

**Introduction to Directing**  
**200 or 300-level**  
**Meets 2x week for 120 minutes**

**Sara B.T. Thiel**

Office Hours and Location

Contact Email

This practical workshop-style course in directing for the stage focuses on script analysis, script preparation, casting, staging techniques, and design strategies. This course culminates in the presentation of a final scene from a contemporary play. In addition to reading, analyzing, and practicing various directing theories and techniques, students will have the opportunity to analyze and stage work by underrepresented groups including women and people of color. (Note: In an ideal world, this class would collaborate with beginning acting for majors and/or non-majors course for the final scene presentation casting pool.)

**Course Objectives**

**In this class students will:**

- 1.) Be introduced to the work of the director, the director's art, and the role of directing in theatre.
- 2.) Research the methods used by leading directors in our field.
- 3.) Practice analyzing the director's work in performance.
- 4.) Develop skills to analyze dramatic literature from the perspective of a director preparing for rehearsals and production.
- 5.) Prepare for directorial concept meetings and designer collaboration.
- 6.) Hold auditions and cast a scene from a play.
- 7.) Prepare for and lead rehearsals of their scene.
- 8.) Stage and present their scene for the class.

**Required Texts:**

Hauser, Frank and Russell Reich. *Notes on Directing: 130 Lessons in Leadership from the Director's Chair*. 2003.

Akhtar, Ayad. *Disgraced*

Nottage, Lynn. *Intimate Apparel*

Baker, Annie. *Circle Mirror Transformation*

**Play Attendance**

TBD

**Other plays, essays, and films will be made available to you.**

**Grading**

Class Participation	50%
Play Attendance and Performance Analysis	5%
Oral Report: The Director	10%
Directorial Presentation to the Production Team	15%
Final Scene Presentation	20%

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A=90-100%; B = 80-89%; C=70-79%; D=60-69%; F=0-59%

### ATTENDANCE

There will be no way to substitute the in-class experience in this class. Therefore, attendance is of the utmost importance. **You are allowed one excused absence.** Following that, your grade will be lowered one grade level for each unexcused absence. Excused absences require documentation from a recognized authority such as your doctor, the Emergency Dean's office, or other agreed upon sources. In addition, promptness and participation are required. Failure to arrive on time to class and/or cited lack of participation will affect the student's overall class participation grade.

### ASSIGNMENTS

#### **Class Participation (50%)**

Please bring the assigned reading with you to class as we will be working directly from it. Classroom discussions and exercises require alertness, constructive engagement with, and respectful attendance to your instructor and fellow students. Please do not text, check e-mail, or engage in extraneous talking during class.

#### **Play Attendance and Performance Analysis (5%)**

Students will attend one play during the course of the semester. They will review the direction from the play, incorporating the concepts we have learned in class (2-3 pages). Students will pay particular attention to staging, casting, and the cohesiveness of the design elements. Through this assignment students will practice scholarly critique and analytical writing.

#### **Oral Report: The Director (10%)**

In order to become familiar with a host of artistically significant directors who have been influential in American theatre (though are not necessarily Americans), students will tell us the story of a director in 10-12 minutes. This presentation will include, but is not limited to, a discussion of the director's: life experiences and influences, directing history, successes, failures, and signature style aspects. A 1-page informational sheet highlighting major aspects of the director's life and career will accompany each presentation. Each student will choose one of the directors from the list below. More information will come at a later date.

George C. Wolfe	Anne Bogart	Joseph Chaikin
Julie Taymor	Ellen Stewart	Tina Landau
Daniel Sullivan	Chay Yew	Tyrone Guthrie
JoAnne Akalaitis	Mary Zimmerman	Bertolt Brecht
Julian Beck	Vinnette Justine Carroll	Augusto Boal
Ping Chong	Anna D. Shapiro	Bob Falls
Ron OJ Parson	Regina Taylor	Elizabeth LeCompte
Antonin Artaud	Jerzy Gratowski	Robert Wilson

#### **Directorial Presentation to the Production Team (15%)**

Over the course of the semester, the entire class will read four plays together. I will then assign each student one of these four plays to direct. Each student will give an oral presentation detailing their "vision" for an imagined production of the play (with an unlimited budget!). The audience will serve as the production team. The presentation will include a summary of the play's dramatic action,

relevant context (historical, social, etc.), an analysis of the design's purpose in this production, brief character descriptions, and an explanation of what the director understands to be the play's big ideas. More details will follow at a later date.

### **Final Scene Presentation (20%)**

After students have completed their directorial presentations, they will choose one 5-7 minute scene from a play written in the last fifteen years. We will collaborate with the Beginning Acting classes to hold auditions, cast the scenes, hold rehearsals, and stage them at the end of the semester. On the day of their presentation, students will turn in a prompt book that includes a written version of their directorial concept (taken and updated from the presentation), a script with appropriate blocking notes, a rehearsal calendar, and daily rehearsal journal that reflects on each day's rehearsal. Students will be graded on the quality and organization of their prompt book as well as the effectiveness of their direction in performance. More details will follow later.

### **Course Calendar**

\*\*This calendar is subject to change due to course developments\*\*

<u>Week 1</u>	<u>In-Class</u>	<u>What's Due?</u>
T	What is Directing? Course Introduction	
R	contd.	Hauser, Part II: The Director's Role
<b><u>UNIT 1: Directing in Theory and in Practice</u></b>		
<u>Week 2</u>		
T	Personal Storytelling	
R	contd.	
<u>Week 3</u>		
T	Personal Storytelling through Images	
R	contd.	
<u>Week 4</u>		
T	Oral Report: The Director	In-class presentations
R	Oral Report: The Director	In-class presentations

### UNIT 2: Script Exploration Work

<u>Week 5</u>		
T	Ayad Akhtar's <i>Disgraced</i> & script exploration	Hauser, Part I: Understanding the Script Akhtar, <i>Disgraced</i>
R	<i>Disgraced</i> , contd.	
<u>Week 6</u>		
T	<i>Intimate Apparel</i> script exploration	Nottage, <i>Intimate Apparel</i>
R	<i>Intimate Apparel</i> , contd.	
<u>Week 7</u>		
T	<i>Circle Mirror Transformation</i> script exploration	Baker, <i>Circle Mirror Transformation</i>
R	contd.	

### UNIT 3: Preparing to Direct

<u>Week 8</u>		
T	Directorial Presentations	<i>Disgraced</i> and <i>Intimate Apparel</i> presentations
R	Directorial Presentations	<i>Intimate Apparel</i> contd. and <i>Circle Mirror Transformation</i> presentations
<u>Week 9</u>		
T	Casting Workshop	Hauser, Part III: Casting
R	Read-Through Workshop	Part IV: First Read- Through
<u>Week 10</u>		
T	Rehearsal Workshop	Hauser, Part V: Rehearsal Rules
R	Rehearsal Workshop, contd.	Part VI: Building Blocks

Week 11

T Talking to Actors Workshop

Hauser, Part VII:  
Talking to Actors

R Staging Workshop

Hauser, Part IX:  
Elements of Staging  
and Part X: Last Tips**UNIT 4: Scene Work**Week 12

T Auditions

R Casting Meeting

Week 13

T In-class rehearsal

R In-class rehearsal

Week 14**No Classes – Fall Break**Week 15

T In-class time to polish scenes

R Final Performances

Week 16

T Final Performances

R Final Performances

Finals Week**Play Attendance and Performance Analysis Due**

Debrief