

THEA 3400: Theatre for Young Audiences

Production | Performance | Pedagogy

Fall 2025

MW 9:00-10:50 am, RTFP 130

Instructor Contact

Name: Zoe Settle

Office Hours (by appointment): MW 1:00-1:30pm, TR 11:00-11:30am

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Course Description

Recognition and examination of the history and philosophy, production and performance of theatre for young audiences. Focused inquiry on the practical problems that arise in the selection and performance of dramatic texts, original collective creations, and adaptation of selected literature. Course designed for those who advocate theatre as a stimulus for learning, whether they are specializing in classroom teaching or seeking careers in professional theatre.

Course Structure

The class is taught on MW, 9:00-10:50 am. This 15-week course will be taught face-to-face. There are four modules in the course. In each module, the focus will be on elements of production, performance, and pedagogy (the art of teaching).

This course is intended to introduce you to the academic study and practice of play production for young people. Classes will include a mixture of lectures, discussions, and interactive activities that will help you to develop your own unique style as a teaching artist.

Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, students will have knowledge of:

- ❖ The process of devising theater for young audiences
- ❖ Local and national TYA organizations
- ❖ Modern approaches to teaching theater in the classroom
- ❖ TEKS as pertaining to theater
- ❖ Challenges impeding the growth of theater for young audiences

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- ❖ Demonstrate skills and methodology for teaching theater in a classroom
- ❖ Develop and implement an original performance concept
- ❖ Plan and implement an original STEAM lesson plan
- ❖ Create a multicultural awareness as a theater artist
- ❖ Engage in oral discussion reflecting on written and performed works
- ❖ Create and implement age-appropriate drama activities

Required Texts

- ❖ Viola Spolin: *Theater Games for the Classroom: A Teacher's Handbook*
- ❖ Coleman A. Jennings: *Theatre for Young Audiences*
* Both are available on Amazon and through the UNT bookstore; Spolin can be bought second-hand for around \$8. Please reach out if you have any trouble acquiring these texts

Grading

Your grade in the class will depend on the following:

- ❖ Competent, disciplined rehearsal and classwork
- ❖ Thorough preparation for class
- ❖ Timely and successful completion of individual and group projects as assigned
- ❖ Regular, faithful attendance
- ❖ Reliable, collegial partnering in group projects

A point system will be used to determine your final course grade and your individual assignment grades. See individual assignments for point values. The final semester grade will appear in letter form, according to the UNT grading system.

1010-1120 points = A

896-1009 points = B

784-895 points = C

783 points = D

782 points or below = F

All written work will be turned in through email, and must be submitted before class (i.e. no later than 8:59am the day it's due).

Late work and extra credit will be accepted at the instructor's discretion.

In-class presentations and group projects cannot be made up. If absent on the day of your presentation, you will not receive credit.

Course Assignments

Additional details for each assignment will be posted to Canvas

Play Readings

- ❖ The Arkansaw Bear - Aurand Harris
- ❖ Home on the Mornin' Train - Kim Hines
- ❖ Bocon! - Lisa Loomer
- ❖ A Thousand Cranes - Kathryn S. Miller
- ❖ Peter Pan and Wendy - Lauren Gunderson
- ❖ Best Christmas Pageant Ever - Barbara Robinson
- ❖ All American Boys - Jody Drezner Alperin & Vicky Finney Crouch

Play Reflections

- ❖ Around 250 words, responding to plays read for class
- ❖ What did you like? What stood out? Would you produce this play? Why or why not?
- ❖ Share your own interpretation and opinion of the play
- ❖ **Five** reflections will be expected – your group will skip the play you teach to class

Group Project: Leading a Creative Drama Class

- ❖ Following reading a play, the class will be led through group discussion, reflection, and activities inspired by the piece
- ❖ Two lessons will be demonstrated and led by the professor, and the remaining lessons will be given by the students
- ❖ We will sign up for groups on August 27th, with the first student-led class being presented on September 15th.
- ❖ In groups of 3-5, each student will prepare a section of the class to lead:
 - Interactive Summary
 - Activity for Setting the Scene
 - Activity for Exploring Characters
 - STEM connection
 - Conclusion/Wrap-up activity
- ❖ Target your activities to an age group of your choice, and be prepared to defend how they meet the [fine arts TEKS](#) for that grade level
- ❖ Grade will be based on:
 - Group understanding of the play
 - Clarity of presentation
 - Quality of activities
 - Relevancy to target age group

