

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 3331 — FUNDAMENTALS OF STAGE DIRECTING

(syllabus extract)

Spring 2019

Department of Drama, Treadaway Hall

Tue/Thu, 2-4:25 pm

Treadaway 200 and 381

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TU/TH 12-1:30 pm, F 12-3 pm,
or by appointment

Course Description

This course is an application of staging techniques and directorial principles onto selected scenes and short plays in a laboratory setting. Emphasis is placed upon the fundamentals of script analysis, stage composition, and achievement of emphasis as it relates to the development of a director's visionary concept.

Course Materials

Readings posted to CANVAS and the following texts:

- *A Sense of Direction: Some Observations on the Art of Directing*, by William Ball, Drama Publishers, 2003, ISBN: 978-0986760820
- *Backwards & Forwards: A Technical Manual for Reading Plays*, by David Ball, Southern Illinois University Press, 1983, ISBN: 978-0809311101

Directing Rubric

Consider each and all of these elements as you rehearse your actors:

1. **Plot** – tell the story of your scene, be it a monologue or a complex sequence, with clarity and logic
2. **Character** – establish the journey of every character with momentum and moments of “discovery”
3. **Setting** – don't let critical theory create an abstraction of/distract from the dramatic narrative
4. **Staging** – articulate the argument of the scene and suit the action to the word (blocking)
5. **Conveyance** – ensure that each character inhabits the contextual choices in the text
6. **Stakes** – within the bounds of credibility, encourage actors to make the boldest choices possible
7. **Repetition** – allow time for actors to play, to explore, and to own their actions

Learning Outcomes

- Research and understand background information required to successfully direct a play
- Ability to analyze a script for performance
- Create and practice effective staging composition techniques
- Create a supportive, productive, and challenging rehearsal environment
- Communicate effectively and collaboratively with actors
- Constructively critique your and other's theatrical work
- Create compelling stage compositions that clearly tell the play's story and director's point of view

Course Work

Directing Assignments

You will direct three scenes, each lasting from 2-10 minutes. In these scenes, you will develop your “close” directing skills in the staging of various common set-ups. You can utilize actors from the DM 2321 Acting class, which meets concurrently in another room, or anyone else for your scenes. Though some class time is provided for rehearsal of your final scene, expect most rehearsing to be done outside of class. Your final scene should demonstrate your developing directorial style and skills in a fully realized dramatic scenario. A paper copy of your annotated scene script is due no later than the beginning of the class BEFORE the performance day.

The Three Scenes

- 1) Monologue: 2-3 minutes
- 2) Dialogue: 3-5 minutes
- 3) Final scene: 5-10 minutes

Grading

- 1) Attendance (5%) – see attendance section in course policies.
- 2) Class Participation (10%) – active participation in class discussions on readings.
- 3) CANVAS Journal Entries (10%) – weekly commentary on reading and course work, consisting of a 500-word minimum reflection to an assigned writing prompt. The final entry describing your experience directing your final scene is due 24 hours after its performance.
- 4) Director's Portfolio (25%) – dramaturgical and directorial information on your final scene's play. This breakdown will include detailed information on the play, playwright, production history, director's vision and intended impact, production environment, and analysis of your scene. The portfolio also includes a 2-3 page MLA-formatted essay on your experience directing this semester, focusing on the development of your director's process. Your essay should cite both William Ball's and David Ball's books (and other sources as needed) to support your ideas.
- 5) Directed Scenes (50%) – evaluation of your directed scenes, well rehearsed and presented. You should be prepared to rework scenes on performance days as requested by the instructor. Scenes will be graded on evidence of 1) sufficient and well-organized rehearsals, 2) a courteous, yet disciplined approach to working with actors, 3) the application of the directing rubric - see above, 4) an ability to give notes, receive critique, and enact change, 5) and most importantly, an overall clear telling of a story.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Changes to the following will be announced in class and posted on CANVAS.

WEEK	ACTIVITY AND ASSIGNMENTS
ONE	Director – Storytelling Medium for the Playwright Director’s Vision and Intended Impact The Production Environment
TWO	Script Analysis, part 1 Story vs. Plot
THREE	The Casting Process and Dealing with Actors Rehearsal Structure and Possibilities
FOUR	Scene #1 Performance – Monologue Post-performance roundtable discussion (without actors)
FIVE	The Goal of Table Work Staging Self-Expression
SIX	Dealing with the Spoken Word Objective, Motivation, and Action
SEVEN	Stage Action, part 1 Text-based Action
EIGHT	Scene #2 Performance – Dialogue Post-performance roundtable discussion (without actors)
NINE	Script Analysis, part 2 Externals – sound, music, lighting, multimedia, set
TEN	What About the Audience?
ELEVEN	Stage Action, part 2 Internal-based Action
TWELVE	The Director’s Character Analysis Further dealings with Actors Rehearsal time for Final Scene
THIRTEEN	Previous Session Rehearsal Issues Discussion Rehearsal time for Final Scene
FORTEEN	Previous Session Rehearsal Issues Discussion Rehearsal time for Final Scene
FIFTEEN	COURSE WRAP UP and Scene #3 Performance