



**THE 415 – STAGE DIRECTION
COURSE SYLLABUS: FALL 2016
T/TR 12:30-1:45 p.m.
PERFORMING ARTS #126**

Instructor: Rebecca Worley, MFA, Assistant Professor of Theatre
Office Location: Performing Arts Center #105
Office Hours: M/W 2-4 p.m., T/R 9:30-10:30 a.m. or by appointment
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COURSE INFORMATION

Required Textbook:

Thinking Like a Director by Michael Bloom
Scenes from realistic plays (provided for you by your instructor)
Various handouts

Additional Readings:

Throughout the semester, there may be additional readings provided for you by your instructor (via email or eCollege, 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 book 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 help you as a director remain aware of what is happening in the theatre world and expand your knowledge of theatrical works.

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:***Acting: The First Six Lessons***

Directed by Kelsey Cooper

Produced in the Studio Theatre by the University Playhouse at A&M Commerce

October 11-15 at 8 p.m. and October 16 at 3 p.m.

The Dispute

Directed by Dr. Carrie Klypchak

Produced in the Main Stage Theatre by the University Playhouse at A&M Commerce

November 15-19 at 8 p.m. and November 20 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.

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.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

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 assigned 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 @ 10, 15 = 25 pts total): Once scenes/plays are assigned/approved, students will submit a director's breakdown for each directing project (in-class scene: 10 pts.; and final scene: 15 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. **Your final breakdown must** also include 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.

Final presentation (20 pts): Each student in this course will be responsible for casting*, arranging and preparing rehearsals, and directing a play (modern Realism ONLY); and for arranging for the instructor to visit a rehearsal. The running time of each play should be around 15 minutes. In lieu of a final exam, the final presentations will take place during the final exam period.

*I would prefer that all casting is done from *within* our class. Still, if you can make a good case for using an outside actor (make careful note of final performance dates/times), I will consider it. You **MUST** get permission from me to use an outside actor & provide sufficient evidence that there will **NOT** be a scheduling conflict.

Grading:

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

Participation	10 pts.	90-100 =	A
Papers	20 pts.	80-89=	B
In-Class Scene	15 pts.	70-79=	C
Proposal	10 pts.	60-69=	D
Breakdowns	25 pts.	59 and below=	F
Final Presentation	20 pts.		
Total	100 pts.		

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**. Please do not leave a message for me in the main department office.

Email Policy:

Before sending me an email with a general course-specific question, **review your syllabus/look at the handouts/check eCollege/ask a classmate first**. If your question has already been addressed in one of those places, then you will have the answer you need. If your question does not exist, please feel free to email me.

When emailing me: Please make your emails clear and concise, written with proper grammar in order to assure my earliest attention. In addition, please follow some common "email etiquette" procedures in order to keep our electronic communication effective and efficient. Specifically:

- Write a relevant subject line (e.g., "Directing question," or "THE 415 meeting request")
- Address me by name (ie: "Dear Professor Worley" or "Hi Becca" or just "Becca")
- Bonus: "meaningless niceties" are never a bad idea!
- Concisely state what it is you need. If it can't be communicated in a concise manner, perhaps request an appointment. **If requesting an appointment**, give me times that you are available **in the initial email!!!** My office hours are posted above.
- Use a "sign-off" ("Thank you" is always good) and **sign your name**.

Not following these guidelines potentially puts you at the bottom of my list for response time.

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
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Course Specific Procedures:**Attendance Policy:**

You may accumulate one (2) 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 12:30 p.m.! If you arrive after 12:40 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.)*

Campus Concealed Carry

Texas Senate Bill - 11 (Government Code 411.2031, et al.) authorizes the carrying of a concealed handgun in Texas A&M University-Commerce buildings only by persons who have been issued and are in possession of a Texas License to Carry a Handgun. Qualified law

enforcement officers or those who are otherwise authorized to carry a concealed handgun in the State of Texas are also permitted to do so. Pursuant to Penal Code (PC) 46.035 and A&M-Commerce Rule 34.06.02.R1, license holders may not carry a concealed handgun in restricted locations. For a list of locations, please refer to

(<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/34SafetyOfEmployeesAndStudents/34.06.02.R1.pdf>) and/or consult your event organizer).

