

Directing I

THEA 3100.001/301: Directing I (TuTh's 2:00pm - 4:20pm)

Class Location RTFP 127

Office Hours: TuTh 11:30am - 1:30pm (by appointment only)

Office location RTFP 221*

Instructor: Nathan Autrey

Email: nathan.autrey@unt.edu

*****The instructor reserves the right to change any information contained in this document, when necessary, with adequate notice given to the student.*****

Prerequisites: Students must be a theatre major or theatre minor to take this course. Students must have taken the prerequisite courses THEA 1050, THEA 1440, THEA 2051, THEA 2351, and passed them with a C or better. To enroll in THEA 4100 Directing II, students must successfully complete Directing I with a grade of C or higher and obtain instructor approval.

Hours: 3;2

Course Description: Introduction to the techniques of stage direction: conceptualization, staging and actor coaching. Script analysis, rehearsal organization and practical application of practices through scene work. Written examination on composition and picturization.

Course Overview: In this course, students will learn to approach a text from a director's perspective. The process encompasses research, pre-blocking based on compositional principles, actor coaching from table-work through staging, and ultimately, preparing for performance.

Required Text: Reading/Supplies Requirements:

- *The Memory of Water* by Shelagh Stephenson
- Thinking Like A Director by Michael Bloom ISBN 978.0.571.19994.5
- Homework readings provided via Canvas: The Director's Theatre excerpt by Harold Clurman, Revealing A Character's Inner Conflicts excerpt by Mel Shapiro, Directors on Directing excerpts by Konstantine Stanislavsky and Peter Brook.
- Script for choose your own scene selection
- 10 minute play script

ALL handouts will be posted to Canvas Files and a hard copy will be available upon request.

Attendance Policy: Theatre is a collaborative art. Since so much of the process of learning about acting involves interacting with your peers, attendance is MANDATORY. As such, absences will greatly affect your ability to pass this course. Per the UNT Student Attendance and Authorized Absences Policy, an absence may be excused for the following reasons:

- a religious holy day, including travel for that purpose;
- active military service, including travel for that purpose;
- participation in an official university function;
- illness or other extenuating circumstances;

- pregnancy and parenting under Title IX; and
- when the University is officially closed by the President.

Attendance Syllabus Statement: Students are expected to attend class meetings regularly and to abide by the attendance policy established for the course. It is important that you communicate with the professor and the instructional team prior to being absent, so you, the professor, and the instructional team can discuss and mitigate the impact of the absence on your attainment of course learning goals. Please inform the professor and instructional team if you are unable to attend class meetings because you are ill, in mindfulness of the health and safety of everyone in our community.

Attendance Policy: Students are allowed THREE absences only in this Course. After each unexcused absence you will drop a letter grade. If you accrue a FOURTH absence, the highest grade you will be able to receive in this course is a D. Three tardies will equal ONE ABSENCE. Please be present, on time and ready to work. This is the professional standard that we will be striving to attain this semester.

Office of Disability Access Accommodations: 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 Access (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, refer to the Office of Disability Access website at <https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/office-disability-access>. You may also contact ODA by phone at (940) 565-4323.

Safety in this Course: Directing demands both mental and physical focus, not only for effective storytelling but also for fostering a respectful and mindful environment among collaborating artists. Our role is to ensure collaborators feel heard, seen, and appreciated, all while guiding the work towards a unified vision. Respect is paramount in all interactions. Should you encounter emotional struggles, recognize this as a potential part of the artistic and growth process. Information on university Student Affairs Counseling and Testing services is available on their website.

Physical Contact: Directing often involves physical and intimate moments for performers. All physical contact must be consensual, discussed with the instructor, and choreographed to prioritize actor comfort. This applies to all forms of contact, including handshakes, pats on the back, shoving, and kissing. Any unauthorized contact is inappropriate and should be reported. Directors are expected to adjust blocking if an actor expresses discomfort, as stories can always

be told without compromising an actor's comfort or safety.

Sexual Assault Prevention: UNT is committed to providing a safe learning environment free of all forms of sexual misconduct. Federal laws and UNT policies prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex as well as sexual misconduct. If you or someone you know is experiencing sexual harassment, relationship violence, stalking and/or sexual assault, there are campus resources available to provide support and assistance. The Survivor Advocates can be reached at SurvivorAdvocate@unt.edu or by calling the Dean of Students Office at 940-565- 2648.

Sensitive Subject Matter: In this course sensitive subject matters may be discussed in this class. Everyone is expected to treat these moments with the sensitivity and respect they deserve. Racist, misogynistic, homophobic, or any other form of hateful language/action is disruptive and will not be tolerated. Anyone who finds it difficult to act respectfully toward their classmates and the subject matter will be asked to leave the class and will forfeit the participation points for the day.

