

TH 321 01 Directing I [3 credits]

TR 3:30-5:30pm

Location: SPEC

Spring 2020

“Everything is possible, but you must find your own way. So, if you look at my work and think, ‘Ah, there is an example, I will start by what he’s done,’ you are bound to go wrong. Because the work that I do today is the result of all the work I’ve done through trial and error, in changing times.”

-Peter Brook

Instructor: Dr. Tom Robson

Office Hours: Monday 1-4pm, Tuesday 10-11am, Thursday 10-11am.

Course Description: An introduction to the theory and techniques of stage directing, this course emphasizes script analysis, collaboration, executing blocking and staging techniques, understanding aesthetics and clarity.

Learning Goals: The five central goals of the Department of Theatre and Dance are to engage in analytical learning, technical learning, collaborative learning, professional learning, and the pursuit of a life of meaning and value.

Course Objectives: On successful completion of this course, students should be able to:

- Identify the varying aspects of a director’s job.
- Execute a rehearsal process from casting through performance.
- Analyze a dramatic text for production from the perspective of a director.
- Employ the basic techniques of blocking and composition to create a compelling moving stage picture.
- Clearly communicate constructive criticism in a manner designed to support, enhance, and improve the work of their fellow artists.

Student Well-Being: The well-being of students is of primary importance. If you are facing any challenges related to your physical or mental health, or obstacles like food or housing insecurity, please do not hesitate to get in touch to discuss ways we can put you in the best possible position to succeed.

Inclusivity:

Every student in this classroom, regardless of personal history or identity categories, is a valued member of this group. Your experiences are valued and important, and you should feel free to share them as they become relevant to our class. No student in this class is ever expected or believed to speak for all members of a group.

In this classroom you have the right to determine your own identity. You have the right to be called by whatever name you wish, and for that name to be pronounced correctly. You have the right to be referred to by whatever pronoun you wish. You have the right to adjust those things at any point in your education.

If you find that there are aspects of course instruction, subject matter, or classroom environment that result in barriers to your inclusion, please contact me privately without fear of reprisal.

Required Texts:

- Louis E. Catron and Scott Shattuck, *The Director's Vision: Play Direction from Analysis to Production, 2nd Edition*
- Peter Brook, *The Empty Space*
- Tony Kushner, *The Illusion*

Incompletes: No incompletes will be given except for verified medical or other real emergencies. Please note that theatre production responsibilities do not constitute emergencies.

Email Communication:

Students in this class should be sure to check their Millikin email accounts *at least once per day*, and ideally more frequently than that. In the event of schedule changes, I will use email to inform the class. Additionally, the School of Theatre & Dance regularly uses email to inform students of events, meetings, policies, auditions, etc. If you do not check your email, you will miss vital information.

I check my email regularly and will make every effort to respond to emails as I receive them. That said, you should always allow 24 hours for a response to any email.

Grading Breakdown (1000 points total):

Final One-Act (Product AND Process):		450 points total
Presentation	50	
Rehearsal Reflections	50	
Rehearsal Observation	25	
Analysis	100	
1 st Showing	50	
2 nd Showing	150	
Final Reflection	25	
<i>Illusion</i> Project		200 points total
Analysis	50	
First Meeting Worksheet	50	
Design Meeting Reflections	50	
Presentation	50	
<i>TIPS</i> Presentation		50 points
Image Assignment		25 points
Sound Assignment		25 points
Self-Assessment		50 points
Participation:		200 points

Two Notes on Grading:

I will be using the Gradebook feature on Moodle to post grades in this course. As I complete assignments, grades will be posted so that you can keep close track of your progress.

Due to privacy concerns I will not discuss grades over e-mail or in the classroom. If you would like to have a grade explained, or if you have questions about your standing in the class, please set up an appointment with me, and I will be more than happy to discuss it with you.

Exams and Quizzes: There will be no exams in this course. At present I do not plan to give any quizzes. I reserve the right to change the quiz policy if it seems that students are not keeping up with the reading.

One-Act Play Project: Students will select a short one-act play (10 minutes in length or less, roughly 8 pages in length) by mid-semester. You will then use the second half of the semester preparing this play for production. These one-acts will be presented twice in class – once as an in-process showing, and once as a finished product. Students will give and receive feedback to each of these showings. Additional information about this project is provided in a separate handout.

Illusion Design Project: Working in groups of three (two designers, one director) you will develop a production design concept for the play *The Illusion*. You will direct one (hypothetical) production and design for two others. You may or may not be designing in an area that you have prior experience in, and that is OK. As a director, you will

1. Complete an analysis of the play,
2. Meet at least four times with your designers to develop your production approach,
3. Observe one meeting conducted by another director (not in your group), and
4. Give an in-class presentation about your production.

Additional information about this project is provided in a separate handout.

TIPS Presentations: Every student in the class will select one of the “tips” from Jon Jory’s *Tips: Ideas for Directors* book on reserve at the library to present in class over the course of the semester. The presentations should be short (approximately 5 minutes each). The student should create and distribute a one-page handout to the class (you will need to bring physical copies for everyone.) That handout should include:

1. The full text of the tip,
2. An indication of why you selected it (you will expand on this in your oral presentation),
3. An indication of what its practical use has been or could be for you (you will expand on this in your oral presentation,) and
4. A thoughtful question designed to begin conversation with the class. (Something more thoughtful than, “So, what do you think of this?”)

Students will sign up for dates in class early in the semester. Every student in the class needs to present a different tip, so be sure to keep track of the tips discussed by those before you.

