

DIRECTING

UNIVERSITY OF NEW ORLEANS

Course Number: FTA 2380 Section: 01 Semester: Spring 2018

INSTRUCTOR:

Ryan M. Decker
PAC 351, office hours by appointment
rmdecke1@uno.edu

MEETINGS:

Tuesdays, Thursdays
11:00-12:15 p.m.
PAC 114B (Dance Studio)

CREDIT:

3 units toward B.A. Film & Theatre *or*
Fine Arts or Humanities requirement
*Prerequisite: FTA 1300

COURSE DESCRIPTION & OUTCOMES:

The best directors use collaboration and leadership to illuminate story and facilitate the finest work of actors, designers, and production team members. FTA 2380 will provide you an opportunity to practice and hone your actor/director communication, playscript analysis, interpretation, and blocking skills. Upon completion of this course, you will be able to guide actors through the basic realization of a scene with an understanding of concept, conflict, character and their translation into action, composition, and rhythm.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

- *Notes on Directing* by Frank Hauser and Russell Reich
- Selected plays for directing projects

RECOMMENDED TEXTS:

- *Play Directing: Analysis, Communication, and Style* by Francis Hodge
- *Directing for the Stage* by Terry Converse
- *Working Together in Theatre: Collaboration and Leadership* by Robert Cohen
- *A Sense of Direction* by William Ball
- *Tips: Ideas for Directors* by Jon Jory

ACCOMPLISHING OUTCOMES (HOW GRADES ARE DETERMINED):

- **Class Participation & Professionalism (30%)**
- **Conceptual Information & Theory (30%)**
 - ✓ Midterm Exam (10%)
 - ✓ Final Production Book (20%)
- **Performance Applications (40%)**
 - ✓ Performance #1 – Comedy (10%)
 - ✓ Performance #2 – Drama (10%)
 - ✓ Performance #3 – Final Scene (20%)

GRADE GUIDELINES:

- A:** Outstanding work that is significantly above basic requirements for the assignment, shows significant personal development, and demonstrates a high level of commitment. Work surpasses that of others in class
- B:** Above average work that goes beyond basic requirements for the assignment, shows personal development, and demonstrates commitment
- C:** Work that meets basic requirements of the assignment
- D:** Work that is worthy of credit, even though it does not fully meet the basic requirements
- F:** Work fails to meet basic requirements

CLASS PARTICIPATION & PROFESSIONALISM (30%):

300 total points possible

Directing is an experiential process. In addition to completing assignments on time, you are encouraged to participate in the activities taking place in class and to contribute to the discussion being held. For this portion of your grade, you must meet the following expectations:

- **Be prepared**
 - ✓ Prepare for class
 - ✓ Be in the room at the start of class or before
 - ✓ Make time for work outside of class
- **Be willing to learn**
 - ✓ Value your own work – you get out of it what you put into it
 - ✓ Jump in to exercises without reservations or judgment
 - ✓ Remain open to criticism and eschew defensiveness
 - ✓ Dare to take risks in your work
 - ✓ Stay in the room
- **Develop and embody professionalism**
 - ✓ Honor class policies, treat others and the space with respect
 - ✓ Focus on class topics during class
 - ✓ Engage in clear discussion
 - ✓ Focus on classmates' work and offer pertinent feedback

CONCEPTUAL INFORMATION & THEORY (30%):

100 points for Midterm Exam; 200 points for Production Book; 300 total points possible

THE MIDTERM EXAM will be a take-home, written examination based on in-class lectures, discussions and the required reading, *Notes on Directing*. Completed exams must be submitted to the instructor's email (rmdeckel@uno.edu) by 12:30 PM, Tuesday, February 27.

THE FINAL PRODUCTION BOOK is a written assignment designed to be completed in tandem with the preparation and direction of your final (third) scene. The specifics of this assignment will be determined after midterm. Do expect the project will be substantial. It will ask you, in specific ways, to document your analysis, interpretation, rehearsal process, and discoveries. Please do not wait until the end of semester to understand this project. Final Production Books are due to the instructor's mailbox in PAC 307 by 4:00 PM, Thursday, May 3.

PERFORMANCE APPLICATIONS (40%):

100 points for Comedy; 100 points for Drama; 200 points for Final Scene; 400 total points possible

We will explore directing concepts with in-class exercises and develop directing skill by rehearsing and presenting three (3) different scenes – a comedy, drama, and final scene of either genre.

SCENE SELECTIONS must meet the following requirements for use in class:

- Approximately five to seven (5-7) minutes long.
- From a published play. NOT a musical, one-act, short play, film, television, internet or original script.
- Contains two to three (2-3) roles, relatively close to your actors' ages.
- From a contemporary play (written after 1960). Older material must receive instructor approval in advance.

CASTING will be conducted in collaboration with Acting II (FTA 2330). We will attempt to cast all student-actors from this course. Casting outside of the Acting II course is allowed, however, requires instructor approval, as giving these students opportunity is our priority. All actors must be available during our scheduled class time. It is your responsibility to find mutually agreeable outside rehearsal time.

CLASS POLICIES:

Tardiness: Tardiness means arriving ten minutes OR LESS after class starts. Leaving early is not tolerated and counts as an incidence of tardiness. Two tardy occurrences will count as one absence. Arriving later than ten minutes after class starts will count as one absence.

