

Directing I: The Development of Visual Perception

THEA 3100.001/3100.301 (Lab) Fall 2023

Instructor: **Lisa Devine, MFA**

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Office Hours:

In-person: Tuesday/Thursday: 11:00a.m.-1:00 p.m. or by appointment.

Virtual: Monday/Wednesday: Appointments via Zoom.

Communication Preference: Message via Canvas, email, or Zoom session.

Class Time: T/TH 2:00-4:20

Office: RTFP 215

Prerequisites

Courses: Completion of *Play Analysis*, *Acting Fundamentals*, *Acting Realism*, *Theatre History* with a C or better final grade. Skills Needed:

1. Ability to analyze text.
2. Knowledge of American Realism acting terms.
3. Familiarity with actor coaching techniques.
4. Excellent written and verbal communication skills.
5. Good group organizational skills.

Course Description

Directing I is addressed to those interested in learning to direct for the theatre whether community, academic, regional or Broadway theater. We will explore the art of storytelling, by first asking, "What is the story" and then deciphering "What are the pictures and staging that will compliment the text". Directing will be studied as both a craft and an interpretive art. We will study the basic techniques of stage directing such as interpretation, staging, and actor-coaching. We will analyze scenes in context of the play and explore how that scene manifests itself onstage. This course will exercise the emerging director's ability to think and create by developing the powers of observation.

****Because you (and only you) know what you'd like to gain from this class, I encourage you to set a few goals to accomplish over the course of the semester. Please let me know what I can do to assist you as you achieve these goals.*

Required Course Textbook

Hodge, Francis and Michael McLain, Play Directing: Analysis, Communication, and Style. 7th edition. Boston, Allyn & Bacon, 2010.

Scripts from plays you want to direct this semester.

Recommended books:

Caldarone, Marina and Maggie Lloyd Williams, Actions: The Actor's Thesaurus. Hollywood, Quite Specific Media Group, Ltd. 2004.

Hauser, Frank and Russell Reich, Notes on Directing. New York, RCR Creative Press, 2003.

Jory, Jon, Tips: Ideas for Directors. Hanover, N.H., Smith and Kraus, 2002.

Subject Matter Disclaimer

Theatre is an art, which imitates human living: since sexuality and violence are a part of human living, some materials in this class may deal with sexual and violent images, behaviors, situations and language. The instructor nor the university plays the role of "censor." Please consider this matter carefully. ***People who may be offended by such materials may want to reconsider taking this course.***

Assignments and Grading

Performances

Silent Tension

My Photo Story

Brecht Test

Director's Showcase

Director's Prompt Book

A= excellent (100-90)

B= good (89-80)

C=average (79-70)

D= (69-60)

F= (59 or below)

50%

Writing & Analysis

| | |
|--------------------------|-----|
| Social Norm | |
| Brecht Analysis | |
| Final Reflection | |
| Play Critiques (2) | |
| Peer Director Evaluation | 30% |

Citizenship & Work Ethic

| | |
|---|------|
| Attendance (Class, Rehearsal and Productions) | |
| Class Participation | |
| Learning Activities | |
| Actor Evaluations | 20% |
| <hr/> | |
| | 100% |

UNT DTA Season Productions

You will receive vouchers for free tickets to the productions. The Fall 2023 season of plays includes:

Elephant's Graveyard by George Brant
Dates: September 20-22

Peter & the Starcatcher by Rick Elise & Wayne Barker
Dates: October 5-8

Antigone by Sophocles; Translated by Nicholas Rudall
Dates: November 1-5

Eurydice by Sarah Ruhl
Dates: November 2-4

Attendance

Active Participation is an extremely important part of maintaining a good grade in this class. You must attend all scheduled class sessions. Each has been designed for the needs and goals of this group. If you are absent, you have missed experiences that cannot be made up or even explained. Information is imparted during lecture, discussion, activities and exercises that discussing with me or other students will not fill the gap of your absence.

Acceptable Student Behavior

- It is expected that you give your **undivided attention and support** to your classmates during their presentations. This often requires silence while they work, and you observe. You can learn a great deal from watching others work. *Please note that it is considered extremely discourteous to enter or leave the room while others are working, or to speak quietly while others are performing.*
- Student behavior that interferes with an instructor's ability to conduct a class or other students' opportunity to learn is unacceptable and disruptive and will not be tolerated in any instructional forum at UNT. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior will be directed to leave the classroom and the instructor may refer the student to the Center for Student Rights and Responsibilities. The Code of Student Conduct can be found at www.unt.edu/csrr.