Performance Reflection

- ❖ Students will find time outside of class to attend one live TYA or educational performance
- ❖ Prepare a reflection on the production between 350-500 words, following class writing guidelines outlined in syllabus

Activity Writeup

- ❖ Gaining inspiration from a childhood story, plan an engaging activity to share with the class
- ❖ Prepare an engaging activity pamphlet to accompany a TYA production of your choosing

Discussion Prompts:

- ❖ Following a reading and discussion in class, a prompt will be listed on Canvas to be answered prior to the next class session
- ❖ Responses should be around 150 words, and each student is expected to reply or interact with at least one other student response

Reports:

- ❖ Three assignments to be written up following a targeted search for information, including:
 - Searching for TYA organizations in North Texas
 - Viewing local UIL and school seasons
 - Analysis of children in the media via chosen clip

Midterm: Group Devised Performance

- ❖ As a group, you will create a five minute performance piece devised from a stimuli
- ❖ Your performance should include more than one style of performance (ex: spoken dialogue, movement, dance, music, video, poetry, etc.)
- ❖ Your performance will be graded on group preparedness and cohesiveness, an in-class “dress” rehearsal, and the written accompaniment
- ❖ Written work should include:
 - Inspiration for your piece
 - Rehearsal and process notes
 - Script/action log and rough drafts (if applicable)
 - Citation for any music, stories, or other sources used
- ❖ Grade Breakdown is:
 - 50 points - In-Class Rehearsal
 - 50 points - Written Work
 - 100 points - Final Performance

Final Project: Pitch of a Play

- ❖ You will choose a play to prepare to pitch to a children’s theater or school for inclusion in their season
- ❖ By responding to provided questions, you will create a written summary of your pitch
- ❖ You will then prepare an accompanying PowerPoint presentation to present your concept to the class
- ❖ Your pitch will include a learning guide of classroom activities to accompany the production

Extra Credit Opportunities:

- ❖ See one additional live TYA or educational performance and write a reflection on the production
- ❖ Choose two additional TYA plays to read and reflect on

Communication Expectations

- ❖ Always be respectful towards your classmates and professor in class, email, or any other communication
- ❖ Regularly check UNT emails for class communication
- ❖ Written work should have correct spelling and grammar, and be properly formatted.
- ❖ Standard fonts such as Arial, Calibri or Times New Roman, with a max size of 12 point font are preferred, and please mind your oxford commas 😊

Course Evaluation

Student Perceptions of Teaching (SPOT) is the student evaluation system for UNT and allows students to confidentially provide constructive feedback to their instructor and department in order to improve the quality of student experiences in the course. The student will receive an email when the SPOT evaluation for this course becomes available.

Attendance Policy

As a student, you are expected to attend each class for the entire period. Active participation in theatre is important, and you need to be present to participate. **Three absences** are allowed with no penalty to your grade. Starting with the 4th absence, your final point total will be reduced by a letter grade. Habitual late arrival or early departure may result in an absence. Please inform the professor if you are unable to attend class meetings because you are ill, in mindfulness of the health and safety of everyone in our community.

Class Participation

As a member of this class, you should arrive having read and reflected on the week's materials. You have a perspective unique from your classmates, and it is expected you will bring this to all class discussions and activities.

UNT Policies

Academic Integrity Policy

Academic Integrity Standards and Consequences. According to UNT Policy 06.003, Student Academic Integrity, academic dishonesty occurs when students engage in behaviors including, but not limited to cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, forgery, plagiarism, and sabotage. A finding of academic dishonesty may result in a range of academic penalties or sanctions ranging from admonition to expulsion from the University.

ADA Policy

UNT makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide a student with an accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding one's specific course needs. Students may request accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of 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 accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. For additional information see the ODA website (<https://disability.unt.edu/>).

Course Schedule

Reading and written assignments/presentations are due for class discussion on the day they appear on the schedule. This schedule is subject to minor changes.

