

Western University
Don Wright Faculty of Music
Music 2701A: Musical Theatre, Fall 2018

Talbot College Room 141 Tuesdays, 7:00-10:00 p.m.

Instructor: Prof. Kristina Baron-Woods
Office hours: Tuesdays 3 - 5 pm, other times by appointment

Office: Talbot College 324
Email: kbaron3@uwo.ca

Teaching Assistants: Patrick Feely pfeely@uwo.ca
 Daniel Gardner dgardne6@uwo.ca
 James Lowrie jlowrie3@uwo.ca

Course Description:

This course focuses on the American musical theatre of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries and will involve a survey of the history of the Broadway musical through the study of selected works from the repertoire. We will look at how the different elements of the musical (music, lyrics, book, choreography, and direction) work together to create a performance.

Other questions that we will consider:

How do scholars perceive musicals within a cultural context?

What structural and performance conventions typify the Broadway musical as a genre and how have these conventions changed?

Learning Objectives:

Students will be expected to achieve a general knowledge of the history of the American musical theatre through lectures, listening, and the course readings. Students will be expected to complete writing assignments using creative thinking and written language skills. Students will also learn to critique performance aspects of theatre and apply this knowledge in a review of a live performance.

Evaluation:

20%	Reception History	Due October 2
30%	Mid-term examination	October 23
20%	Performance review	Due November 27
30%	Final examination	Date TBA (in final exam period)

There is no textbook for this course. Course readings (journal articles) will be available online through various databases. A USB of the musical examples will be on reserve and available for borrowing through the Music Library.

*You will be required to attend a live performance of a musical theatre production in order to fulfill the requirements of one of the written assignments. I will make you aware of as many options as possible in London, but you may choose to see a performance elsewhere.

Course Schedule:

- Week 1** **September 11** **Introduction to the Course/Elements of Musical Theatre**
Pasek and Paul: *Dear Evan Hansen*
- Week 2** **September 18** **The Mega Musical**
Lloyd Webber: *Cats*; Schoenberg and Boublil: *Les Misérables*
- Week 3** **September 25** **Disney and Other Tales**
Ashman and Mencken: *Beauty and the Beast*; Schwartz: *Wicked*
Read the article: Stacy Wolf, “Defying Gravity: Queer Convention in the Musical *Wicked*” in *Theatre Journal* Vol. 60/1 (2008). In ProjectMUSE and JSTOR databases.
- Week 4** **October 2** **Contemporary Classics**
Simon and Norman: *The Secret Garden*; Guettel: *The Light in the Piazza*
Performance and Reception History assignment due in class
- Week 5** **October 16** **The Mini Musical: Intimate Affairs**
Brown: *The Last Five Years*; Tesori and Kron: *Fun Home*
- Week 6** **October 23** ***Mid-Term Examination***
- Week 7** **October 30** **Back to the Beginning: Operetta**
Gilbert and Sullivan: *The Pirates of Penzance*; Kern: *Show Boat*
- Week 8** **November 6** **The Musical Play**
Rodgers and Hammerstein: *Oklahoma!*
- Week 9** **November 13** **The Golden Era of Broadway**
Loesser: *Guys and Dolls*; Lerner and Loewe: *My Fair Lady*
- Week 10** **November 20** **1957: A Turning Point**
Willson: *The Music Man*; Bernstein: *West Side Story*
- Week 11** **November 27** **Sex, Drugs, and Rock Musicals**
Larson: *Rent*; Kitt and Yorkey: *Next to Normal*
Performance Review assignment due in class
- Week 12** **December 4** **Stephen Sondheim**
Sondheim: *Sweeney Todd* and *Sunday in the Park with George*

Assignment: Performance and Reception History (Due October 2)

Objectives:

To increase independent research skills by accessing historical materials in periodicals and databases.
To assess musical theatre reviews in preparation for your own theatre review assignment.

Directions:

A list of thirty-one musicals will be posted on the course OWL. Select the musical that corresponds with the date of your birthday; i.e., my birthday is October 19, so I would choose the nineteenth musical on the list. Write a performance and reception history of this musical.

Using any and all research tools you can (internet, books on musical theatre history, old newspapers or entertainment magazines), learn about your show's performance history, including workshops, previews, original Broadway or Off-Broadway runs, and major revivals. Note important directors or other members of the directorial team, designers, significant stars. Then, research the reception history: what did critics have to say about the show in its various stages and incarnations? What does the critic feel merits discussion (music, lyrics, design, direction, acting, etc.)? What kinds of words and language does the critic use to enliven their review?

