

Drama 3651 - Directing I
Fall 2015 Syllabus

Section 1: Tues/Thurs 2:00 – 3:15pm
Drama Building, B006

Section 2: Tues/Thurs 12:30-1:45pm
Drama Building, Helms Theatre

Instructor: David Dalton
Office: Drama Building, Room 205
Office Hours: Tues. and Thurs. 10:30 – 12:00pm, or by appointment
Email: dnd8b@virginia.edu
Phone: (434) 243-8956

Imagine...

You walk into a room and a large group of people sitting at a long table turn to look at you. You're the one they've been waiting for. You're their director. They are a very creative and dedicated team of actors, designers, and stage managers, who are excited to work with you on play that you've chosen for them. Now they're waiting for you to lead. What will you say to them?

In this class we'll explore how to think like a director, and we'll discover the tools that a director has to interpret a play, breakdown a scene, stage exciting and moving moments, and lead a group of talented collaborators to an awesome production.

By the end of this course you will...

- Be able to analyze the language of plays to interpret and empathize with characters' motivations based on their actions and past experiences
- Collaborate with actors and manage their time, talent, and input to create dynamic staging that communicates a deeper meaning of a play to your audience
- Manage your theatrical resources effectively and reflect on how you can use them better
- Assess your own growth as a director and an artist as well as the growth of your fellow students
- Envision plays from a director's point-of-view and inspire a team to excitedly follow your unified vision for a dramatic performance

If you want to think like a director, *act like one!*

Throughout the course you'll have multiple opportunities to think and act like a director by assuming many of a director's roles in a typical production:

- **Find Material** – You will find a play that you would feel passionate about directing. Ask friends and fellow students for recommendations. Approach the Drama faculty as well to ask them about great plays that need to be seen by an audience. You can also think about themes and issues that are important to you, and then search for plays that address these issues in a smart and compelling

way. Once you've found a play that interests and excites you, you'll need to read it thoroughly, analyze its component parts, and present both a written and an oral version of your analysis to your fellow students in the course.

- **Choose and Analyze a Scene** – Within the play you choose to work of for the semester, you'll select a 3-to-5 minutes scene with 2 or more characters to direct. You'll analyze the scene for important given circumstances, motivating character actions, beat changes, and any obstacles you find within the scene. You'll turn in an analysis prior to your first rehearsal, and revise and re-submit it prior to your in-class presentation.
- **Cast and Stage your Scene** – You'll be directing in groups of three and working with the remaining students as your actors. I'll set your groups in the next couple of weeks as I get to know you. Working with a limited pool of actors may require some creative thinking and non-traditional casting choices. You may either embrace the way this affects your scene (making cross-gender casting a part of your directorial vision, for example), or instruct your classmates to view your scene the way that you might direct it in an ideal situation. So, for example, you might instruct your classmates to imagine that your 20 year-old actress is actually a 40 year-old man. Of course, this all depends on the requirements of the scene you choose and your point-of-view on the scene as a director. If you prefer to recruit actors outside of the class to act in your scene, you may do so.
- **Organize and rehearse your scene** – You'll rehearse the scene **at least twice** outside of class time and once in class, receiving feedback on your ideas, as well as how you inspire and work with your actors.
- **Pitch your vision of a production of your play** – Imagining that the Department of Drama has asked you to possibly direct your play in the Culbreth Theatre in the next season, you'll prepare a written proposal of how you might approach the play as an artist, and you'll present your proposal in-person to your fellow student directors who'll be acting as the Department's Season Selection Committee: advising the chair whether your proposal should be a part of the season.
- **See other work and support your fellow directors** – Seeing another director's work is an invaluable tool, so you'll attend all of the Department of Drama productions this semester and submit a short written critique of the staging choices of the director. You'll also support one another's work by offering constructive criticism for in-class rehearsals and performances and by participating in discussions in small groups to help reflect on lessons you've learned and to share questions you still may have.
- **Practice your analysis and composition techniques** – Throughout the course you'll have the opportunity to apply analysis and composition skills you've acquired to short exercises both in and outside of class.

