



**THE 543: DEV OF AMERICAN THEATRE
COURSE SYLLABUS: SPRING 2021
MONDAY 4:30 p.m. - 7:10 p.m.
VIRTUAL CLASSROOM & ONLINE**

Instructor: Rebecca Worley, MFA, Assistant Professor of Theatre
Office Location: Performing Arts Center #105
Office Hours: M 2-4 p.m., T/R 9:30-10:30 a.m., W 12-2 p.m. or by appointment
Office Phone: 903-886-5339
University Email Address: Rebecca.worley@tamuc.edu

COURSE INFORMATION

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)

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 Description:

A study of the theatre as it reflects the social, artistic, and literary interests in America from the colonial period to the contemporary scene. 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.

Student Learning Outcomes:

1. 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.
2. Display a learned knowledge of the skills of the working theatre historian.
3. Synthesize academic research into cohesive scholarly writing and oral presentation.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

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.

TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

All course sections offered by Texas A&M University-Commerce have a corresponding course shell in the myLeo Online Learning Management System (LMS). Below are technical requirements

LMS Requirements:

<https://community.brightspace.com/s/article/Brightspace-Platform-Requirements>

LMS Browser Support:

https://documentation.brightspace.com/EN/brightspace/requirements/all/browser_support.htm

ACCESS AND NAVIGATION

You will need your campus-wide ID (CWID) and password to log into the course. If you do not know your CWID or have forgotten your password, contact the Center for IT Excellence (CITE) at 903.468.6000 or helpdesk@tamuc.edu.

Note: Each student needs to have a backup method to deal with inevitable problems. These methods might include the availability of a backup PC at home or work, the temporary use of a computer at a friend's home, the local library, office service companies, Starbucks, a TAMUC campus open computer lab, etc.

Technical Support: If you are having technical difficulty with any part of D2L, please contact Brightspace Technical Support at 1-877-325-7778. Other support options can be found here:

<https://community.brightspace.com/support/s/contactsupport>

COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT

Contacting Me:

Please feel free to visit me during my virtual 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. Communicate, communicate, communicate! 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 myLeo Online/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., "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>

COURSE AND UNIVERSITY PROCEDURES/POLICIES
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Course Specific Procedures:**Attendance Policy:****Attendance is mandatory and grades will be lowered ½ letter grade per absence.**While I will be flexible with technical difficulties, **plan accordingly**. Of course, if you have a prolonged illness or injury, or if a family emergency arises, speak with your instructor ASAP.**Students should not attend class when ill or after exposure to anyone with a communicable illness. Communicate such instances directly with your instructor. I will work to support you getting access to missed content or completing missed assignments.****Late Arrivals:**As with absences, I will be flexible with technical difficulties; however, all attempts to join our weekly meetings **on time** should be made. The class will begin promptly at 4:30 p.m.! If you are experiencing technical issues, please text me so I know you are making all attempts to join class on time. Also, you are expected to stay in the meeting until you are dismissed from class. **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.****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 Policies and Procedures:****Face-Coverings**

A&M-Commerce requires the use of face-coverings in all instructional and research classrooms/laboratories. Exceptions may be made by faculty where warranted. Faculty have

management over their classrooms. Students not using face-coverings can be required to leave class. Repetitive refusal to comply can be reported to the Office of Students' Rights and Responsibilities as a violation of the student Code of Conduct.

Student Conduct

All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment. The Code of Student Conduct is described in detail in the [Student Guidebook](#).

<http://www.tamuc.edu/Admissions/oneStopShop/undergraduateAdmissions/studentGuidebook.aspx>

Academic Integrity

Students at Texas A&M University-Commerce are expected to maintain high standards of integrity and honesty in all of their scholastic work. For more details and the definition of academic dishonesty see the following procedures:

[Graduate Student Academic Dishonesty 13.99.99.R0.10](#)

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/13students/graduate/13.99.99.R0.10GraduateStudentAcademicDishonesty.pdf>

ADA Statement

Students with Disabilities

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

Gege Library- Room 162

Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835

Fax (903) 468-8148

Email: studentdisabilityservices@tamuc.edu

Website: [Office of Student Disability Resources and Services](#)

<http://www.tamuc.edu/campusLife/campusServices/studentDisabilityResourcesAndServices/>

Nondiscrimination Notice

Texas A&M University-Commerce will comply in the classroom, and in online courses, with all federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination and related retaliation on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, age, genetic information or veteran status. Further, an environment free from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression will be maintained.

Campus Concealed Carry Statement

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.

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

Jan 11 **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"

WEEK TWO

Jan 18 **MLK DAY - NO CLASS**

WEEK THREE

Jan 25 **Reading:** Miller, Intro-Chapter 2; Royall Tyler's *The Contrast* with Prologue
Discuss Restoration Theatre in England – Character Types in Restoration/18th c.
What is American about *The Contrast*?
Discuss "American" Characters
Discuss and practice forming a conceptual framework, finding a lens

WEEK FOUR

Feb 1 **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 FIVE

Feb 8 **CF# 2 on Metamora due**
Article #1 presentation due
Reading: Miller, Chapter 4, and *Fashion*
Discuss Fashion in Cultural Context: What is Mid-19th Century American Theatre? Discuss Melodrama

WEEK SIX

Feb 15 **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 SEVEN**DoT Production *Recipe of Life* Feb. 23-28**

Feb 22 **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 EIGHT

Mar 1 **CF# 5 on *The Octoroon* due**
Reading: *Held by the Enemy*
 Discuss readings
 Discuss Abstracts

WEEK NINE

Mar 8 **Abstracts for papers due!** Bring copies to class to distribute and share aloud.
CF# 6 on *Held by the Enemy* due
 Images of the Civil War

WEEK TEN

Mar 15 **Reading:** Miller, Chapter 5 and *The Great Divide*
 Discuss readings

WEEK ELEVEN

Mar 22 **CF#7 on *The Great Divide* due**
Article #3 presentation due
Reading: *The Verge*
 Discuss play and the Provincetown Players, Glaspell

WEEK TWELVE

Mar 29 **CF#8 on *The Verge* due**
 Discuss *The Verge*, cont. and drama in the Great Depression

WEEK THIRTEEN

Apr 5 **Rough Drafts of Papers due**
Reading: *Bury the Dead*
 Discuss reading

WEEK FOURTEEN
DoT Production Title TBD April 13-18

Apr 12 **CF#9 on *Bury the Dead* due**
Article #4 presentation due
Discuss

WEEK FIFTEEN

Apr 19 **Discuss Final**
Discuss papers (bring copies of rough drafts to class!)
Wrap-up & Review: What is "American" "Theatre" "History"?
Application of material studied to modern and contemporary American plays
and/or productions

WEEK SIXTEEN

FINAL EXAM: MONDAY, April 26th 4:30 p.m. – 7:10 p.m.