



**THE 543: DEV OF AMERICAN THEATRE  
COURSE SYLLABUS: SPRING 2017  
MONDAY 4:30 p.m. - 7:10 p.m.  
BA #338**

**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  
**Office Phone:** 903-886-5339  
**University Email Address:** Rebecca.worley@tamuc.edu

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

*Early American Drama*, ed. Jeffrey Richards  
*Entertaining the Nation*, Tice Miller  
Assorted Hand-outs (distributed in class and/or posted online)  
PDFs of plays

**Plays Covered:**

*The Contrast* (1787) in Richards  
*Metamora* . . . (1829) (**pdf**)  
*Fashion* (1845) and Prologue in Richards  
*Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) in Richards  
*The Octoroon* (1859) in Richards  
*Held By the Enemy* (1888) (**pdf**)  
*The Great Divide* (1906) (**pdf**)  
*The Verge* (1921) (**pdf**)  
*Bury the Dead* (1936) (**pdf**)

**Recommended Reading:**

*Performing America: Cultural Nationalism in American Theater*, ed. Jeffrey D. Mason and J. Ellen Gainor  
*Interrogating America through Theatre and Performance*, ed. William H. Demastes and Iris Smith Fischer  
*An Outline History of the American Theatre*, Walter Meserve  
*American Drama: Colonial to Contemporary*, ed. Stephen Watt & Gary A. Richardson

### Course Objectives:

To develop a working background on the history of the American theatre, its plays and players, that will assist students in making intelligent assessments regarding the American theatre of the twenty-first century.

The organizing principle of this course will be the question of what it means to be *American*. We will critique the loaded term *American* and interrogate notions of *history* and *theatre* as well. We will study plays from the accepted American drama canon in light of marginalized groups who rightfully claim a place in the American theatre, tracing flagrant stereotypes (race, ethnicity, class, gender). We will study the historiography of the American theatre as well as its history. In this course, the emphasis is on traditional “scripted” plays. We will also hone the skills of the working theatre historian.

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

**Conceptual Frameworks (Best 8 @ 2.5 pts = 20 pts total):** (CF on Class Schedule) are statements of the lens(es) through which you might view a particular play – in essence, approaches to analyzing the piece(s) or production(s). They might utilize a particular theory, social practice, thematic concern, etc. These should be a few sentences long, typed, and written in complete sentences. You can think of them as mini-abstracts. We will practice in class.

**Article Presentations (4 @ 5 pts = 20 pts total):** Each presentation will summarize two articles found in either a) peer-reviewed theatre journals or b) book chapters. Presentations can be informal. Students will also provide a short (one-page, front and back) handout **outlining** the main ideas of two articles for myself and their classmates (please include article citations in MLA format). The articles can relate to anything we are covering in class, including the organizing principle “What is American?” and our other questions but, **they should be about the period at hand**. While these articles may HELP you form conceptual frameworks, they do not have to (it would, however, save you time later if they did!).

**Abstract (10 pts):** Students will submit a short (250-300 word) abstract that summarizes their paper topic and the critical lens(es) they will use. We will discuss how to write an abstract in class.

**Rough Draft (15 pts):** Students must turn in a rough draft of their paper. Rough drafts need not have formal “scholarly apparatus” as in proper formatting of Endnotes and Works Cited, **but be forewarned**. These are not to be slap-dash efforts. These must be coherent, fully formed papers, 12-15 pages in length. They must be well-organized and draw a conclusion. You have to give me a paper that is ready for editorial comments, not stream-of-consciousness. PLAN AHEAD.

**Polished Paper (20 pts):** Each student will turn in a conference length paper (12-15 pages) analyzing a particular performance (**note:** performance does not necessarily denote “traditional” theater) or play, applying a theoretical lens(es)/concepts covered in class

(particularly the questions: What is American? Who is featured? Who is left out? Who is implied?). The paper should give the critical history of the performance and provide an original argument on this topic. Examples of this type of analysis will be present in many of the readings for the class, and I will point them out as we read them. This project is to familiarize students with the research process and to prepare them for future, more extensive research.

**In-Class Final (15 pts):** Students will present the final draft of their research papers during our final exam period. The final paper must include the topic’s critical history, the student’s analysis of this history and an original argument about the topic itself. We will approach this final presentation in the manner of an academic scholarly panel.

**Grading:**

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

90-100 =	A
80-89=	B
70-79=	C
60-69=	D
59 and below=	F

**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.**

<b>TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS</b>
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**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. Additionally, I WILL provide electronic copies of the plays and supplemental reading through email.

**WRITTEN WORK:** Unfortunately, papers/projects do occasionally get lost. Please, for your sanity, save your work on a disc or thumb 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.

<b>COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT</b>
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**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 cannot 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 presents you with difficulties in this class, let me know. I cannot help you if I do not 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 you cannot find the answer, please feel free to email me.

**When emailing me:** Please make your emails clear, concise, and 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., “American Theatre question,” or “THE 543 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>

<b>COURSE AND UNIVERSITY PROCEDURES/POLICIES</b>
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**Attendance Policy:**

**Attendance is mandatory and grades will be lowered ½ letter grade per absence.** That being said, I do understand that there are unavoidable, *emergency* situations in life. You are allowed

one *emergency* absence in this course with no attendance grading penalty (although you are still responsible for all work during said absences).

