



## THEA 3110-001 BEGINNING STAGE DIRECTING

Fall 2025 | M/W 12:55-2:50 pm

Performing Arts Building | PAB Studio 110

**Instructor:** Alexandra Harbold, she/her/hers

**Email:** Alexandra.murray@utah.edu (*preferred method of contact/communication*)

**THEA3110 Discord:** <https://discord.gg/CpTqDeMK>

**Office Hours:** online or by appointment

**Office Location:** Price Theatre Arts Building, Office 218

**Zoom/Office Hours:** by appointment

- **DOT Theatre News Canvas Page** - <https://utah.instructure.com/courses/433054>
- **Prospero DoT Calendar** - <https://view.prosperoapp.com/utah/DOT>
- **Space Booking Portal** - <https://portal.prosperoapp.com/utah/studios>

[https://utah.instructure.com/courses/1170198/discussion\\_topics/7713877](https://utah.instructure.com/courses/1170198/discussion_topics/7713877)

“Why theatre at all? What for? Is it an anachronism, a superannuated oddity? Surviving like an old monument or a quaint custom? Why do we applaud and what? Has the stage a real place in our lives? What function can it have? What could it serve? What could it explore? What are its special properties?”

*Peter Brook*

“You cannot create results. You can only create conditions in which something might happen.”

*Anne Bogart*

“How are we ‘us’ in a room? In a theatre? How do a group of strangers come together and make a play and go through tons of conflict resolution in the space of three hours of rehearsal? How does the art object hold us, take care of us, and maybe allow us to see each other again, as who we are and who we might be?”

*Caridad Svich*

### REQUIRED & RECOMMENDED MATERIALS

- Recommended:
  - *Actions: The Actor's Thesaurus* app: Calderone, Marina and Maggie Lloyd-Williams. (available in paperback, kindle and app versions)
- [U of U GCloud account](#)

- Create a google doc for field notes. Please add a date chip before each entry and add the current entry to the top of the document.
- Computer and Canvas access for assignments. The assignments are nested under the Modules.
  - I create a google doc overview for each class that I send out on Canvas; these often include videos and other assets for future reference.

## ADDITIONAL COURSE MATERIALS:

Additional Course Materials are available on Canvas or via handouts.

## REQUIRED PERFORMANCES

- [\*The Cherry Orchard\*](#) by Anton Chekhov, Version by Pam Gems

September 26 – October 5 | Director Alexandra Harbold | Babcock Theatre

- [\*Legally Blonde\*](#) Book by Heather Hach, Music and Lyrics by Lawrence O'Keefe and Nell Benjamin

November 14 – November 23 | Director Erin Farrell Speer | Meldrum Theatre

- [\*R.U.R.\*](#) by Karel Čapek

October 24-November 2 | Director Samantha Briggs | Studio 115

## PRODUCTION RESPONSES

Director Katie Mitchell proposes that there are [ten things](#) that a director is in charge of in a production: the text, the performers, the concept, the design (set and costume), lighting, sound, music, movement, video, and the management of the creative team.

For each performance you attend, you are asked to submit a response to the work on Canvas. Katie Mitchell's point is that directing is scientific, concrete, graspable, readable; anyone can learn how to direct and make those decisions.

## RECOMMENDED

[Pioneer Theatre Company](#)

[Salt Lake Acting Company](#)

[Plan-B Theatre](#), [Pygmalion Productions](#), [The Grand Theatre](#), [Ririe-Woodbury Dance Company](#)

(and so many more)

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

For Theatre Majors and Minors. An introduction to the fundamentals of play directing. Students will study and experience the craft of directing including play analysis, interpretation, rehearsal, and performance. Participants will create a director's vision that integrates all play and production elements into a unified artistic whole, and examine the evolution of the director's role in the theatre.

**Prerequisite:** C or better in (THEA 1713 AND (THEA 1220 OR THEA 1120 OR THEA 1033)) OR Instructor Consent.

**Credit Hours:** 3 units

## COURSE OUTCOMES

Students who successfully complete this course will:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Analyze texts as a director, interpreting structure and narrative into stage action</li><li>● Organize ideas into a cohesive play-world and synthesize analysis and instincts into actable, clear direction</li><li>● Build a toolbox of rehearsal techniques to build company-sense and collaborative process</li><li>● Reflect in writing and discussion on creative process and practice</li><li>● Respond to the work of fellow artists in a constructive, generative way</li><li>● Select, cast, rehearse, stage and produce scene work</li><li>● Collaborate with other directors and theatre artists to create a cohesive performance event</li></ul>