Student Academic Integrity: The University of North Texas promotes the integrity of learning and embraces the core values of trust and honesty. Academic integrity is based on educational principles and procedures that protect the rights of all participants in the educational process and validate the legitimacy of degrees awarded by the University. In the investigation and resolution of allegations of student academic dishonesty, the University's actions are intended to be corrective, educationally sound, fundamentally fair, and based on reliable evidence. Please visit UNT Student Academic Integrity Office for more information.

General Class Information & Guidelines:

Grading:

1. Class Participation & Effort - Active participation in this course encompasses both physical attendance and engaged mental presence during class discussions and rehearsals. Participation points will not be awarded if you are present but not engaged or prepared for class. ***There are no points awarded for absences, excused or not.**
2. Completion of Assignments - Needs no explanation.
3. Professionalism - Professional conduct requires demonstrating respect for classmates and the instructor in all interactions and consistently striving for excellence daily. This includes both giving and receiving feedback.
4. Preparedness - Adequate preparation entails completing assignments before class, whether preparing to discuss assigned readings or demonstrating elements of your rehearsal process. Preparedness is measured through passes. Pass clarification:
 - 1st pass - Ensure all necessary materials have been acquired, thoroughly read, researched and conceptualized. Each individual should possess a physical copy of the materials, including a proposed ground plan, if applicable. Ready to cast, and rehearse the material.

- 2nd pass - It is clear that you have been meeting with your actors for quality rehearsals. You are required to have a minimum of two scheduled rehearsals between passes. During rehearsals, you have successfully implemented clear staging that aligns with your concept and guided your actors toward believable performances. You are fully committed and receptive to constructive feedback.
- 3rd pass - Your directorial work is now performance-ready, a testament to your effective use of rehearsal time and your commitment to refinement, particularly during our dedicated rehearsal session. Your choices are clear and strong, reflecting both your confidence as a director and the individual strengths of your actors. You are fully invested in the storytelling. Your commitment is to realize the scenic, props, and visual elements that define the world of this story. Furthermore, your actors are appropriately dressed and presented to embody their characters convincingly, meeting your directorial vision.

5. Improvement - Developing as an artist hinges significantly on the ability to improve. This requires actively receiving feedback and implementing adjustments throughout the rehearsal process to refine and enhance your artistic choices accordingly.

6. Collaboration with actors and other directors (when applicable) - Successful theatre is based on collaboration. Effective collaboration leads to abundant work opportunities, while its absence results in a lack thereof. Be someone others want to work with by being reliable, present and committed to the work.

Assignments will be graded based as follows:

- Participation (10pts x 30) 300 points
- Reading, Rehearsal, & Observation reflections (10pts x 10) 100 points
- 1st Pass Preparation (35pts x 3) 105 points
- 2nd Pass Preparation and Rehearsal (65pts x 3) 195 points
- 3rd Pass Performance (65pts x 3) 195 points
- Director's Showcase 80 points

Assignments throughout semester:

- Observation of an outside rehearsal (Reflection posted in Canvas)
- Observation of an outside production (Reflection posted in Canvas)
- Weekly reading
- Scene from *The Memory of Water*
- Choose your own scene
- 10 Minute Play
- 10 Minute Play Festival

TOTAL 1000 POINTS

For every unexcused absence you will be dropped a letter grade

- 900-1000 points = A
- 800-899 points = B
- 700-799 points = C
- 600-699 points = D
- 0-599 points = F

You can track your grade progress through Canvas.

Weekly Schedule of Class Assignments: Assignment dates are SUBJECT TO CHANGE:

- **13 - 15 JAN** - Class Information and Expectations. A quick introduction to the art of directing, tracing its evolution from the Duke of Saxe-Meiningen to the modern director. We will explore the director's multifaceted role and identify key elements for success. Introduction to COMPASSION and General Principles of Staging. In-class staging assignment the Mill. Required Homework, read *The Memory of Water* and "The Director's Theatre" excerpt by Harold Clurman and write Reflection 1.
- **20 - 22 JAN** - Introduction to the 4 C's Handout. Discussion will be based on "The Director's Theatre" reading and working through the 4 C's with *The Memory of Water*. From *The Memory of Water*, select a scene to direct. Watch actors' 1-minute monologues and decide on 2 to three actors to call back. Homework, read "Thinking Like An Artist" (Chapter 1) from "Thinking Like A Director" by Harold Bloom and "Revealing A Character's Inner Conflicts" excerpt by Mel Shapiro.
- **27 - 29 JAN** - Each director has 10-15 minutes to coach actors, focusing on their ability to play the role. Casting session after auditions. Discussion will be based on "Thinking Like A Director" by Harold Bloom and "Revealing A Character's Inner Conflicts" excerpt by Mel Shapiro. Homework, read Chapter 3, "Interpreting The Action" and "The Early rehearsals" (Chapter 9) by Harold Bloom. Cast your scene and meet with the cast for a table work and read-through.
- **3 - 5 FEB** - For *The Memory of Water*, the initial 1st pass of scenes will begin, interspersed with individualized feedback from both the professor and the class. We will discuss Harold Bloom's "Interpreting The Action" (Chapter 3) and "The Early Rehearsals" (Chapter 9). Homework, read "Staging" (Chapter 10) by Harold Bloom and stage your scene with your cast.
- **10 - 12 FEB** - First half of the directors will present their 2nd pass of their scenes, followed by individualized feedback from both the professor and the class. The discussion will focus on "Staging" (Chapter 10). Homework, students are to read "The Middle Rehearsals: Problem Solving" (Chapter 11) and write Reflection 3 and rehearse notes with their cast in preparation for the final pass.
- **17 - 19 FEB** - The last half of the directors will present their 2nd pass of their scenes, followed by individualized feedback from both the professor and the class. The discussion will focus on "The Middle Rehearsals: Problem Solving" (Chapter 11).

