

## **THTR 390 Theatre in Production – Assistant Directing**

UMBC Department of Theatre, Fall 2016

Mon – Friday 7:00 – 10:30 pm

Prof. Nyalls Hartman

Office PAHB 354

Office Hrs. T & R 1:00pm – 2:00pm

Other Hrs. by Appointment

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### **Theatre in Production – Proof**

This course is designed to provide students with practical theatrical production experience, rehearsing and presenting a fully-mounted theatrical production before a live audience as part of the UMBC Theatre Department's Production Season. Through practical experience students apply and clarify classroom studio actor/performance training techniques, and learn the additional expectations, dispositions, processes, and techniques of rehearsal and performance, modeling the professional theatre production process. This is an ensemble based course. Students will be trained and expected to work together in a positive, proactive, and professional disposition to create a unified, harmonious, experience culminating in a completed creative work of live theatre.

Our goals for the course are:

1. To provide students with practical application of classroom and directing/ performance training techniques;
2. To provide students with the opportunity to practice directing skills, while working with partners and a production team in the rehearsal and performance process.
3. To provide students with hands-on production experience wherein they will encounter and learn the expectations, dispositions, processes, and techniques of rehearsal and performance, modeling the professional theatre production process;
4. To empower students with the responsibility to positively affect the caliber of work undertaken by the Department of Theatre through their contributions to the performance company, as company members;
5. To learn, promote, and apply the mental, physical, and spiritual dispositions essential to working effectively as collaborative members of a professional performance ensemble.

As these are our goals, organization, a focus on process, and a professional disposition are the foundations on which this course is designed. As adult students, you are expected to be open and willing to investigate the many sides of the self that naturally arise in the development and understanding of character and actions in the re-creation of life and life issues. Further, you are expected to respond, incorporate, and play upon the exploration of your fellow actors as they explore and develop their process and technique during the course. As this exploration is a vital part of the rehearsal and production process, you will be graded on the level of your dedication to and depth within which you undertake this work; high-level

energy, professionalism, focus and commitment are required throughout the duration of every class and performance.

THTR 390 is a studio/laboratory class and as such is designed to investigate the reproduction of life and diverse life issues. Directing students are reminded that actors do not live as themselves in a play or a scene, but rather portray characters that demonstrate a multitude of life behaviors. Since good acting and directing requires an honest reflection of life (language, thought, and action), it is possible that material may arise in rehearsal that might approach your personal sensibilities, morals, or religious convictions. As directing students you are expected to actively undertake and engage within the character behaviors, choices, actions, and language required by the specific world, characters, or life contained in a play, scene, or exercise—even if contrary to your personal ethical, moral, gender, sexual, and/or religious convictions.

If for any reason a student believes that, as directing students observing actors portraying characters, they will be unable to perform their responsibilities because of a conflict with their personal convictions, they should speak with the professor immediately so we can pursue alternatives—including, but not limited to, the possibility of taking the course at another time with another instructor.

As a studio/laboratory class, Theatre in Production requires the utilization of the physical body and therefore body training. Techniques for learning the physical instrument as they are being taught may, at times, involve ‘hands-on’ guidance from the instructor. This physical contact is essential for proper training and will be undertaken only as needed for the growth of the student’s learning and technique. Respect to and for the student’s personal space will always be present and all contact will be undertaken with the utmost professional integrity.

UMBC’s Department of Theatre’s teaching philosophy follows the statement of the Department of Drama at University of California Irvine:

"In drama, the actor becomes a medium as well as a creator of art. Stage life, which may involve actions such as touching, laughing, crying, kissing, dancing, flirting, threatening, dueling, and/or fighting, is not something the actor merely mimics, but necessarily experiences in and with his or her own body and mind. The ancient maxim of Horace, 'in order to move the audience, the actor must first be moved himself,' is as valid today as when Horace stated it two thousand years ago: stage performance involves not only the externals of body and voice, but also the internals of longings and emotions.

Effective teaching in the drama disciplines, therefore, may often involve physical and/or emotional interventions that can be demonstrative, suggestive, and/or challenging. This has been true as long as theatre has existed."

