

THEA 101 Syllabus

Fall 2025

THEA 101 is designed to create discerning and appreciative audience members through experiencing live theatre, practicing performance criticism, and studying theatre production processes, theatre history, and dramatic literature. This course is part of the Foundations of the Disciplines curriculum, and meets the requirements of a Foundations of the Arts Course.

About Foundations Of The Discipline Courses

Foundations of the Discipline courses are part of Boise State's University Foundations curriculum, which is designed to broaden and enhance the more focused study done within each major, so students can discover more ideas, develop different ways of knowing, and connect with more people.



Foundations of The Performing Arts Learning Outcomes

- Accurately recognizes and understands visual and/or performance elements and principles within a given context.
- Displays exceptional ability to analyze the formal qualities and historical contexts of art presented in the course.
- Skillfully communicates and applies critical thinking skills regarding the questions generated by works of art presented in the course.
- Demonstrates self-reflection, intellectual curiosity, widened perspective and a respect for diverse viewpoints.

Meeting Time and Place

Days/Time: Tuesday and Thursday, 10:30 AM to 11:45 AM

Location: MPCB118

Instructor Information

Name: Teresa Focarile

Student hours: Tuesday and Thursday from 4-5 PM and any time by appointment

Office location: ILC 316C - come see me there!

Email address: teresafocarile@boisestate.edu

You can reach me via email, Canvas, or by calling my office at 208-426-4617

Welcome

Welcome to Introduction to Theatre! This course provides a backstage tour of the theatre process, teaching you about the artists and practices that bring theatre to life. Engaging with topics and plays and collaborating with others will give you a chance to explore your own creativity and develop communication and critical thinking skills useful beyond the world of theatre.

Course Format

This is a face to face course that will meet two times a week. It is an interactive experience in which you will be learning and applying the skills of theatre artists. To best achieve the learning outcomes for the course, students will be expected to complete the readings and assignments posted on Canvas prior to coming to class, and be engaged with the content, instructor and each other while in class.

Required Materials

This course uses Open Educational Resources and other material that can be accessed through the Boise State Albertsons Library. All course material can be found through our Canvas course site.

Assessments

This course uses a Specifications Grading approach. This means that all assignments in the course will be assessed not based on points/percentages, but by whether or not it meets the given criteria. The criteria for each assignment will be articulated clearly, discussed in class well in advance of the due date, and, in some cases, be co-created by us. This means that the “grade” you get on an assignment is directly connected to the learning you demonstrate.

The only letter grade that will be given in the course will be your final grade, and it will reflect the “bundles” of assignments and requirements you have satisfactorily accomplished in the class (as outlined in the table below). *That final letter grade is not an assessment of your intelligence, your abilities, or your value as a person*—in fact, I will never grade “you” directly, and grading is never a reflection of who you are as a person. Rather, your final grade will reflect *what you demonstrated* that you learned in the course: no more, no less.

Built into this system is a good deal of choice as to how much you wish to learn and how hard you want to work to demonstrate and apply that learning. You might decide that passing the course with a C is sufficient for your goals—it is perfectly appropriate for you to make that choice, especially if it allows you to proactively allocate your time to other responsibilities or goals. I do want to be clear that it is possible for **all students to get an A in this course**. It just requires your commitment to participating in class and applying what you already know/will learn.

Modified final grades of + and – will be given when a student's activities fall between the bundles. For instance, a student who met all of the requirements for the B Bundle, and 1-2 of the requirements for the A bundle, will receive a B+, while a student who fell just short of the B Bundle requirements would likely receive a B– final grade. Grades of D will only be given in rare cases where a student meets most of the C Bundle requirements but falls short in one area. An F will only be given if a student does not meet the (very attainable) requirements of the D Bundle.

Resubmitting Work

Since every element of the course is assessed based on meeting all of that assignment's criteria, it might be stressful given that the stakes for not meeting that threshold may be significant. To ease stress, to allow for flexibility—and most of all, to maximize opportunities for learning—you can resubmit the following assignments if you do not meet the criteria with the first submission:

- Knowledge Checks: unlimited resubmissions until the class period in which we discuss that topic
- Production Review: one resubmission
- Season Brochure: one resubmission

Learning Outcomes

The specifications for each assignment will align with our course learning outcomes. All students who pass the course (with a minimum grade of C) will have demonstrated the ability to:

- Explain the basic responsibilities of various theatre artists
- Explain how theatrical skills and practices can relate to other professional and personal experiences
- Identify artistic choices made in a theatrical production
- Give an example of how plays are relevant to contemporary issues

Students who achieve a higher level of mastery (with a minimum grade of B) will have also demonstrated the ability to:

