

THEA 435: History of American Musical Theatre Spring 2015

Instructor: Professor Matt Nesmith
USD Campus Office: Fine Arts 227
Class Meetings: M/W/F
9:00-10:50am

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Department of Theatre Statement of Mission

The Department of Theatre prepares the student for a career in the theatre and encourages personal and creative growth. We do this by providing a comprehensive liberal arts education, supplemented by intensive craft-training, in which classroom study and practical experience are of equal and complimentary value. The Department promotes excellence in education, research, and service; fosters student engagement and leadership; develops creative and pragmatic problem-solving skills; explores new questions, techniques, and practices in the theatre; and inspires students to become life-long learners who contribute to their respective discipline and profession while enhancing the cultural lives of the University and their community.

Catalog Description

History and development of American Musical Theatre from 1866 to the present.

Additional Course Description

THEA 435 is a comprehensive yet accessible exploration of the landmark concepts, productions, creative artists, performers, and socio-cultural impacts of the American Musical Theatre. Everything from ragtime to rock and roll, ballet to hip-hop, and Disney to *American Idol* have influenced, or been influenced by, American Musical Theatre. This course is ideal for students of all majors, particularly those majoring in theatre or music, with an interest in expanding their knowledge and discrimination of this uniquely American art form.

Required Textbooks

Jones, John Bush. *Our Musicals, Ourselves*. First Edition. Brandeis University Press, 2003.
ISBN-10: 0874519047; ISBN-13: 9780874519044

McLamore, Alyson. *Musical Theatre: An Appreciation*. First Edition. Pearson/Prentice Hall, 2004.
ISBN-10:0130485837; ISBN-13: 9780130485830

The libretto for *Pirates of Penzance* can be located [here](#). Or, you can checkout the libretto for *Pirates* and *Company* from the library (for a 24-hour period from the Reserve desk). Electronic librettos for *Oklahoma!* and *Company* will also be made available to students.

Hyperlinks itemized in D2L Content.

PLEASE NOTE: This text will be in stock at the **USD Barnes and Noble Bookstore**. It may also be purchased from online booksellers.

Key Deadlines

First day of the course:	January 12
Last day to drop and add:	January 21
Midterm grades submitted:	Mar 16
Last day to drop w/a "W"	April 7
Last Day of Course:	May 1
Final Exam	May 5 @ 5:30pm

Expectations of the Student

- Students are expected to read and abide by all of the policies and requirements outlined in this syllabus.
- Students are expected to read and abide by all of the policies and requirements outlined in CDE Online Orientation, which can be accessed from the "Getting Started" widget on the course homepage.
- This contains important information about all of the academic, technical, and student resources available at USD.

Attendance

Students will be allowed two unexcused absences. However, students will NOT be allowed to make up graded assignments missed due to an unexcused absence. Three tardies (arriving at class after roll has been taken) equal one unexcused absence. Each unexcused absence after the first two will result in a drop of one full letter grade from the final course grade.

Example: A grade of "A" becomes a "C" with four absences.

Six unexcused absences will constitute an automatic failing grade for the course. Students must receive permission of instructor and show written request for excused absences due to university events (participation in varsity athletics, travel for band/choir, etc.) prior to the absence. Students must contact the instructor (before class if at all possible) if they will be absent due to **severe** illness in order not to receive an unexcused absence (hangovers and common colds do not count).

Expectations of the Instructor

- The instructor will strive to respond to all communications within 24 hours.
- The instructor will strive to return written assessments with feedback within a reasonable amount of time.
- The instructor will abide by all policies set forth in this syllabus, and those by The University of South Dakota and the South Dakota Board of Regents.

Course Design

1. Desired Learning Outcomes

The primary goal of this course is to expose students to the origins and evolution of American musical theatre, and its interaction and effect on American society. Upon completion of this course, students should be able to integrate personal experience, lecture and textbook content, research, and practical observation in order to articulate an informed perspective on theatre today as well as the human experience explored in theatre. Simply put, the desired learning outcomes of this course are for students to:

- A. Gain factual knowledge (terminology, classification, methods, trends) of musical theatre (Knowledge, Comprehension, and Application)
- B. Gain a broader understanding and appreciation of musical theatre.
Articulate personal attitudes about musical theatre. (Comprehension)

2. Learning Activities

A. Concentrated Personal Study through watching recorded lectures, media links and movie musicals, reading text and course notes, attending a live theatrical performance, and relevant research for written assessments

B. Content Application through written activities and participation in class discussions

3. Assessment of Desired Learning Outcomes

Achievement of the Desired Learning Outcomes will be determined through quizzes, discussions, worksheets, exams, artist report, and a group presentation

Graded Assessments: Quizzes, Discussions, Exams, Response Worksheets, and Group Presentation

Quizzes:

- Throughout the semester, there will be six unannounced quizzes over assigned reading and links.
- Quizzes are administered at the beginning of class. Those tardy or with an unexcused absence will not be permitted to make up missed quizzes.