In the UMBC Department of Theatre we view theatre training as a collaborative process, involving shared responsibilities. The central role of the instructor is to support students in this work. The theatre faculty will always do their best to clarify the intention of the work. However, it must be understood that acting is a psychophysical process and that intellectual understanding is not always the key factor. Students have a responsibility to enter the training process with a spirit of spontaneity, inquiry and a sense of discovery. If a student is ever confused about the intention of an exercise or a direction, the faculty encourage her or him to bring that particular concern to their attention as soon as possible. Students will never be penalized for questioning the process. Open discussion is a vital component of life in a university; it strengthens the relationship between faculty and students, actor and director.

## Course Requirements

Decorum – Professionalism is expected at all times. Respect the director, designers, crew, and fellow SMs and actors in all situations. Easygoing friendliness, courtesy, a willingness to be accommodating, grace-under-fire, and an upbeat, can-do attitude are some of the most important professional dispositions. Any report of insubordination, disrespectful attitude, or an inability or unwillingness to follow faculty instructions will not only result in a lower grade, but may also impact future production assignments and your status in the Theatre Department.

Cell phone use is not permitted in the rehearsal room or during any class activity. Phones and other electronic devices are to be turned off or silenced (no vibration) the moment you enter the studio and must remain off during the class period. Cell phones may be used only during breaks and only outside of the rehearsal room. Except during the research phase of the process, personal computers and text messaging are prohibited in the classroom or during any class activity. Only the stage managers, assistant director, or dramaturge will be allowed to utilize a computer and cell phone.

Beginning with tech and continuing through production, SMs will collect cell phones each evening at sign-in by the stage management team for the run of the rehearsal or production. Cell phones are to be returned following notes at the end of the evening; not a moment before.

Students are encouraged to bring a bottle of water to every class; no other food or drink is permitted. The rehearsal studio and the theatre are 'carry-in, carry-out' rooms! Please treat the rehearsal room as a sacred space for disciplined work. Avoid distracting others and avoid unnecessary chatter; I tend to work with great focus and quiet in the rehearsal room. I expect the same. Leave the outside, outside and focus on the rehearsal.

Attendance – **Attendance is mandatory, punctuality is mandatory; both are absolutely critical.** You are required to attend all class hours, unless otherwise specified in weekly call schedules. Rehearsals will be held during class times: Monday-Friday from 7:00 – 10:30 pm. Students should plan for additional evening and weekend rehearsals as we approach performance. Students will receive a detailed rehearsal schedule on the 1<sup>st</sup> day of rehearsal. As per department policy, all students must be available for all rehearsal hours. If an assistant director has an attendance conflict they are to inform the SM and director well in advance of the rehearsal. In the final weeks of rehearsal or production, no absences of any kind will be excused.

ADs are required to keep up-to-date with all scheduled fittings, makeup calls, photo calls, and/or any other meetings scheduled by the director, designers, production team, costume/scene shops, or publicity. To expedite meetings, fittings, and scheduling, it is expected that you will have your personal calendar, daily planner, and a copy of every company member's schedule at every rehearsal and on your person at all times during the day. Punctuality for all rehearsals and appointments is absolutely critical. More than one late arrival to any rehearsal or appointment will have a negative impact on your final grade.

Daily Calls – As ADs you can assume that you are called for every rehearsal. It is expected that you will arrive early to be on hand for any cast or SM questions or to handle any needed coordination. It is expected that you will check your UMBC email twice daily, minimum. It is expected that you will make all Calls and that you will remain informed and up-to-date. Prior to Tech week, we will usually take one 10 – minute break during nightly rehearsal.

Dress – Personal dress for ADs should be comfortable and enable you to be agile on your feet. Clothing should not be inappropriate or distracting, reveal excessive flesh, or limit your ability to undertake or demonstrate any manner of physical action/activity.

Preparation – Your daily assignment is to *prepare for rehearsal*. An AD must not rely solely on the director's instructions, but should take full initiative. The production may also require significant character research and you may be required to fulfill assignments connected to this research as the rehearsals proceed. These assignments may take the form of written work, oral reports, or something less formal.

ADs are expected to be prepared for every rehearsal. Preparation includes having on your person, a number of writing implements, a notepad for taking notes on scene work, blocking and other production related issues. An organized prompt book that contains a well-organized system for production-related paperwork: your syllabus, contact sheets, production calendar, character notes, rehearsal and production reports, notes from the director and/or the SM or dramaturge, designers, production team, or shops.