- Interpret main ideas of theatrical productions and plays
- Use knowledge of theatrical components and practices to analyze a theatrical production from a subjective point of view

Students who achieve the highest level of mastery (with a grade of A) will have also demonstrated the ability to:

- Articulate how plays have been used to examine contemporary issues over time
- Use knowledge of theatrical components and practices to make clear arguments for how artistic decisions support a play's cohesive theme

Assessment Categories

Pre-Class Knowledge Checks

For each new topic area there will be assigned readings/videos that introduce important concepts and vocabulary. To help make sure you are prepared to build understanding about these ideas during class time, you will also complete a Pre-Class Knowledge Check on the topic. These Knowledge Checks will ensure that you are ready to engage with the content in our class meeting, including being ready to ask questions about what was not clear. Therefore, you must complete the Knowledge Check before class starts.

In Class Activities

Our class is a participatory one, so it is important you attend. Each week I will collect some aspect of the work we do in class and use that to provide you with feedback on your learning. Because this category is based on you engaging in course concepts with your fellow students, you must be in class to earn these points. There will be some occasions when it will be possible to do make up work for a class session. If you have to miss class for some reason, please let me know - so I know you are okay, and also so we can discuss possible make up work. Note that different letter grade bundles require different amounts of in class participation.

Production Review

We will apply the skills and knowledge gained in this class by watching a theatrical production, reviewing its use of theatrical elements, and interpreting how those elements shaped your understanding of the play. You will have a variety of options for plays to watch, including attending local productions as well as viewing performances online.

Season Brochure

Working in theatre companies, you and your collaborators will decide on a company mission statement and put together a brochure for a season of plays that support that mission. This project will give you an opportunity to consider how theatre is relevant to contemporary issues.

End of Class Reflection

At the end of the class, you will have the opportunity to reflect on what you learned, and how the theatrical skills and practices introduced in this course can help you achieve your professional and/or personal goals.

Course Grade Table

The below table outlines the “bundle” of work students must submit in order to earn a particular grade in the course. The criteria for “Informed Audience Member” work will align with the learning outcomes demonstrated in the C Bundle; the “Theatre Artist” criteria will align with the higher level learning

outcomes outlined for the B and A Bundles (in the learning outcomes section above, and as detailed in the individual assignment descriptions).

	A Bundle	B Bundle	C Bundle	D Bundle
% of Pre-Knowledge Checks points	100-80%	79-70%	69-60%	<59%
% of classes attended as an active participant	100-80%	79-70%	69-60%	<59%
Production Review and Season Brochure	Both "Theatre Artist"	One "Theatre Artist" and one "Informed Audience Member"	Both "Informed Audience Member"	One "Informed Audience Member", one Not Yet an "Informed Audience Member"
End of Class Reflection	"Theatre Artist"	"Informed Audience Member"	"Informed Audience Member"	Not Yet an "Informed Audience Member"

Late Work Policy

This course has been designed so that we are engaging with the content and each other in every class session. In order to get the most out of this experience, and to support your fellow students, it is important to complete assignments on time and attend class. That said, life has a way of throwing us curve balls sometimes, so if you have life experiences coming into or during the semester that affect your ability to complete work, please contact me so we can make arrangements to keep you moving forward in the course. If you begin to fall behind on deadlines, or do not attend class, I will submit an Academic Alert and also reach out to you, so that both I and your advisor can discuss with you strategies for completing the course successfully.

(Other) Expectations for Student Success

My - achievable! - goal is that every student is successful in this course, but I need your help to achieve that. In order to do your part to ensure your success in this course, please:

- **Ask questions!** Theatre is a creative and collaborative art, and there is no "right" way to do it, so ask questions, bring your own ideas, and support the ideas and questions of others.

- **Be willing to be uncomfortable.** There are many ways that people can bring their strengths to this class, but there will also be chances to try out new experiences and roles. I encourage you to take advantage of those opportunities in the safe space our classroom will provide.
- **Check announcements or e-mails regularly.** Announcements will serve as courtesy reminders and also point you to any new materials or changes.

Expectations for Me

In support of my goal that every student be successful in this course, you can expect that I:

- **Will be available to answer questions throughout the course.** I encourage you to visit me during Student Hours to ask any questions about the course material or to further your curiosity in the subject matter. You may also email me with questions or concerns or ask to meet via Zoom or on campus outside of the Student Hours, and I will do my best to accommodate your needs.
- **Will provide regular feedback on your work in a timely fashion.** I will return completed work to you, with feedback, within one week of the due date.
- **Will continuously work on improving your learning experience through my own class observations and based on your feedback.** You will have the opportunity to provide feedback to me throughout the semester, and via the end of course evaluations.