Quizzes (6 @ 10 points each)	60 points
Total	60 Points

Discussions:

- As noted in the Course Schedule, there are six small group discussions. Some of these discussions will take place in class, and others will be online in D2L.
- For in class discussions, you will receive the discussion question in the prior class period and are expected to prepare a typed response the question. In class, we will engage in a large group discussion based on your prepared responses. You will turn the prepared response in at the end of class.
- For online discussions, you will receive the discussion question on D2L. You will prepare your initial response to the question by the date noted on the course schedule. You will then reply to two of your classmates' initial posts by the dates noted on the course schedule.
- In both cases you are graded on the content of your response, engagement in the discussion process, and civility in debate.

In Class Discussion (3@ 5 points each)	
• Prepared Response	3 points
• Discussion Participation	2 points
Sub-Total	15 points
Online Discussion (3@ 5 points each)	
• Initial Post	3 points
• Secondary reply to classmate's initial post (2)	2 points
Sub-Total	15 points
Total	30 Points

Exams:

- As noted in the Course Schedule, there are two exams over lecture content and assigned reading. These exams will be taken in-class. Exams are worth 50 points each.

Exam #1 (March 18)	50 points
Exam #2 (May 5, 5:30-7:30pm)	50 points
Total	100 Points

Libretto Worksheets

- These worksheets are over the librettos of *Pirates of Penzance Oklahoma!*, and *Company*. The libretto for *Pirates of Penzance* can be located [here](#). Or, you can checkout the libretto for *Pirates* and *Company* from the library (for

a 24-hour period from the Reserve desk). Electronic librettos for *Oklahoma!* and *Company* will also be made available to students.

- Worksheets are due **prior** to viewing the films of these movie musicals.

Libretto Worksheets (3 @ 10 points each)	30 points
Total	30 Points

Movie Musical Response Worksheets:

- We will be watching 3 musicals during the semester: *The Pirates of Penzance*, *Oklahoma!*, and *Company*. In watching these, we will focus on contributing factors to the show’s creation, why it was groundbreaking, and how it impacted musical theatre henceforth.
- **Prior to** viewing each film, students will be required to read the libretto.
- While we will watch *Company* in class, you are responsible for viewing the other two films and completing assigned worksheets on the films. We will hold group viewings of *Pirates* and *Oklahoma!* outside of class on the dates noted in the Course Schedule; these group viewings are optional. If you are unable to attend group viewings, films will be available for you to checkout from I.D.Weeks Library from the Reserve desk for a 24-hour period.

Response Worksheet on <i>The Pirates of Penzance</i> (due Feb. 2)	15 points
Response Worksheet on <i>Oklahoma!</i> (due Feb. 17)	15 points
Total	30 Points

Group Presentation on Artist (contribution from 1880s-1940s):

- Students will be assigned into small groups and assigned an artist on which to report.
- Each group member should speak during the presentation
- These oral presentations should be 10-15 minutes in length, utilize a Powerpoint slide show to supplement the report, and include a :30-1 minute (no more) of audio or video of the artist.
- Powerpoints should be submitted into the D2L Dropbox before you present.
- Specific content guidelines and grading measures for the presentation will be described in class

Group Presentation	20 Points
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Contemporary (contribution from 1996-2015) Artist Report:

- Students will prepare a report on a modern theatre artist with significant contributions to musical theatre. The selection of the artist will be proposed by the student and agreed upon with the instructor by April 22.
- The report should be 4-6 pages in length, double-spaced, MLA format, and should include a title page and bibliography (neither of which count toward the page length). You should consult at least 3 credible sources (other than your texts) to support your report. You should consult your texts in addition.
- The content of the paper should provide a brief biographical sketch of the artist (one page), the contributions of the artist to musical theatre (one-two pages), any critical acclaim (no more than one page), and a personal commentary on why you admire this artist (one page).
- Carefully read the plagiarism statement below

Artist Report	40 Points
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Total Point Distribution:

Assessment	Points Possible
Quizzes	60 points
Discussions	30 Points
Exams	100 Points
Libretto Worksheets	30 Points
Response Worksheets	30 Points
Group Presentation	20 Points
Artist Report	40 Points
TOTAL	310 Points

Note: The actual number of points in the course may vary slightly from this.

