**Stephen F. Austin State University**

**Introduction to Play Directing**

**Fall 2023**

**DRAM 4321.001**
**DRAM 4021.020**

**Instructor:** Prof. Scott Shattuck *(he/him)*

E-mail: shattucksh@sfasu.edu

Phone: 936.468-1336 (office), 917.860-6180 (mobile)

Office: Griffith Fine Arts Building Rm. 225

Office Hours: Monday, Wednesday, Friday 1-2 pm; Tuesday, Thursday 2-3 pm

or by appointment (preferred). Office hours end on December 1. Meetings by Zoom, FaceTime, or phone may be arranged upon request.

To avoid disappointment, **it is always best to let me know you will be coming** even if you are coming to a scheduled office hour. If you prefer to meet on Zoom or FaceTime, or on the phone, that can usually be arranged so please just let me know. I am always open to meeting outside office hours at a mutually convenient time; the most efficient way to find one is to speak on the phone.

You may text or call me any time between 8:00 am and 8:00 pm especially if your message or question is time-sensitive. Otherwise, **e-mails are usually preferred. Use the address above**, not the D2L email system, or you may never receive my reply. Please be specific in the subject heading. Also, please specify in the body of your email what course (Beginning Directing) you are in. If you do not hear back from me within 48 hours, please email again or reach out to me in another way. **If I need to contact you I will usually use your D2L email**, so please be sure to forward those to an email you check frequently. Whether it’s sent to your SFA email or your D2L email, you are responsible for any message I send.

**Class Meetings:** Upstage Theatre (Griffith Fine Arts Building Rm. 301)

Monday 11-11:50 pm

Wednesday and Friday 11-12:50 pm
Important Dates to Note:
Auditions and casting for final scene cuttings are scheduled for 1:00 pm Sunday, October 22. This is a time-consuming process so you should keep your calendar completely clear at least until 6 pm on that date until and unless we find that we will not need the entire afternoon.

Your scenes will be presented during the week of December 4-8 at times to be announced. You are required to attend all of your classmates’ scenes as well as your own (unless you have another class that prevents you from attending).

Our last class meeting will be on Monday, December 11 from 1 to 3 pm (the time designated for the final exam). This is an important wrap-up evaluation discussion, and attendance is required.

Course Description: Introduction to the art and craft of directing with specific consideration of the major elements of director’s work: play analysis, stage composition, visualization and blocking, rehearsal techniques, and the nature of collaboration. Prerequisites: Lower-division theatre core or permission of instructor.

Course Contact and Study Hours

This is a three semester-credit-hour course (one hour of “lecture” and two of “laboratory,” with the lab hours requiring four in-person contact hours per week), so there will be an average of five hours of in-class (or in-rehearsal/presentation) instruction per week, and each student should spend an average of four additional hours of reading, viewing/listening, writing, reviewing, rehearsing, and other learning time outside of class every week.

In addition to regular class meetings and individual preparation (traditional “homework”) time, this course requires a substantial amount of audition, casting and rehearsal time that must be arranged with student actors, and, in lieu of a traditional final exam, a presentation of a scene that must be scheduled to accommodate student actors and multiple faculty members. To facilitate this process, every student must be prepared to accept scheduling mandated by the instructor and the School of Theatre faculty, including evening and weekend work times.
Text and Materials:


Talley & Son by Lanford Wilson, Dramatists Play Service, Inc., 1995. Also required.

Please bring both textbooks with you to every class session so that we are able to reference them together in discussion.

You may be required to buy one or two more plays later in the semester, but these will be paperback or acting editions so they should not be as expensive as many textbooks. Other reading will be provided on-line, or in the form of handouts.

You will need some basic school supplies to analyze scripts and create a prompt book (erasable pencils with erasers, paper, hole punch, scissors, glue or tape, photocopying, loose-leaf binder, etc.), and you will need access to a computer and the internet, especially to use the university’s course management system, D2L Brightspace, and possibly Zoom.