Attendance Policy

- Attendance is mandatory. You may receive two (2) excused absences for family emergencies, serious illness, or official UNT business. Students must show written proof. Doctors' appointments are not excused.
- **Each unexcused absence beyond the allotted 2 lowers the final grade 5 points on a scale of 100 points possible.**
- The professor's roll book is the official record of absences and tardiness. This should be followed by students on Canvas. Leaving class early, sleeping, and non-participation will all be counted as an absence.
- Suggested Dance and Theatre attendance policy expects the number of allowable absences should not exceed 10% of the total class meetings for the semester. For example, if a class meets twice a week for 15 weeks, then the number of allowable absences before the students receives a failing grade (or is withdrawn) is three (3).

Bottom Line: Class attendance is mandatory.

Class Participation & Rehearsals

- Most of your assignments will involve working with other people. Be the type of person that you would want to work with. Areas you will be evaluated are: *Attitude, Willingness to Learn, Citizenship, Adding to the conversation, work ethic, improvement over the semester, acceptance of grades earned and how absences are handled.*
- If a student is disruptive, they will be asked to leave and be counted absent.

- **Rehearsals for Scenes:**
 - Directors are required to organize rehearsals in and outside of class and recruit volunteer actors to augment those in the Director's Ensemble.
 - Directors are responsible for clearly communicating rehearsal schedule to their actors.
 - Directors are responsible for finding rehearsal space. You can reserve space in the D+T office.
 - Make sure that times and places are clearly decided upon.
 - Once a plan is made, you must be there. It is unforgiveable to call a rehearsal and then be late or worse, not show up.

Performance Assignments

For every assignment you will be asked to complete, you will receive **an assignment sheet and a rubric** as to my expectations. I am always happy to answer questions about an assignment but if I am not available please refer to these sheets. With some of the performances you will be assigned a written portion that will help with understanding of your interpretation. *Use these sheets when creating your performance or writing play analysis and artistic vision as a checklist to be sure you have completed the assignment. The most egregious mistake I see student's make is not completing all portions of an assignment.*

Evaluations

Throughout the semester, you will be evaluated by your actors and other student directors in the class. This is a tool for you to not have only my observations on your creative choices, communication style and leadership abilities but those who you are leading and another outside observer besides myself. This will help you to hone your skills throughout our time together. Likewise, you will be evaluating the actors in return. Evaluations are graded.

Directing Showcase (or Final Exam)

- Final scene performances will be held on December 5 and 7. Class time (2:00-4:20) will be devoted to a final dress rehearsal. An evening showcase with invited audience will begin at 6:00p.m. and run until the first 8 scenes are performed. All students are required to see all scenes on both days.
- The Final Reflection and scene critiques will be due Thursday December 14, 1:30-3:30p.m. This is your Final Exam and attendance is mandatory.

Late Assignments

No late assignment. Directing scenes will be administered only on the day that is listed on the assignment sheet. This is to guarantee equitable treatment of all students. Please acquaint yourself with the calendar attached. ***In theatre, the curtain rises on opening night regardless.*** As far as any written assignments, consider the "due date" the last moment I will take the assignment. Any written assignment may be turned in early. This allows you to structure your study schedule to allow you time for other course assignments. *Time Management is a life skill. If you are not good at time management, this is the semester you will conquer this skill.* **Bottom line: Any assignment can be early. Nothing can be late. Show initiative.**

Grades

There is a grading rubric that has been designed for each assignment. This tool is used to stay as objective and fair as possible when grading each student's work. **You are responsible for knowledge of your grade at all times.** Consult Canvas frequently (if not daily) to know where your grade is at throughout the semester. For large classes, I will grade the papers in the order they are received. This means those students who turn their assignments in at or close to 11:59 p.m. the day they are due will receive their graded work back last. If you have any questions about your grades, please contact me and I will be happy to help you. *Grades will not be discussed over the phone but rather in private Zoom sessions or in person during office hours.*

Incompletes

Only under extraordinary circumstances will an Incomplete be given.

Withdrawal

Should you choose to drop this course, you must initiate the drop and acquire all the proper signatures and paperwork. If that process is not completed, you will be subject to a WF or F at the close of the semester.

