

### Basic info

Amherst College THDA 45  
Course in the Arts of Theater and Dance  
Keywords: artistic practice, writing attentive,  
speaking attentive  
Course web page: <http://alturl.com/4dfyn>  
Course meets MWs from 2 to 4 p.m.  
in Webster Studio 3

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### Course description

This course explores the process of directing plays for the stage. Studio exercises develop skills in key areas: interpretation of form and artistic intent; perception and sensibility in rehearsal; effective communication with actors; and balancing the interplay between action and text. Students stage scenes from distinct categories: plays in verse, realistic plays, and non-realistic or less literal modern and contemporary plays. Special emphasis is placed on the role of dramaturgical understanding in the creation of meaningful stage action.

### Materials

#### Required Texts

(available for purchase locally at Amherst Books)

*King Lear*, by Shakespeare (Arden)

*The Cherry Orchard*, by Anton Chekhov (translation by Tom Stoppard)

*The Empty Space*, by Peter Brook

#### Plays for Classwork

(from Dept. of Theater and Dance; additional copies may be in Frost Library, or you may want to buy select titles)

I do not expect you to read all of these plays. However, I do expect you to read closely and completely any play you choose for scene or other exercise work.

#### Group I

Thornton Wilder's *Our Town*

Tennessee Williams' *A Streetcar Named Desire*

Arthur Miller's *Death of A Salesman*

Tony Kushner's *Angels in America Part I: Perestroika*

Christopher Shinn's *Dying City*

#### Group II

Samuel Beckett's *Not I*

Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*

Sarah Kane's *Crave*

Caryl Churchill's *A Number*

Mark Ravenhill's *Shopping & F\*\*\*king*

#### Group III

Euripides' *The Bacchae* (C.K. Williams translation)

Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*

Shakespeare's *King Lear*

Molière's *The Misanthrope* (R. Wilbur translation)

## Assignments Overview

This is a process-oriented course. We will work through technique exercises, textual analysis and studio directing work at a pace that supports your development. I ask that you to write about your experience on a weekly basis, and to write two longer formal essays. Your work will be in the following areas:

- Exercises in aspects of directing & text analysis
- Individual scene directing (1-3 scenes)
- Weekly writing portfolio
- Formal essays (2)
- Group-directed projects

## Grading (and attendance policy)

It is not possible to succeed in this course without excellent attendance. Activities are inter-related, and the largest portion of your course grade will be based on your work in class. Your course grade comprises:

Written work

Weekly writing portfolio	10%
Formal essays	20%
Individual scene directing results & process learning	30%
Group & class work and overall development as a director	40%

## Course Schedule

- This is an *approximate* outline of our work together.
- Your weekly writing is **due on Mondays**, starting September 20 through December 6.
- Formal essays will be **due October 13 and November 17**, respectively.
- Exercises, scene work and group projects are ongoing. I will announce additional written exercises or reading assignments in class, particularly in the first few weeks.

### Week 1

September 8: Introduction

Read *King Lear* for work beginning next week.

Begin looking at plays from the list for scene work choices.

### Week 2

September 13 & 15: Discussion, text analysis & directing exercises

Read *The Cherry Orchard* for work beginning next week.

Finalize scene choices & organization; begin rehearsing on your own, outside of class.

### Week 3

September 20 & 22: Discussion, text analysis & directing exercises

Read *The Empty Space* by Peter Brook for discussion next week.

*Possible start of scene work presentation*

### Week 4

September 27, 29: Discussion, text analysis & directing exercises

Discuss *The Empty Space*

### Week 5

October 4 & 6: Scene lab

MID-SEMESTER BREAK

Week 6

October 13: : Scene lab

**First formal essay due**

Week 7

October 18 & 20: Scene lab

Week 8

October 25 & 27: Scene lab

Week 9

November 1 & 3: Scene lab

Week 10

November 8 & 10: Beginning of large group project work

Week 11

November 15 & 17: Group project work

**Second formal essay due**

**Last chance for scene work presentation**

THANKSGIVING BREAK

Week 12

November 29 & December 1: Group project work

Week 13

December 6 & 8: Group project work

**Collected writings portfolio due**

Week 14

December 13 & 15: Group project work

**There is no examination for THDA 45 during the Examination Period.**

**The absolute deadline for any outstanding writing is 5 p.m. on December 20.**

**Statement of Intellectual Responsibility and Implications**

*Every person's education is the product of his or her own intellectual effort and participation in a process of critical exchange. Amherst cannot educate those who are unwilling to submit their own work and ideas to critical assessment. Nor can it tolerate those who interfere with the participation of others in the critical process. Therefore, the College considers it a violation of the requirements of intellectual responsibility to submit work that is not one's own or otherwise to subvert the conditions under which academic work is performed by oneself or by others.*

Some implications of the Statement of Intellectual Responsibility for THDA 45 are listed below.

- Our work is cooperative by design. Indeed, creating theater depends on developing skills in collaboration and good communication. In order to maintain optimal learning conditions, it is your intellectual responsibility to yourself and to your peers to attend all scheduled class meetings, to cooperate in scheduling and attending meetings outside of class necessary to complete collaborative work, and to communicate conflicts, time-management problems and related issues openly and promptly.
- Writing that you submit to me must be your own.