



**THE 415 – STAGE DIRECTION  
COURSE SYLLABUS: FALL 2015  
THURSDAY 4:30-7:10 p.m.  
PERFORMING ARTS #126**

**Instructor: Rebecca Worley, MFA, Assistant Professor of Theatre**  
**Office Location: Performing Arts Center #105**  
**Office Hours: M/W 9:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m., T/R 2 p.m. – 3 p.m. or by appointment**  
**Office Phone: 903-886-5339**  
**University Email Address: Rebecca.worley@tamuc.edu**

<b>COURSE INFORMATION</b>
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**Required Textbook:**

*Thinking Like a Director* by Michael Bloom

Scenes from realistic plays (TBD – provided for you by your instructor)

Various articles and handouts (TBD – provided for you by your instructor)

**Additional Readings:**

Throughout the semester, there will be additional readings provided for you by your instructor (via email, most likely). There may also be materials on reserve that you will be required to copy and read. I will notify you in advance of the availability. Please plan accordingly for this expense. Additionally, I encourage you to put money aside to order new scripts. This will be a good opportunity for you to begin (or continue) building your own script library. Most scripts cost around \$7 a piece plus shipping. Since the books for this course costs very little, I would suggest putting some money aside for this expense now and begin budgeting that regularly in semesters to come. Searching for and buying new scripts will give you a leg up in auditions (you want to do something they have never seen if at all possible) and expand your personal repertoire.

**Required Special Supplies:**

In addition to standard classroom supplies (pens, pencils, paper for daily notes/assignments, a folder for those notes/assignments, computer paper, etc.), you will need the following supplies for this class.

- 2 hard-cover, three-ring binders with pockets
- dividers
- highlighters
- "TAMU-C Production Handbook"

**Required Viewing:*****The 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee***

Directed by Kelsey Cooper

Produced in the Main Stage Theatre by the University Playhouse at A&M Commerce  
October 20-24 at 8 p.m. and October 25 at 3 p.m.

***Calling All***

Directed by Lauren Simpson

Produced in the Studio Theatre by the University Playhouse at A&M Commerce  
November 17-21 at 8 p.m. and November 22 at 3 p.m.

Tickets are available for a nominal fee from the University Playhouse Box Office (PAC 101) from 1:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. on weekdays. Or, you may make advance reservations by phone at any time by calling 903-886-5900 or by email at [playhouseboxoffice@tamuc.edu](mailto:playhouseboxoffice@tamuc.edu).

**Course Description:**

The procedure and the problems involved in directing a play from selection of the script, auditions, and conducting rehearsals to the final production. The principle focus of the course is on practical work and discussion and criticism of ongoing projects. Aside from discussions of the practical work, classroom discussions will focus on readings and events selected according to the interests and expressed needs of the students, and at the discretion of the instructor. Certain library reading may be assigned from time to time, and articles will be distributed in class for students to read

**Prerequisite:**

THE 213 or permission of the instructor.

**Course Introduction:**

Welcome! This course provides a practical introduction to directing techniques. This class will be challenging, invigorating, and participatory. Please consider yourself part of a production rather than a classroom as it is usually understood.

Although there is a lecture/discussion component to this course, the nature of our work as directors requires substantial outside work – both inside and outside of the classroom. Please consider yourself part of a learning community where members support one another with suggestions and constructive criticism. Learning, observing, and sharing are central to this course. *Attitudes of awareness and openness are essential to your development and your contribution to the development of the other members of this class.* Please leave your worries, frustrations, competitiveness, and negativity outside the classroom door as much as possible.

*Active participation in discussion and presentation of projects within the class is not only welcome; it is an essential requirement. Positive, helpful and constructive attitudes are also required!* Presentations must be well prepared and shared with the understanding that questions and discussion will follow. The ongoing critique of our work as directors is crucial to

everyone's learning process. You should be aware that the vast majority of class time is composed of activities in which you are REQUIRED to actively participate. *If you have no plans or interest in sincerely exploring directing techniques and accomplishing significant growth as a director, this is not the class for you.*

In this course, I will serve as your teacher, director, guide, and outside eyes/ears as we work very specifically on your individual directorial efforts. I ask that you trust me and approach the work with an open mind, an open heart, discipline and commitment, and a willingness to try new things. Then, we can work through our artistic challenges together!