Cheating/Plagiarism

The Student Code of Conduct prohibits all forms of academic dishonesty including the use of Artificial Intelligence or AI. This includes plagiarism, cheating on exams, using papers that have been written by someone other than yourself,

or providing work to other students. *“Use of AI to produce or help content without proper attribution or authorization, when an assignment does not explicitly call or allow for it, is plagiarism.”*

To plagiarize means to take and submit as one's own ideas and/or the expression of ideas of another person. Plagiarism is using words or ideas which are not your own, but which you have culled from another source (including the internet) and have not given credit. Plagiarism is intellectual thievery and will not be tolerated.

If a student is caught cheating or plagiarizing the student will receive an F for that assignment. If the student is caught a second time, the student will receive an F for the course. With plagiarism, it will also be incumbent upon the student to demonstrate that the student has not plagiarized (rough drafts of papers, notes, outlines, annotated source materials, etc.) so please retain all evidence of your having done writing projects yourself.

Fitness

This course is designed to accommodate all levels of physical ability and fitness. As with any physical training, there will be some soreness and muscular fatigue as a result of a new use of the body. This is normal and healthy. *However, you are responsible for your own health.* If you are in doubt as to whether you can perform some aspect of the exercises, please refrain from doing so until you can consult a physician. If you need to refrain from doing significant portions of the coursework due to this condition, you must get written verification from a physician and be prepared to do alternative assignments.

Americans with Disabilities Act Notice

The University of North Texas makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking reasonable accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide you with a reasonable accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course. You may request reasonable accommodations at any time; however, ODA notices of reasonable accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of reasonable accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. Students are strongly encouraged to deliver letters of reasonable accommodation during faculty office hours or by appointment. Faculty members have the authority to ask students to discuss such letters during their designated office hours to protect the privacy of the student. For additional information see the Office of Disability Accommodation website at <http://www.unt.edu/oda>. You may also contact them by phone at 940-565-4323.

Accommodation

Please let me know if you need accommodation for religious holidays or other issues.

SPOT

The Student Perception of Teaching Effectiveness (SPOT) is a requirement for all organized class at UNT. This short survey will be conducted in class on your laptop or cellphone at the end of the semester, providing you a chance to comment on how this class is taught. I am very interested in your feedback I get from students, as I work to continually improve my teaching. I consider your “Personal Growth Assessment Assignment” and the SPOT to be an important part of your participation in this class.

Future Training and Possibilities of Production

Our Directing sequence includes:

- Directing I: Scene Study
- Directing II: Play Conceptualization and Design Collaboration
- Directing Practicum: Rehearsal and Performance of Plays

There are many opportunities to direct in D+T. Students must have at least Directing I to be considered to direct a “First Stage” one act. More advanced students may be chosen to direct for the “Lab Series” or Summer Arts Festival which are small budgeted full-length productions with the possibility of designers and technical support as part of our season. Apply early January for a place in next year's season.

There are also opportunities as Assistant to the Director (no directing classes), Assistant Director (Directing I), and Associate Director (Directing II). Please let me know of interest.

Last day to drop a course is November 10, 2023.

I am looking forward to getting to know each of you!

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Tentative Calendar

Week 1

August 22

Welcome Directors! Receive syllabus and calendar.

2:00-3:00: Actors' Ensemble Members Only

3:00-4:20: Directors Arrive

Activity: This is your laboratory of creativity.

August 24

Read Chapters 1-2 (What is a Director?; What is a Play?). Lecture & Activities: What is a director? What is a good director? How about casting power? Being the power in the room? *Receive Play Critique Assignment.*

3:45: Actors' Ensemble Arrive

Activity: Get to know the Actors' Ensemble

Week 2

August 29

Read Chapter 7 (Directors is Working with Actors). Lecture & Activities: How Humans Work. Crash course on communication. *Receive Social Norm Assignment.*

3:30: Actors' Ensemble Arrive

Activity: Giving Directions; Social Norm Casting Revealed

August 31

Read Chapters 9, 10 (Blocking; Composition). Lecture & Activities: Developing an actor playground.

2:45: Actors' Ensemble Arrive.

Activity: Blocking for Enriching a Story.

Week 3

September 5

Social Norm Assignment Due September 4 by 11:59pm. Lecture & Activities: Fun with traffic patterns and composition. Bring: A visual piece of art that has at least 2 people in it that you love. *Receive Silent Tension Assignment.*

2:30: Actors' Ensemble Arrive.

Activity: Sculpting Actors

September 7

Lecture & Activities: Importance of Play Reading. Silent Tension Rehearsal.

2:45: Actors' Ensemble Arrive.

Activity: Silent Tension Rehearsal

Week 4

September 12

Silent Tension Performance Due.

Actors' Ensemble Arrive per director request.

