

QUEST 2935 Special Topics: Acting for Change

Spring 2025

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TA: Savannah Slmerly

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General Education Designations: Humanities WR 2000

*** A minimum grade of C is required for general education credit ***

Course Description

Can Performance create lasting and meaningful societal change?

This course explores the transformative power of Theatre as a catalyst for societal change. By examining historical and contemporary examples, students will study how theatre has been used to challenge norms, spark dialogue, and inspire activism. From classical works to modern productions/companies that address issues like race, gender, and climate change, this course highlights theatre's ability to reflect and reshape society.

Students will engage in critical analyses of plays, articles, and documentaries, as well as create their own performance pieces/presentations aimed at addressing current social issues. By the end of the course, students will understand how theatrical art forms can function as both a mirror of societal values and a tool for transformation.

Course Objectives

- *Explore key terminologies, theories, and methodologies of Theatre in performance.
- *Engage with Theatre History as it relates to performance as a vehicle for societal change.
- *Become comfortable with creating and sharing your own ideas in a group setting.
- *Learn about modern companies, theatrical movements, and programs that create societal change (we will refer to these as "Case Studies")
- *Practice voicing your own opinions in a public setting.
- *Engage in verbal, written, and kinesthetic communication.

Required Course Materials

Readings and viewings will be available on Canvas as needed.

Student Learning Outcomes

<https://undergrad.aa.ufl.edu/uf-quest/faculty/quest-1/q1-objectives-and-slos/>

Course Requirements and Expectations

Participation & Attendance (15%) are required.

Discussion and on-our-feet activities will be an integral part of our class meetings, and the extent to which you participate will impact your grade. We're here to learn from each other and your meaningful contributions to discussion and active engagement makes for a fun class! Please come to class prepared, having read/completed the daily assignments.

•Discussion Guidelines

- Speak with Compassion
- Speak from the "I"
- Acknowledge that we speak in draft
- Offer constructive criticism

Read/View and Respond (20%)

Students will be required to do weekly readings/viewings in preparation for Friday breakout session discussions. This may include an out of class required reading or viewing OR if there is not one assigned, students will respond to the lecture and viewings (or guests) we have had in class that week. After each reading/viewing, students will

1. Summarize the content
2. Pull 3 quotes from a reading (or 3 moments from a viewing) that you'd like to draw attention to for discussion purposes. Briefly outline why each of those quotes/ideas/moments were important to you. Do you agree/disagree? What is your point of view? What would you have changed or enhanced? What confused you? Etc... If you are responding to in-class content, pull 3 points of interest from the lecture or viewing to follow the same outline as above.
3. Submit these responses on Canvas by **Friday at 10am** before Friday sessions. Come prepared to discuss your points.

Performance Response Essay (10% each for a total of 20%)

Students will be required to attend the School of Theatre and Dance productions of **Macbeth** (Feb 7th-16th) and **The Importance of Being Earnest** (March 7th-March 14th) and write a 1-2 page essay (about 500 words) about each Production and its potential role as a vehicle for change. These are both classic plays that have been produced countless times. While it is important to include some historical background of the play and its historical significance as a change-maker, the bulk of the essay is your opinion of THIS production. As such, chatgpt **should not** be used (as it was unable to attend this performance). *Please note that you are responsible for securing a ticket to these shows and they do Sell Out!* **You will not be excused from the assignment if the performance is sold out, so please plan ahead.**

Group In-Class Workshop/Presentation (25%)

As part of a group, you will present a short piece of art as activism and an idea for a company, program, study, or production in the form of one of the formats we have covered in the course. This will include a 3-4 performance presentation, as well as a presentation of an action plan for implementing the performance or program you've dreamed up as a group. Use our case studies to inspire ideas!

- *Brechtian Style (Epic Theatre)
- *Theatre of the Oppressed Techniques
- *Documentary/Verbatim Theatre
- *Arts Access Program (Performance or Education Based)
- *Devised Theatre
- *Theatre for Social Programs (courts, prisons, outreach, support for infrastructure/education/basic needs etc)

Groups will be determined by the instructor. Each performance-presentation combination will last about 15-18 minutes, and will be discussed and workshopped after the presentation. More guidelines will be on Canvas.

FINAL PAPER (20%)

In this 1000-word reflective paper, you will discuss a problem in your own discipline, community or culture... or simply one you witness in the world where you see the need and potential for change. You will present research on this issue (citing 2 sources) and select one mode Performance as change/activism that we have covered this term (including case study programs) to apply to the issue at hand. Is there historical precedent for arts-as-change on this issue? What techniques have you embodied this semester that you might apply here? How do you see yourself as an agent of change in our world? What steps could you take (both practically and artistically) to make this change happen? **This paper counts toward your 2,000 word requirement.**

UF GRADING SCALE

- A 94-100
- A- 90-93
- B+ 87-89
- B 84-86
- B- 80-83
- C+ 77-79
- C 74-76
- C- 70-73
- D+ 67-69
- D 64-66
- D- 60-63
- F Below 60

Course Conduct

This may be a small class size for you, but it is an enormous class for me. Because it is my desire that we really take the time to hear each other, share ideas, and engage thoughtfully, there will be no cell phone use allowed in this classroom (including texting). You will receive a public request to put away your device. If it happens a second time in one class period you will be asked to leave, and will not get credit for attending class that day. Notes must be taken by hand,

and no tablets or laptops will be allowed in the classroom. If you have a need for a device to facilitate note taking, please go through the UF Disability Resource Center for a formal accommodation.