Module 1: 8/18 - 9/10

Monday, 8/18

Syllabus review, class introductions, earliest theater memories

Wednesday, 8/20

Discussion (Canvas):

- ❖ What do you think of when you hear “Theater for Young Audiences”? Respond with your first impressions in around 150 words

Read:

- ❖ [How Theater for Young People Could Save the World](#)
- ❖ [Transcending TYA Stigma](#)
- ❖ Envisioning the Future of TYA*: pgs 1-4, pgs 20-25

* Posted to Canvas

Monday, 8/25

Read:

- ❖ Arkansaw Bear - *Theatre for Young Audiences*
- ❖ [The Importance of Creative Drama](#)

Assignment:

- ❖ Play reflection

In-Class Activity:

- ❖ Leading a Creative Drama Lesson
- ❖ Sign up for group slots

Wednesday, 8/27

Read:

- ❖ [How to Create Drama that Appeals to Children](#)
- ❖ [Social Emotional Learning and the Arts](#)
- ❖ Significance and Practice of Creative Drama Education (Canvas)

Assignment: Lesson Plan

- ❖ Using your Spolin textbook, bring in a drama game or activity inspired by a children’s story of your choosing. Prepare a short writeup to be turned in and graded.

Monday, 9/1

LABOR DAY - NO CLASS

Wednesday, 9/3

Assignment: Theaters for Young Audiences

- ❖ Research online to find three companies that produce theater for young audiences: in Texas, in the United States, and in another country
- ❖ Prepare a short summary on each to share in class, including the following:
 - Organization name and location
 - Organization website
 - Mission statement
 - Current season
 - Education programming offered
- ❖ As you search, take notice of the types of jobs offered in the field of children's theater

Monday, 9/8

Read:

- ❖ Home on the Mornin' Train - *Theatre for Young Audiences*

Assignments:

- ❖ Play reflection
- ❖ What game or activity would you pair with this play?

In-Class Activity:

- ❖ Leading a Class Discussion

Wednesday, 9/10

Activity: View of a Child

- ❖ Choose a scene from a television show or movie and analyze its portrayal of children. What is the relationship between the adults and children in the scene?
 - What does this portrayal show about the everyday relationships between adults and children?
 - How could this portrayal affect the children's life experiences?
 - What are viewers supposed to "learn" from this clip?
- ❖ Prepare a written response around 250 words, and bring your chosen clip to share with the class

Module 2: 9/15 - 10/8

Monday, 9/15

Read:

- ❖ [Devising Drama](#)
- ❖ [Frantic Assembly](#) - glance at activities for class

Watch:

- ❖ [National Theatre Masterclass on Devising](#) (11 mins)

In-Class Activities:

- ❖ Discuss: why use devising in the classroom?
- ❖ Is there a link between creative drama and devising?
- ❖ Guided Practice: devising with young people

Wednesday, 9/17

Read:

- ❖ [Drama-Based Pedagogy](#)
- ❖ [What is Pedagogy?](#)

Discussion (Canvas)

- ❖ What do you think is your pedagogical style? Respond in around 150 words

Monday, 9/22

Read:

- ❖ Best Christmas Pageant Ever (Canvas)

Assignment:

- ❖ Play reflection

In-Class Activity:

- ❖ Bring 1-2 items to serve as stimuli for group devising practice

Wednesday, 9/24

Assignment: Educational Theater Seasons

- ❖ Part I - UIL
 - Using the [UIL archives](#), choose a classification (1A, 2A, 3A, 4A, 5A, 6A) and list the winning One-Act plays from the following years: 2014, 2019, 2025
 - Are there any similarities across the decade?
 - Choose one play to look up and give a short summary of
- ❖ Part II - School Theater Seasons
 - Locate three public schools from different districts in North Texas and list their current theater season

- Are there any similarities across the seasons?
- Choose one play to look up and give a short summary of

Monday, 9/29

In-Class Activity: Rehearsal Day

Wednesday, 10/1

In-Class Activity:

- ❖ Rehearsal “Rough Draft”
 - Be prepared to share a rough draft of your devised piece alongside your group
 - This is an opportunity to receive feedback and give clarification ahead of your midterm performance

Monday, 10/6

Read:

- ❖ Peter Pan and Wendy - Lauren Gunderson (Canvas)

Assignment:

- ❖ Play reflection

In-Class Activity:

- ❖ Group 1 Leads Creative Drama Lesson

Wednesday, 10/8

Midterm Performances

Monday, 10/13

Read:

- ❖ [Can Theatre for the Very Young Dare to Talk about Prejudice and Inclusion?](#)

Assignment:

- ❖ Discussion: After reading the article, write an advocacy statement explaining the necessity of theater for the very young. Then explore how you as a teacher can bring culturally relevant pedagogy to the classroom.