September 14

Lecture & Activities: Building your artistic vision. Analyzing Romeo & Juliet Balcony scene. *Receive My Photo Story Assignment.*

UNT Production: Elephant's Graveyard by George Brant

Dates: September 20-22

Week 5

September 19

Rehearsal for My Photo Story.

Actors' Ensemble Arrive per director request.

September 21

My Photo Story performance and presentation of artistic vision due.

Actors' Ensemble Arrive per director request.

Week 6

September 26

Read Chapters 3-4. (Foundation and Façade of Playscript; Core of Playscript) Lecture & Activities: Creating the world of the play through given circumstances. *Receive Brecht Test Assignment.*

3:00: Actor's Ensemble: Auditions for 25 actors.

September 28

Read Chapters 5-6. (Idea and Rhythm-Mood Beats)

Lecture & Activities: Great shows start with script analysis.

3:00: Actor's Ensemble: Auditions for 25 actors.

UNT Production: Peter & the Starcatcher
Play by Rick Elise. Music by Wayne Barker.
Dates: October 5-8

Week 7

- October 3 Lecture & Activities: Director's choice of script. *Scene Selection & Cast due for Brecht Test Assignment.*
- October 5 Read Chapters 11-12. (Picturization)
Lecture & Activities: Linking Composition to Picturization.
3:30: *Actors' Ensemble Arrive*
Activity: First Read Thrus and Director's introduction

Week 8

- October 10 **Play Critique #1 Due.** Lecture & Activities: My Show is Blocked. Now What?! Brecht Test Rehearsal.
Actors' Ensemble Arrive per director request.
- October 12 Lecture & Discussion: Building a creatively safe environment for artists to play. Rehearsal for Brecht Test.
Actors' Ensemble Arrive per director request.

Week 9

- October 17 Director-to Director: Groundplan and Blocking check. *Actors' Ensemble Arrive per director request.*
- October 19 Brecht Test Rehearsal: Silent sequence storytelling. *Actors' Ensemble Arrive per director request.*

Week 10

- October 24 Brecht Test Rehearsal: Dress Rehearsal. *Actors' Ensemble Arrive per director request.*
- October 26 Brecht Test Rehearsal: Dress Rehearsal. *Actors' Ensemble Arrive per director request.*

UNT Productions:

Antigone by Sophocles; Translated by Nicholas Rudall
Dates: November 1-5

Eurydice by Sarah Ruhl
Dates: November 2-4

Week 11

- October 31 **Brecht Test Performances and Director's Vision/Analysis Due.**
Actors' Ensemble Arrive per director request.

- November 2 **Brecht Test Performances and Director's Vision/Analysis Due.**
Actors' Ensemble Arrive per director request.

Week 12

- November 7 **All peer and director evaluations due.** Critique & Discussion of Brecht Test Scenes. *Receive Final Exam: Directors' Showcase and Director's Book.*

- November 9 **Play Critique #2 Due.** Scene selection and cast for Final Exam due. Directors Homework: Analysis, Vision, and Communication.

- November 10 Last Day to Withdraw**

Week 13

- November 14 Point to ponder: First Read Thru Bliss or Challenge? Activities: Have you created groundplan? Share you artistic vision with the cast? Block your scene. *Actors' Ensemble Arrive per director request.*
- November 16 Point to ponder: Did you block the scene organically or planned? Activities: Extrinsic Research and story discussion. Tips for inspiring memorization from your actors. *Actors' Ensemble Arrive per director request.*
- November 20 – 24 Thanksgiving Break**

Week 14

November 28

Point to ponder: Are your actors memorized? What about design elements: costume, lights, sound, props?
Activities: Characterization Rehearsals and Full Run Thru. *Actors' Ensemble Arrive per director request.*

November 30

Point to ponder: Are you and your actors ready for dress rehearsal? *Actors' Ensemble Arrive per director request.*

Week 15

December 5

Final Exam: Directors' Showcase Performance and Director's Book Due.

2:00-4:20: Final Dress Rehearsal for Directing Showcase

6:00-9:00: Directing Showcase Performances

December 7

Final Exam: Directors' Showcase Performance and Director's Book Due. Receive Reflection Paper Assignment.

2:00-4:20: Final Dress Rehearsal for Directing Showcase

6:00-9:00: Directing Showcase Performances

December 9

All peer and director evaluations due.

Finals Week

Thursday December 14 1:30-3:30pm Reflection Paper Due.

Director's Showcase Discussion and Assessment. Your future in Directing II.