

ST. MARY'S UNIVERSITY



MISSION STATEMENT

St. Mary's University, as a Catholic Marianist University, fosters the formation of people in faith and educates leaders for the common good through community, integrated liberal arts and professional education, and academic excellence.

**DM 2350—HISTORY OF
MUSICAL THEATRE**
(syllabus extract)

Fall 2021

**Drama Department, Treadaway Hall, 3rd Floor
Mon/Wed, 3:15-4:30 pm
300 Treadaway Hall**

George Kendall, M.F.A.
English Literature and Language
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Office Hours: M/W 12:30-2:30 pm,
TU/TH 12-1:30 pm, F 12-3 pm,
or by appointment

Course Description

This course examines musical theatre from its origins in antiquity through today. We'll also examine related forms including opera, operetta, the minstrel show, burlesque, musical variety revue, and vaudeville. Exploration of how composers, lyricists, and librettists wrote within the social-historical context of when the work was written will be connected to discussions on whether or not older musicals can/should still be performed today.

Learning Outcomes

1. Understand the evolution of the various forms of musical theatre from antiquity through today.
2. Examine the structure and elements of the musical theatre genre, using proper stage terminology.
3. Analyze how musical theatre librettists, composers, and lyricists create trends in musical theatre.
4. Experience various staging aspects of musical theatre to better understand the way performers take a musical from page to stage.
5. Examine the social/political/cultural significance and historical context of specific musicals related to when they were written and determine whether the work is still relevant to today's audiences.

Course Materials - Required

Readings posted to CANVAS and the following texts:

- *Musical Theatre*; Kenrick, John; Meuthen Drama, Bloomsbury; 2018; ISBN: 978-1464266994
- *The Secret Life of the American Musical*; Viertel, Jack; Sarah Crichton Books; 2017; ISBN: 978-0374536893
- *Our Musicals, Ourselves*; Jones, John Bush; Brandeis University Press; 2003; ISBN: 978-0874519044

Course Requirements

Class Participation	10%
Quizzes and Class Assignments	20%
Journal Entries	20%
Weekly Showtime	25%
Final Project (written 20%, oral 5%)	25%

Class Participation (10%)

Attentive and contributory involvement with class discussion, both answering and posing questions.

Quizzes and Class Assignments (20%)

Quizzes, smaller written assignments, and group presentations given in class.

Journal Entries (20%)

A running interactive Canvas commentary on the course material by posing questions, doubts, connections, articulating opposing viewpoints, etc. These entries should be a minimum of 500 words and posted no later than noon the day due. The journal is a place to comment on readings, class discussions, express your thoughts, investigate any cultural/sociological/historical references, and develop your understanding of musical theatre.

Weekly Showtime (25%)

Once a week the class will examine a particular component of musical theatre through viewing videos, listening to music, and some limited “staging” of selections from various shows.

Final Project (25%)

Group presentation of a thorough examination of how a composer/lyricist/libretto team and their works influenced the musical theatre genre. Grading consists of 20% on written content and 5% on a 15-minute oral presentation during the final exam time slot.

Course Calendar (tentative)

The following schedule is subject to change. Changes will be announced in class and on Canvas.

WEEK	CONTENT
ONE	Overview of Musical Theatre
TWO	Origins in Antiquity
THREE	Renaissance and the Opera
FOUR	<i>The Beggar's Opera</i> and the Operetta
FIVE	Gilbert & Sullivan
SIX	Vaudeville and the Minstrel Show
SEVEN	Black Musical Theatre and the Harlem Renaissance
EIGHT	George M. Cohen, WWI, and 1920s Musicals including <i>Showboat</i>
NINE	Musical Variety Revue and the Federal Theatre Project
TEN	<i>Oklahoma</i> and the Golden Age of American Musical Theatre
ELEVEN	Golden Age of American Musical Theatre, continued
TWELVE	The Edginess of 1960's Musicals
THIRTEEN	Mega-Hit, Huge Budget Musicals of the late 20 th Century including <i>Les Misérables</i>
FORTEEN	Musical Theatre in the first quarter of the 21 st Century including <i>Hamilton</i>
FIFTEEN	COURSE WRAP-UP