## GRADING POLICY (EVALUATION METHODS & CRITERIA)

### CREATIVITY RUBRIC\*

QUALITY ASSESSED	Novice (1)	Competent (3)	Master (5)
<b>Taking Risks</b>	Sticks precisely to the assignment guidelines with no evidence of imagination	Considers and incorporates a few new ideas; some imagination evident	Actively seeks out and follows through on potentially risky approaches; demonstrates advanced imagination
<b>Solving Problems</b>	Only considers one approach to solving problems; imitative approach; unable to justify choice made	Considers and rejects options for solving problems, but is unable to develop a complete plan for incorporating solutions	Considers several options for solving problems; develops a logical and consistent plan for solving problems; understands consequences of chosen solution and can justify choice
<b>Innovative Thinking</b>	Takes existing sets of ideas and re-uses them for each situation	Experiments with new ideas, questions, formats, or products	Presents a novel and or unique idea, question, format, or product to create

			new knowledge for each situation
<b>Connecting and Transforming</b>	Uses existing connections rather than coming up with new ones; no transformation evident	Connects ideas into a whole	Transforms innovative thinking into completely new ideas

\*modified from AAC&U's "Creative Thinking" VALUE Rubric Jane G. Duncan, Belmont University, 2020<sup>1</sup>

### PROFESSIONALISM RUBRIC

QUALITY ASSESSED	Novice (1)	Competent (3)	Master (5)
<b>Preparedness</b>	Does not contribute to class/rehearsal discussions; comments made (if any) are generally irrelevant; cannot elaborate or answer questions with any specificity	Inconsistent participation in class/rehearsal; contributions reflect satisfactory preparation; often able to elaborate and answer questions with specificity	Consistently participates to class/rehearsal; contributions reflect thorough preparation and advanced critical thinking skills
<b>Respect</b>	Distracts from class/rehearsal focus; demonstrates a lack of concern for colleagues/peers; does not respond well to constructive criticism	Rarely distracts from class/rehearsal focus; generally demonstrates concern for colleagues/peers; usually responds well to constructive criticism	Does not distract from class/rehearsal focus; shows compassion and concern for colleagues/peers; seeks out constructive criticism and opportunities for growth

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<sup>1</sup>[Assessment Resource Bank - Association for Theatre in Higher Education](#)

<b>Time Management</b>	Late to class/rehearsal more than once a week; doesn't regularly attend class/rehearsal; makes excuses for missed deadlines; does not prioritize projects	Infrequently late to class/rehearsal; informs colleagues/leadership of issues that may result in missed deadlines; usually prioritizes projects	Arrives on time for class/rehearsal and stays for duration; does not miss deadlines; properly prioritizes assignments
<b>Integrity</b>	Disregards established rules/policies; says one thing but behaves in a completely different way	Adheres to established rules/policies most of the time; provides high quality work; makes concerted effort to correct mistakes	Always follows established rules/policies; provides highest quality work; models the behavior she/he/they expect from others
<b>Teamwork</b>	Fails to contribute to team projects; displays no leadership tendencies; dominates group efforts negatively	Demonstrates contributions to team projects; sporadically displays leadership tendencies; occasionally dominates group efforts	Makes apparent and significant contributions to team projects; regularly displays leadership tendencies; does not dominate group efforts

Jane G. Duncan, Belmont University, 2020

- **Class attendance & engagement**

**NOTE:** As directing is a collaborative process, attendance and communication with me and your collaborators is essential.

→If you cannot make a class for any reason, please contact me as soon as possible to let me know:

[Alexandra.murray@utah.edu](mailto:Alexandra.murray@utah.edu)

→If there is a group assignment scheduled that day, cc your collaborators/scene partners as well so we can strategize an alternate plan for the work.

Engagement is an integral component of this class. The in-class discussions and activities are essential to your directing research and practice. Engagement requires you to be alert, prepared and collaborative.

Attendance is vital to student success, and the Department of Theatre wants to work with you on finding solutions so you can be successful in the program. ***ATP Attendance Policy:*** We will continue to operate with the allowed 2 excused absences per semester. Anything beyond these 2 excused absences needs to be discussed individually with your instructor. **Please note, any Actor Training BFA candidate missing 3 classes will be required to meet with the ATP Area Head and instructor to discuss the situation, and how to best remedy the situation.**

- **Canvas assignments and Artist Dates**

Canvas readings/viewings: Your homework and rehearsal work are interrelated; to that end, your assignments are due by 12:30 pm so that we can discuss and apply the concepts.

Recommended: A weekly artist date: do something that intrigues or enchants you for an hour or two weekly. Play. Report back.

- **Final Project**

- Selection final scene (a minimum of 4 rehearsals, folding in instructor feedback prior to final rehearsal and performance)
- Preparation of final scene work and program, including director's note and company headshots and bios
- Collaboration with other directors to create final event
- Tech, final performance and strike

- **Final self-reflection and assessment**

## **THE FINAL PROJECT | PLEASE ADD THESE TO YOUR CALENDAR**

The semester culminates in a final performance of scene work open to the Department of Theatre cohort. The final is divided over two evenings with half of the class presenting work each night.

**NOTE:** all directors are asked to attend both performances and to help with strike each night. Please mark these dates and times on your calendars now:

- **Monday, December 8 | Final event 1**

4-6 pm (TECH call)

6-8 pm Performance

Studio 115

- **Tuesday, December 9 | Final event 2**

4-6 pm (TECH call)

6-8 pm Performance

Studio 115

In preparation for the final (action steps)

- Each director will choose a 5-10 minute scene to direct and create a scene breakdown with character descriptions and a content advisory.

