

THTR 250: Directing (offered as a tutorial)
Fall 2008

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MWF 2:30pm - 3:50pm
Buchanan 200

office hours: Tuesdays 1-2pm
Wednesdays 10:30-11:30am
and by appointment

This core course for advanced theater majors is taught each fall in the Department of Theater and is designed to help students make connections between the different areas of knowledge developed in their theater education as they apply their skills to directing. Using exercises, peer critique, observation, and analysis, students develop the fundamental skills of stage directing. Units are structured to explore the different roles that directors take on in their work with actors, designers, and the text. Each student's work in the class culminates in a final scene.

Course Goals & Objectives:

- To practice telling a compelling story with the tools of theater.
- To identify style in one's own work and in others'; to develop a vocabulary to discuss style.
- To experience the organizational and logistical demands on a director.
- To identify the director's relationship with key personnel on the production.
- To translate textual and interpretive choices into staging decisions; to develop a vocabulary to discuss staging.
- To practice auditioning, casting, and coaching actors for performance.
- To learn how to give and receive honest and respectful feedback to peers on artistic projects.
- To synthesize practical and analytic skills into an independent, sustained directing project.

Texts: *The Director's Companion*, by Mel Shapiro
 A Director Prepares, by Anne Bogart
 Thinking Like A Director, by Michael Bloom
 A Practical Handbook for the Actor, by Melissa Bruder, et al

We will be using the following plays for our exercises throughout the term:

The Heidi Chronicles by Wendy Wasserstein
Copenhagen by Michael Frayn

Class Attendance Policy:

You are required to attend all class meetings, and to arrive on time, ready to work. Attendance will be taken every day (late arrivals will be noted). Excused absences will be granted for *verifiable* medical and family emergencies, as well as for observed religious holidays, if brought to my attention ahead of time. A number of unexcused absences or late arrivals will result in a lower grade for the course, at my discretion.

When you are in class, you should be focused on class: please turn off cell phones, and refrain from writing or reading for other classes. *Please bring with you any texts under discussion that day and wear comfortable clothes that allow a range of movement.*

Field Trips:

Going to Chicago to see professional performance is a hallmark of the Theater curriculum at Lake Forest College, and an educational opportunity unmatched at other colleges. Since this course is being run as a tutorial, our field trips will be either “piggybacking” on other course field trips, or you will be given the option of seeing a particular show on your own. *There will be a fee* associated with the cost of tickets and transportation for the “piggybacking” field trips—how to pay this fee will be determined.

Please note: It is mandatory that you attend or make up the class field trips as arranged. Field trips will take place on Thursday or Friday evenings and will not conflict with Theater department productions. Reasonable attempts will be made to avoid conflicts with Garrick Players events and other all-campus events. Once the tickets have been purchased, you will not, under any circumstances, be reimbursed for your ticket or travel expenses if you have to miss the field trip.

Special Accommodations:

Everyone is built a little differently, and it shouldn't be surprising that everyone has different needs when it comes to learning in the classroom. Please come and talk with me if your needs are not being met.

If you have concerns about mobility requirements for any assignment or physical access to the classroom, performance spaces, or any resources, please see me and we will work together to resolve the problem.

Assignments:

- scene and/or performance exercises, designed to give you the chance to focus and work on the fundamental skills of directing
- written and verbal critiques of your classmates' scene work
- written analytic responses to the performances we attend
- a final scene from one of the class plays, presented publicly

Grading:

40% Scene/performance exercises: Each assigned exercise will be graded pass/fail with comments during the term. In November you and I will meet individually to review your growth and improvement in scene work. From this meeting will come the scene work portion of your grade. Guidelines for exercises will be distributed as the term progresses, to allow flexibility to address the interests and needs of the class. Some of the exercises may be more written or preparatory work than performance.

Please note the following about this conference on exercise work: *The starting point for our discussion will be the rhetorical position that completing all the exercises on time and according to the directions earns a “C” – your task will be to provide evidence that your work in exercises has exceeded the basic requirements in significant ways. Although I intend for this portion of your grade to be determined with your input and cooperation, in the case of dispute, disagreement, or dissatisfaction, I retain the final authority to assign a grade for your scene exercises.*

LATE WORK - No extensions will be granted for scene/performance exercises. Exceptions will be made for college-approved absences (only if arranged ahead of time) or for verified emergencies.

PARTICIPANTS - The scene study tutorial taught by Professor Jennifer Lowe will form the pool of actors from which we will draw our participants for exercises and final scenes. In

addition, you may recruit each other or outside actors to perform in your scenes. You may not perform in your own scene unless the directions for the exercise require it.

20% Participation: Written and verbal critiques of your classmates' scene work will constitute the major portion of your participation grade, as well as (of course) the quality of your participation in class. Attendance, preparation, and discussion will also count here.

You may turn in your critiques of your classmates via email to ohlandt@lakeforest.edu. These should be submitted in the body of the email and not as an attachment.

20% Written work: Analytic response papers to the plays we will be seeing on field trips will be graded with a number grade out of 10 points. All assigned papers will be averaged into one grade for written work.

LATE WORK - Papers become late at the start of the class period in which they are due. Papers will lose 1 point if they are turned in after the start of class but before midnight on the day they are due, and an additional point for each day they are late after that. No extensions will be granted, except for verifiable emergencies.

EMAIL - I *encourage* you to turn papers in electronically via email ohlandt@lakeforest.edu or Moodle. Papers turned in electronically **MUST** be in MSWord, WordPerfect, or Adobe PDF format– inline text will be returned to you without credit, with penalties for lateness applied.

20% Final scene & promptbook: Your final scene will be graded according to criteria determined by the goals of the class. This criteria will be made explicit by the time work begins on the final scenes. *It would take a dire emergency indeed for me to accept a final scene after the due date.*

TECHNICALITIES - Your final scene will be a staging of one of the following short plays:

Trifles by Susan Glaspell

Los Vendidos by Luis Valdez

Dutchman by Amiri Baraka

You **MAY NOT** make cuts to the dialogue in the middle of your scene.

Along with the performance of your final scene, you will also be graded on a director's "promptbook" that you turn in to me at the time of the final performance. The graded components of the promptbook will be decided upon during the course of the class, but will most likely include: audition prep, casting notes, rehearsal schedule, action domino, unit breakdown,actable verb bank, groundplan, and director's note for your play– mostly the things we've been doing in class up until this point.

PARTICIPANTS - The same guidelines for participant selection for the exercises apply to the final scene. Your actors must have memorized lines for the final scene performances. You will be graded on your directing of the scene, not on the quality of your actors, although their failure to memorize well suggests poor organization or motivation on the part of the director, or else a lack of rehearsal time.