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Office hours: By appointment       Cell: (519) 670-1470
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Teaching Assistants:
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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 viewing, course readings, and forum discussion. 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 filmed performance.

Evaluation:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mid-term Examination</td>
<td>Week 6, during Tuesday class time 7 - 9pm</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Topic check-in</td>
<td>Due Week 8 Tuesday, March 9, 11:59pm</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Performance Review</td>
<td>Due Week 11 Tuesday, March 30, 11:59pm</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>Throughout the term</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Examination</td>
<td>During final exam period in April</td>
<td>30%</td>
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There is no textbook for this course. Course readings, musical examples, and video examples (via YouTube links) will be available online through the class OWL. Students will need access to filmed stage musicals for the Performance Review, as being able to attend live musicals is unlikely this year. You may wish to purchase a subscription to a streaming service like BroadwayHD to access professionally filmed stage musicals.
Course Schedule:

Week 1  January 12  Introduction to the Course/Elements of Musical Theatre  
Watch: Andrew Lloyd Webber: Cats (the stage musical).

Week 2  January 19  The Mega Musical  
Lecture: Cats; Schoenberg and Boublil: Les Misérables

Week 3  January 26  Disney and Other Tales  
Lecture: Ashman and Mencken: Beauty and the Beast; Schwartz: Wicked  

Week 4  February 2  Classical and Contemporary  

Week 5  February 9  The Mini Musical: Intimate Affairs  
Lecture: Brown: The Last Five Years; Tesori and Kron: Fun Home

Week 6  February 23  Mid-Term Examination

Week 7  March 2  Sex, Drugs, and Rock Musicals  
Lecture: Larson: Rent. Watch video. Kitt and Yorkey: Next to Normal

Week 8  March 9  Back to the Beginning: Operetta  
*Topic check-in due*

Week 9  March 16  The Musical Play  
Lecture: Rodgers and Hammerstein: Oklahoma! Watch video.  

Week 10  March 23  The Golden Era of Broadway  
Lecture: Loesser: Guys and Dolls

Week 11  March 30  1957: A Turning Point  
Lecture: Willson: The Music Man; Bernstein and Sondheim: West Side Story  
*Performance Review due*

Week 12  April 6  Stephen Sondheim  
Lecture: Sondheim: Sweeney Todd
Participation  (Weekly, to be posted by Sunday nights at 11:59pm, following the Tuesday lectures)  
10% of total grade

Every week on Tuesday, discussion questions based on the week’s lecture or the week’s theme will be posted on the course OWL’s forum. Listen to the lecture, watch the videos, and then take a few minutes to respond to the questions or discuss other students’ responses. You will have until late night Sunday to respond to that week’s discussion. This will encourage you to keep up with your work on a weekly basis and not leave all the lectures to the last minute before exams. Your grade will be derived from your level of engagement with the material. This is one area where everyone can potentially get full marks.

Note: I am not looking for you to repeat or summarize the lecture content; this is about your thoughts, opinions, and insights into the material. You may challenge thoughts, add your ideas, give a personal perspective. This does not need to be lengthy or taxing on your time.

I will give more direction on the Wicked discussion in that class’s lecture.

Topic check-in (Due Week 8, Tuesday, March 9th, before 11:59pm)  5% of total grade

Three weeks before your Performance Review is due, you must submit a short comment in paragraph or point form, stating what show you are using for your assignment. In this statement, give the show title, which production (company/date) you are reviewing, and where you accessed this film. If you are lucky enough to have found a ‘proshot’ (professionally filmed and released), state that. If you have found a bootleg (filmed by an audience member at the live show), mention that. It may take some detective work to figure out the date the show was recorded, but do your best; you might only be able to give an approximate date range.

Explain what three elements you will be writing about, as per the assignment below. Make sure that you are specific. Example: writing that you will focus on the lyrics, the actors’ performances, and the costumes will get a comment that you need to be more specific and to resubmit. However, if you write that you will focus on the lyrics to one song that is particularly revealing of the lead character’s motives, the vocal and acting performance of that character, and how the costumes depict the class difference between the lead and the ensemble, your check-in will be accepted.

