

Abilene Christian University
College of Arts and Sciences

The Abilene Christian University Department of Theatre is committed to providing quality training and opportunity for the disciplined theatre artist in a nurturing environment that models Christian values.

Introduction to Theatre

THEA 220-01	Class meets:	Sandy Freeman, Associate Professor
FALL 2011	Room 193 WPAC	Cell: 325.668.0719 Box: 27843, Department of Theatre
Credit hours: 3	10:00am MWF	email: freemans@acu.edu
		Office: Sewell Theatre basement, Room 16
		Office hours: M-TR 3-5pm Please call or email to make an appointment.

REQUIRED TEXTS

The Theatre Experience by Edwin Wilson, 12th Edition, McGraw-Hill, New York, NY, 2011
ISBN 978-0-07-338219-7

Three (3) ten-minute plays: “**Sure Thing**” by David Ives ***These scripts will be provided to you.**
 “**What I Came For**” by Alice O'Neill
 “**Andre’s Mother**” by Terrence McNally

One full-length script may be added to the required reading. If so, you will have plenty of notice.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

These resources, noted in your text on page xxii will be helpful to you:

WWW.MHHE.COM/WILSONTE12E

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course serves as an introduction to the purposes, function, history, and impact of the art of theatre.

Major themes include

- theatre as cultural reflection
- the collaborative process involved in producing theatre, including the audience
- theatre as a spatial art
- the dynamic fusion of past and future in the evolution of the function and practices of theatre
- ethical and spiritual implications for theatre participants.

This course may be used to satisfy Fine Arts Degree Core requirements and is a required class for Theatre majors.

2

COURSE GOALS

The purpose of the class is to assist the student in forming a greater appreciation of theatre as a fine art as well as entertainment. It will, hopefully, stimulate creative thinking in some of the following areas:

- The universal need to express our individual and collective experience as human beings
- How is theatre a reflection of culture?
- Is theatre capable of impacting culture?
- What are the roles of various theatre artists and practitioners and how do they participate effectively in the collaborative creative process?
- How has theatre evolved in Western Civilization?
- Can faith and art be integrated without diluting the integrity of either in our search for meaning and purpose?

SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THEATRE AS ART

- If we believe human beings are formed by a creator God, are we not, in the very fact of our living as God's creations, already involved in the most fundamental and most profound creative process?
- Does it follow, then, that our own impulse to create may indeed be a gift, or even a call to vocation, from the Creator?
- As believers, how do we access and evaluate the experience of theatre? Can we look receptively at literary and performed art with world views different than our own as we seek to learn more deeply and personally about the human condition?
- How can we, in a meaningful way, integrate the experience of theatre with our personal faith?

These are only a few of the questions in which we will be able, as a group, to engage this semester.

TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

I believe that in order for meaningful learning to take place, both student and teacher must be active and motivated participants, as learning is not a passive experience. I commit to being your informed guide for the journey and expect you to prepare as well. When you stay current with required readings and have a little incubation time for your own ideas and questions, we will be free to use class time as an enrichment experience to deepen our understanding of and appreciation for the art and adventure of theatre.

COURSE FORMAT

With your willingness to participate, our classroom can be informal, discussion rigorous, and learning opportunities varied, hands-on, and exciting.

- Web site visits and video will supplement text reading and class lecture and discussion for the body of our study.
- Several short tours of theatre facilities will provide immediate experience with various aspects of production

- A variety of professional theatre practitioners will enrich course study with informal discussion, performance, and presentation of their work.

COURSE COMPETENCIES AND REQUIREMENTS

By the end of semester,

Students should be able to:	This will be measured by:
Appreciate the experience of live theatre	Required attendance at two (2) live theatre events Interaction with guest theatre practitioners
Discuss the roles and contributions of various practitioners in the production of live theatre	Response papers to two (2) live theatre productions Interaction with guest practitioners
Know how to effectively read a script as dramatic literature and as the inspiration for live production	Assessment papers of dramatic literature
Evaluate theatrical performance and production in the language of the craft	Contribution to class discussion Tests Response papers to live productions
Identify the technical terms involved in theatre production	Tests Response papers to live productions

Articulate responses to theatre experience in terms of faith and as a reflection of, or impact on, culture	Class discussion
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COURSE REQUIREMENTS

The following are required assignments for this class:

- It is essential that you stay current with required readings so you are able to fully participate in class discussion.
- Quizzes throughout the semester
- Two (2) response papers to live theatre events
- Two (2) response papers of play readings
- Midterm exam
- Final exam
- A collaborative script-based production project
- Participation in class discussions

GRADE ASSESSMENT

Participation in class discussion will be evaluated in terms of preparation for the topic at hand, and willingness to offer and listen to ideas. Agreeing to civil discourse, let's have some exciting debate!

