

Western University
Don Wright Faculty of Music
Music 2701B: Musical Theatre, Winter 2021

Instructor: Prof. Kristina Baron-Woods
Office hours: When on campus, Tuesday afternoons 3-5p.m.
Meetings can take place other times via Zoom; please email or text to arrange appointment

Email: kbaron3@uwo.ca
Cell: (519) 670-1470

Teaching Assistants: Yumi Jang - yjang62@uwo.ca
Carmen Specht - cspecht2@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 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:

Topic check-in	Tuesday, February 15th	5%
Mid-term Examination	Tuesday, March 1st, class time 7 - 9pm	30%
Performance Review	Tuesday, March 29th	25%
Participation	Throughout the term	10%
Final Examination	During final exam period in April	30%

There is no textbook for this course. Course readings, musical examples, and video examples (via web-links) will be available online through the class OWL. Students will need to attend a live musical or access filmed stage musicals for the Performance Review, if 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 11** **Introduction to the Course/Elements of Musical Theatre**
Watch: Andrew Lloyd Webber: *Cats* (the stage musical). Watch video.
- Week 2** **January 18** **The Mega Musical**
Lecture: *Cats*; Schoenberg and Boublil: *Les Misérables*
- Week 3** **January 25** **Disney and Other Tales**
Lecture: 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). JSTOR database.
- Week 4** **February 1** **Classical and Contemporary**
Lecture: Guettel: *The Light in the Piazza*. Watch video.
- Week 5** **February 8** **The Mini Musical: Intimate Affairs**
Lecture: Brown: *The Last Five Years*; Tesori and Kron: *Fun Home*
- Week 6** **February 15** **Sex, Drugs, and Rock Musicals**
Lecture: Larson: *Rent*. Watch video. Kitt and Yorkey: *Next to Normal*
Topic check-in due
- Week 7** **March 1** **Mid-Term Examination**
- Week 8** **March 8** **Back to the Beginning: Operetta**
Lecture: Gilbert and Sullivan: *The Pirates of Penzance*. Watch Act I. Kern: *Show Boat*.
- Week 9** **March 15** **The Musical Play**
Lecture: Rodgers and Hammerstein: *Oklahoma!* Watch video.
- Week 10** **March 22** **The Golden Era of Broadway**
Lecture: Loesser: *Guys and Dolls*
- Week 11** **March 29** **1957: A Turning Point**
Lecture: Willson: *The Music Man*; Bernstein and Sondheim: *West Side Story*
Performance Review due
- Week 12** **April 5** **Stephen Sondheim**
Lecture: Sondheim: *Sweeney Todd* and *Sunday in the Park With George*

**Participation (Weekly, to be posted by the beginning of the following week's 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 the following class to respond to each 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 6, Tuesday, February 15th, before 11:59pm) 5% of total grade

Several 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 or if you attended a live production. 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), 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. If you saw the musical in person, mention date and theatre.

Explain what three elements you will be writing about, as per the Performance Review assignment on the following page. 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 29th) 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.) or attend any live musical 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. Course Prerequisites: [insert course number here or state None]. Unless you have either the prerequisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll 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. Grading scale: A+=90-100%, A=80-89%, B=70-79%, C=60-69%, D=50-59%, F=0-49%.

3. Academic Consideration for Student Absence: Students will have up to two (2) opportunities during the regular academic year to use an on-line portal to self-report an absence during the term, provided the following conditions are met: the absence is no more than 48 hours in duration, and the assessment for which consideration is being sought is worth 30% or less of the student's final grade. Students are expected to contact their instructors within 24 hours of the end of the period of the self-reported absence, unless noted on the syllabus. Students are not able to use the self-reporting option in the following circumstances:

- for exams scheduled by the Office of the Registrar (e.g., December and April exams)
- absence of a duration greater than 48 hours,
- assessments worth more than 30% of the student's final grade,
- if a student has already used the self-reporting portal twice during the academic year

If the conditions for a Self-Reported Absence are not met, students will need to provide a Student Medical Certificate if the absence is medical or provide appropriate documentation if there are compassionate grounds for the absence in question. Students are encouraged to contact their Faculty academic counselling office to obtain more information about the relevant documentation.