Required texts

- *Time Stands Still* by Donald Margulies
- *Eurydice* by Sarah Ruhl

Grading

| | |
|---|-----|
| Internal and external analysis assignments for your play <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • External analysis summary of the play – 5% • Internal analysis of your scene prior to rehearsals – 7.5% • Revised analysis of your scene prior to your presentation – 7.5% | 20% |
| Stage a scene from your play | 30% |
| Pitch your external analysis of the play <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written analysis and pitch with visual support – 10% • In-person pitch and defense of your proposed production – 10% | 20% |
| Performing in your fellow students' scenes | 10% |
| Short assignments, readings, and in-class work throughout the semester | 10% |
| Participation, group discussion, and reflection assignments | 10% |

Tentative Class Schedule (subject to change)

| Date | In-Class Activity | Important Completion Dates |
|---------------|---|---|
| Week 1 | | |
| Tues, 8/25 | Introduction to the course | |
| Thurs, 8/27 | Internal scene analysis | |
| Week 2 | | |
| Tues, 9/1 | Internal scene analysis | |
| Thurs, 9/3 | Composition and blocking | |
| Week 3 | | |
| Tues, 9/8 | Composition exercises | |
| Thurs, 9/10 | Composition exercises and presentations | |
| Week 4 | | |
| Tues, 9/15 | External play analysis. | Reading due of <i>Time Stands Still</i> by Donald Margulies. |
| Thurs, 9/17 | External play analysis. | Reading due for <i>Eurydice</i> by Sarah Ruhl. |
| Week 5 | | |
| Tues, 9/22 | External play analysis. | External analysis summary of plays due |
| Thurs, 9/24 | Presentations on the plays you've read | |
| Week 6 | | |
| Tues, 9/29 | Presentations on the plays you've read | |
| Thurs, 10/1 | Catching up and reviewing your chosen scenes. | Submit the play and the scene you'd like to work with for the rest of the semester for approval. Attend a performance of <i>Bloody Bloody Andrew Jackson</i> and write a reflection on the staging. |
| Week 7 | | |
| Tues, 10/6 | No Class – Reading Day | |
| Thurs, 10/8 | Internal analysis review and working with actors. | Final scene and play title submission due. |

Directing 1 – Fall 2015

| | | |
|------------------|--|---|
| Week 8 | | |
| Tues, 10/13 | External analysis review. Cast Group 1 scenes. | |
| Thurs, 10/15 | Imagining your play production | Group 1 directors, scene analysis due |
| Week 9 | | |
| Tues, 10/20 | Creating your play production | |
| Thurs, 10/22 | Rehearsal – Group 1 | Attend a performance of <i>Sweetest Swing in Baseball</i> and write a reflection on the staging, using the play summary provided. |
| Week 10 | | |
| Tues, 10/27 | Rehearsal – Group 1 Cast Group 3 scenes. | Group 2 directors, scene analysis due. |
| Thurs, 10/29 | Performances – Group 1 | |
| Week 11 | | |
| Tues, 11/3 | Rehearsal – Group 2. Cast Group 3 scenes. | Group 3 directors, scene analysis due |
| Thurs, 11/5 | Rehearsal – Group 2 | |
| Week 12 | | |
| Tues, 11/10 | Performance – Group 2 | Group 4 directors, scene analysis due |
| Thurs, 11/12 | Rehearsal – Group 3 | |
| Week 13 | | |
| Tues, 11/17 | Rehearsal – Group 3 | Attend a performance of <i>Our Town</i> and write a reflection on the staging. |
| Thurs, 11/19 | Performances – Group 3 | |
| Week 14 | | |
| Tues, 11/24 | Preparing for the in-person pitch. | |
| Thurs, 11/26 | No Class – Thanksgiving | |
| Week 15 | | |
| Tues, 12/1 | Rehearsal – Group 4 | |
| Thurs, 12/3 | Rehearsal – Group 4 | |
| Week 16 | | |
| Tues, 12/8 | Performances – Group 4 | |
| Exam week | | |
| Exam | Final Pitches delivered | |