannot happen if there is nobody watching. You are required to serve as Usher at least twice for a Department of Theatre and Dance mainstage production. The purpose of this exercise is for you to have first-hand experience and understanding of working with patrons, house managers, box office personnel, and other theatre staff. This is a class exercise so it's unpaid.

UTEP Performance reviews.

Observing and discussing the work of professional directors is a very important part of your training. In addition to recordings of live performances that will be assigned as homework or screened in class you need to attend at least two of the following productions:

Slow emergencies: moving through crises, dance as opportunity.

Artistic Director Melissa Melpignano.

Wise Family Theatre

7:30 PM Performances: February 19*, 20, 21, 2025

2:00 PM Performance: February 22, 2025

*Discount Performance - All Tickets \$10

Tickets on Sale Date: January 27, 2026

Rent

Book, Music and Lyrics by Jonathan Larson.

The Dinner Theatre

Dinner Performances (6:30 P.M.): March 27, 28 & April 2*, 3, 4, 9*, 10, 11, 2026

Matinee Dinner Performance (1:00 P.M.): March 29*, 2026 (Meal Served)

Non-Dinner Evening Performances (7:30 P.M.): April 1**, 8**, 2026

Non-Dinner Matinee Performances (2:00 P.M.): April 5**, 12**, 2026

** (No Meal Served / General Admission Seating)

*Discount Dinner Performance
 Tickets on Sale NOW

Orlando.

Written by Sarah Ruhl. Adapted from the novel by Virginia Woolf. Directed by Jay Stratton
 Wise Family Theatre

7:30 Performances: April 17*, 18, 24 & 25, 2026

2:00 PM Performances: April 19 & 26, 2026

*Discount Performance - All Tickets \$10

Tickets on Sale Date: January 27, 2026

You are responsible for securing your own ticket. If performances sell out, you will need to attend on a different date or another show from the ones listed above.

For the first production you attend, you will write a Descriptive review. The content should address the following issues:

-Plot (What is the production about?)

-Production elements (**describe** the set, costumes, and lights AND how, in your opinion, does each element contribute—or not—to your understanding of what you saw on stage).

The first review is due no later than **April 20, 2026**.

For the second production you attend, you will write an Analytical Review

In this review you will address the following issues:

-Pick one scene in the production and explain what happens.

-Provide an analysis of the scene, describing how space and movement are used by the director to convey the meaning of the scene.

-In your last paragraph provide a critique of the overall production.

The second review is due no later than **May 04, 2026**.

Criteria for grading the reviews:

All reviews should be typed, double-spaced, font #12, and must be between 500 and 700 words. Papers that do not follow the above guidelines, including those that are less than 500 words or exceed the word limit will not receive full credit.

Each review is worth 5 points of your final grade.

A paper receiving 5 points has the following characteristics:

-Submitted by or before the deadline.

-Follows ALL the guidelines (listed above) consistently throughout the entire essay.

-Addresses ALL the content issues required by the exercise.

-The paper is free of grammatical errors as well as syntax and structure issues.

-ALL papers must be uploaded to our Blackboard site. Late papers will not be accepted.

Final Directing Project.

We will discuss the final directing project at length during our first session. In essence, the project should synthesize all the material we covered throughout the semester.

For this project you'll have the opportunity to choose a 10 minute play or a 10 minute scene from a published play (Please note that original work or plays that are only available online are not acceptable, and you may not choose scenes from any of the titles from this season or the past four Department of Theatre & dance seasons). In addition to selecting a play or scene, this project includes:

1-Concept presentation

2-Casting (You must have at least two performers)

3-Detailed rehearsal schedule.

4-Rehearsals

5-Work-in-progress presentations

6-Publicity plan

7-One public performance.

8-A self-assessment report.

Please note that there is no production support for this project. This is on purpose. Lights, props, scenery, costumes and sound must be kept to the very minimum. We will not have access to professional equipment and support. One of the main goals of the final project is for you to learn how to be resourceful and creative—to think outside the box—and learn how to make performance when there are no resources available other than your own entrepreneurial spirit. In other words, we will recreate the conditions that more likely, you will experience in your first post-university directing experience.

The deadline to submit your proposed title is **February 18, 2026**. Please submit a hard copy to me in class no later than February 18, 2026. Not via email Each student will have five minutes to present to the class the rationale behind your title choice. These presentations will take place during our **February 25, 2026** class session.

You are responsible for finding your actors. Please keep in mind that you assume full responsibility for the casting choices. If any of your actors miss skip rehearsals and/or the public performance, it will impact your grade significantly. I encourage you to choose titles that have a small number of performers, and keep in mind that you cannot cast yourself.

Final casting decisions must be submitted by **March 02, 2026** to me via email.

The self-assessment report will take place in class on **May 04** and **May 06, 2026**

Public performance: **All the public performances will take place during the week of April 27, 2026.**

Concept presentations will take place during the week of **March 09, 2026.**

Specific dates for submission of rehearsal schedule, publicity plan will be provided by the beginning of the third week of the semester.

TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

You will need to have access to a computer/laptop.

If you do not have 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 Technology Support 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!

COURSE COMMUNICATION: How we will stay in contact with each other

Here are the ways we can keep the communication channels open:

- Office Hours: Wednesdays 4:30 – 5:30 pm. My office hours are in-person only.
- Email: UTEP e-mail is the best way to contact me. I will make every attempt to respond to your e-mail within 24 hours of receipt. When e-mailing me, be sure to email from your UTEP student e-mail account and please put the course number in the subject line. In the body of your e-mail, clearly state your question. At the end of your e-mail, be sure to put your first and last name, and your university identification number.
- Announcements: I will make announcements in class or via email. Please check your email regularly.