Course Calendar (subject to change):

Week 1: Overview of course & directing; emergence of the director 8/28-9/1
Week 2: Notable contemporary directors 9/4-8
Week 3: Periods, styles and research 9/11-15
Week 4: Play analysis: plot & character 9/18-22
Week 5: Play analysis: thought, diction, music, & spectacle 9/25-29
Week 6: Scene scoring 10/2-6
Week 7: Casting and rehearsal scheduling 10/9-13
Week 8: Theatre spaces and ground plans 10/16-20

Auditions & Casting (1:00 pm Sunday afternoon, October 22)
Week 9: Blocking as visual storytelling 10/23-27
Week 10: Blocking as visual storytelling, continued 10/30-11/3
Week 11: Working with actors 11/6-10
Week 12: Working with actors, continued 11/13-17 (rehearsals start 11/13)

Thanksgiving Break 11/18-26
Week 13: Rehearsals, “production meetings,” and catch-up 11/27-12/1
(some class meetings abbreviated or canceled)
Week 14: Culmination: scene presentations 12/4-8 (no regular class meetings)
Final Week: Evaluation and reflection 12/11 (during final exam period 1-3 pm)
Course Requirements:

1. Consistent, active, productive, collaborative participation. To succeed in this course, you must be prepared (with the assigned reading completed, for example), alert and engaged, willing and able to participate in class exercises, cooperative, supportive, and respectful of your fellow students in every class session. To maximize your participation grade you must volunteer to speak in discussions, participate in demonstrations of techniques, etc. The instructor’s assessment of your participation will form 15% of your final grade for the course. Upon request, you will receive a mid-term assessment of your participation. Any pattern of tardiness or absenteeism may have a negative effect on your participation grade (as few as three absences or three times late for class may be considered a pattern).

2. Two written production responses relating the direction of the two School of Theatre faculty-directed “Mainstage” productions of the semester (The Piano Lesson and Once Upon a Mattress) to material from the course. Each response will be brief (100 words maximum). In order to write it, you will purchase a ticket for and attend each of these productions at least once (you may have to pay the student ticket price). If you have a cast or crew assignment on one or both of these productions your assignment will still be to relate the direction to the course from the perspective of your role/job. If you miss one of these productions you will receive no credit (a score of 0, a grade of F) for that response. Each response is due at the time of the next class session immediately following the closing performance. The average of your response grades will form 5% of your final course grade.

3. Independent reading and oral report. You will find an article or book chapter in which a well-known contemporary director describes their work (it may be written by the director or may be an interview with them). Read the article and make notes from which you will give a five-minute report to the class on the director you studied, citing the material you read. To prepare for this report you may also need to do a little background reading on the director for context—an encyclopedia entry, for example. Cite your source(s) in your talk and on your notes, and turn in your notes in advance to the drop box provided. If the oral report is not delivered on schedule, the make-up assignment will be a five-page research paper on the same director using multiple sources fully and correctly cited. 5% of final grade.

Each of the following assignments relates to a scene that you will direct as your major project for the semester:

4. Play analysis. Read a well-known, full-length, realistic, modern (1879-present) play approved in advance by the instructor and analyze it by answering a series of questions about the play’s form and structure. These questions will be provided by the instructor. The results will comprise a paper about five pages long. This will be due before you begin work on your directing scene and will not be accepted after the rehearsal start date. 15%.
5. Scene score. Prepare a script annotated for performance, called a “score,” for a scene from that same play. The form of your score will be prescribed by the instructor (you will need access to a photocopier, a pair of scissors, some blank paper, invisible tape or glue stick, a stapler, an erasable pencil—not ink pen—and an eraser). A draft of your score must be available for the instructor to see before you start rehearsal on your scene. An improperly formatted score will automatically be marked down 20 points (two full grades). Your final score will not be accepted after the date on which scene presentations are scheduled to begin. 10%.

6. Casting breakdown and rehearsal plan. Write brief descriptions of actor requirements and desired characteristics for each role that appears in your scene. This will be due before auditions and will not be accepted after auditions have begun. Also, design a schedule of activities outlining the amount of time required for each phase of the rehearsal process for your directing scene. This will be due before the first rehearsal and will not be accepted after the rehearsal start date noted here. Together, a total of 5%.

