

# Theatre & Social Change

## THEA 4390.001 Spring 2023

Instructor: **Lisa Devine, MFA**

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Office Hours:

In-person: Tuesday/Thursday: 11:00a.m.-1:00 p.m. Friday: After our class. Or by appointment.

Virtual: Monday/Wednesday: Appointments via Zoom.

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

Class Time: F 12:00-2:50p.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:

Arnold, Daniel, et.al. Inheritance: A Pick-the-Path Experience. Talonbooks, 2022. (ISBN: 9781772013627)

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

Moore, Wes. The Other Wes Moore. Random House, New York City, 2010. (ISBN: 9780385528191)

#### Plays: (available on Canvas)

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

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

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

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

Hwang, David Henry. Yellow Face. Theatre Communications Group. NYC, 2009. (ISBN: 9781559363402)

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

Karam, Stephen and PJ Paprelli. 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)

Schreck, Heidi. What the Constitution Means to Me. Theatre Communications Group. NYC, 2020. (ISBN: 9781559369640)

Shekar, Madhuri. In Love & Warcraft. Samuel French, NYC, 2014.

Spector, Jonathan. Eureka Day. Dramatists Play Service, NYC 2022. (ISBN: 9780822241423)

Vogel, Paula. Indecent. Theatre Communications Group, NYC. 2017 (ISBN: 9781559365475)

## 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)
Self-Reflection Essay #2	50%	F = (59 or below)

### Assignments & Writings

Hot Social Topic Outline	
Hot Social Topic Visual Aid	
Social Critique of <u>American Idiot</u>	
Self-Reflection Essay #1	
Sculpting Our Future	30%

### Discussion & Reading

Weekly Reading Quizzes	
Attendance	
Class Participation	
Learning Activities	20%
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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 Friday's class (3:00pm.) and be open for students to take until Sunday 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 and Self-Reflections

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.

## Research Projects and Response Papers

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.**

### **UNT DTA Season Productions**

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

#### **The Book of Will** by Lauren Gunderson

Dates: March 30- April 2, 2023

#### **American Idiot**

Book and lyrics by Billie Joe Armstrong and Michael Meyer. Music by Green Day.

Dates: April 20-23, 2023

While we are living with Covid-19, we ask for your patience. 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.

### **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.

#### **Covid-19 Symptoms**

- It is important that you communicate with me, **PRIOR** to be absent so we can discuss and mitigate the impact of the absence on your attainment of course learning goals. Please inform me if you are unable to attend class meetings because you are ill, in mindfulness of the health and safety of everyone in our community.
- If you are experiencing any symptoms of Covid-19 (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html>) medical attention from the Student Health and Wellness Center (940-565-2333 or [askSHWC@unt.edu](mailto:askSHWC@unt.edu)) or your health care provider PRIOR to coming to campus. UNT also requires you to contact the UNT COVID Hotline at 844-366-5892 or [COVID@unt.edu](mailto:COVID@unt.edu) for guidance on actions to take due to symptoms, pending or positive test results, or potential exposure.

#### **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/csr](http://www.unt.edu/csr).

#### **Bottom Line:**

- 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.
- 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, not joining an assigned breakout room 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 once a week for 15 weeks*, then the **number of allowable absences** before the student's grade is affected **one and half class sessions (1.5)**.

## **Class Discussions**

The structure of this course is focused on experiences, investigation, and interaction. You are required to read all the plays, come to class with the text, ready to participate in all class activities. Read the scripts not only as literature, but also from the perspective of directors, designers, actors, and teachers/students of literature. **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.*

### **Course Materials for Remote Instruction**

Remote instruction may be necessary if community health conditions change, or you need to self-isolate or quarantine due to COVID-19. Students will need access to computer, webcam, and microphone to participate in fully remote portions of the class. Information on how to be successful in a remote learning environment can be found at <https://online.unt.edu/learn>.

## **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. 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.

**Last day to drop course is April 7, 2023**

*\*\*\*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!***