**Course Ethics and Attendance:** Promptness, attendance, and "attentiveness" are valued in this class. Please behave accordingly and do not disrupt the class with excessive talk or the use of cell phones or other devices. It is assumed that students will work cooperatively with one another and all work that is not "original" will be properly credited. See the TAMUC *Student's Guide Handbook* for more information on plagiarism. This is a serious offense that can result in separation from the university. **EVEN if not specifically noted on instructions or prompts for each assignment, plagiarism policies will be strictly enforced.**

**Student Learning Outcomes:** By the end of this course, the student will be able to:

1. Define, analyze, and demonstrate the role and responsibilities of the director in a live performance
2. Understand and demonstrate the range of approaches to stage direction in the contemporary theatre.
3. Apply concepts explored and discussed in class to the execution of direction in a variety of production opportunities.

<b>COURSE REQUIREMENTS</b>
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**Instructional / Methods / Activities Assessments:**

**Participation (10 pts.):** *Note that attendance alone does not constitute participation.*

Participation is a large portion of your grade in this course – for good reason! As mentioned above, participation is vital in this class. This is an interactive environment and students must not only attend, but must also actively contribute to each class.

Furthermore, the completion of miscellaneous homework assignments will also be considered part of your participation grade. There will be quite a few of these short assignments and they are all important in the development of your skills as director.

Positive, respectful and helpful attitudes are mandatory. *I would like to make this very clear: I will make every effort to treat you with the respect that I believe you deserve. You are also expected to treat your peers and myself with that same respectful attitude.* If I believe that a student is disrespectful, I will ask that person to leave the classroom. In this event, the student

will receive a zero for any activities conducted that day in class and receive a zero for his/her participation grade for the day (no matter how long you have been in class). Disrespect, rudeness, disruptive behavior, or negative attitudes will *NOT BE TOLERATED*. It should go without saying that refusal to participate in any activity or part of an activity during class will result in a substantial and appropriate loss of participation points for the student.

Participation grades will be calculated daily and reflected upon/tabulated at the end of the semester. *Each student will begin with a mid-passing Participation and Growth grade of an 8.* Strong effort or lack of effort during each class and over the course of the semester as a whole will either raise or lower that grade.

**Application Papers (2 @ 10 pts = 20 pts. total):** Students are required to attend performances of both Playhouse productions (clear your schedule NOW!). Students will submit a critical analysis of some aspect or part of the production relating to the direction (casting choices, Vision/Concept, blocking, character relations, etc). Papers should be approx. 3-4 pages, typed, 12 pt. font (or whatever your default font/size is), well-organized (complete sentences, full paragraphs). I *will* consider spelling, punctuation, and sentence structure in the grading. (See grading rubric in your syllabus). Papers are to be submitted **via email. I will not accept hard copies of your papers.**

**In-Class Directing Scene (15 pts):** Each student in this course will be responsible for directing a short scene (from the above TBD plays) in class. Members of the class will be used as your actors. Students will be responsible for casting, preparing for rehearsals, and directing your scene.

**Directing Proposal (10 pts):** Students will submit a proposal to direct a one-act play – or a reasonably freestanding segment of a play – to direct. The play will be modern Realism (written in the last 50-ish years). Each proposal will include a brief reason for the selection, a synopsis of the play, Vision, Concept, special technical requirements, and special casting requirements (if any).

**Director's Breakdown (2 @ 5, 10 = 15 pts total):** Once scenes/plays are assigned/approved, students will submit a director's breakdown for each directing project (in-class scene: 5 pts.; and final scene: 10 pts.). The style of this breakdown should be pragmatic: an organized compendium of information that would be useful to you as a director. Among the categories of information that would likely be useful: historical and critical material; themes; style; ground plan and blocking; pacing; key moments; problematic aspects; set pieces; metaphors; sound; colors; lighting; resonances; analogies. Other approaches to the Breakdown will be handed out in class at a later date.

**Director's Notebook (10 pts):** Students will submit an organized notebook for your final presentation that contains the following:

- Rehearsal Calendar: Prior to the first rehearsal, students will create and submit a rehearsal calendar.

