

TPP 3234 – Diversity and Multiculturalism in American Theatre

3 Credit Hours – 1:55PM–2:45PM M/W/F

Spring 2025 – Weimer 1076

Instructor: Ryan Hope Travis

Office: McGuire Pavilion Room 226 + Zoom: <https://ufl.zoom.us/j/9943846349>

Office Hours: 8:30AM-10:30AM Wednesday + By Appointment

Phone: 352-273-2608

Email: rht@ufl.edu

Course Description:

“Development of images of marginalized peoples as presented in the American Theatre from Colonial period to the present.” (UF Undergraduate Catalog). Through a critical examination of plays, performances, and theatrical movements, students will investigate how theatre has both reflected and influenced societal attitudes towards race, gender, sexuality, and other aspects of identity. Emphasis will be placed on understanding the historical context and cultural significance of these portrayals, as well as the contributions of diverse playwrights and performers. Students will engage with a variety of texts and media, participate in discussions, and develop analytical skills to critically assess the impact of theatre on social change.

Through a blend of lectures, readings, and hands-on workshops, students will gain a deep understanding of the cultural, social, and political contexts that have influenced theatrical expression. This course is also practice-based. We will analyze works from various marginalized traditions and then create our own pieces, reflecting the rich tapestry of American theatre. By the end of the course, students will gain a deeper appreciation for the role of theatre in shaping and challenging perceptions of diversity and multiculturalism in American society.

Key Topics:

1. Colonial and Early American Theatre: Depictions of marginalized peoples in early American plays and performances.
 2. 19th Century Theatre: Representation of race, gender, and class during the 19th century, including minstrel shows and melodramas.
 3. 20th Century Movements: Impact of the Harlem Renaissance, Civil Rights Movement, and feminist theatre on the portrayal of marginalized communities.
 4. Contemporary Theatre: Modern representations and challenges in depicting diversity and multiculturalism on stage.
- Influential Playwrights and Works: Study of key playwrights and their contributions to the development of diverse images in American theatre.

Student Learning Outcomes:

1. Examine the portrayal of marginalized communities in American theatre from the Colonial period to the present.
2. Analyze how race, gender, sexuality, and other identities are depicted and the impact of these portrayals.
3. Identify key playwrights and their contributions to the development of diverse images in American theatre.

4. Create a work of art or original research that embodies themes discussed in the course

Course Requirements:

1. Active participation in class discussions and workshops
2. Completion of assigned readings and written/oral reflections
3. Attendance to SoTD performances
4. Final project involving a performance or research presentation

Required Text:

There is no required text. However, published plays and reference materials, which may be obtained from the campus libraries, will be utilized by the student in class. Essays and selected readings will be posted on Canvas. Handouts may be distributed as well.

Grading:

This course embraces the philosophy of *un-grading*. Simply, complete assignments receive complete points. Because students come to this space with varying synthesis and exegesis proficiencies, diverse pedagogical backgrounds and analytical skills, *time*, *effort*, and *commitment* are the crux of your grade.

Full participation is crucial in grading – i.e., thorough and thoughtful discussion posts, willingness to participate in class discussions, full prep work outside of class, etc.

1. *Thorough and thoughtful discussion posts*: This means discussion posts reflect critical thinking, depth of analysis, clarity and coherence, relevance, use of sources, etc.
2. *Willingness to participate in class discussions*: Active participation in class discussions shows that you are engaged and interested in the subject. It involves asking questions, sharing your thoughts, and listening with an open heart.
3. *Full prep work outside of class*: This includes all the preparation you do outside of class, such as reading assigned materials, reviewing notes, and meeting with group members, where appropriate. It's about being prepared for each class session and staying on top of the coursework.

Overall, full participation means being proactive and dedicated to all aspects of the learning process, which is crucial for both understanding the material and achieving a good grade. Each assignment will be awarded a specific point value. Points will be tallied at the end of the semester to determine the final grade.

Grading Scheme:

Points are used to demonstrate the weight of each assignment. In general, we will utilize a "complete" or "incomplete" grading scheme. Feel free to reach out if this is unclear.