Write a short paper describing what you have learned about this show and its performance and reception history. You might consider whether the early critics had an impact on the show's long term success, or if the critical reception to the show has changed over the show's history. Include, at the end, a list of sources you used for your research, using the Chicago Manual of Style for your citations. Check the Music Library for a helpful handout on how to cite sources using Chicago Style. *There is no need to footnote your sources in this short paper; simply write the author's name and the publication when you introduce a quote. Ex.: "Ben Brantley, in the *New York Times*, writes that..." Make sure that each source is included in the bibliography.

Formatting guidelines:

Approximately 800-1,000 words in a double-spaced, 12-point standard font (prefer Times New Roman). There is no need for a title page for this assignment; just include your identifying information on the top of the first page. Your sources page will be in addition to the word count.

Sources:

The New York Times is an absolute must! You may use the online version through the ProQuest database (ProQuest Historical Newspapers New York Times version). Ask for help at Weldon or the Music Library if you are not familiar with accessing or using this type of resource. Other useful sources could be *The New Yorker* or *Variety* magazines, or any other major newspaper or entertainment publication. The Music Library also has a good selection of general musical theatre history books; you'll also find numerous online sources.

Performance Review Assignment (Due November 27)

Objective:

To apply what you have learned about musical theatre to a specific production, to think critically about the theatre and become an active participant in the creation of the theatrical experience, and to enhance your own writing skills.

Directions:

Book a ticket to a show after ascertaining that it is, indeed, a musical! Be really clear on this matter: reviews of operas and straight plays will not be accepted for credit. How to determine if a production is a musical: Read the description on the theatre company's website; look for author credits like composer and lyricist; phone or message the theatre company if you really confused.

Think about three major areas that you should consider commenting on and critiquing:

1. Text (the immutable elements of a show such as story, music, lyrics)
2. Performance (the elements that change from one production to another: the direction or director's concept, movement, the performances of specific actors)
3. Design (Visual and aural elements like costumes, sets and props, lighting, and sound)

Your review should answer the question "Is this good theatre?"

On show night, get to the theatre early enough to read the program. There may be program notes written by the director or a theatre scholar that could prove helpful in understanding the show or the directorial and design concept. If you can read a plot synopsis of the show before going, even better.

Formatting guidelines:

1000-1300 words in a double-spaced, 12-point standard font (prefer Times New Roman). Include a title page with an interesting title that encapsulates your experience watching this musical; i.e., just the word *Cats* on your title page tells your reader nothing about how you felt about the show.

You will also need to **attach a ticket stub** to prove that you went to the show during this term. (If you are a collector and are concerned about getting your ticket back in good condition for your scrapbook, you may photocopy the stub and include that instead.) If you have your tickets on your phone, simply print and attach the page. If you lost your ticket, attach a copy of the main page of the program.

*For all assignments: "The 24 Hour Rule" If you are unsure or unhappy about the mark you received on an assignment, you must have the assignment back in your possession for at least 24 hours before initiating any communication protesting or questioning the mark. This gives you time to consider the comments and grade given by the marker. After the 24-hour mark, I am happy to make an appointment with you to help you understand how your mark was derived.

University and Course Policies

Who can take this course:

It is your responsibility to find out if you may take this course for credit. Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enrol in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

Plagiarism:

The University has a strict policy on plagiarism and academic integrity:

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea or a passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a serious academic offense (see Scholastic Offense Policy in the Western Academic Calendar).

The University of Western Ontario uses software for plagiarism checking. Students may be required to submit their written work in electronic form for plagiarism checking. All work for this course is to be performed independently and must be new work. A student cannot submit work that has been previously handed in for another course.

Accommodation on Medical or Compassionate Grounds:

Any missed assignments will require a doctor's certificate submitted to the Dean's Office of your faculty. If you need additional time to meet course expectations for medical or compassionate reasons, in addition to contacting me, please see Diane Mills, Academic Counsellor of the Faculty of Music, or the Academic Counsellor in your home faculty in order to submit proper documentation.

See the Policy on Accommodation for Illness found under "Rights and Responsibilities" at:
http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/academic_policies/index.html

Students in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western
<http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help. Western has a Wellness Education Centre located in the UCC, room 76, to which students in distress may be directed. <http://wec.uwo.ca/>

Appeals:

Student appeals that relate to this or any course (marks, grade appropriateness of assignments, or grading practices) are heard first by: 1) the course instructor (informal consultation); 2) the Department Chair (submission of written request); 3) the Dean of the Faculty (submission of written request). Details of the appeal process, grounds of appeal, and examples of relief are given in the Academic Calendar.