7. Ground plan. Design a ground plan for your scene’s setting and submit it as a casually drafted schematic (form prescribed by the instructor). This assignment does not require any special drawing talent or skill, but it will test your spatial ability. Your ground plan will be due before you start pre-blocking your scene and will not be accepted after the rehearsal start date given here. 5%.

8. Prompt book. Prepare a graphical representation of the planned staging of your scene, illustrating a copy of your scene score (this will require more photocopying, and a small loose-leaf binder). The form of your prompt book (also called a “prompt script”) will be prescribed by the instructor. A draft of your prompt book must be available for the instructor to see before you start blocking the actors in rehearsal. Your final prompt book will also include lists, schedules and other documentation that will be specified by the instructor. Your final prompt book will be due before the presentation of your scene and will not be accepted after the final date scheduled for scene presentations. 15%.

9. Directing scene. Direct a scene cutting from your play, using actors enrolled in THR 221 (Beginning Acting). To facilitate this process, you will be required to cooperate in a process and adapt to a schedule designed by the instructor and the School of Theatre faculty. Your scene must conform to guidelines provided by the instructor. Your scene will be rehearsed at times arranged by you and in spaces found by you in the final weeks of the semester and performed at a time that may be outside of regularly scheduled class times. Leadership and collaboration are essential to the nature of directing, so it follows that your success on this project is dependent to some extent on other people. By taking this course you are embracing this fact and setting out to succeed as a leader of a collaborative process. Your scene must be presented on schedule and will not be accepted late. 25% of final grade (see grading note in #5 above).
Because your work as leader of your scene cutting has such an important impact on the actors involved, you must demonstrate through your behavior in the part of the semester before auditions that you are capable of taking on the leadership role of a director. The instructor reserves the right to substitute a set of alternative assignments for any student whose behavior fails to instill trust that s/he is capable of the discipline, professionalism, and maturity necessary to lead other students to success in a scene. In fairness to the students undertaking the huge challenge of directing a scene cutting, the alternative assignments will be sprawling, complex, and demanding.

Due Dates (subject to change):

*Assignments due at the beginning of class time*
Oral Report (with documented written notes) Sept. 6
*Have Talley & Son Act I read by Sept. 11, Act II by Sept. 13*
First Production Response Oct. 2
Play Analysis Oct. 9
Casting Plan Oct. 16
Scene Score Oct. 23
Ground Plan Oct. 30
Second Production Response Nov. 6
Rehearsal Plan Nov. 6
Prompt Book Dec. 4-8 (at time of scene presentation)
Grading:

The letter grade on each assignment is translated to this numerical scale:

- **A+**: 100
- **A**: 95
- **A-**: 91
- **B+**: 88
- **B**: 85
- **B-**: 81
- **C+**: 78
- **C**: 75
- **C-**: 71
- **D+**: 68
- **D**: 65
- **D-**: 61
- **F**: 0

The final grade is then calculated using the percentages in the “Requirements” section above, and the numerical weighted average is translated to this letter-grade scale:

- **89.500-100**: A
- **79.500-89.499**: B
- **69.500-79.499**: C
- **59.500-69.499**: D
- **0-59.499**: F

Attendance Policy:

In keeping with the School of Theatre policy (see *School of Theatre Handbook*), the following applies to this course:

“A career in the fine arts demands dedication and discipline; preparation for this career requires conscientious development of effective work habits. To this end, regular and punctual attendance is expected for all classes, laboratories and other activities for which a student is registered or assigned.

“I. It is University policy to excuse students from class attendance for certain reasons related to health, family emergencies, student working the Performing Arts Series, and other situations of similar importance.

“Excused absences from Theatre classes will only be granted upon presentation of written documentation upon the first day of the student’s return from the teacher, sponsor or physician involved. In the case of absences caused by University-sponsored events, inclusion in the University’s public listing of such absences will constitute an official excuse. It is the student’s responsibility to inform the instructor that he/she has scheduled the planned official absence.
“II. A total of...10 excused and/or unexcused absences in Monday-Wednesday-Friday classes will result in the student receiving a failing grade. Excessive unexcused absences will affect your grade. [More than three unexcused absences are considered excessive in this course. Each student is responsible for keeping track of their own attendance; do not rely on the professor for an attendance warning!]