Wednesday, 10/15

Read:

- ❖ A Thousand Cranes - *Theatre for Young Audiences*

Assignment:

- ❖ Play reflection

In-Class Activity:

- ❖ Group 2 - Leads Creative Drama Lesson

Monday, 10/20

Read:

- ❖ [Memory and Imagination](#)
- ❖ [Cultural Autobiography](#)

Activities:

- ❖ When reading the cultural autobiography, jot down responses to the questions posed
- ❖ Then, write down your responses to the following and prepare to share in class:
 - What was your favorite toy growing up?
 - What was your best birthday party?
 - Which teacher do you remember the best
 - Have you ever broken a bone? How did it happen?
 - Who or what comes to mind when you hear “friendship”?
 - Who or what comes to mind when you hear “theater”?

In-Class Activity:

- ❖ Writing a memory monologue

Wednesday, 10/22

Read:

- ❖ [Culturally Responsive Teaching](#)
- ❖ [Importance of Diversity in the Classroom](#)
- ❖ [Designing the Neurodivergent Classroom](#)

Activity:

- ❖ Take an [Implicit Association Test \(IAT\)](#)
 - Prepare to discuss your experience with the test and if anything surprised you

In-Class Activity:

- ❖ Edit and workshop memory monologues

Monday, 10/27

Read:

- ❖ Bocón! - *Theatre for Young Audiences*

Assignment:

- ❖ Play reflection

In-Class Activity:

- ❖ Group 3 - Leads Creative Drama Lesson

Wednesday, 10/29

Activity: Study Guide

- ❖ Prepare an engaging activity pamphlet to accompany a TYA production of your choosing

Monday, 11/3

Read: Exploring the Landscape of TYA (Canvas)

Activity: 2025 Follow-Up

- ❖ In the study, they compare the 2008-2009 season with the 2018-2019 season. In the five years since, have there been any further changes?
- ❖ In your play groups, work together to view children's theater seasons in a major city *outside* Texas, and compare your findings to the numbers in the study

Module 4: 11/5 - 12/3

* Live Performance Reflections and any Extra Credit is due by 11/21 *

Wednesday, 11/5

Read: [Anti-Racist & Anti-Oppressive Futures for Theatre for Young Audiences](#)

Discussion: Cultural Identity

- ❖ Only sharing what you feel comfortable, consider the last several weeks of readings and class discussions. What informs your identity? What do you bring to your identity as an artist? Educator? Performer?

In-Class Activity: Reflection on Diversity, Inclusion, and the Future of TYA

Monday, 11/10

Read:

- ❖ All American Boys - Book (Canvas - First Two Chapters)
- ❖ Battle Royale (end at "he whispered fiercely; then he died.")
- ❖ [All American Boys - Play](#)

Watch: <https://www.tyausa.org/allamericanboys/>

In-Class Activity: Play Study

- ❖ Play study - group reflection on the piece and its source material
- ❖ What needs to be considered to turn a book into a play? Into a TYA play?
- ❖ How did reading the source material first inform your reading of the play?

Wednesday, 11/12

Bring: your children's book from Week 2

In-Class Activity: Page to Stage

- ❖ In small groups, read chosen stories to each other, and choose a favorite
- ❖ Together, choose a passage or scene to focus on, and work together to adapt the book into a short play

Monday, 11/17

In-Class Activity: Page to Stage

- ❖ Rehearse and stage your adapted scene with your group

Wednesday, 11/19

Present each book and performance for feedback. Debrief on the positives and negatives of this style of theater-making.

Monday, 12/1

Final Project Presentations:

- ❖ Play pitches in sign-up order
- ❖ Attendance is REQUIRED for both presentation days
- ❖ Classmates will serve as “producers” viewing your pitch

Wednesday, 12/3

Final Project Presentations:

- ❖ Play pitches in sign-up order
- ❖ Attendance is REQUIRED for both presentation days
- ❖ Classmates will serve as “producers” viewing your pitch