EXCUSED ABSENCES AND/OR COURSE DROP POLICY

According to UTEP Catalog, “At the discretion of the instructor, a student can be dropped from a course because of excessive absences or lack of effort. A grade of “W” will be assigned before the course drop deadline and a grade of “F” after the course drop deadline.” See Policies and Regulations in the UTEP Undergraduate Catalog for a list of excuse absences. Therefore, if I find that, due to non-performance in the course, you are at risk of failing, I will drop you from the course. I will provide 24 hours advance notice via email.

MAKE-UP WORK

Make-up work will be given *only* in the case of a *documented* medical emergency. Note that make-up work may be in a different format than the original work, may require more intensive preparation, and may be graded with penalty points. If you miss an assignment and the reason is not considered excusable, you will receive a zero. It is therefore important to reach out to me—in advance if at all possible—and explain with proper documentation why you missed a given course requirement. Once a deadline has been established for make-up work, no further extensions or exceptions will be granted.

ALTERNATIVE MEANS OF SUBMITTING WORK IN CASE OF TECHNICAL ISSUES

I strongly suggest that you submit your work with plenty of time to spare in the event that you have a technical issue with the course website, network, and/or your computer. I also suggest you save all your work in a separate Word document as a backup. This way, you will have evidence that you completed the work and will not lose credit. If you are experiencing difficulties submitting your work through Blackboard, please contact the UTEP Help Desk. You can email me your backup document as a last resort.

INCOMPLETE GRADE POLICY

Incomplete grades may be requested only in exceptional circumstances after you have completed at least half of the course requirements. Talk to me immediately if you believe an incomplete is warranted. If granted, we will establish a contract of work to be completed with deadlines.

ACCOMMODATIONS POLICY

The University is committed to providing reasonable accommodations to students with documented disabilities. Students who become pregnant may also request reasonable accommodations, in accordance with state and federal laws and regulations and University policy. Accommodations that constitute undue hardship are not reasonable. To make a request, please register with the UTEP Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS). Contact CASS at 915-747-5148, email them at cass@utep.edu, or apply for accommodations online via the CASS portal.

SCHOLASTIC INTEGRITY

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 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. All suspected violations of academic integrity at The

University of Texas at El Paso must be reported to the [Office of Community Standards](#) for possible disciplinary action. To learn more, please visit [HOOP: Student Conduct and Discipline](#).

GUIDANCE ON ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Use of AI technologies or automated tools, particularly generative AI such as ChatGPT or DALL-E, is only allowed with proper attribution given for its use.

Students must properly cite and give full credit to the program used upon submission of every relevant assignment. For example, text generated using ChatGPT must be cited:

Chat-GPT(version). Date of query (year/month/day). "Text of your query."

Generated using OpenAI. <https://chat.openai.com/>

A short paragraph describing how the tool(s) was/were used for the assignment must be included.

PLAGIARISM DETECTING SOFTWARE

Some of your course work and assessments may be submitted to SafeAssign, a plagiarism detecting software. SafeAssign is used to review assignment submissions for originality and will help you learn how to properly attribute sources rather than paraphrase.

COURSE RESOURCES: Where you can go for assistance

UTEP provides a variety of student services and support. Please refer to the QR code below for a listing of campus resources or visit https://www.utep.edu/advising/student_resources/student-success-resource-hub.html.



Course Calendar

Subject to change at instructor's discretion

Wednesday 01/21

Course Introduction

Monday 01/26

A brief history of Directing. Part I

Wednesday 01/28

A brief history of Directing. Part II

Leone De Sommi's *Four Dialogues on Stage Presentations* c. 1556. Directing Theory from the Renaissance to Today.

Monday 02/02

Traditional Dramatic Structure

READ: Ott, Gustavo. Passport

READ: Bogart, Anne *Narrative*. 4-15p.

Wednesday 02/04

Traditional Dramatic Structure: In-class exercise

Monday 02/09

Traditional Dramatic Structure: In-class exercise

Wednesday 02/11

Casting and Scheduling

Monday 02/16

Space: Theatre and Architecture

READ: Rufford, Juliet Theatre and Architecture *Introduction*

Wednesday 02/18

Space: In-class exercise

Monday 02/23

Space: In-class exercise

Wednesday 02/25

Composition: In-class exercise

Monday 03/02

The visual arts: Research

Wednesday 03/04

The visual arts: Research

Monday 03/09

The visual arts: In-class exercise

Wednesday 03/11

The visual arts: In-class exercise

Monday 03/16

Spring Break

Wednesday 03/18

Spring Break

Monday 03/23

Publicity

Wednesday 03/25

Creative use of Resources. Part I

Monday 03/30

Creative use of Resources. In-class exercise

Wednesday 04/01

Creative use of Resources. In-class exercise

Monday 04/06

Collaborating with Actors

Wednesday 04/08

Collaborating with Designers

Monday 04/13

Collaborating with Designers

Wednesday 04/15

Final Project: Individual Meetings

Monday 04/20

Final Project: Group work

Wednesday 04/22

Final Project: Group work

Monday 04/27

Final Project presentations

Wednesday 04/29

Final Project presentations

Monday 05/04

Final Project self-assessment and critiques

Wednesday 05/06

Final Project self-assessment and critiques