Homework, rehearse notes with their cast in preparation for the final pass. For your upcoming project, please read and select two scene options from two different plays. Ensure you bring a paper copy of the scene with you.

- **24 - 26 FEB** - Directors will present the final pass of their scenes, followed by individualized feedback from both the professor and the class. The discussion will focus on individual self-reflection and scene options for the next directing project, including casting decisions. For homework, write Reflection 4 and meet with the cast for a table read and table work in preparation for the 1st pass.
- **3 - 5 MARCH** - Directors will present the 1st pass of their chosen scene, followed by individualized feedback from both the professor and the class. Discussion will be based on each director's Reflection 4 response and post-mortem experience. For homework, directors will read "Exploring what the Actor Needs," an excerpt by Mel Shapiro, write Reflection 5, block and rehearse their chosen scene in preparation for the second pass.
- **10 - 12 MARCH - SPRING BREAK!**
- **17 - 19 MARCH** - First half of the directors will present their 2nd pass of their scenes, followed by individualized feedback from both the professor and the class. Discussion will be based on Reflection 5: "Exploring what the Actor Needs." Homework: read "Directors on Directing" excerpt by Konstantin Stanislavky, write Reflection 6, and rehearse scenes.
- **24 - 26 MARCH** - Last half of the directors will present their 2nd pass of their scenes, followed by individualized feedback from both the professor and the class. Discussion will be based on Reflection 6: "Directors on Directing" excerpt by Konstantin Stanislavky. For homework, read "The External Perspective" excerpt by Michael Bloom. Write Reflection 7 and rehearse scenes in preparation for the final pass.
- **31 MARCH - 2 APRIL** - Directors will present the final pass of their scenes, followed by individualized feedback from both the professor and the class. The discussion will focus on individual self-reflection, Reflection 7, scene options for the next directing project, including casting decisions. For homework, meet with the cast for a table read and table work in preparation for the 1st pass.
- **7 - 9 APRIL** - Directors will present the 1st pass of their 10-minute plays. This will be followed by individualized feedback from both the professor and the class, with discussion based on each director's post-mortem experience. For homework, directors are to read the "Directors on Directing" excerpt by Peter Brook, write Reflection 8, and block and rehearse their 10-minute plays in preparation for the 2nd pass.
- **14 - 16 APRIL** - 2nd pass First half of the directors will present their 2nd pass of 10 minute plays, followed by individualized feedback from both the professor and the class. Discussion will be based on Reflection 8: "Directors on Directing" excerpt by

Peter Brook. Homework: read “The Final Stages” excerpt by Bloom and rehearse scenes.

- **21 - 23 APRIL** - The last half of the directors will present their 2nd pass of their scenes, followed by individualized feedback from both the professor and the class. Discussion will be based on “The Final Stages” excerpt by Michael Bloom. For homework, submit Reflections 9 & 10 and rehearse scenes in preparation for the final pass, director’s showcase.
- **28 - 30 APRIL** - Director’s showcase.

The following mantra serves as a declaration of our essential needs as performers to achieve alignment with our instruments, fully grasp our capabilities, and unlock our true potential. At the end of each class, we will recite this mantra together as a ritual to leave behind the work of the day and honor the artistry we've experienced. Our belief in ourselves should not be swayed by temporary setbacks. By nurturing a sense of self-worth and confidence, we not only improve our actions but also strengthen our conviction in our own value.

The Actor's Vow
by Elia Kazan

“I will take my rightful place on the stage
and I will be myself.

I am not a cosmic orphan.

I have no reason to be timid.

I will respond as I feel;
awkwardly, vulgarly, but respond.

I will have my throat open,

I will have my heart open,

I will be vulnerable.

I may have anything or everything
the world has to offer, but the thing I need most,
and want most, is to be myself.

I will admit rejection, admit pain, admit frustration,
admit even pettiness, admit shame, admit outrage,
admit anything and everything that happens to me.

The best and most human parts of me are those
that I have inhabited and hidden from the world.

I will work on it.

I will raise my voice.

I will be heard.”