Tests and quizzes will be evaluated for accuracy and depth of knowledge.

4

Written and project work will be evaluated in terms of depth of knowledge, degree of completion, attention to detail, and quality of presentation.

Written work will be evaluated for

- original observation and commentary (30%)
- degree of thorough assessment of the topic at hand (30%)
- for clarity and organization of thought (30%)
- for technical writing (spelling, sentence structure, and appropriate punctuation) (10%).

GRADE DISTRIBUTION

• Quizzes	10%
• Two (2) response papers to live theatre events	20%
• Two (2) response papers of play readings	20%
• Midterm exam	10%
• Final exam	10%
• A collaborative script-based production project	20%
• Participation in class discussions	10%

GRADING SCALE

Assignments and tests are graded in this course on a 10-point scale:

A	90 - 100
B	80 - 89
C	70 - 79
D	60 - 69
F	0 - 59

ATTENDANCE POLICY

The attendance policy for this class reflects the departmental policy:

- Five (5) absences are allowed without penalty. But please try to attend every class, as much of the important information you will need to know will come from guest lecturers and live presentation.
- A 6th or 7th absence will each drop the final semester grade by one letter.
- An 8th absence will result in the student receiving a failing grade.
- Three (3) tardies constitute an absence.
- Arriving 15 minutes late or leaving 15 minutes early is considered an absence.

This policy includes absences for reasons of illness, travel, or any reason other than any approved by a Dean's Advance Approval for Absence.

5

CLASS POLICIES

- Please advise me in advance if you are taking a planned absence so you can discuss with me any assignments that might be due during your absence.
- You are responsible for class lecture information or tests missed during an absence of any kind.

- Except in the case of true emergency, tests may not be made up. Please read this now. Don't ask me later.
- Please call or email me as soon as possible if you miss class because of illness.
- Unless we're using mobile phones for a particular purpose in class, please silence them and put them away. **For the short time that we're in class together, please give yourself over with wild abandon to the adventure of learning new things about the world of theatre. Thank you.**

EXPECTATIONS FOR CLASS PARTICIPATION

Your learning experience in this class will be most successful when you come to class prepared, focused, and open to the group dynamic. The following reminders are intended to be helpful to each of you individually, and to our class as a whole:

- Deadlines for reading assignments will be important. Only if you've read the assigned material can you be fully prepared for class discussion and for what our guest artists will have to say.
- Deadlines for assignments will be observed. **Late work is not accepted** except in the event of extenuating and documented circumstances.
- There is a participation grade in this class. Your thoughtful ideas and questions about the content of the course are expected and welcome; they will, hopefully, spark the meaningful discussion that is a large part of what the collaborative process of theatre is about. Come informed and prepared; come ready to speak up. Ask questions, and be open to listening to other ideas and opinions that might stretch your own thinking.
- You are welcome to ask questions of me at any time; please just raise your hand. We will have lecture times when I will ask you to hold your comments. But when it's time for discussion, jump in.

In a word, your participation grade will absolutely reflect your investment in the class.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Violations of academic integrity and other forms of cheating, as defined in ACU's Academic Integrity Policy, involve the intention to deceive or mislead or misrepresent, and therefore are a form of lying and represent actions contrary to the behavioral norms that flow from the nature of God. Violations will be addressed as described in the Policy. While the university enforces the Policy, the most powerful motive for integrity and truthfulness comes from one's desire to imitate God's nature in our lives. Every member of the faculty, staff, and student body is responsible for protecting the integrity of learning, scholarship, and research. The full Policy is available for review at the Provost's office web site (<http://www.acu.edu/campusoffices/provost>) and the following offices: Provost, college deans, Dean of Campus Life, Director of Student Judicial affairs, Director of Residential life Education, and academic departments.