The following grading standard will be used to determine your final grade in this class:

Grade	Range
A	100pts to 93pts
A-	< 93pts to 90pts
B+	< 90pts to 87pts
B	< 87pts to 83pts
B-	< 83pts to 80pts
C+	< 80pts to 77pts
C	< 77pts to 73pts
C-	< 73pts to 70pts

D+	< 70pts to 67pts
D	< 67pts to 63pts
D-	< 63pts to 60pts
F	< 60pts to 0pts

Mini-Lecture/Seminar	10pts
Discussion Posts (5pts each)	50pts
Final Research Project	20pts
Participation	20pts
Total	100pts

For information on current UF grading policies for assigning grade points, please visit:
<https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/>

Assignments:

1. To lighten our impact on the planet, all documents will be submitted via Canvas. Canvas will also be our repository for the syllabus, readings, assignments, links, grades, etc. Emailed assignments are not permitted.
2. Due dates will be set with respect to student needs and outside obligations -- where appropriate.

Mini Lecture/Seminar

Students will prepare and present a 20-30 minute mini lecture or seminar on a topic related to the week's discussion. Choose a specific aspect of diversity and multiculturalism in American theatre, such as a key playwright, movement, or historical period. Your presentation should include a thorough analysis, relevant examples, and engage the class in discussion. Use multimedia elements to enhance your presentation. Upload your bibliography and/or slideshow to Canvas by 11:59PM on the day of your presentation. This assignment aims to deepen your understanding of the course material and develop your research and presentation skills More details will be provided. (10pts)

Weekly Discussion Posts

Posts may be a 250-300 word commentary or 2-3min video. Posts should respond to the themes and/or readings of the week. You may find and discuss peer-reviewed essays written about a play, person, genre, or related to our course. You may discover media trends that are relevant to class topics. Here, Diversity and Multiculturalism in American theatre is considered broadly. The purpose of this assignment is to get you to practice: reading arguments, synthesizing arguments, connecting coursework to your everyday lives, and more. See Canvas Discussions tab for due dates, parameters, and prompts. 10 posts required (5pts each).

Final Research Project

This is an opportunity to deepen your investigation or point of inquiry. You can delve deeper into something we studied e.g., a theme or topic, the works of a playwright, etc. You may choose to investigate a playwright we haven't studied. Check out the non-exhaustive list at the end of this syllabus, for examples. Instructions and rubrics will be discussed in class and shared on Canvas. Presentations will be during the last weeks of class. (20pts)

Option 1: Conference Paper

Ideal for students who want to practice academic writing, public speaking, and learn about academic conferences. This essay is also an excellent starting point for the SoTD Honors in the Major requirement. You will develop a research question and write an essay targeting the Association of Theatre in Higher Education (ATHE) conference. ATHE is one of the major international conferences in our field (and the largest in the US). Every year, ATHE has several “debut/emerging scholar panels” that are intended to support new researchers—like you! You will be expected to write 8-10 pages double-spaced essay accompanied with a 10-15 minute presentation.

Option 2: Creative Project

For your creative project, explore or celebrate the rich history, culture, and contributions of marginalized communities in American theatre from the Colonial period to the present. Your project can take various forms, such as a performance piece, visual art, multimedia project, or documentary. Accompany your creation with a 2-3 page commentary explaining its relevance to course themes and your creative process. Additionally, present your project to the class in a 10-15 minute presentation, discussing your inspiration, process, and the significance of your work. This assignment encourages originality and a deep understanding of the course material.

Course Policies:

Late Assignment Policy

- Written assignments submitted 48hrs beyond the due date will receive a half letter grade deduction every day it is late. Keep track of due dates. Keep the lines of communication open. If you are having a challenge, let me know. Extensions will be permitted if you email me 24hrs *before* the deadline.
- There are no make-ups for workshops, exercises, or performances. Professional actors who show up late get fired (eventually). For graded in-class work, the make-up assignment will be developed in collaboration with the instructor.
- Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found at: catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies/

Attendance Policy

- Excused absences include documented illness, deaths in the family and other documented crises, call to active military duty or jury duty, religious holy days, and official University activities. These absences will be accommodated in a way that does not arbitrarily penalize students who have a valid excuse. Consideration will also be given to students whose dependent children experience serious illness. Contact the Dean of Students Office for an excusal letter when appropriate.
- This is a performance class; therefore, attendance is mandatory. You must be present to perform. If you miss a class, an alternative assignment will be created for the missed work, given documentation is provided. We learn from each other. Your presence, whether or not a “performance” is involved that day, is important to the collective learning process.