- The directing cohort will share their scenes in class and discuss core questions and themes and propose a selection of scenes for the two performances.
- The directors will hold in-class auditions, negotiate casting, and create their individual rehearsal schedules with their actors.
- Each director will select a sound cue to bring the audience into the play-world of the scene and choreograph transitions into and out of their respective scenes.
- Each director will submit a reflection on the collaborative process and final sharing of the work.

## GRADE SCALE

According to the [U's official policy](#):

*Student work in University courses shall generally be reported in terms of the following grades:*

- *A, A-, excellent performance, superior achievement*
- *B+, B, B-, good performance, substantial achievement*
- *C+, C, C-, standard performance and achievement*
- *D+, D, D-, substandard performance, marginal achievement*
- *E, unsatisfactory performance and achievement*

The criteria for grading students shall be performance in examinations, papers, or assignments, participation in class discussion and activities, and other evaluative processes necessary in determining the students' achievement levels. All of these Procedures may be part of the total evaluation, as adapted by the individual course instructor to fit the needs of the particular course and student.

<https://regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-100.php>

*Note:* Please know that your suggestions are always encouraged and appreciated. Let me know ways to improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally or for other students or student groups. In addition, if any of our class meetings conflict with your religious events, please let me know so that we can make arrangements for you. Contact me to schedule a meeting at any time during the semester to discuss your grade or any other concerns. Please do not hesitate to reach out if you are having any trouble with the concepts or exercises in the class. If I don't know what's wrong, I won't be able to help. A meeting can usually set things right.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING METHODS

Beginning Directing for the Stage is a test kitchen, focusing on preparation, ingredients and trying out recipes. Teaching and learning methods will include readings and viewings, discussions, in-class projects and a final collaborative project. You will generally prepare for class with a weekly reading assignment. We will investigate a specific aspect of the directing process each week of the semester, with readings, viewings and exercises related to the development of specific skills.

## TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

“How we make something is what we mean.” — Erik Ehn

As a teacher, I will make every effort to meet you in your learning process and recognize and uplift your unique strengths and curiosities. As directors, we must not only develop our imaginative capacity, but also our analytical, communication, organizational and leadership skills. Company sense and shared language are vital to the success of our work, both in the classroom and the rehearsal room, and I continually seek out practices that nourish both.

### **Corita Kent: Ten Rules for Students and Teachers**

RULE ONE: Find a place you trust, and then try trusting it for a while.

RULE TWO: General duties of a student: pull everything out of your teacher; pull everything out of your fellow students.

RULE THREE: General duties of a teacher: pull everything out of your students.

RULE FOUR: Consider everything an experiment.

RULE FIVE: Be self-disciplined: this means finding someone wise or smart and choosing to follow them. To be disciplined is to follow in a good way. To be self-disciplined is to follow in a better way.

RULE SIX: Nothing is a mistake. There's no win and no fail, there's only make.

RULE SEVEN: The only rule is work. If you work it will lead to something. It's the people who do all of the work all of the time who eventually catch on to things.

RULE EIGHT: Don't try to create and analyze at the same time. They're different processes.

RULE NINE: Be happy whenever you can manage it. Enjoy yourself. It's lighter than you think.

RULE TEN: We're breaking all the rules. Even our own rules. And how do we do that? By leaving plenty of room for X quantities.

HINTS: Always be around. Come or go to everything. Always go to classes. Read anything you can get your hands on. Look at movies carefully, often. Save everything—it might come in handy later.

From Corita Kent's book *Learning by Heart: Teachings to Free the Creative Spirit*.



### **Be a good thief**

“Grotowski knows that to learn something means to conquer it in practice. One must learn through ‘doing’ and not through memorization of ideas and theories... Often he would repeat to me that the true apprentice knows how to steal, how to be a ‘good thief’: this demands an active effort from the learner, because he should steal the knowledge trying to conquer the capacity to do.”

*At Work with Grotowski on Physical Actions*, Thomas Richards

### **STUDENT FEEDBACK**

I incorporate student feedback into my course design from semester to semester. I value what you share in the student course feedback forms; they will be available to you mid-semester and at the end of the semester.

### **ACCOMODATIONS**

**Disclaimer: Accommodations will be considered on an individual basis and may require documentation.** Please contact your instructor as soon as possible (preferably shortly before the semester begins) to request accommodations of any kind.

### **NON-CONTRACT STATEMENT**

*Note: This syllabus is meant to serve as an outline and guide for our course. Please note that I may modify the schedule at any time to accommodate the needs of our class. Any changes will be announced in class and posted on Canvas under Announcements. Should you have any questions or concerns about the syllabus, it is your responsibility to contact me for clarification.*

### **Preliminary Course Schedule**

<https://utah.instructure.com/courses/1028094/modules>