

TH 324 Modern American Theatre

Professor: Amy Guerin

Course Description/Goals and Prerequisites:

This course is a seminar-style study of current American theatre and plays written in the 21st century. Over the course of the semester we will work to gain an understanding of American theatre as it stands now and where it might be going as the century progresses.

As theatre becomes more and more of a niche product, how is American theatre responding? What does current playwriting and production tell us about that response? How are other arts influencing theatre, both positively and negatively? What might American theatre performance look like in 100 years?

To that end, we will read and write about 8 current American plays, and other articles from theatre journals and blogs. At the end of the class, students will understand and be able to explicate in writing, spoken presentation, and/or through creative activity, the present, and possible future impacts of current American theatre on American society.

This course assumes a basic knowledge of American history. Concepts and terms from the worlds of literature, philosophy, history, art history and theatre will be a part of course lectures and discussions.

Prerequisites for this course: TH 150

Required Course Texts:

(in order of need)

1. *Hamilton* by Lin-Manuel Miranda
2. *She Kills Monsters* by Qui Nguyen
3. *The World of Extreme Happiness* by Frances Ya-Chu Cowhig
4. *Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo* by Rajiv Joseph
5. *An Octoroon* by Branden Jacob-Jenkins
6. *Water by the Spoonful* by Quiara Alegria Hudes
7. *The Elaborate Entrance of Chad Deity* by Kristoffer Diaz
8. *Ruined* by Lynn Nottage

Recommended Course Texts:

Script Analysis for Actors, Directors and Designers, 4th Edition by James Thomas

Graded Assignments:

Individual Action Analyses (100 Points each/300 Points total) – There will be 3 individually-written action analyses of class-assigned plays. It is your choice which 3 of the 8 plays you write about. We will review the Action Analysis process before the first possible assignment is due. All Action Analyses will be turned in via the class Canvas page. They should be no more than three pages in a bullet-point or outline format. With these assignments I am looking for both attention to detail and originality of thought and process.

Performance Response (100 Points each/200 Points total) – You will write a performance response on both UAH Theatre productions this semester. The responses will be 500-750 words, and turned in via the class Canvas page. Focus on your experience and response to the play in performance, focusing on theme, acting, directing and design elements (lighting, costume, sound, projections.)

Moderated Discussion (100 Points) – During the semester you will moderate one 10- 20 minute discussion. You will type 5-7 open-ended discussion questions to turn in.

Discussion Participation (100 Points) -- During the moderated discussions, your participation in the discussion will be noted by number and quality of comments. Aim for approximately 6 quality comments per discussion to receive the maximum number of points.

Final Project (300 Points) – Each student will select one of the plays read this semester for a final project. 100 points of the total grade will come from a Project Proposal, 250-500 words, that outlines the project and its objectives. The project can be a research paper, full design, dramaturgical project, directing a 15 minute scene, performing in a 15 minute scene, a full formalist analysis, etc—your proposal determines if your project is approved or rejected.

Grading scale (based on the graded assignments):

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

Policies:

Class Materials: Please come to every class with your copies of the text reading that is due that day and the proper note-taking materials.

Attendance: The basis of this course is personal participation and class discussion. Those who do not attend regularly and promptly will not succeed. **Because emergencies occur, your first two unexcused absences will not affect your final grade. Each subsequent unexcused absence will result in the lowering of your final grade by one letter grade. At 5 unexcused absences, I will drop you from the class. Work missed due to unexcused absences cannot be made up.**

University Policies regarding absence: The university views class attendance as an individual student responsibility. Students are expected to attend class and to complete all assignments. Instructors are expected to give adequate notice of the dates on which major tests will be given and assignments will be due.

Academic Integrity: Academic Integrity: Students who engage in scholastic dishonesty (i.e. plagiarism or “cheating”) are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course.

Course Calendar:

Week 1	Class Intro: Syllabus/Canva page Opening discussion on current American theatre	Intro/Review of Action Analysis format
Week 2	Class discussion: articles posted on Canvas	Class discussion: <i>Hamilton</i> Action Analysis due online
Week 3	Class discussion: <i>Hamilton</i> production articles	Class discussion: <i>She Kills Monsters</i> Action Analysis due online
Week 4	Class Visit: <i>She Kills Monsters</i> production articles	Class discussion: articles posted on Canvas
Week 5	Class discussion: <i>The World Of Extreme Happiness</i> Action Analysis due online	Class discussion: <i>The World of Extreme Happiness</i> production articles
Week 6	Class discussion: <i>Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo</i> Action Analysis due online	Class discussion: <i>Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo</i> production articles
Week 7	Discussion of first UAH Theatreproduction Performance Response due online	Class discussion: articles posted on Canvas

Week 8	Class discussion: <i>An Octoroon</i> Action Analysis due online	Class discussion: <i>An Octoroon</i> production articles
Week 9	Class discussion: articles posted on Canvas	Class discussion: Final Project/Project Proposal
Week 10	No class meeting Final Project Proposals due online	Class discussion: articles posted on Canvas
Week 11	Class discussion: <i>Water by the Spoonful</i> Action Analysis due online	Class discussion: <i>Water by the Spoonful</i> production articles
Week 12	Class discussion: <i>The Elaborate Entrance of Chad Deity</i> Action Analysis due online	Class discussion: second UAH Theatre production
Week 13	Class discussion: <i>Ruined</i> Action Analysis due online	Class discussion: <i>Ruined</i> production articles
Week 14	Project Presentations	Project Presentations
Week 15	Final Class Discussion (Last Day of Class) Performance Response due online	

THIS SYLLABUS MAY CHANGE AT THE DISCRETION OF THE INSTRUCTOR IF UNFORESEEN CIRCUMSTANCES ARISE. YOU WILL BE INFORMED IN ADVANCE OF ANY CHANGES.