Policy on Responding to Students

- 24 to 48 hours to reply to emails is typical.
- Submitted documents are typically returned within 2 weeks after due date.

Physical Contact Policy

Unlike most classes, acting spaces can require a certain amount of physical contact between students or between instructor and student. This contact may be used to aid in releasing tension, promote deeper breathing, or to fuel a deeper emotional connection. If at any time you feel uncomfortable with any physical contact suggested in class, you have the right to refuse it with no repercussion towards any sort of grade.

Attendance at UF SoTD Productions:

You are required to see the SoTD mainstage shows to which you receive a complimentary ticket. You are encouraged to attend other SoTD, Florida Players and theatre-related productions, when possible. Be prepared to discuss SoTD productions in class.

Academic Honesty Policy:

UF students have the responsibility to conduct themselves in an honest and ethical manner while pursuing their studies. They are expected to abide by the UF Academic Honesty Policy, which defines an academic honesty offense as “the act of lying, cheating, or stealing academic information so that one gains academic advantage.” In the context of this course, this includes conducting original research and properly citing sources for any materials (both printed and online) used in the writing reaction papers, journals, and self-analysis paper. Submitting work that has been plagiarized will result in a failing grade. For more information on the UF Academic Honor Code visit: <https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/>.

Our Honor Code on AI Usage:

As students committed to academic integrity and personal growth, we recognize the importance of producing original work that reflects our own understanding and effort. The use of AI tools can be beneficial for learning and research, but it must be balanced with ethical considerations to maintain the integrity of our academic work.

1. Originality and Authenticity – Students must ensure that all submitted essays are their own work. AI tools should not be used to generate entire essays or significant portions of text.
2. Permissible Uses of AI / AI tools may be used for:
 - Grammar and spell-checking
 - Generating ideas or outlines
 - Conducting preliminary research
 - Providing feedback on drafts
3. Prohibited Uses of AI / AI tools may not be used to:
 - Write entire essays or large sections of text
 - Paraphrase or rephrase existing content to pass it off as original work
 - Generate citations or references without proper verification
4. Transparency:
 - Students must disclose any use of AI tools in their work. This includes specifying which tools were used and how they contributed to the final essay.
5. Accountability:
 - Students are responsible for the content of their essays, including any errors or inaccuracies introduced by AI tools. Proper verification and critical evaluation of AI-generated content are required.
6. Respect for Intellectual Property:
 - Students must respect copyright laws and avoid using AI tools to generate content that infringes on the intellectual property rights of others.
7. Commitment to Learning:

- The primary goal of essay assignments is to enhance learning and critical thinking skills. Students should use AI tools as aids, not substitutes, for their own intellectual efforts.

By adhering to this honor code, we commit to upholding the values of academic integrity, personal responsibility, and ethical use of technology in our academic pursuits.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, dso.ufl.edu/drc) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. A meeting with the student, instructor and DRC representative will be scheduled to discuss students' needs. Absences related to accommodation are not retroactive.

Campus Resources:

Health & Wellness:

1. *U Matter, We Care*: If you or someone you know is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu, 352-392-1575, or visit umatter.ufl.edu/ to refer or report a concern and a team member will reach out to the student in distress.
2. *Counseling and Wellness Center*: Visit counseling.ufl.edu/ or call 352-392-1575 for information on crisis services as well as non-crisis services.
3. *University Police Department*: Visit police.ufl.edu/ or call 352-392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies).
4. *UF Health Shands Emergency Room / Trauma Center*: For immediate medical care call 352-733-0111 or go to the emergency room at 1515 SW Archer Road, Gainesville, FL 32608; ufhealth.org/emergency-room-trauma-center.