- Rehearsal Journals: After each rehearsal, students should take a few moments to reflect upon the rehearsal and write a brief journal entry. Topics can include what was on the schedule for that rehearsal, what was actually accomplished, discoveries made, changes made, etc.
- Cast List
- Contact List
- Working script: should include any and all blocking, notes, scoring, etc.
- Anything else that you find useful as a director: Research, articles, images, etc.

**Final presentation (20 pts):** Each student in this course will be responsible for casting, arranging and preparing rehearsals, and directing a play; and for arranging for the instructor to visit a rehearsal. The running time of each play should be 25-30 minutes. In lieu of a final exam, the final presentations will take place during the final exam period.

### **Grading:**

The following grading scale will be used to determine all individual grades as well as the student's overall grade in the course:

<b>Participation</b>	<b>10 pts.</b>	90-100 =	A
<b>Papers</b>	<b>20 pts.</b>	80-89=	B
<b>In-Class Scene</b>	<b>15 pts.</b>	70-79=	C
<b>Proposal</b>	<b>10 pts.</b>	60-69=	D
<b>Breakdowns</b>	<b>15 pts.</b>	59 and below=	F
<b>Notebook</b>	<b>10 pts.</b>		
<b>Final Presentation</b>	<b>20 pts.</b>		
<b>Total</b>	<b>100 pts.</b>		

**Please note: A grade of "A" will not be assigned to an individual who has not completed ALL outside of class assignments, regardless of average.**

## TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

**WORKING EMAIL REQUIREMENT:** It is a course expectation that you have a working email address that you check daily. If you have not already acquired an email address through the university or otherwise, please make arrangements to do so before the next class meeting. There WILL be times that I need to contact you with important information and email is often the speediest and easiest way of doing so.

**WRITTEN WORK:** Unfortunately, papers/projects do occasionally get lost. Please, for your sanity, save your work on an external source (thumb drive, external hard drive, etc). Do not depend on your paper staying on the hard drive of any university computer, as it will be deleted, altered, or worse – turned in by someone else as their work! Be aware that it is a

course expectation that you keep copies of your assignments until you receive your final grade for the semester.

## COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT

### **Contacting Me:**

Please feel free to visit me during my office hours at any time during the semester. I am here to help! If you can't make my office hours due to a scheduling conflict, please set up an appointment with me. It is not an imposition. Communicate, communicate, communicate! If something is occurring that is presenting you with difficulties in this class, let me know. I cannot help you if I don't know what is going on. The easiest and most reliable way to contact me is **via email**. I check it almost constantly. Please do not leave a message for me in the main department office.

### **Student Resources:**

#### **Department of Theatre**

Performing Arts Center (PAC) #101

Phone: 903-886-5346 (Main Office)

<http://www.tamu-commerce.edu/mmct/default.asp>

#### **Communication Skills Center**

Hall of Languages #103

<http://www.tamu-commerce.edu/litlang/CSC/index.htm>

## COURSE AND UNIVERSITY PROCEDURES/POLICIES

### **Course Specific Procedures:**

#### **Attendance Policy:**

You may accumulate one (1) absence before any penalty occurs. **There are no additional absences allowed without penalty. Plan accordingly. There is no such thing as an "excused" absence.** Of course, if you have a prolonged illness or injury, or if a family emergency arises, speak with your instructor ASAP. **Grades will be dropped in ½ letter grade increments for every class absences beyond the first absence.**

#### **Late Arrivals:**

To further foster a high level of commitment—and because the work we will be doing this semester will involve intensive focus—the class will adopt the following late entry policy. Students must be on time for every class. Entering a class late or leaving early is disruptive to the flow of the class and indicative of a less than disciplined/committed artist. Please be on time out of consideration to your learning process and the processes of others. If you are late for class, your participation grade will reflect this. The class will begin promptly at 4:30 p.m.! If you arrive after 4:40 p.m., please do not enter the classroom (you will be marked absent

regardless). If you arrive within the ten minute grace period, please do so discretely in order to avoid disrupting the class activities/discussions. *It is your responsibility to make sure that you find me after class and document your late attendance for the day—otherwise, your initial marked absence documented during roll will remain.* Also, you are expected to stay until you are dismissed from class. An early departure will significantly reduce your participation grade as well. **Two late arrivals (within the ten-minute grace period) or early departures (or any combination of the two) will be counted as one absence in the class.**