Students should also note that individual instructors are not permitted to receive documentation directly from a student, whether in support of an application for consideration on medical grounds, or for other reasons. All documentation required for absences that are not covered by the Self-Reported Absence Policy must be submitted to the Academic Counselling office. For the Western University policy on Consideration for Student Absence, see:

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/Academic_Consideration_for_absences.pdf and for the Student Medical Certificate (SMC), see: http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf

Special Note for Covid-19-related Situations:

As a guideline, if a student has been contacted by the Middlesex-London Health Unit (MLHU) to self-quarantine due to a Covid-19-related situation, then the Self-Reported Absence system is not to be used to report this absence or to request an academic accommodation. The student should contact the Academic Counselling office as soon as they are notified.

In general, students are advised to not self-determine when to self-isolate. Unless directed by the MLHU students should go about their business as usual. But if a student chooses to self-isolate due to a suspected Covid-19-related situation while waiting to receive direction from the MLHU then the student is directed to contact the Academic Counselling office as soon as possible for further direction on receiving accommodation consideration.

4. Academic Consideration for Missing Work: In cases where students are unable to submit work due to medical illness or compassionate grounds, if an online self-reported absence is submitted, or if appropriate supporting documentation is submitted to the Associate Dean's office, and the accommodation is granted, then the missed assessments may be rescheduled or discounted in the calculation of the final grade for the

course, at the discretion of the instructor. If neither a self-reported absence nor an appropriate supporting document is submitted to the appropriate office, then the missed assignments will receive a grade of zero.

5. Academic Offences: Submission of work with which you have received help from someone else (other than the course instructor or TA) is an example of plagiarism, which is considered 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, as found at:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

6. Mental Health & Wellness: Students that are in emotional/mental distress should refer to the Health and Wellness at Western page (<https://www.uwo.ca/health/>) for a complete list of options about how to obtain help or to go to the Wellness Education Centre located in UCC room 76. Students in crisis in need of immediate care are directed to go directly to Student Health Services in UC11 or to click on the green “I Need Help Now” button on the Health and Wellness page above.

7. Accommodation for Students with Disabilities: Students work with Accessible Education Western (AEW, formerly SSD) which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive testing. The accommodation policy can be found here:

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/Academic%20Accommodation_disabilities.pdf

8. Religious Accommodation: Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays, and should give reasonable notice in writing, prior to the holiday, to the Instructor and an Academic Counsellor if their course requirements will be affected by a religious observance. Additional information is given in the Western Multicultural Calendar. <http://multiculturalcalendar.com/ecal/index.php?s=c-univwo>

9. Contingency Plan: Although the intent is for this course to be delivered in-person, the changing COVID-19 restrictions may necessitate some or all of the course to be delivered online, either synchronously (i.e., at the times indicated in the timetable) or asynchronously (e.g., posted on OWL for students to view at their convenience). The grading scheme will not change. Any assessments affected will be conducted online as determined by the course instructor.

10. Electronic Devices in Exams: Electronic devices of any type will not be permitted during the Midterm Test and/or Final Exam in this course (unless required for accessibility reasons based on an approved accommodation request from Accessible Education).

11. Online Etiquette: Some components of this course will involve online interactions. To ensure the best experience for both you and your classmates, please observe the following general considerations of “netiquette”:

- Keep in mind the different cultural and linguistic backgrounds of the students in the course.
- Be courteous toward the instructor, your colleagues, and authors whose work you are discussing.
- Be respectful of the diversity of viewpoints that you will encounter in the class and in your readings.

The exchange of diverse ideas and opinions is part of the scholarly environment.