

Seminar in Theatre History: History of Musical Theatre

University of Missouri
Spring 2009

THEATR 8787
MW 3-4:30
A&S 300

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“Musicals are just songs and a narrative onstage. And there can be all kinds. The tradition is sturdy enough. I don’t think there’s anything bad about this. The only bad thing is if they’re done badly. Ultimately, it’s taste I’m more worried about.”

--John Cameron Mitchell, creator and star of *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*

Course Description and Goals:

This course, although titled a "seminar," is in actuality intended to provide a survey of the history and variety of the American musical during the twentieth century and beyond. The theatrical genre known as musical theatre is significant for a variety of reasons. First, it is the most popular form of theatre in the United States; second, it is one of few truly American art forms; third, it is arguably the most complex form of theatre, bringing together a number of elements to create the whole. We will focus on exploring the "American" identity of this form as well as significant trends throughout its history.

The following are some of the primary overall objectives of this course:

1. Learning to analyze and critically evaluate ideas, arguments, and points of view, both orally and written.
2. Gaining factual knowledge (terminology, classifications, methods, trends)
3. Learning fundamental principles, generalizations, or theories
4. Gaining a broader understanding and appreciation of intellectual/cultural activity

Course Technologies:

This Web-Enhanced Course will be supported by a course page on Blackboard at <https://courses.missouri.edu/>.

What to Expect from a Web-Enhanced Course - This course is designed to meet both face-to-face and virtually. It is essential that you consult the course site daily to access course announcements, engage in online discussions, submit assignments, check grades, etc.

What the Instructor and Your Peers Expect from You - By enrolling in this course, you have agreed to contribute to weekly discussions by accessing the bulletin board regularly. This will require a team effort, with respect and help for each other, as we build a community of learners. I also

expect that you will have a foundational understanding of Internet terms and functions.

What You May Expect from the Instructor - Monitor email no less than once a day and respond within 24 to 48 hours, facilitate online discussions and help build a learning community, both online and in the classroom.

Help Available If you are having any technical difficulties (e.g., logging in, accessing the discussion board) please email helpdesk@missouri.edu or contact the *Mizzou IT Help Desk* at 882-5000.

Required Texts:

The Cambridge Companion to the Musical, Eds. Everett and Laird, 2nd edition, 2008.

West Side Story libretto and original cast recording

Various Readings on Blackboard

Grades:

In-Class Participation	150	A = 900-1000 pts
Online Discussion Participation	100	B = 800-899
Online Discussion Leadership	50	C = 700-799
Theatre Attendance (50 pts. each)	100	D = 600-699
Two Reviews (150 each)	300	F = 0-599
Creative Presentation	100	
Collaborative Anthology Project	200	
Total:	1000 pts	

Participation: It is imperative that you read the assigned material **by** the day that it is listed on the syllabus. Although quality of class contribution is more important than quantity, it is expected that you will participate regularly. See Blackboard for guidelines for online discussion participation.

Theatre Attendance: You are required to see **two** of the musicals in the University of Missouri Concert Series (in Jesse Auditorium) offerings this semester. Shows and dates are as follows (all shows are at 7 PM):

The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee Sunday, Feb. 15

Dirty Rotten Scoundrels Thursday, March 19

The Drowsy Chaperone Saturday, April 4

You will have a chance to discuss the show in class with fellow attendees. Attendance at each is worth 50 points.

Guidelines for Online Discussion, Book/Performance Reviews, the Creative Presentation, and the Collaborative Anthology Project are available on Blackboard under "Assignments."

Attendance Policy:

You are expected to attend class every day. I will make no distinction between "excused" and "unexcused" absences. You are allowed **two** absences total without penalty. Each subsequent absence will automatically lower the student's final grade by 50 points. If a student is late (arrives after 3:00), he or she is given a tardy; two tardies equal one absence.

Disability Accommodation Policy

If you need accommodations because of a disability, if you have emergency medical information to share with me, or if you need special arrangements for evacuation, I will be happy to work with you; please inform me immediately **in writing (email is fine)**. To request academic accommodations, students must also register with Disability Services, AO38 Brady Commons, 882-4696. For more information, visit Disability Services at <http://disabilityservices.missouri.edu/>.

Notice of Nondiscrimination

The University of Missouri System is an Equal Opportunity/ Affirmative Action institution and is nondiscriminatory relative to race, religion, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, age, disability or status as a Vietnam-era veteran. Any person having inquiries concerning the University of Missouri-Columbia's compliance with implementing Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990, or other civil rights laws should contact the Assistant Vice Chancellor, Human Resource Services, University of Missouri-Columbia, 130 Heinkel Building, Columbia, Mo. 65211, (573) 882-4256, or the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Education.