“III. The student will be allowed a maximum of...three unexcused absences in Monday-Wednesday-Friday classes.

“IV. In the case of missed classes, the student will be held responsible for the successful completion of assigned work and/or projects.”

Also, in this course if you arrive late for or leave early from any class session it will be considered the equivalent of at least 1/3 of one absence. The same rules apply for excused and unexcused absence from a part of a class session (arriving late or leaving early) as apply to absences from the entire session.

Attending Shows

To attend ticketed theatre productions, you should get your ticket well in advance to avoid missing a show due to a sell-out (which is especially but not exclusively a concern at closing performances). The Box Office is in the lobby of the Griffith Fine Arts Building. Using a credit card, you may also order tickets on the phone at (936) 468-6407. The Box Office strives to be open from 8 am to 5 pm Monday through Friday and from 45 minutes before each performance but is sometimes required to close because staff is not available. If your call is answered by voicemail, you should leave a clear message including your phone number (spoken slowly) and you will get a call back. A credit card may also be used at boxoffice.sfasu.edu, but this is not recommended because there is an exorbitant service charge on each ticket.
Academic Integrity:

SFA Statement:

“The Code of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity outlines the prohibited conduct by any student enrolled in a course at SFA. It is the responsibility of all members of all faculty, staff, and students to adhere to and uphold this policy.

Articles IV, VI, and VII of the new Code of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity outline the violations and procedures concerning academic conduct, including cheating, plagiarism, collusion, and misrepresentation. Cheating includes, but is not limited to: (1) Copying from the test paper (or other assignment) of another student, (2) Possession and/or use during a test of materials that are not authorized by the person giving the test, (3) Using, obtaining, or attempting to obtain by any means the whole or any part of a non-administered test, test key, homework solution, or computer program, or using a test that has been administered in prior classes or semesters without permission of the Faculty member, (4) Substituting for another person, or permitting another person to substitute for one’s self, to take a test, (5) Falsifying research data, laboratory reports, and/or other records or academic work offered for credit, (6) Using any sort of unauthorized resources or technology in completion of educational activities.

Plagiarism is the appropriation of material that is attributable in whole or in part to another source or the use of one’s own previous work in another context without citing that it was used previously, without any indication of the original source, including words, ideas, illustrations, structure, computer code, and other expression or media, and presenting that material as one’s own academic work being offered for credit or in conjunction with a program course or degree requirements.

Collusion is the unauthorized collaboration with another person in preparing academic assignments offered for credit or collaboration with another person to commit a violation of any provision of the rules on academic dishonesty, including disclosing and/or distributing the contents of an exam.

Misrepresentation is providing false grades or résumés; providing false or misleading information in an effort to receive a postponement or an extension on a test, quiz, or other assignment for the purpose of obtaining an academic or financial benefit for oneself or another individual or to injure another student academically or financially.”

In keeping with the School of Theatre rules (see the Handbook), the following applies:

“It is the responsibility of the student to abstain from cheating. Dishonesty of any kind with respect to examinations, written assignments, in or out of class, alteration of records, or illegal possession of current examinations or keys to examinations shall be considered cheating….Courtesy and honesty require that any ideas or materials borrowed from another must be fully acknowledged [NB. “another” includes any Internet resource, including generative artificial intelligence (AI) sources such as ChatGPT]. Offering the
work of another [including an anonymous or group or AI Internet author] as one’s own is plagiarism. The subject matter of ideas thus taken from another may range from a few sentences or paragraphs to entire articles copied from books, periodicals, or the writing of other students [or web sites or AI platforms]. The offering of materials assembled or collected by others in the form of projects or collections without acknowledgement is also considered plagiarism. Any student who fails to give credit for ideas or materials taken from another is guilty of plagiarism.

“The School of Theatre expects students to maintain the highest standards of academic conduct. Misrepresenting someone’s work as your own or knowingly allowing someone else to represent your work as his/hers constitutes academic dishonesty. Such behavior is antithetical to our work as scholars, as artists, and as members of a community founded on trust and mutual respect. It is an insult to faculty and an affront to honest students.