This assignment ensures that you select a show and start work on your review well before the due date, that you are clear about the elements you will be critiquing, and that I can offer assistance if it appears to be needed.

The Topic check-in should be submitted directly to me via email so that I can respond easily if you need further guidance.
Performance Review  (Due Week 11, Tuesday, March 30th, before 11:59pm)  25% of total grade

Objective:

To apply what you have learned about musical theatre to a specific production, to think critically about the theatre, and to enhance your own writing skills.

Directions:

Select a filmed stage musical from any source (YouTube, Netflix, BroadwayHD, etc.) and write a critical review in essay form. Try to choose a musical that is a filming of a live stage show rather than a movie adaptation of a musical. The goal is to replicate as closely as possible the experience of seeing the live version of a musical. If your show has a website that allows you to read the material that would have been a playbill (program), take the time to read it.

Critique and comment on one element from each of the following three major areas:

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

Your review should consider the question “Is this good theatre?” Your review may be positive, negative, or mixed.

Formatting guidelines:

1300-1400 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. Set your paper up as an essay with an introduction that gives a thesis and states the elements you are critiquing, body paragraphs that detail those elements, and a conclusion. While reading professional reviews from newspapers will help with the tone of your paper, please note that newspaper critics try to cover as much of a production as possible, with very little detail; you are doing the opposite - covering only a few elements in great detail.

The Performance review should be submitted as a PDF document to the Drop Box on OWL.

*For all assignments: “The 24 Hour Rule” If you are unsure or unhappy about the mark you received on an assignment, please consider your grade and comments for at least 24 hours before initiating any communication protesting or questioning the mark. This gives you time to reflect on the criticisms given by your TA. 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

1. 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.

2. Plagiarism: Complete assignments independently. Submission of work with which you have received help from someone else (other than the course instructor or TA) is an example of plagiarism. Plagiarism is a major academic offence. Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following website:
http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

3. Accommodation on Medical or Compassionate Grounds:

Students are responsible for making up any missed classes or assignments as soon as possible. In order to ensure fairness and consistency for all students, academic accommodation for work representing more than 30% of the student’s overall grade in the course shall be granted only in those cases where there is documentation in the form of a completed and appropriately signed Student Medical Certificate (SMC) indicating that the student was seriously affected by illness and could not reasonably be expected to meet his/her academic responsibilities, or the equivalent documentation for non-medical or compassionate grounds.

Students seeking academic consideration must communicate with their instructors no later than 24 hours after the end of the period covered by either the self-reported absence or SMC, or immediately upon their return following a documented absence, to clarify how they will be expected to fulfil the academic expectations they may have missed during the absence. Documentation, if required, shall be submitted to the Office of the Associate Dean, Undergraduate (TC210) or the Associate Dean of your home faculty. Note that the new Self-Reporting Absence Portal may not be used for requesting academic relief for work worth more than 30%, or for Final Exams scheduled during the official examination period. Students are directed to read the full Senate policy on accommodation for medical illness at the following website:
https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/Academic_Consideration_for_absences.pdf

A pdf copy of a Senate approved Student Medical Certificate (SMC) may be downloaded here:
https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf

In cases where students miss work that is worth 30% or less of the total course grade due to medical illness or compassionate grounds, if an online absence report is submitted using the new Self-Reporting Absence Portal, or if documentation is voluntarily submitted to the Associate Dean’s office and the Associate Dean deems that accommodation is warranted, then the missed assignments or exams may be discounted in the calculation of the final grade for the course. If documentation is not submitted voluntarily then the missed assignment(s) or quiz(izes) will receive a grade of zero.

4. Students in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western
https://www.uwo.ca/health/mental_wellbeing/ for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

5. Students may be excused to observe a religious holy day of their faith without penalty provided they notify the instructor in advance. Students are responsible for material covered in their absence and each student shall be permitted a reasonable amount of time to make up missed work.

Students shall inform the instructor at least two weeks before a scheduled exam if the exam falls on a religious holy day and an alternate date is required to write the exam.