COURSE DISCLAIMER

Any meaningful discussion of the role and purposes of theatre in society must require exploration of a range of dramatic texts that demonstrate diversity in world views. Our classroom will provide a safe environment in which to engage those discussions. If theatre serves as a reflection of the human condition, we must examine the dark as well as the light; indeed, sometimes we more fully comprehend the light only when we have moved through the dark. Our journey in dramatic literature will hopefully spark exciting debate about many things, including issues of faith and the purposes of art. I hope so. Your thoughtful participation in our discussions will be most welcome, and I will be eager to engage with you in any questions you may have concerning the relevance of faith in the texts we will study during the semester.

LEARNING ASSISTANCE

If you have a documented disability and wish to discuss academic accommodation, please feel welcome to contact me. The ACU Student Disability Services Office (a part of Alpha Academic Services) facilitates disability accommodations in cooperation with instructors. In order to receive accommodations, you must be registered with Disability Services and you must complete a specific request for each class in which you need accommodations. Call **extension 2667** for an appointment with the Director of Disability Services.

If you would like assistance in writing any of your papers for this or any other class, you are invited and welcome to go to the **Writing Center** located in the Learning Commons of the library. The staff there will help you with every step of your writing assignment or with specific questions. The Writing Center serves every level of writing ability, from students who have never written a paper before to students who have advanced writing skills. It is a wonderful resource on campus; take advantage of it.

And finally! PLEASE call or email me or catch me after class if you have any concerns whatsoever about your work in this class. I want to serve as your partner in learning, but as my mind-reading skills are limited, I will not know of your concerns unless you tell me.

I look forward to an exciting semester with you!

Further Information Regarding Tests and Assignments

QUIZZES

Short quizzes will be given over the course of the semester to assist you in assimilating information in your required reading, both text and scripts. If you read and understand the required assignment for each class, you should be able to complete each quiz successfully.

RESPONSE PAPERS

Every student is required to attend two (2) ACU Department of Theatre productions during the semester.

As soon as possible after viewing the show (so it's fresh in your memory), write your response to the production. You will receive a detailed handout concerning required information. Papers should be no more than **one page**, double-spaced, with a maximum 12-point font.

Available productions:

Noises Off

Fulks Theatre, Williams Performing Arts Center

September 1-3 at 7:30pm

Come by the Box Office in WPAC to purchase a ticket at the student discount rate.

The King and I

Abilene Civic Center (downtown and N. 7th and Pine Streets)

October 14-15 at 8pm, and October 16 at 2pm

Purchase tickets at the Box Office at your student discount rate, or order online at acu.edu/academics/cas/theatre/tickets/index.html

Private Eyes

Fulks Theatre, Williams Performing Arts Center

November 15-19 at 7:30pm

Come by the Box Office in WPAC to purchase a ticket at the student discount rate.

The deadline for each paper will be two weeks after the close of each production, and is noted on the class calendar.

Note: You are welcome and encouraged to attend all three productions and can earn up to 10 extra points in your response papers grade for writing a third paper.

PLAY -READING RESPONSE PAPERS

There are two (2) required play-reading response papers for this class:

The first will be a response to one of the three ten-minute plays that we will read in class:

"What I Came For" by Alice O'Neill

"Andre's Mother" by Terrence McNally

"Sure Thing" by David Ives

The second will be a response to the play you will read for your collaborative production project.

8

For each reading, you will write a response of no more than **one page**, double-spaced, with a maximum 12-point font. You will receive a detailed handout concerning required information.

General topics will include:

- The idea and/or themes of the play (Why did the playwright write the play?)
- Important characters who move the action of the play
- Possibilities for visual expression of the play
- The relevance of the play to contemporary audiences
- Your personal connection to the ideas of the play

EXAMS

The mid-term and final exams will be comprehensive. The format for each will be a mix of short response, multiple choice, completion, true or false, matching, and possibly essay.

You should keep all your quizzes and take useful notes in class as part of your study material.

COLLABORATIVE PRODUCTION PROJECT

You will receive a separate detailed handout of instructions for this project.

In small groups you will explore the creative process of a theatre production team, beginning with script study. Within the team you will choose production assignments that may include:

Director	Scenic Designer
Dramaturg	Costume Designer
Stage manager	Lighting Designer
	Sound Designer.

Each team member will be responsible for his or her own work (as detailed in the separate instructions), but will also be responsible for working collaboratively with the team.