This Class Welcomes Everyone

Students in this class represent a rich variety of backgrounds and perspectives. The Department of Theatre, Film and Creative Writing is committed to providing an environment where similarities and differences are respected, supported, and valued. While working together to build this community, we ask all members to:

- share their unique experiences, values, and beliefs, if comfortable doing so.
- listen deeply to one another.
- honor the uniqueness of their peers.
- appreciate the opportunity we have to learn from each other in this community.
- use this opportunity together to discuss ways in which we can create a welcoming and respectful environment in this course and across the campus community.
- recognize opportunities to invite a community member to exhibit more respectful speech or behavior—and then also invite them into further conversation. We also expect community members to respond with gratitude and to take a moment of reflection when they receive such an invitation, rather than react immediately from defensiveness.
- keep confidential any discussions that the community has of a personal (or professional) nature, unless the speaker has given explicit permission to share what they have said.

As your instructor, my goal is to make sure that our learning environment is effective for everyone. This means, in part, that each student is encouraged to share perspectives relevant to the course material and that our class activities and discussions are conducted in a way that supports everyone's learning.

Student Well-being

Students with a disability or diagnosed condition (e.g., are neurodiverse, have a mental health condition, medical condition, etc.) who are needing accommodations should consider connecting with the Educational Access Center (EAC). All accommodations must be approved by the EAC prior to being implemented. Students are encouraged to visit the EAC website and submit a request for accommodations at boisestate.edu/eac.

If you are struggling for any reason (e.g., health, family, grief, safety, financial/basic needs, life's stresses, caregiving responsibilities, etc.) and believe these struggles may impact your performance in the course, I encourage you to reach out to me if you are comfortable doing so, and I will refer you to an appropriate university resource. You may also reach out directly to the outreach team in the Office of the Dean of Students at (208) 426-1527 or email studentoutreach@boisestate.edu for support. In addition, the [Student Life Essentials website](#) is a great place to find resources. If you notice a significant change in your mood, sleep, feelings of hopelessness or a lack of self worth, consider connecting immediately with Counseling Services (1529 Belmont Street, Norco Building) at (208) 426-1459 or email healthservices@boisestate.edu.

Course Policies

Academic Integrity

Academic Excellence is a [Shared Value](#) at Boise State, and part of your responsibility in pursuing academic excellence includes avoiding cheating, plagiarism, and any other kind of academic misconduct. If I find a student responsible for academic misconduct in our class, the outcome of their choice to not fully engage in their learning might range from a 'revise & resubmit' up to an 'F (failure) for the course.' For more info, please read [The Student Code of Conduct \(Policy 2020\), Section 7: Academic Misconduct Complaints, Violations, Processes and Sanctions](#).

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Use in This Course

In this course, I want to see *your* thoughts, understand *your* reasoning, and hear *your* voice. However, there are moments in this course where you might find it useful to use generative AI tools in support of your learning.

You may use generative AI tools for specified activities and assignments if their use supports, rather than undermines, your learning. While generative AI can help to advance your learning, its usefulness depends on the purpose of each activity or assignment. You will find guidelines for generative AI use in the instructions for each assignment; please read them very carefully, as these guidelines differ by assignment.

If you use ChatGPT, Gemini, Grammarly, Midjourney, or other AI tools in support of your work in this course, cite any ideas, text, images, or other media generated by the tool using the instructions and format of the [Modern Language Association](#) (MLA), [American Psychological Association](#) (APA), [Chicago Manual of Style](#), or other citation style as appropriate. When you use a tool in an assignment, include a brief, clear description of how you used it. If you use generative AI, you must not let this tool replace *your* thinking and work. In fact, it's your responsibility to ensure you are fully engaging in learning and submitting authentic work. To learn more about how to learn successfully and avoid academic misconduct behaviors, please review the [Student Code of Conduct](#) with special attention to [Section 8: Procedures for Academic Misconduct](#).

If you're unsure of whether or when to use generative AI tools in this course, please reach out to me. I'm eager to learn about how we might use them in new ways to meaningfully advance your learning and prepare you for your future beyond Boise State.

General course schedule (subject to change)

Week	Topic
1	Welcome and class introduction
2	Theatre Spaces
3	Business of Theatre
4	Playwrighting
5	Directing
6	Acting
7	Design
8	Design
9	Reviews/critical watching
10	Plays (<i>Oedipus</i>)

11	Work Week
12	Plays (<i>Hamlet</i>)
13	Plays (<i>Fires in the Mirror</i>)
14	Play Reviews
15	Theatre Company Presentations

Have feedback on the course?

The Department of Theatre, Film and Creative Writing welcomes your suggestions, comments, concerns, and/or praise about this course. If you have anything you'd like to share about the course, at any time in the semester, you can do so anonymously using the QR code below.