“Penalties for academic dishonesty may range from failure of a specific project to failure of the course, suspension from the production season for up to one year, and referral to university authorities for further action, which may include suspension or expulsion from the university.”

It is the student’s responsibility to know the definition of plagiarism and to avoid unintentional as well as intentional plagiarism. In this course, unintentional plagiarism will be treated no differently from intentional cheating. All of your work must be your own original work (unless appropriately cited). In recent years professional directors have successfully asserted legal ownership of staging. In other words, it is possible to plagiarize another director’s concept, blocking or other ideas. This too is a form of cheating and carries all of the consequences described above.

Withheld Grades:

SFA Statement: “Ordinarily, at the discretion of the instructor of record and with the approval of the academic chair/director, a grade of WH will be assigned only if the student cannot complete the course work because of unavoidable circumstances. Students must complete the work within one calendar year from the end of the semester in which they receive a WH, or the grade automatically becomes an F. If students register for the same course in future terms the WH will automatically become an F and will be counted as a repeated course for the purpose of computing the grade point average.”
Acceptable Student Behavior:

According to the General Bulletin, “A student enrolling in the university assumes an obligation to conduct himself/herself in a manner compatible with the university’s function as an educational institution.” In this course, you must uphold the highest standards of respect for the teaching and learning process. Any behavior that distracts from our educational or artistic work, or would cause a reasonable person working as instructor or student in this setting to feel uncomfortable or distracted, will not be tolerated. This includes whispering or talking out of turn or making other distracting sounds at any level of volume, no matter how low, or making irrelevant or inappropriate gestures or signs of any kind, no matter how small. If you engage in such behavior, you will receive one warning from the instructor. If the same behavior or any other disruptive behavior occurs after a warning, you will be required to leave the class immediately, counted absent (unexcused) from the class, and held responsible for assigned work and/or projects due or assigned in the class. You will have to satisfy the instructor that you intend to behave appropriately for the rest of the semester before returning for the next class meeting. Any disruptive behavior after one ejection will result in a failing grade for the course; you will not be permitted to return for the rest of the semester. Serious conduct violations will also be referred to university authorities for further action.”

SFA Statement: “Classroom behavior should not interfere with the instructor’s ability to conduct the class or the ability of other students to learn from the instructional program (see the Student Conduct Code, policy D-34.1). Unacceptable or disruptive behavior will not be tolerated. Students who disrupt the learning environment may be asked to leave class and may be subject to judicial, academic or other penalties. This prohibition applies to all instructional forums, including electronic, classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. The instructor shall have full discretion over what behavior is appropriate/inappropriate in the classroom. Students who do not attend class regularly or who perform poorly on class projects/exams may be referred to the Early Alert Program. This program provides students with recommendations for resources or other assistance that is available to help SFA students succeed.”

Policy on Late Work:

When an assignment’s scheduling affects other students (scenes with student actors and/or student audiences, for example) it is never accepted late if the change of schedule might inconvenience or affect the work of others. Written work that must be completed in sequence to build for success on a complex project is never accepted late. Individual written assignments such as critiques may be accepted late at the instructor’s discretion, but the grade on the assignment will always be affected negatively (the later it is, the larger the penalty), and the instructor will always make it his top priority to be fair to students that submitted their work in on time.
Guidelines for Written Work:

Except where otherwise instructed, whenever it is reasonable to expect it, written work such as play analyses and casting breakdowns should be word-processed using Microsoft Word software and submitted as a Word document or PDF in the appropriate Dropbox of the course management system. It should be printable in black ink on regular white copier/printer paper in a widely-used, highly readable font such as Times New Roman, no less than 10 nor more than 12-point size, with margins of approximately one inch. In other words, it should look much like this document. It should have your name word-processed on the front page (no title page is necessary). (For more details on standards for college papers in the arts and humanities, consult the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers.) Unless otherwise specified, due dates refer to the scheduled class start time.

Students with Disabilities:

SFA Statement:

“To obtain disability related accommodations, alternate formats and/or auxiliary aids, students with disabilities must contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), Human Services Building, and Room 325, 468-3004 / 468-1004 (TDD) as early as possible in the semester. Once verified, ODS will notify the course instructor and outline the accommodation and/or auxiliary aids to be provided. Failure to request services in a timely manner may delay your accommodations. For additional information, go to http://www.sfasu.edu/disabilityservices/.”

