

THR 116 Introduction to Theater

Winter 2021

Number of Credits: 3

Days Class Meets: Distance Learning

Location: Cooper Street Correctional Facility

Instructor: Professor Letherer



Course Description

Survey of Western theatre and drama. Appreciation of theatre through understanding of historical development and societal function. Theatre architecture, production, costuming, and acting styles, and the artists who create it.

Prerequisite(s) None.

Course Goals

An introduction to theater intends to broaden the student's knowledge and appreciation of live storytelling forms, especially of theatrical productions. Throughout the course, the students will learn the definition and function of theater, its history as a part of Western Civilization, some Eastern theater practices, musical theater, and applied theater. Students learn about the roles and responsibilities of people who practice theater, some theater scripts, and the steps of production. Through reading and discussion, improvisation and class exercises, outside reading of plays, and viewing of theatrical performances, students will apply their knowledge as theater viewers, critics, and practitioners. Whether they have any experience with theatrical forms or not, students will all gain more understanding and appreciation for theater as an art form, and how the practice of it can enrich lives. Students must be able to read with a high school reading level. Being willing to read aloud, act, or interact in class exercises is also a plus.

Course Objectives

The course goals and objectives incorporate specific General Education Outcomes (GEOs) established by the JC Board of Trustees, administration, and faculty. These goals are in concert with four-year colleges and universities and reflect input from the professional communities we serve. GEOs guarantee students achieve goals necessary for graduation credit, transferability, and professional skills needed in many certification programs. The GEOs and course objectives addressed in this class include the following:

- Define theatre and articulate the facets that make theatre a unique art form.
- Define basic terminology related to stage production, theatre jobs, performance, and scripts.
- Describe the major forms of theater architecture, styles of acting, and genres of live performance.
- Explain how different technical and performance jobs including producers, directors, actors, designers, costumers, technicians, etc., work together to stage a production.
- Explain why and how theatre has been a part of Western culture, and what compels humans to perform live stories.
- Critically assess live theatrical performance, evaluating the execution of design, direction, acting, technical elements, and their cohesion and execution.

Textbook *Theatre: A Way of Seeing, 7th Edition* by Millie S. Barranger

Grading Procedure

Methods of Evaluation:

Text Summaries and Reflections	35%
Completion of Course Pack Assignments and Reflections	35%
Play Response	10%
Research and Reflection Paper	10%
"In Class" Production	10%

Text Summaries and Reflections Each unit has assigned chapters from your textbook. Please include a one paragraph summary of each chapter, clearly labeled, in your journal, along with responses to the text reflection questions found in your course pack. They should be labeled as follows:

Student Name

Unit 1

Chapter 1 Summary

In this chapter I read...(etc.)

Chapter 1 Reflection

In response to the prompt about...(etc.)

Completion of Course Packs In each unit of your course pack there will also be prompts and exercises. Some portions of the course pack will ask you to create or do something every unit, and talk about the experience or share the thing you have created. Others will call for you to write a response in your journal. Please label these entries as follows:

Unit 1

What is Theater Reflection

(Write your reflection here)

Unit 1

Theater Drawing

(Insert your theater drawing)

Play Response: Students will read a play and write a response to it, discussing various aspects of storytelling, and how the play could be produced including acting, directing, design, & technical elements. **This paper can be started any time after the 5th Unit and is due by the last day of class.** More assignment-specific information follows in this packet.

Research and Reflection Paper: Students will choose a production role, noteworthy person, or play as outlined your course pack, and write a 4-5 page paper detailing research about the topic, importance in the theatre world, and application towards the student's future work or appreciation of theatre. **This paper can be started any time after the 5th Unit and is due by the last day of class.** More assignment-specific information follows in this packet.

There is no **Final Exam**. Instead, your **In Class Production** will demonstrate your knowledge of theater terms, roles, and concepts. Please concentrate on your work for this production, even if you must work by yourself, and fill out the responses and reflection fully. The reflection is how your exam will be graded, so take your time to do it properly!

Grading Scale

GPA	Grade Range
4.0	94-100%
3.5	89-93%
3.0	84-88%

2.5	78-83%
2.0	72-77%
1.5	66-71%
1.0	60-65%
0.5	55-59%
0.0	0-54%

Failure

Failure to pass the course will be based on the amount of work turned in to the instructor, clear communication via JPay or the Facility Navigator, and attitude toward learning.

Academic Honesty Policy

Academic Honesty is defined as ethical behavior that includes student production of their own work and not representing others' work as their own, by cheating or by helping others to do so.

