

Theatre & Social Change

THEA 4390.001 Spring 2021

Instructor: **Lisa Devine, MFA**

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Office Hours: Wednesday: Before or after class via Zoom or by appointment.

Communication Preference: email, phone call, private zoom session

Class Time: Wed 6:00-8:50p.m.

Office: RTFP 215

Course Description

This course has been developed to provide opportunities for students to explore the potential relationship between Theatre and Contemporary Issues from Social, Political, and Personal Perspectives. The premise draws from the notion that theatre/film/performance arts are effective tools of communication – and beyond the aesthetic or entertainment value – may reflect and influence changes within society.

Objectives:

- Through readings, performances, film/videos, personal experiences, historical and cultural concerns, students will form and discuss personal point of view regarding contemporary issues and theatrical performances.
- Students will develop the ability to effectively communicate about theatre and contemporary issues in written and verbal forms.
- As active participants in the learning process, students will assume a responsibility for identifying and investigating opportunities to broaden and deepen a personal understanding and commitment to issues of social change inherent in popular culture.

Required Course Textbooks

Books:

Andrews, Andy. The Traveler's Gift. Thomas Nelson, Nashville, 2002. (ISBN: 9780785264286)

Coates, Ta-Nehisi. Between the World and Me. Spiegel & Grau, New York City, 2015. (ISBN: 09780812993437)

Plays:

Akhtar, Ayad. Disgraced. Dramatists Play Service, NYC, 2017. (ISBN: 978-822230427)

Clifford, Jo and Chris Goode. Eve. Oberon Modern Plays. London, 2017. (ISBN: 9781786822697)

Drury, Jackie Sibblies. Fairview. Theatre Communication Group. NYC, 2019. (ISBN: 9781559369527)

Hickson, Ella. Oil. Nick Hern Books, London, 2016. (ISBN: 9781848426030)

Karam, Stephen and PJ Paparelli. Columbinus. Dramatic Publishing, Woodstock, IL. 2008. (ISBN: 9781583423929)

Lewis, Sinclair. Adapted by Tony Taccone & Bennett S. Cohen. It Can't Happen Here. Dramatists Play Service, NYC, 2017. (ISBN: 9780822237068)

Morisseau, Dominique. Pipeline. Theatre Communications Group, NYC, 2018. (ISBN: 9781559365871)

Stephens, Simon (adaptor). The Curious Incident of The Dog in the Night-Time. Bloomsbury, London, 2012. (ISBN: 9781408185216)

Wallace, Naomi. One Flea Spare. Broadway Play Publishing, NYC, 1997. (ISBN: 088145138x)

Wedekind, Frank. Edward Bond (Translator) Spring Awakening. Dramatic Publishing, Woodstock, IL, 1979.

Additional Plays available on Canvas:

Alfaro, Luis. Mojada. Methuen Drama. London. 2021. (ISBN: 9781350155404)

Ensler, Eve. The Vagina Monologues. Dramatists Play Service, NYC, 2000. (ISBN: 0822217724)

McIntyre, Dennis. Split Second. Samuel French, NYC, 1984.

Subject Matter Disclaimer

In the study of theatre, film, art, and literature as well as the moral, social, cultural, and political issues, we will cover a wide spectrum of human behavior, practices, language, and subject matter that may be considered immoral, anti-social or obscene to some. Some performances, readings and discussions may contain adult themes, language or images which are not within your personal standards or value system. The instructor nor the university plays the role of "censor." Please consider this matter carefully. ***If you are easily offended or are not willing to experience standards and values different from your own, this may not be the class for you.***

Assignments and Grading

Projects & Major Grades

Current Events Exam		A= excellent (100-90)
Race in America Exam		B= good (89-80)
Social/Personal Issues Exam		C=average (79-70)
Hot Social Topic Presentation		D= (69-60)
Traveler's Gift Project	40%	F = (59 or below)

Assignments & Writings

Hot Social Topic Outline	
Hot Social Topic Visual Aid	
Social Critique of <u>Machinal</u>	
Response to <u>Fugitive Songs</u>	
Self-Reflection Essay (2)	
Social Change Considerations	30%

Discussion & Reading

Weekly Reading Quizzes	
Attendance	
Class Participation	
Learning Activities	30%
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	100%

*** This course meets the Historical/Critical Perspective requirements for Theatre Majors. ***

Quizzes and Exams – On Canvas only

A quiz will be given once a week over the play reading and/or play background. All quizzes will be taken on Canvas. A quiz will be uploaded directly after Wednesday's class (9:00pm.) and be open for students to take until Friday at midnight (11:59 p.m.). Once Canvas has closed the quiz, I will not re-open it. Plan your quiz taking schedule with this in mind.

Three exams will also be administered through Canvas. The date and hours of exam availability will be written on review sheets. The exams will be composed of limited choice questions, short essay, and the occasional essay. Exams must be taken during the scheduled opportunity. Once the date and time has passed, **no make-up exams will be given.**

Considerations, Self-Reflections and Research Projects

Throughout the semester, questions about the play or its structure will be posed to you to investigate and form an opinion. There are no "right" answers to these questions. They are designed like essay questions in which there are a range of possible responses. Your grade does not rest on what your opinions are. You will be graded on the amount of effort and thought that you put into your writings, as well as how you well you support your opinions given the limitation of two pages. All written assignments will be uploaded into Canvas for grading.