Pursuant to PC 46.035, the open carrying of handguns is prohibited on all A&M-Commerce campuses. Report violations to the University Police Department at 903-886-5868 or 9-1-1.

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

[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*).

COURSE OUTLINE / CALENDAR

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

- T Aug 30 Course Overview
Directing techniques - Staging Focus, and Composition
- Th Sept 1 Directing techniques, cont.

WEEK TWO

Monday, September 5- LAST DAY TO WITHDRAW WITH 80% REFUND

- T Sept 6 Directing techniques, cont.
- Th Sept 8 **Reading:** Bloom, Intro - Part I (pp. 3-66)
Discuss reading

WEEK THREE

Monday, September 12- LAST DAY TO WITHDRAW WITH 70% REFUND

- T Sept 13 Discuss expectations for Director's Breakdowns & Proposal for final presentation
Wrap up reading discussion
Directing techniques, cont.
- Th Sept 15 **Reading:** Bloom, Part II (pp. 69-116)
Discuss reading
Selection of scenes from above plays

WEEK FOUR

Monday, September 19- LAST DAY TO WITHDRAW WITH 50% REFUND

- T Sept 20 **Reading:** Bloom, Part III (through "The External Perspective in Rehearsals,"
pp.119-183)
Discuss reading
- Th Sept 22 Scene work - Rehearsals

WEEK FIVE**Monday, September 26- LAST DAY TO WITHDRAW WITH 25% REFUND**

T Sept 27 Scene work - Rehearsals

Th Sept 29 Scene work - Rehearsals

WEEK SIXT Oct 4 **Director's Breakdown for scene due!**
Scene work - RehearsalsTh Oct 6 Performance of scenes
Scene feedback**WEEK SEVEN****DoT Production Acting: First Six Lessons October 11-16**T Oct 11 Performance of scenes
Scene feedback

Th Oct 13 Scene work - Rehearsals

WEEK EIGHTT Oct 18 **Proposal for Final Presentation due!**
Scene work - Rehearsals

Th Oct 20 Scene work - Rehearsals

WEEK NINET Oct 25 *Acting* papers due **via email!**
Scene work - RehearsalsTh Oct 27 Performance of scenes
Scene feedback

WEEK TEN**Thursday, Nov. 3 - LAST DAY TO DROP A CLASS WITH Q GRADE**

T Nov 1 Performance of scenes
Scene feedback

Th Nov 3 **Becca at ASTR - Rehearse with your groups!**

WEEK ELEVEN

T Nov 8 Scene work - Rehearsals

Th Nov 10 Scene work - Rehearsals

WEEK TWELVE**DoT Production *The Dispute* November 15-20**

T Nov 15 Scene work - Rehearsals

Th Nov 17 Performance of scenes
Scene feedback

WEEK THIRTEEN

T Nov 22 **Director's Breakdown for Final Presentation due!**
Performance of scenes
Scene feedback

Th Nov 24 **THANKSGIVING BREAK - NO CLASS**

WEEK FOURTEEN**Sunday, Nov 27 - LAST DAY TO WITHDRAW**

T Nov 29 *The Dispute* papers due **via email**
Director's Breakdown feedback sessions (individual time)

Th Dec 1 Director's Breakdown feedback sessions (individual time)

WEEK FIFTEEN

T Dec 6 Wrap-up

Th Dec 8 **Final Directing Scenes - GROUP 1**

WEEK SIXTEEN

Final: Thursday, 12/15, 10:30-12:30 Final Directing Scenes - GROUP 2

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 2016

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).

NAME (Signature)

Date