

THR 830: Introduction to Graduate Studies¹
Wednesdays 9:10 AM-12:00 noon
C302 Snyder Hall

Instructor: Dr. Daniel Smith
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Office: 133 Auditorium Building
Office Hours: Mon. 11am-12:00pm
Tues. 2:30 PM-3:30 PM

Course Description and Objectives

This course introduces students to three fields of graduate study: pedagogy, research methodology, and scholarly theory. We will examine these professional activities as they pertain to the unique disciplinary concerns of theatre scholars and artists. Through critical engagement with writing on these subjects and by practicing activities necessary to each area, students will develop analytical, writing, and practical skills for teaching, research, and scholarship /artistic production.

Course Objectives:

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Improve their writing skills for academic and professional situations
- Analyze scholarly arguments and apply these arguments to professional and pedagogical scenarios
- Articulate their values in a teaching philosophy and/or artistic mission statement
- Ask thoughtful research questions and engage in important conversations for the field
- Understand the role of theatre in undergraduate general education, the mechanics of the undergraduate theatre major, and the purpose of graduate theatre education

Required Materials

All required readings are available online via D2L

ASSESSMENTS:

Participation: 20%, ongoing

Practicing critical thinking and writing skills demands that you are challenged to test the validity and applicability of your own ideas and those presented in the curriculum. In order to build on your capacities, I ask that you dialogue, debate and collaborate with peers, and try out alternative means of expressing arguments and ideas. Our seminar sessions are opportunities to work through ideas and materials as a team. This requires that you arrive on time and are prepared to engage in thoughtful discussion as an active listener and a considerate contributor. In graduate school, attendance is expected at all class sessions unless you have an emergency or a pre-approved professional conflict.

Critical Journal Reflections: 20% (Weekly)

Each week, students will write a 300-500 word response to a question related to the week's readings, or to a topic of professional development pertinent to that week's content. Topics are

¹ Syllabus developed in collaboration with Dr. Ann Folino White.

provided for the first three weeks. These assignments should be printed out before class meets and turned in as hard copies at the end of the class session.

Discussion Leadership: 10% (Various Dates)

Each student will serve as discussant for two articles on different dates chosen in consultation with the instructor. Teaching the article to your colleagues is intended to help develop pedagogical skills.

Teaching Philosophy Statement or Artist Mission Statement: 10% (Due November 8)

Students will choose to write a Teaching Philosophy Statement or an Artist Mission statement. We will look at examples of these kinds of statements together and complete exercises to reflect on developing these statements.

Conference Paper Abstract and Annotated Bibliography: 20% (Revision due Monday December 11 by 5:00 PM)

Students will write an abstract for a proposed research presentation at an academic conference. This abstract will be revised and turned in, along with an annotated bibliography for supporting this research.

Course Syllabus: Introduction to Theatre: 20% (Due Monday, December 11 by 5:00 PM)

Students will create a syllabus for an Introduction to Theatre or other General Education Theatre course.

Course Schedule:

Please note that all readings and Critical Reflection Journals are due on the date listed.

8/30:

Class does not meet; Monday schedule

9/6:

Week 1: Undergraduate Theatre Experiences

Readings:

George Kernodle, "Theatre Practice and Theatre Theory in the Liberal Arts Curriculum"

Russell Vandenbroucke, "What Stays?"

Rhonda Blair, "I do-I Understand: Hampshire College's Alternative Teaching Model"

Critical Journal Reflection #1: Describe your undergraduate theatre

experience/your experience of Theatre undergraduates: Did you major in theatre?

What courses were required? What courses were useful/less useful? What is your understanding of MSU Theatre undergrads and their expectations about their major?

9/13:

Week 2: Graduate Theatre Curriculum

Readings:

Jill Dolan, "To Teach and to Mentor"

Howard Bay, "Teaching Theatre Design"

Shannon Jackson, "Professing Performance"
MSU Department of Theatre Graduate Handbook

Critical Journal Reflection #2: What is the purpose of an MFA in Design? Why are you here? What do you hope to get out of this program?

9/20:

Week 3: New Play Dramaturgy/Professional Theatre Settings;
Visit with Guest Artist Matthew Schneider

Readings:

Art Borreca, "New Play Dramaturgy: The Yale and Iowa Models"

Websites of professional theatre organizations (LORT, AEA, USA, IATSE, etc.)

Critical Journal Reflection #3: What is your approach to collaboration? Which of the models described by Borreca do you prefer? Are you more of an in-house critic or an empathic facilitator? (Can we apply these labels to design?)

9/27:

Week 4: Skills 1: Research Methods

Readings:

Dwight Conquergood, "Performance Studies"

W.B. Worthen, "Acting, Singing, Dancing and So Forth"

Yakel and Torres, "AI: Archival Intelligence"

Reviews of Shannon Jackson's book *Professing Performance*

Critical Journal Reflection #4: Write a cogent response to this week's readings.

10/4

Week 5: Design Scholarship and Pedagogy

Readings:

Christin Essin, Toward an Aesthetic of Backstage Labor

Isackes, Design Pedagogy

Waltz, Filmed Scenery

Snyder, How to Ask a Smart Question

Critical Journal Reflection #5

10/11

Week 6: Devised Theatre

Readings:

Martine Kei Green-Rogers, "What Is Devised Theatre?"

Joan Herrington et al, "Preparing to Devise"

Mia Perry, "Theatre and Knowing: Devised Theatre and Theatre Pedagogy"

Critical Journal Reflection #6

10/18

Week 7: Immersive Theatre

Readings:

W. B. Worthen, "Sleep No More"
Jonathan Mandell, "Defining Immersive Theatre"
Taylor Mac, "What's Gonna Happen?"

Critical Journal Reflection #7

10/25

Week 8: Theatre and the Digital

Readings:

Sarah Bay-Cheng, Theatre and Digital Humanities

Debra Caplan, Notes from the Frontier

Erin Mee, Smartphone Plays

Critical Journal Reflection #8

11/1

Week 9: Skills 2: Pedagogy

Altman, and Cashin "Writing a Syllabus"

Brinko, "Visioning Your Course"

Haggerty, "Teaching Statements are Bunk"

Lang, "Four Steps to a Memorable Teaching Philosophy"

Woods, "Researching and developing interdisciplinary Teaching"

Critical Journal Reflection #9: Reflect on positive and negative education experiences. What teachers made you want to teach? What activities have helped you learn?

11/8

Week 10: Theatre and the Liberal Arts

Readings:

Brockett et al, Roundtable on Theatre Education

Nancy Kindelan, The Evolution of the Liberal Arts

Ronald Wainscott, Teaching Intro Classes

Critical Reflection #10: How would you approach an Intro to Theatre or other General Education Theatre course?

Teaching Philosophy or Artist Statement Due

11/15

Week 11: Diversity and Inclusion

Readings:

Lavina Jadhvani, "Color-Conscious Casting"

Abel, "Gay and Lesbian Studies and the Theatre Curriculum"

Flaugh, "Trans/formability and the Talk *Tomate*"

Shaw, "Insert [Chitlin Circuit] Here"

Critical Journal Reflection #11

11/22

Week 12: Syllabus and Research Project Workshop

(Instead of Critical Journal this week, please submit a draft of your End-of-Semester meeting narrative. This can be submitted via email.)

11/29

Week 13: Skills 3: Professional Profile

Readings:

Braun, et al., "How to Fail in Grant Writing"

Eyler, "Rhetoric of the CV"

Hermann, "Grand Applications"

Critical Journal Reflection #12

12/6

Week 14: Presentations of Work in Progress