Academic Resources:

1. *E-learning technical support*: Contact the [UF Computing Help Desk](#) at 352-392-4357 or via e-mail at helpdesk@ufl.edu.
2. *Career Connections Center*: Reitz Union Suite 1300, 352-392-1601. Career assistance and counseling services.
3. *Library Support*: Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources.
4. *Teaching Center*: Broward Hall, 352-392-2010 or to make an appointment 352- 392-6420. General study skills and tutoring.
5. *Writing Studio*: 2215 Turlington Hall, 352-846-1138. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers.
6. *Student Complaints On-Campus*: [Visit the Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code webpage for more information](#).
7. *On-Line Students Complaints*: [View the Distance Learning Student Complaint Process](#).

Course 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 gatorevals.aa.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 GatorEvals, or via ufl.bluera.com/ufl/. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/.

Course Journey:

This is a judgment-free zone. In this class, we are committed to sharing and listening mindfully, thoughtfully, and patiently. We hold space for each other. We listen with open hearts. We enter this space with a *wide* range of experiences and backgrounds. Our differences help us learn. They also provide building blocks for a safe, brave, inviting, and rigorous space. We grow here.

TENTATIVE TIMETABLE**WEEK 1: Introduction to Diversity and Multiculturalism in American Theatre**

Course Introduction, Orientation, Syllabus Review

Exploration of how theatre has been used to comment on and influence social issues.

Key Figures: You.

WEEK 2: Colonial and Early American Theatre

Examination of early American plays and performances, focusing on the portrayal of marginalized peoples.

Key Figures/Plays: Royall Tyler, Mercy Otis Warren

WEEK 3: 19th Century Theatre: Minstrel Shows and Melodramas

Analysis of racial stereotypes and the impact of minstrel shows and melodramas on American theatre.

Key Figures/Plays: Dion Boucicault, William Wells Brown

WEEK 4: The Harlem Renaissance

Exploration of the Harlem Renaissance and its influence on African American theatre and culture.

Key Figures/Plays: Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston

WEEK 5: Theatre and the Civil Rights Movement

Study of plays and performances that addressed civil rights issues and contributed to social change.

Key Figures/Plays: Lorraine Hansberry, Amiri Baraka

WEEK 6: Feminist Theatre

Discussion of feminist theatre movements and the representation of women on stage.

Key Figures/Plays: Lillian Hellman, Wendy Wasserstein

WEEK 7: LGBTQ+ Representation in Theatre

LGBTQ+ Representation in Theatre

Examination of the portrayal of LGBTQ+ characters and themes in American theatre.

Key Figures/Plays: Tony Kushner, Harvey Fierstein

WEEK 8: Spring Break (March 3-7)

WEEK 9: Contemporary Theatre: Race and Identity

Analysis of modern plays that address race and identity in contemporary society.

Key Figures/Plays: August Wilson, Suzan-Lori Parks

WEEK 10: Indigenous Peoples in American Theatre

Study of the representation and contributions of Indigenous peoples in American theatre.

Key Figures/Plays: Mary Kathryn Nagle, William S. Yellow Robe Jr.

WEEK 11: Asian American Theatre

Exploration of the history, themes, and significant figures in Asian American theatre.

Key Figures/Plays: David Henry Hwang, Philip Kan Gotanda

WEEK 12: Latinx Theatre

Examination of Latinx theatre, including key playwrights and cultural themes.

Key Figures/Plays: Luis Valdez, Quiara Alegría Hudes

WEEK 13: Disability and Theatre

Discussion of the representation of disability in theatre and the contributions of disabled artists.

Key Figures/Plays: Susan Nussbaum, John Belluso

WEEK 14: Final Projects and Presentations

Students present their creative projects and reflect on their learning throughout the course.

WEEK 15: Final Projects and Presentations Cont'd

Students present their creative projects and reflect on their learning throughout the course.

WEEK 16: Final Projects and Presentations Cont'd

Last Day of Class

This syllabus is a good approximation of what this course will be like this semester. The instructor reserves the right to make reasonable additions or subtractions to the syllabus or to allow more or less time for certain sections based on how the work progresses this semester.
