

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 4331 — ADVANCED
STAGE DIRECTING
(syllabus extract)**

Fall 2019

Department of Drama, Treadaway Hall

Tue/Thu, 2-4:25 pm

Treadaway 200 and 381

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TU/TH 10-11:30 am, F 12-3 pm,
or by appointment

Course Description

Continuing the fundamental directing work from DM 3331, this advanced directing class will allow a high level of experimentation in balancing the interplay between action and text. Emphasis will be on defining directorial artistic intent, creating structured and sensible rehearsals, and effective communication with actors. Special emphasis is placed on the role of dramaturgical research in the creation of a meaningful interpretation of the text. Scenes performed will be from: plays in verse, realistic plays, and non-realistic/less literal plays. For scenes performed in class, you are encouraged to cast from the StMU student body, both drama and non-drama students. Blending practical application with textual preparation and literary reflection, this course seeks to create an environment for students to define a personal directing aesthetic as a storytelling medium between playwright and audience.

Course Materials

Readings posted to CANVAS and the following texts:

By Peter Brook

- *The Empty Space*, Touchstone, 1995, ISBN: 978-0684829579
- *The Open Door*, Anchor, 2005, ISBN: 978-1400077878

By David Mamet

- *The Uses of the Knife*, Vintage, 2000, ISBN: 978-0375704239
- *Theatre*, Straus and Giroux, 2011, ISBN: 978-0865479470

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

- Dramaturgical understanding and application of research required to theatrically stage direct
- Ability to analyze a script for performance
- Identify the theatrical relevancy of current social, political, and/or local events
- Understand the similarities and differences in directing multiple genres of plays
- 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 four scenes, each lasting from 5-15 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 StMU student body 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 Four Scenes

- 1) Verse/Heightened Language (Shakespeare, Middleton, Moliere, etc.): 5-7 minutes
- 2) Realism and Naturalism (Ibsen, Chekov, GB Shaw, etc.): 5-7 minutes
- 3) Non-Realistic (Brecht, Stoppard, Pinter, etc.): 5-7 minutes
- 4) Final scene (your choice of 1-3 above): 10-15 minutes

Grading

- 1) Class Participation (10%) – active participation in class discussions on readings.
- 2) 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.
- 3) Director’s Portfolio (20%) – 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 4-5 page MLA-formatted essay on your experience directing this semester, focusing on the development of your director’s process. Your essay should cite both Peter Brook’s and David Mamet’s books (and other sources as needed) to support your ideas.

- 4) Directed Scenes (60%) – 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	Directorial Basics – Review from DM 3331 <i>Fundamentals of Stage Directing</i> The Director’s Artistic Intent Dramaturgy 101
TWO	Challenges of Directing Plays in Heightened Language, part 1 Verse and Prose Language
THREE	Challenges of Directing Plays in Heightened Language, part 2 Outside-In Structure - Peter Hall
FOUR	Scene #1 Performances – Heightened Language Post-performance roundtable discussion (without actors)
FIVE	Realism and Naturalism, part 1 David Garrick to Stanislavsky
SIX	Realism and Naturalism, part 2 The Ibsen Revolution to O’Neill’s Psychological Realism
SEVEN	Scene #2 Performances – Realism and Naturalism Post-performance roundtable discussion (without actors)
EIGHT	Abstract Ideas and Non-Realistic Performance
NINE	Epic Theatre and Absurdism Brecht, Pinter, Stoppard
TEN	The Musical Theatre Moment
ELEVEN	Scene #3 Performances – Non-Realistic Post-performance roundtable discussion (without actors)
TWELVE	Open Format Discussion of Course Materials to Date
THIRTEEN	Rehearsal Issues Discussion Rehearsal Time for Final Scene
FORTEEN	Rehearsal Issues Discussion Rehearsal Time for Final Scene
FIFTEEN	COURSE WRAP UP and Scene #4 Performance