Self-Assessment: Students will complete a self-assessment reflection activity roughly halfway through the semester, analyzing their work to that point of the semester and articulating strategies for the second half of the semester.

Late Work/Missed Work: All assignments must be submitted on time the day that they are due, whether they be postings, presentations, or showings. Work not submitted on time will receive zero credit. Missed assignments may not be made up.

Participation: Your active participation in this class is vital to overall success for the course. As such, participation will form a significant portion of your grade. I expect all students in this class to engage verbally with the material and to contribute their own ideas to our discussions. Additionally, we will often be on our feet in this class engaging in exercises. In order for these exercises to have their desired effect, all students in the class must commit to them. Students who do not commit to these activities will find their participation grade adversely affected. Please note: There will be times in this class that people will present perspectives or opinions with which you disagree. Disagreement and reasonable debate are an important part of the collaborative nature of theatre, especially directing. You are never required to agree with a perspective shared by a classmate, a reading, or your professor, but you are required to engage with that perspective. I welcome disagreement and dialogue, but disrespectful behavior will not be tolerated.

Classroom Attire: Often students will engage in physical activity in the classroom in the course of working on directing exercises. Students must come to class dressed to move. Sneakers or other soft-soled shoes will be a necessity; please be sure to wear flat-soled shoes. Dresses and skirts are discouraged, due to the possibility of inhibiting movement.

Feedback: Several projects that we will undertake this semester, especially the final one-acts, will require students to give feedback to their classmates. Allow me to stress the importance of constructive criticism. It is important to be able to objectively evaluate one another's work, but such criticism needs to be delivered in a supportive manner designed to help each other. Also, I stress to everyone in the class the idea that *criticism of the work is not a criticism of the person.* Just as important as giving feedback in a constructive manner, students must remember to *take* feedback in a constructive manner. At times there will be need for back-and-forth discussion, but allow the commenter to complete her thought before responding.

Attendance: As much of this course will be project-based, your attendance in class is essential. Many of our in-class exercises are designed around having a particular number of students. Absences make these activities less effective. Students are permitted three absences for the semester, including illness. Each additional absence above that point will result in a full letter grade reduction of your final course grade. Students who accrue SIX total absences will automatically fail the course. Please also be certain to come to class on time. I will treat two instances of lateness as being equivalent to a single absence. Additionally, it is vital that students attend scheduled out-of-class rehearsals. Students who make a habit of missing rehearsals or arriving late to them will have their course grade penalized. [Please note: In the event of a significant medical situation that would cause you to miss more than two classes, please contact me and we will work out a solution.]

Grading Scale (1000 points total):

A: 940-1000	A-: 900-939	
B+: 870-879	B: 830-869	B-: 800-829
C+: 770-779	C: 730-769	C-: 700-729
D+: 670-679	D: 630-669	D-: 600-629
F: 0-599		

Schedule (Subject to change, dates of major assignments will not move.):*TDV = The Director's Vision**TES = The Empty Space*

Date	Subject	Assigned
T 1/21	Course Introduction	
Th 1/23	The Role of the Director	<i>TDV</i> 3-37
T 1/28	Composition	<i>TDV</i> 235-251 <i>The Illusion</i>
Th 1/30	Plot and Character	Online Learning Styles Quiz <i>TDV</i> 38-69
T 2/4	Thought and Diction	<i>TDV</i> 70-101
Th 2/6	Music and Spectacle	<i>TDV</i> 102-130
T 2/11	Ground Plans	<i>TDV</i> 221-234
Th 2/13	Ground Plans	<i>TDV</i> 252-270
T 2/18	Working with Designers	Illusion Analysis Due
Th 2/20	Working with Designers	Image Assignment Due
T 2/25	Working with Actors	Sound Assignment Due <i>TDV</i> 191-203
Th 2/27	Working with Actors	<i>TDV</i> 204-220 One-Act Approval Deadline
T 3/3	Auditions & Casting	<i>TDV</i> 143-172
Th 3/5	In-Class Creation of Scene Showing Schedule In-Class Group Work (Tom at MATC)	
T 3/10	NO CLASS --- SPRING BREAK	
Th 3/12	NO CLASS --- SPRING BREAK	
T 3/17	<i>Illusion</i> Presentations	
Th 3/19	<i>Illusion</i> Presentations	One-Act Analysis Due
T 3/24	Mock Auditions	Self-Assessment Due
Th 3/26	The Deadly Theatre	<i>TES</i> Chapter One
T 3/31	One-Act Presentations 2 <i>TIPS</i> Presentations	
Th 4/2	One-Act Presentations 2 <i>TIPS</i> Presentations	
T 4/7	One-Act First Showings 2 <i>TIPS</i> Presentations	

Th 4/9	One-Act First Showings 2 <i>TIPS</i> Presentations	
T 4/14	NO CLASS --- ADVISING DAY	
Th 4/16	One-Act First Showings 2 <i>TIPS</i> Presentations	
T 4/21	The Holy Theatre & The Rough Theatre 3 <i>TIPS</i> Presentations	<i>TES</i> Chapters Two and Three
Th 4/23	Blocking in Alternative Spaces 2 <i>TIPS</i> Presentations	
T 4/28	The Immediate Theatre	<i>TES</i> Chapter Four
Th 4/30	One-Act Second Showings	
T 5/5	One-Act Second Showings	
Th 5/7	One-Act Second Showings	
Finals Week	Feedback Session	