Final Letter Grading:

Letter Grade	Percentage	Points (approximate)
A	90-100 %	300-279
B	80-89%	278-248
C	70-79%	247-217
D	60-69%	216-186
F	up to 59%	185-0

Make-up Policy

Quizzes and Assignments cannot be “made-up.” Exceptions will be made for students who encounter circumstances beyond their control (family emergency, significant health problems, legitimate computer problems). **Poor time management, failure to seek out internet connection in times of personal system failure, or personal forgetfulness is not considered a circumstance beyond the student’s control.**

Office Hours

My contact information is listed on the course homepage and at the top of this document. The best way to reach me is via my USD email. You may also call my office or cell phone, or send me a text message. I will do my best to respond to your requests within 24 hours.

PLEASE NOTE: Do not contact me through the course email in D2L as I do not check this regularly and no phone calls after 9:00 PM. Contact me via my USD email: matthew.nesmith@usd.edu

Student Resources

The University of South Dakota provides several useful services to students:

- **The Academic Advising and Career Planning Center** (<http://www.usd.edu/academics/academic-and-career-planning-center/>). Here a student can find a wide variety of assistance:
 - **Tutoring** - There are times we all need a little help. From writing workshops and math tutoring to study groups and counseling, we offer a wealth of services to help you succeed at USD.
 - **Learning Specialist** - We help you develop successful learning strategies and study skills, study habits, time management, overcome math anxiety and more.
 - **Supplemental Instruction** - Peer-assisted study sessions assist you with traditionally difficult first and second year courses.
 - **Writing Center** - Need help with writing? USD's Writing Center offers individualized help with any writing project.

- [Presentation Center](#) - The Presentation Center provides a multitude of resources including workshops, feedback, and audience services, etc., so you can give the best presentation whether it's to your class or your boss.
- [Study Guides & Strategies](#) - This site provides a wealth of information about time management, effective study habits, thinking critically, problem solving and more.
- [International Student Services](#) - Unique programs address the needs of our International student body.
- [Library Services](#) - The University's libraries offer a wide range of information resources held locally and worldwide. Subject Specialists who know your field can assist with your research.
- [IT Help Desk](#) - Get information and assistance troubleshooting computer hardware, software or network problems.

Plagiarism Statement

No credit can be given for a dishonest assignment. At the discretion of the instructor, a student caught engaging in any form of academic dishonesty may be:

1. Given a zero for that assignment;
2. Allowed to rewrite and resubmit the assignment for credit;
3. Assigned a reduced grade for the course;
4. Dropped from the course
5. Failed in the course.

PLEASE NOTE: The instructor will use iParadigm's Turnitin product to determine the level of originality of papers submitted in the course. All student papers will become part of a course database of papers that will also be used to check the originality of future papers submitted in the course; however, the student will maintain all copyright ownership of the paper.

Freedom in Learning:

Students are responsible for learning the content of any course of study in which they are enrolled. Under board of Regents and University policy, student academic performance shall be evaluated solely on an academic basis and students should be free to take reasoned exceptions to the data or views offered in any course of study. Students who believe that an academic evaluation is unrelated to academic standards but is related instead to judgment of their personal opinion or conduct should contact the dean of the college which offers the class to initiate a review of the evaluation.

Disability Services:

Any student who feels she/he may need academic accommodations or access to accommodations based on it the impact of a documented disability should contact and register w/Disability Services during the first week of class. Disability Services is the official office to assist students through the process of disability verification and coordination of appropriate and reasonable accommodations. Students currently registered w/Disability Services must obtain a new accommodation memo each semester. (For information contact: Ernetta Fox, Director of Disability Services, rm. 119, Service Ctr, 605.677.6389, www.usd.edu/ds;dservices@usd.edu.)

Selected Bibliography

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- Berlin, Edward. "Joplin, Scott." *Grove Music Online*. *Oxford Music Online*. 20 May. 2009
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- Hodge, Francis. (2005), *Play Directing (6th ed.)*. Pearson: Boston.
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- Wilson, E. & Goldfarb, A. (2008). *Theatre: The lively art (6th ed.)*. McGraw-Hill: Boston.
- <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/14478>>.
- www.medieval.org
- www.musicals101.com