Plagiarism is defined as the failure to give credit for the use of material from outside sources.

Plagiarism includes but is not limited to:

- Submitting other's work as your own
- Using data, illustrations, pictures, quotations, or paraphrases from other sources without adequate documentation
- Reusing significant, identical or nearly identical portions of one's own prior work without acknowledging that one is doing so or without citing this original work (self-plagiarism)

Cheating is defined as obtaining answers/material from an outside source without authorization.

Cheating includes, but is not limited to:

- Plagiarizing in any form
- Using notes/books/electronic material without authorization
- Copying
- Submitting others' work as your own or submitting your work for others
- Altering graded work
- Falsifying data
- Exhibiting other behaviors generally considered unethical
- Allowing your work to be submitted by others

Course Management

If a student is having trouble accessing materials outside the textbook, or understanding course conceptions, they should contact their navigator or the instructor for assistance.

Calendar

Students will be shown videos pertaining to each week's work. While the course pack may allow you to "work ahead" work should not be submitted early (you may learn something more from the videos and your classmates!). Deadlines should be kept to the best of the student's ability, but two extra weeks are built into the semester in order to accommodate delays. **Do not stress over the timeline of work to be done, access to videos, or receiving JPays late. The JC team understands there are complications and will do our best to accommodate you! Complete each unit to the best of your ability. The course is designed to work even if there are complications.** As you are able, stay in communication with the instructor and your navigator in order to work through any issues that may arise.

Unit #	TOPIC	HOMEWORK
1	What is Theater? Theater Spaces	Read Chapters 1,2, 3 (p2-74), do Summary and Reflection. Answer the Journal prompts. Have a live performance and Reflect on it.
2	Actors and Directors	Read Chapters 9 and 10 (p193-243) do Summary and Reflection. Answer the Journal prompts. Prepare a monologue and possibly perform it. Reflect on the experience
3	Playwrights and Story Structure	Read Chapters 4,5, 6 (p77-154) do Summary and Reflection. Answer the Journal prompts. Write a scene or act out a scene from <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> .
4	Design: Scenery, Costumes, Props, Lights, Sound	Read Chapters 11 and 12 (p245-287) do Summary and Reflection. Answer the Journal prompts. Design a backdrop, mask, or costume for a production of <i>Midsummer</i> .
5	Musicals, Steps of Production	Read Chapters 13, 14, 15 (p289-349) do Summary and Reflection. Answer the Journal prompts. Write a critique of a play
6	Applied Theater and Improvisation	Read the materials on applied theater in the coursepack. Review pages 38-53 about Eastern theater. Play an improvisation game.
7	"In Class" Production	Give a live performance! Write about it by using the template in the coursepack. Don't forget your Play Response and Research and Reflection Paper, which are also due!

If you are relatively new to theater

You are about to enter a world, universally, where everyone should be welcome. Theater takes all kinds. You belong here. Don't be put off if you have never seen or done theater. You are here to learn. The goal is that you expand your knowledge and appreciation. That's all. If you learn to love this art, you are part of a great tribe. If you don't, at least you'll understand the tribe's language. Don't be put off if anyone "shows off" their theater experience or knowledge. You don't have to be good at theater, want to be a performer, or even want to go see lots of plays in order to be a success in this course. Be brave. Engage.

If you've done some theater but it's been a minute or two

While technology and popular shows have change, theater is doing what it has always done, so whatever and whenever you experienced theater it's going to lend to our conversations. Here's a chance to learn new aspects and nuances. And you'll get to practice theater, find resources, and rediscover an eternally relevant art.

If you are currently humming a song from *Phantom of the Opera*

You already know you belong here because theater takes all kinds and you already love it. Perhaps, you really miss it. If so, this is a chance to reconnect with something you love, and to share that enjoyment with others. You are now called upon to help each person in this course appreciate theater, even if they never love it. (They will. We know they will.) Theaterfolk realize that few non-theater people truly understand the work and the heart it takes to do theater. This is your chance to help others understand, and to add to our tribe. Make this course a welcoming one. Share your passion in a way that invites others.

One Last Note

If you fall behind, get discouraged, are not sure how to do something, or would like extra resources, etc., **please reach out to the instructor through your navigator or JPay**. The point of this course is to expand your knowledge of the performed arts, and to gain an appreciation. The instructor is here to help. Theater is about being human, and about seeing and appreciating other humans. You are seen. Your work here is important because theater makes our lives better and therefore this course should too. Do not be intimidated by technology, software, your previous experience, or the overconfidence of others. Theater takes all kinds. This course is for you.