Academic Integrity

Academic honesty is fundamental to the activities and principles of a university. All members of the academic community must be confident that each person's work has been responsibly and honorably acquired, developed, and presented. Any effort to gain an advantage not given to all students is dishonest whether or not the effort is successful. The academic community regards academic dishonesty as an extremely serious matter, with serious consequences that range from probation to expulsion. When in doubt about plagiarism, paraphrasing, quoting, or collaboration, consult the course instructor.

For this course, examples of academic dishonesty include, but are not limited to:

- Collecting information from other sources and claiming it as your own (the instructor utilizes a variety of resources to check for plagiarism).
- Collaborating with a classmate to the extent that your own work is not apparent
- Copying or utilizing outside sources during an exam.

Cases of suspected academic dishonesty will be reported to the provost office; the recommendation WILL be failure of the course. For more information, consult <http://academicintegrity.missouri.edu/about/>.

Intellectual Pluralism

The University community welcomes intellectual diversity and respects student rights. Students who have questions concerning the quality of instruction in this class may address concerns to either the Departmental Chair or Divisional leader or Director of the Office of Students Rights and Responsibilities (<http://osrr.missouri.edu/>). All students will have the opportunity to submit an anonymous evaluation of the instructor at the end of the course.

Electronic Devices:

***All cell phones, ipods, and other electronic devices must be turned OFF at the beginning of class. Laptop computers may be used to take notes; HOWEVER, you may only use a word processing program. If you use any electronic devices for purposes not pertaining to class (e.g. text messaging), you

will be given a warning. Repeated instances will result in dismissal from the class: TWO STRIKES AND YOU'RE OUT.

Grievance Policy:

Information concerning student grade appeal procedures and non-academic grievances and appeals may be found in the Student Handbook.

Miscellaneous Info:

Last day to register, add or change sections is Jan. 27, 2009.

The last day to drop the course without a grade is Feb. 23, 2009.

The last day to withdraw from the course is Apr. 6, 2009.

This syllabus is subject to change with advance notice, given in class and via Announcements on Blackboard.

***Please read the assigned pages (or listen to the recording) by the day that they are listed.**

Course Outline:

- 1/26 "Getting to Know You" (and Me): Course Introduction
- 1/28 Defining the Musical/Musical Theatre Historiography
Cambridge xiv-xv
Rich article – "Conversations with Sondheim"
Koger article – "Trends in Musical Theatre Scholarship"
Savran article – "Toward a Historiography of the Popular"

Roots of the Musical

- 2/2 Early Antecedents: Greek Drama, Shakespeare, Opera, Melodrama
Cambridge 3-21
- 2/4 Later Influences: Operetta, Vaudeville, Burlesque, Revue
Cambridge 22-28, 54-69, 72-82, 86-88
- 2/9 African American Influences
Cambridge 12-13, 21, 89-102

The Maturing Musical

- 2/11 The Princess Musicals, Kern and Hammerstein
Cambridge 69-71, 103-116
- 2/16 Musical Comedy: Gershwin and Porter
The Politicization of the Musical

The Golden Age

- 2/18 The Musical Play: Rodgers and Hammerstein
Cambridge 147-163
- 2/23 The "Oriental Musicals" & the Legacy of R&H
McConachie article – "The 'Oriental Musicals' of R&H"

Cambridge 164-189

Transitions

2/25 *West Side Story*
Read libretto, listen to original cast album
Cambridge 197-201

3/2 *West Side Story* cont.

3/4 **No Class (MATC)**

3/9 Rise of the Choreographer/Director
Cambridge 220-234

Alternatives to the Golden Age

3/11 The Rock Musical
Cambridge 235-249

Review #1 Due

3/16 Musicals and Gay Culture
Clum article – "Fairy Tales: Gay Musicals"
Sebesta article – "Transgression and Carnival in Jonathan Larson's *Rent*"

3/18 Stephen Sondheim
Cambridge 205-219

3/23 **No Class (Spring Break)**

3/25 **No Class (Spring Break)**

3/30 Sondheim cont.

4/1 **Open Day**

4/6 **Creative Presentations**

Re-defining the "American" Musical

4/8 The British Invasion/Megamusical
Cambridge 250-269

4/13 The European Musical
Cambridge 270-283

Review #2 Due

4/15 Diversity and the Musical
Cambridge 289-290
Sebesta article – "Racism and Reception on the 'Great White Way'"

4/20 Disneyfication of Broadway
Cambridge 296-301
Gold article – "The Disney Difference"

Current Issues and Trends

4/22 Revivals/Revisals
Breon article - "Show Boat: The Revival, the Racism"
(*The Drama Review* 39.2)

Cambridge 284-89, 291-296, 325-330

- 4/27 Movicals, Film Musicals, and Televsicals
Cambridge 330-38
Sebesta article – "From Celluloid to Stage"
- 4/29 The Cynicusal
Sebesta article – "Future of the American Musical"
- 5/4 Optimism Redux?: *Wicked*
Cambridge 340-52
Sebesta article – "Interview with Stephen Schwartz"
- 5/6 **Anthology Presentations and Wrap-Up**