### **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) may 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.

### **Extra Credit:**

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

### **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 Procedures:**

### **Academic Dishonesty:**

This course adheres strictly to the college's guidelines for Academic Dishonesty printed in the *Student's Guide Handbook*. Plagiarism (including self-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](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*).

## COURSE OUTLINE / CALENDAR

Reading and assignments are due on the days on which they are listed below. **Bring scripts (and on appropriate days Miller text) to class!**

### WEEK ONE

**Monday, January 23 - LAST DAY TO WITHDRAW WITH 80% REFUND**

- Jan 23      **Reading:** Fletcher/Irelan "Staging 'Americanization'"  
Intro to course  
Discuss: Early theatre of the Americas – Whose America? This historiography of [American] theatre history; Historiography/New Historicism  
**In-Class Hand-Out:** Declaration of Independence; "Dialogues"

(TETA Convention 1/25-29)

### WEEK TWO

**Monday, January 30 - LAST DAY TO WITHDRAW WITH 70% REFUND**

- Jan 30      **Reading:** Miller, Intro-Chapter 2; Royall Tyler's *The Contrast* with Prologue  
Discuss Restoration Theatre in England – Character Types in Restoration/18<sup>th</sup> c.  
What is American about *The Contrast*?  
Discuss "American" Characters  
Discuss and practice forming a conceptual framework, finding a lens

**Wednesday, February 1 - CENSUS DAY  
LAST DAY TO DROP A CLASS WITH REFUND**

### WEEK THREE

**Monday, February 6 - LAST DAY TO WITHDRAW WITH 50% REFUND**

- Feb 6      **CF #1 on *The Contrast* due**  
**Reading:** Miller, Chapter 3; Banks, "The Savage Other"; and *Metamora*  
Discuss CFs  
Discuss play; Jacksonian Democracy, Edwin Forrest; Images of "Indians" onstage; Romanticism

### WEEK FOUR

**Monday, February 13 - LAST DAY TO WITHDRAW WITH 25% REFUND**

- Feb 13      **CF# 2 on *Metamora* due**  
**Article #1 presentation due**  
**Reading:** Miller, Chapter 4, and *Fashion*  
Discuss *Fashion* in Cultural Context: What is Mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century American Theatre? Discuss Melodrama

**\*\*\*UIL OAP CLINIC 2/16-17\*\*\***

**WEEK FIVE**

Feb 20 **CF# 3 on *Fashion* due**  
**Reading:** *Uncle Tom's Cabin*; Condee, "Uncle Tom's Cluster"  
**In-Class Handout:** Chapter 2 in *Interrogating America...* Amy Hughes

**WEEK SIX**

**DoT Production *One Flea Spare* February 28-March 5**

Feb 27 **CF# 4 on *Uncle Tom's Cabin* due**  
**Article #2 presentation due**  
**Reading:** *The Octoroon* and Chiles' article "Blackened Irish and Brownfaced Amerindians"  
Discuss reading; American Identity

**WEEK SEVEN**

Mar 6 **CF# 5 on *The Octoroon* due**  
**Reading:** *Held by the Enemy*  
Discuss readings; Use of primary documents  
Discuss Abstracts

**\*\*\*SPRING BREAK\*\*\* (March 13-17)**

**WEEK EIGHT**

Mar 20 **CF# 6 on *Held by the Enemy* due**  
**Article #3 presentation due**  
Images of the Civil War

**WEEK NINE**

Mar 27 **Abstracts for papers due!** Bring copies to class to distribute and share aloud.  
**Reading:** Miller, Chapter 5 and *The Great Divide*  
Discuss readings

**Sunday, April 2 - LAST DAY TO DROP A CLASS WITH Q GRADE**

**WEEK TEN**

Apr 3 **CF#7 on *The Great Divide* due**  
**Reading:** *The Verge*  
Discuss play and the Provincetown Players, Glaspell



**\*\*\*UIL OAP REGION CONTEST 4/6\*\*\***

**WEEK ELEVEN**

Apr 10 **CF#8 on *The Verge* due**  
**Article #4 presentation due**  
Discuss *The Verge*, cont. and drama in the Great Depression

**WEEK TWELVE**

Apr 17 **Rough Drafts of Papers due**  
**Reading: *Bury the Dead***  
Discuss reading

**Thursday, April 20 - LAST DAY TO WITHDRAW**

**WEEK THIRTEEN**

**DoT Production *Smoke on the Mountain* April 25-30**

Apr 24 **CF#9 on *Bury the Dead* due**  
**Rough Drafts of Papers Returned** – Discuss papers  
Review

**WEEK FOURTEEN**

May 1 **Discuss Final**  
**Wrap-up:** What is “American” “Theatre” “History”?  
Application of material studied to modern and contemporary American plays  
and/or productions

**FINALS WEEK – May 8-12**

**FINAL EXAM: MONDAY, May 8<sup>th</sup> 4:30 p.m. – 7:10 p.m.**