Absences: You are allowed two absences for the semester. **There are no “excused absences.”** It is understood that unavoidable circumstances arise that prevent you from coming to class and for those times, you get two absences without impact on your grade. After two absences, each additional absence lowers your grade by one letter grade. Absence on a day you are scheduled to present will result in an “F” grade for that assignment in addition to the penalty above.

Missed Work: You will receive no credit for missed or late work or exams.

Focus and Participation: Each person learns from others and contributes to others’ learning. Any student who is inattentive, disruptive, or disrespectful can expect a very low grade, and may be told to leave class. If you are told to leave, you will be marked absent for the day.

Be Willing to Learn: Directing is very personal. Taking in feedback can sometimes be uncomfortable. Do your best to remain open to feedback and criticism and avoid putting up defenses. If you successfully deflect or argue against criticism, you have successfully avoided an opportunity to grow. Emotion comes up in our work – you may become sad or angry during class. You will sometimes be frustrated. You may feel overwhelming joy. Allowing these emotions to be present while you continue to focus and work is how you develop discipline as a director. Therefore, you must not leave the room if you feel upset. If you leave the room, you will be marked absent and it will affect your grade.

Our Room: Our classroom is our creative home; please treat it with respect. No wet shoes are allowed on this floor (to keep it clean). No food other than bottled water is allowed in class. Help put away mats and rehearsal furniture at the end of class when necessary. If we need to clean the mats or floor, everyone will be expected to help. No gum in class. Leave the classroom in a better state than you found it.

Clothing: Wear comfortable clothing in which you can move in; we will participate in actor exercises. Avoid low-cut tops or pants – if you have to tug at your clothing to stay decent and comfortable, it is not appropriate for our purposes in class.

Self-care, Professionalism, and Awareness: You have chosen a field where professionals frequently work with injuries, illness, agonized mental states, emotional distress, and all sorts of discomfort. Welcome. Develop the ability to recognize when you are truly unable to work, and when you have discomfort which will not prevent you from working. As a rule of thumb, ask yourself “will it get worse if I work?” For instance, if you have a tension headache, participating in class may not feel good, but it won’t actually make your headache worse. If you have a dislocated shoulder, many activities *will* make it worse. See a health care professional and only do what is safe for you in class. Never skip class because you have a scratchy throat or “are losing” your voice (unless you have a severe contagious illness). You are responsible for your own safety. It is your right and *responsibility* to care for yourself.

Academic Integrity: Academic integrity is fundamental to the process of learning and evaluating academic performance. Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, the following: cheating, plagiarism, tampering with academic records and examinations, falsifying identity, and being an accessory to acts of academic dishonesty. Refer to the Student Code of Conduct for further information. The Code is available online at <http://www.studentaffairs.uno.edu>.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: It is University policy to provide, on a flexible and individualized basis, reasonable accommodations to students who have disabilities that may affect their ability to participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. Students with disabilities should contact the Office of Disability Services as well as their instructors to discuss their individual needs for accommodations. For more information, please go to <http://www.ods.uno.edu>.

COURSE OUTLINE:

18 Jan, Thurs	OFF – Winter Weather Cancellation
23 Jan, Tues	Syllabus and Introductions
25 Jan, Thurs	Scripts and Actors
30 Jan, Tues	Adjustments
1 Feb, Thurs	Concept
6 Feb, Tues	Character
8 Feb, Thurs	Conflict
13 Feb, Tues	OFF – Mardi Gras
15 Feb, Thurs	Staging
20 Feb, Tues	Casting
22 Feb, Thurs	Midterm Review
27 Feb, Tues	MIDTERM EXAM DUE (Instructor Email: rmdecke1@uno.edu, by 12:30 PM)
1 Mar, Thurs	Casting (Acting II Monologues) – <i>Harkins will lead class; Decker at KCACTF</i>
6 Mar, Tues	Comedy: In-Progress Performance (Groups 1-4)
8 Mar, Thurs	Comedy: In-Progress Performance (Groups 5-8)
13 Mar, Tues	PERFORMANCE # 1 – Comedy (Everyone)
15 Mar, Thurs	Drama: In-Class Rehearsal (Everyone)
20 Mar, Tues	Drama: In-Progress Performance (Groups 1-4)
22 Mar, Thurs	Drama: In-Progress Performance (Groups 5-8)
27 Mar, Tues	PERFORMANCE #2 – Drama (Everyone)
29 Mar, Thurs	OFF – Spring Break
3 Apr, Tues	Final Scene: In-Class Rehearsal (Everyone)
5 Apr, Thurs	Final Scene: Beginnings (Groups 1-4)
10 Apr, Tues	Final Scene: Beginnings (Groups 5-8)
12 Apr, Thurs	Final Scene: Middles (Groups 1-4)
17 Apr, Tues	Final Scene: Middles (Groups 5-8)
19 Apr, Thurs	Final Scene: Ends (Groups 1-4)
24 Apr, Tues	Final Scene: Ends (Groups 5-8)
26 Apr, Thurs	Final Scene: In-Class Rehearsal (Everyone)
1 May, Tues	PERFORMANCE #3 – Final Scene (Everyone)
<u>3 May, Thurs</u>	PRODUCTION BOOK DUE (Instructor Mailbox, PAC 307, by 4:00 PM)