Projects

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 projects you may be assigned a performance portion that will help with understanding of your interpretation. ***Use assignment guidelines when creating your assignment as a checklist to be sure you have completed the assignment. The most egress mistake I see student's make is not completing all portions of an assignment.***

Late Assignments

No late assignments will be accepted. 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.*** Consider the

“due date” the last moment I will take the assignment. Any written assignment may be turned in early. I will open the portal to turn in an assignment when I introduce it. This allows you to structure your study schedule to allow you time for other course assignments. *Time Management is a life skill. Recognize that if you are battling the clock on Canvas, you have procrastinated.* **Bottom line: Any assignment can be early. Nothing can be late. Show initiative.**

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.

You should attend class on time, complete readings prior to class and participate in class activities. **Attendance will be taken every class meeting.** Although I am here to help you in any way and sympathize with problems you will encounter this semester, only documented illnesses, death in the family, and extreme circumstances are considered excused absences. **Whenever possible communicate with the instructor if an absence is expected.**

Acceptable Student Behavior

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.

Bottom Line:

- Attendance is mandatory.
- You may receive one (1) excused absence for family emergencies, serious illness, or official UNT business. Students must show written proof. Doctors' appointments are not excused.
- The professor's roll book is the official record of absences and tardiness. Ask the professor to check the roll book to ensure that your attendance record is correct. Leaving class early, sleeping, checking cell phone, reading outside material will count 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 once a week for 15 weeks, then the number of allowable absences before the student receives a failing grade (or is withdrawn) is three (2).

Class Discussions

The structure of this course is focused on experiences, investigation, and interaction. **Discussions of the assigned readings will constitute a major portion of the class.** It is imperative that students accept the responsibility for attending each class and assigned events as evidence of a commitment to the study of social issues as well as to their peers and themselves. This is essential for passing this course. Please feel free to ask questions during lectures or discussions. Even in Zoom sessions, students are expected to become involved in the class discussion.

Class Participation

- The grade for class participation is evaluated in the following areas: *Attitude, Willingness to Learn, Citizenship, adding to the conversation, work ethic, improvement over the semester, acceptance of grades earned and how absences are handled.*
- Cameras: Treat the Zoom session as you would your classroom. Create a space for your zoom sessions within your living environment that allows you to focus on class.
 - Turn your camera on; help to create a classroom experience by seeing each other professionally.
 - In the entertainment business, creating a network is extremely important for building a career. The instructor and all those in attendance should know who you are and what you look like.
 - An exception: If the professor is lecturing and sharing her screen, cameras may be turned off so as to fully focus on the material being presented.
- To avoid disrupting the class, adhere to Zoom Professional Etiquette:
 - Wear clothing to your Zoom session that you would wear in face-to-face classes. Present yourself in the best possible light.
 - Be aware of your surroundings. Make sure you do not have a distracting background (piles of laundry, other people) or a distracting/animated virtual background that has nothing to do with our class.
 - Mute is your friend. Once you log into your virtual classroom, be sure to mute your microphone (lower left corner.)
 - Raise your hand and wait to be called upon. Either physically raise your hand or use the “Raise Hand” button at the center bottom of your screen. Once you are called upon, unmute yourself and begin speaking. When you are finished speaking, indicate you are done by saying “Thank you” or “That's all.” Return your microphone to mute.

- Zoom chat feature is a tool to make comments and ask questions without interrupting. Be aware that your comments are public and recorded in the session. All chat messages must be focused on subject matter of this course.
- If a student is disruptive, they will be asked to leave and be counted absent.

UNT DTA Season Productions

You will receive vouchers for free tickets to the productions. The Spring 2021 season of plays includes:

Machinal by Sophie Treadwell

Streaming Dates: March 18-21, 2021

Fugitive Songs Music by Chris Miller. Lyrics by Nathan Tysen

Streaming Dates: April 15-18, 2021

While we are living with Covid-19, we ask for your patience. Exact dates of the productions may change. Your professor will keep you apprised of any changes to the production schedule. The department is making strides to keep students safe while bringing you the experience of watching or participating in live theatre. Contact the Box Office for the latest procedures or with any questions that may arise.

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. 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.*

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. This includes plagiarism, cheating on exams, using papers that have been written by someone other than yourself, or providing work to other students. 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 s/he 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.

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.

Note from the Professor about Covid-19

This is a class that would normally be taught face-to-face with interacting with myself and other classmates. I will do my best to build a community in our Zoom sessions, so you get the most out of this experience. If something (like the virus) is preventing you from experiencing this class fully, please communicate this to me. If you feel like you are lost and/or behind in your school, talk to me. Our world is tricky to navigate, and I understand the added pressure of going to college during this time. I am here as your guide through your education. To give you something to focus on while preparing for a time when sitting in a theater is no longer dangerous to your health. Let me know how I can help.

Last day to drop course is April 2, 2021

****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.*

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