Student Wellness and Well-Being:

SFA values students’ overall well-being, mental health and the role it plays in academic and overall student success. Students may experience stressors that can impact both their academic experience and their personal well-being. These may include academic pressure and challenges associated with relationships, emotional well-being, alcohol and other drugs, identities, finances, etc.

If you are experiencing concerns, seeking help, SFA provides a variety of resources to support students’ mental health and wellness. Many of these resources are free, and all of them are confidential.

On-campus Resources:
The Dean of Students Office (Rusk Building, 3rd floor lobby)
www.sfasu.edu/deanofstudents
936.468.7249
don@sfasu.edu
SFA Human Services Counseling Clinic  Human Services, Room 202  
[www.sfasu.edu/humanservices/139.asp](http://www.sfasu.edu/humanservices/139.asp)  
936.468.1041

The Health and Wellness Hub “The Hub”  
Location: corner of E. College and Raguet St.

To support the health and well-being of every Lumberjack, the Health and Wellness Hub offers comprehensive services that treat the whole person – mind, body and spirit. Services include:

- Health Services
- Counseling Services
- Student Outreach and Support
- Food Pantry
- Wellness Coaching
- Alcohol and Other Drug Education

[www.sfasu.edu/thehub](http://www.sfasu.edu/thehub)  
936.468.4008  
thehub@sfasu.edu

Crisis Resources:

- Burke 24-hour crisis line: 1.800.392.8343
- National Suicide Crisis Prevention: 9-8-8
- Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1.800.273.TALK (8255)
- johCrisis Text Line: Text HELLO to 741-741
Program Learning Outcomes (PLO’s) Supported in this Course:

PLO’s for BA in Theatre supported in this course:

1. The student will be able to analyze a script in ways that are necessary to a theatre practitioner or scholar/critic.
2. The student will demonstrate an understanding of theatre history and a variety of theatrical styles.
3. The student will demonstrate collaborative and/or leadership competencies appropriate to participate or take a leadership role in an effective theatrical production.
4. The student will demonstrate an understanding of the component areas of theatrical creation, process, production, performance, and study, and their interrelationships.
5. The student will be able to form and articulate a critical analysis and evaluation of a work of theatre.
6. The student will demonstrate intermediate to advanced competence in one or more theatre specialization(s).

PLO’s for BA in Theatre Education supported in this course:

1. See above.
2. See above.
3. See above.
4. See above.
5. See above.
7. The student will be able to use an understanding of educational psychology and appropriate organizational skills to create a positive and disciplined learning environment for students of theatre.

PLO’s for BFA in Theatre supported in this course:

1. See above
2. See above.
3. See above.
4. See above.
8. The student will be able to complete and document a major project as a stage manager, as a designer or technician, or as an actor or director, demonstrating advanced competence in the student’s specialty.
9. The student will be able to present an effective presentation appropriate to the student’s specialization.
Student Learning Outcomes (SLO’s) for this course (and supported PLO’s):

When you successfully complete this course, you will be able to…

1. Use basic techniques for preparing to direct a play. (PLO’s 1 and 2)

2. Discuss the origins of play directing and the work of one or more notable stage director(s) of the past and/or present. (PLO 2)

3. Understand and describe how a director is involved in various aspects of play production. (PLO 4)

4. Understand the basic component crafts of play direction and use basic skills in these crafts, especially visual storytelling. (PLO’s 6, 8)

5. Collaborate and lead in basic ways necessary for successful work as a director in the theatre. (PLO’s 3, 7)

6. Direct (rehearse, present and evaluate) a scene from a contemporary, realistic play. (PLO’s 5, 6, 7, 8)

7. Create a director’s prompt script. (PLO 9)

Please Note:

This syllabus is a plan for the course, and every effort will be made to follow the plan. However, the year 2020 taught even the most confident and flexible among us that circumstances can cause plans to change. If and when adjustments become necessary, priorities will be to seek alternative ways to meet our learning goals, and to ensure that every student is treated fairly with no student unduly penalized by external circumstances which affect us all.