### **Cell Phones and Laptops:**

Please turn off all cell phones upon entering the classroom. Please do not check messages or engage in text messaging during class. This is disruptive to the flow of the course. Further, you are welcome to take class notes on a laptop or other electronic device. However, these devices should only be used for taking notes over the current discussions/activities – and you must type very quietly and turn off all sound so as not to disturb other class members. If I suspect that laptops are being used for other purposes, I will ban them from the classroom.

### **Late Work:**

I do not accept late work. This policy also applies to all Performance Presentations.

### **Extra Credit:**

As a general rule, there is no extra credit offered in this class – please, do not even ask.

### **Adaptation of Assignments:**

Due to the fluid nature of this performance-based class, some assignments/scheduling may need to be adapted. All changes will be announced prior to implementation.

### **Food, Drink, Gum, and Smoking:**

Please do not bring food or drinks into the classroom at any time (exception: you may bring bottled water with you to class). As this is a course focusing on practical performance, chewing gum is not allowed at any time during class.

### **Clothing:**

Dress for maximum freedom and movement, especially early in the semester. Loose fitting clothing, sweats or dancewear are suggested, as are jazz shoes, sneakers, bare feet or stocking feet. There WILL BE DAYS that you will be rolling around the floor and need a full range of motion—clothing that inhibits this will result in a lowered participation grade.

Heels, boots, flip-flops, untied shoes, short skirts, tight jeans, and low-cut shirts will all restrict movement (and consequently restrict your ability to participate in class). Do not wear jewelry that will affect your freedom of movement or speech. No hats are allowed during warm-ups, activities, performances, etc. Also, please keep your hair securely away from your face during all exercises and performances in class. *No one will be excused from a class activity because of clothing concerns; you are required to wear clothing that will not inhibit participation in class activities.*

Fair warning: the floor may or may not be spotless.

**Incompletes:**

Under normal circumstances, an Incomplete (I or X) will NOT be given for a final grade in this course. Per University policy, students who **because of circumstances beyond their control** are unable to attend classes will, upon approval of their instructor, receive a mark of X (incomplete) in all courses in which they were **maintaining passing grades at the time of the request** for an incomplete.

**University Specific Policies and Procedures:****Academic Dishonesty:**

This course adheres strictly to the college's guidelines for Academic Dishonesty printed in the *Student's Guide Handbook*. Plagiarism, cheating, or otherwise representing another's work or ideas as your own without proper attribution will not be tolerated. All work must be new and created for this class during this semester by you. It is your responsibility to ensure that you understand the definition of Academic Dishonesty at Texas A&M-Commerce. If such an instance occurs, the student will receive an automatic zero for the work in question, and I will immediately report the incident to the Head of the Department. (*You should be aware that this could result in dismissal from school without credit for the semester.*)

**Students with a Disability:**

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact:

**Office of Student Disability Resources and Services**  
**Texas A&M University-Commerce**  
**Gee Library 132**  
**Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835**  
**Fax (903) 468-8148**

[StudentDisabilityServices@tamuc.edu](mailto:StudentDisabilityServices@tamuc.edu)  
[Student Disability Resources & Services](#)

**Student Conduct:**

All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment. (*See Code of Student Conduct from Student Guide Handbook*).



<b>COURSE OUTLINE / CALENDAR</b>
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Reading and Assignments are due on the days on which they are listed below.

\*\*\*\*Due to the nature of this course, some assignments/scheduling may need to be adapted.  
All changes will be announced prior to implementation\*\*\*\*

### WEEK ONE

Sept. 3            Course Overview – nature of assignments, etc.  
Directing techniques – Staging, Focus, and Composition

**Thursday, Sept. 3rd- Last day to ADD a class without instructor permission**

### WEEK TWO

**Monday, September 7- LAST DAY TO WITHDRAW WITH 80% REFUND**

Sept. 10        **Reading:** Bloom, Intro-“Reading and Researching,” and “External Analysis”  
Discuss reading  
Directing techniques, cont.