Instructor Personal Policies

Tardiness is my personal pet-peeve. As such, if you arrive more than 5 minutes late 3 times, it will be counted as an “unexcused absence”

Each student is allowed 3 “unexcused absences” in this course. Every subsequent absence will drop your final grade by 1 letter grade (10%).

Any absence from class for the following reasons must be supported by official acceptable documentation to avoid a grade penalty:

*Illness—doctor's note must be on official letterhead with address and phone number, noting the date and time of visit and diagnosis verifying that an absence from class is warranted, doctor name and signature

*Serious family emergencies

*Military obligation

*Severe weather conditions

*Participation in official university activities such as music performances, athletic competition or debate

*Court-imposed legal obligations (e.g., jury duty or subpoena)

Please Note

You do not need documentation to be excused for religious observances. However, you do need to communicate these absences with the instructor **by the end of Week 2** in order to be excused.

COURSE OUTLINE:

WEEK 1:

Monday, Jan 13th: Introduction/Syllabus

Wednesday, Jan 15th: What is Theatre/Applied Theatre?

READING

*No Response Due

Friday, Jan 17th: NO CLASS (Prior instructor obligation)

WEEK 2

Monday, Jan 20th: NO CLASS (MLK DAY)

Wednesday, Jan 22nd: Introduction to Theatre of the Oppressed

Viewing of Invisible Theatre
*Responses due tomorrow

Friday, Jan 24th: Game Play and Discussion

WEEK 3

Monday, Jan 27th: Bertolt Brecht: Epic Theatre and “The Alienation Effect”
Reading from Brecht

Wednesday, Jan 29th: Brecht Exercises/Viewing
*Reading from Brecht
*Responses due tomorrow

Friday, Jan 31st: Response Discussion

WEEK 4:

Monday, Feb 3rd: Devised Theatre

Wednesday, Feb 5th: Double Edge Viewing
*Responses Due tomorrow

Friday, Feb 7th: Response Discussion

WEEK 5

Monday, Feb 10th: Shakespeare: Hold the Mirror up to nature
CASE STUDY VIEWING: Shakespeare Behind Bars

Wednesday, Feb 12th: Shakespeare Behind Bars Continued
*Responses Due Tomorrow

Friday, Feb 13th: Discussion of in-class viewing/Shakespeare

WEEK 6

Monday, February 17th: Arts Access
*Read Article

Wednesday, February 19th: Macbeth Presentation and Discussion
*responses due tomorrow

Friday, February 21st: Response Discussion (and Macbeth if needed)

WEEK 7

Monday, February 24th: Case Study: Time’s Fool Company (Guest Speaker)

Wednesday, February 26th: Case Study: Shakes & Co Ed
Courts and Fall Festival Access for kids
*Response due tomorrow

Friday, February 28th: Response Discussion

WEEK 8

Monday, March 3rd: Documentary or Verbatim Theatre
Viewing of the Laramie Project
Read The Laramie Project

Wednesday, March 5th: Laramie Project Continued...
*Response due tomorrow (play and film)

Friday, March 7th: Response Discussion

WEEK 9

Monday, March 10: Theatre for pragmatic change: Programs, studies, etc.
*View video from Ohio State

Wednesday, March 12: CASE STUDY: Outerloop Theatre Experience (Guest Speakers)
*Response due tomorrow

Friday, March 14th : Response discussion

WEEK 10

HAPPY SPRING BREAK!

WEEK 11

Monday, March 24: In Class Workshop Time (with Instructor and TA support)

Wednesday, March 26th: In Class Workshop Time (with Instructor and TA support)

Friday, March 28th: Importance of Being Earnest Discussion

WEEK 12

Monday, March 31: Group Workshop Presentation
Groups 1 and 2.

Wednesday, April 2: Group Workshop Presentation
Groups 3 and 4
*TAKE NOTES for the discussion on Friday

Friday, April 4th: Discuss Presentations

WEEK 13

Monday, April 7th: Group Workshop Presentation
Groups 5 and 6

Wednesday, April 9th: Group Workshop Presentations
Groups 7 and 8

Friday, April 11th: Discuss Presentations

WEEK 14

Monday, April 14th: Group Workshop Presentations
Groups 9 and 10

Wednesday, April 16th: Group Workshop Presentations
Groups 11-12

Friday, April 18th: Discuss Presentations

WEEK 15

Monday, April 21st: Wrap Up thoughts

Wednesday/Friday: NO CLASS, reading week

UNIVERSITY INFORMATION**EVALUATIONS**

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.ua.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under

DRC Information

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the Disability Resource Center. See the “Get Started With the DRC” webpage on the Disability Resource Center site. <https://disability.ufl.edu/get-started/> It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs, as early as possible in the semester.

FINAL NOTE FROM THE INSTRUCTOR:

I am a very reasonable human with my own set of access needs. I know that life happens and circumstances come up that cannot be avoided. Please communicate with me throughout the

course of the term if you are struggling. I cannot help you and will not be able to accommodate you in the last few weeks of the term. I want you to “succeed”!

The syllabus is subject to change based on the needs and pace of the class