### WEEK THREE

**Monday, September 14- LAST DAY TO WITHDRAW WITH 70% REFUND**

Sept. 17        **Reading:** Bloom, “Developing the Approach”-“Style” and “Casting”  
Selection of scenes from above plays  
Directing techniques, cont.

### WEEK FOUR

**Monday, September 21- LAST DAY TO WITHDRAW WITH 50% REFUND**

Sept. 24        **Reading:** Bloom, “The Early Rehearsals”-“Staging”  
Scene work – Rehearsals

**WEEK FIVE****Monday, September 28- LAST DAY TO WITHDRAW WITH 25% REFUND**

- Oct. 1      **Reading:** Bloom, “The Middle Rehearsals” - “The External Perspective in Rehearsals”  
 Discuss Reading  
 Scene work – Rehearsals

**WEEK SIX**

- Oct. 8      **Director’s Breakdown for scene due!**  
**Reading:** TBA  
 Performance of scenes  
 Scene Feedback

**WEEK SEVEN**

- Oct. 15     **Reading:** TBA  
 Scene work – Rehearsals

**WEEK EIGHT****DoT Production ...*Spelling Bee* October 20-25**

- Oct. 22     **Proposal for Final Presentation due!**  
**Reading:** TBA  
 Scene work – Rehearsals

**WEEK NINE**

- Oct. 29     **Reading:** TBA  
 Performance of scenes  
 Scene Feedback

**WEEK TEN****Thursday, Nov. 5 - LAST DAY TO DROP A CLASS WITH Q GRADE**

Nov. 5      *...Spelling Bee* papers due **via email**  
**Reading:** TBA  
 Scene work – Rehearsals

**WEEK ELEVEN**

Nov. 12      **Reading:** TBA  
 Scene work – Rehearsals

**WEEK TWELVE****DoT Production *Calling All* November 17-22**

Nov. 19      **Director's Breakdown for Final Presentation due!**  
**Reading:** TBA  
 Performance of scenes

**WEEK THIRTEEN****11/25-27: THANKSGIVING BREAK: NO CLASSES****WEEK FOURTEEN**

Dec. 3      *Calling All* papers due **via email**  
 Final Presentation – Director's Breakdown feedback sessions (individual time)

**WEEK FIFTEEN****Sunday, Dec. 6- LAST DAY TO WITHDRAW**

Dec. 10      Wrap-up  
 Possible time for Final Presentations

**Final: Thursday, 12/17, 4:30-7:10 p.m.: Final Directing Scenes**

OFFICIAL RUBRIC -  
Grading of Performance Response Essays

Format and Details    3 pts.

- Does the author have a clear introductory paragraph that expresses the goal(s) of the overall paper (See prompt.)?
- Does the opening sentence draw the reader in?
- Does the author clearly state a thesis and go on to support it?
- Does the author identify specific examples from the script or production?
- Does the author stay clearly in the past tense?
- Did the author proofread carefully for proper grammar and misspelled words?
- Is paragraphing appropriate (parallel to changing ideas)?
- Is there a concluding paragraph?

Content                    3 pts.

- Does the author clearly discuss topic(s) outlined in the prompt?
- Are there specific examples from the text/performance to support the argument?
- Is there unnecessary information (such as recounting the plot versus using plot points to support argument)?
- Is the information in the performance response essay accurate?
- Does the author balance their opinion/interpretation with concrete examples from the text/performance?
- Is the author concentrating on what was written or presented as opposed to what was missing or what they preferred to see?

Style and Flow            3 pts.

- Does the paper flow smoothly?
- Is there a clear and logical organization to the paper?
- Does the author make clean, logical transitions from idea to idea?
- Does the author use theatrical terms appropriately?
- Does the author clearly write for an appropriate audience (instructor and peers)?

1 “free floating point” to be used as + or – at the instructor’s discretion.

10= A   9=A-   8= B+   7= B   6= B-   5= C+   4= C   3= C-   2= D+   1= D

Student Contract for THE 415, Fall 2015

I have read the Course Syllabus for THE 415 and understand its content including the attendance policy, productions required, academic honesty section, and classroom behavior requirements (including use of cell phones).

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NAME (Signature)

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Date