The AD's prompt book will be turned in for grading following curtain of the last performance and will be returned after grading. This will factor in the "Rehearsal Management" and "Paperwork" portion of your final grade.

Approach – AD's are expected to communicate clearly and diplomatically, and possess a positive, can-do attitude, and a professional disposition. They must appear with grace-under-fire in the face of the most challenging situations. The AD assists in setting the tone of how a Company interacts, responds to challenges and situations of difficulty. As a student AD, you are not expected to know everything but should take the initiative to ask questions and seek guidance from the director. You should also seek guidance from other faculty in areas of their expertise.

A good AD looks to solve problems before they occur and tries to anticipate needs before they arise. You should alert the director immediately regarding "situations requiring attention" or "situations requiring immediate attention" that are beyond the purview of your position. After addressing situations needing attention, you should debrief with the director so that you can both be on the same page and any additional actions or conversations can be arranged and taken care of. As a leader, it is critical that you not to allow internal frustration to impair your professionalism. You should solicit feedback on a regular basis, and communicate freely with the director about any aspect of the process.

Lines & Blocking – It is expected that the cast will learn their lines & blocking as we go along. ADs may be expected to take and keep updated, clear blocking notation and staging notes and to serve as a reference for the actors and the director in management of the stage picture. After we work a section, it is expected that the actor will start learning and go over their lines and blocking so that the next time we cover the scene they will be off-book and know the shape of what we are doing. It is likely you will need to clarify and remind them. ADs may be asked to assist with line-call to keep rehearsal running smoothly and to give actor notes on missed lines following each section or at the end of the rehearsal, accordingly.

Rehearsal Process – SMs are responsible to create and monitor daily sign-in sheets of the process. All company members are expected to sign-in daily. That means you are here & ready to go. This also means you are accessible and preparing to start. If you leave the immediate area inform the stage manager.

Everyone is mutually responsible for setting up and striking the room at the start and end of each class. Stage management may ask for help and it is expected that the Company will always help when called upon. Stage management calls are to be heeded and repeated back to them as a confirmation of understanding of the call. Stage managers are not to be secretaries, psychiatrists, maids, mothers or jailors. Stage managers are colleagues and are responsible for the operation of the production.

For safety, no one is to walk to their car or dorm alone following rehearsal. Please create a 'buddy' system to reduce risk. As it will be dark during the rehearsal process, please arrange to 'arrive' with company as well. Do not take this for granted.

Production Process – During performance, ADs are expected to watch the production, record running time, confirm the show ran as rehearsed and generally be available to assist as needed. Although we expect growth and excitement during the performance run, the production is to look and be performed as set by the director prior to the opening. The director is to be informed of any and all unauthorized changes immediately following the end of the performance. Unauthorized changes, loss of lines, missed-cues, or mistakes are to be addressed by the SM with the actor and cast immediately following the performance prior to dismissing the cast.

ADs should plan to attend all production talk-backs, pre- and post-show greetings, meetings with donors, or other events related to University or Department relations unless otherwise excused by the director.

Process Paper – An additional assignment will be given after the production closes in which you will be asked to reflect on your process and accomplishments. You will be given detailed guidelines and the due date later in the semester. This will factor in to the “artistic growth” portion of your final grade.

### **Additional Course & Student Information**

Student Services – Students who experience stress or other difficulties and find themselves in need of talking with someone regarding personal issues, trouble adjusting to the challenges of college life, anxiety, depression, or concerns about course work, social life, or the everyday pressures of being a college student are encouraged to contact University Counseling Services located in the Student Development & Success Center or online at [www.umbc.edu/counseling](http://www.umbc.edu/counseling) or over the wires at (410) 455-2472.

Academic Honesty – Students are expected to abide by all policies of conduct as specified within University policy.

#### **UMBC Honor Code statement:**

By enrolling in this course, each student assumes the responsibilities of an active participant in UMBC's scholarly community in which everyone's academic work and behavior are held to the highest standards of honesty. Cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, and helping others to commit these acts are all forms of academic dishonesty and they are wrong. Academic misconduct could result in disciplinary action that may include suspension or dismissal. To read the full policy on academic integrity, consult the UMBC Student Handbook, Faculty Handbook, or the UMBC Policies section of the UMBC directory.

## Grading Policy

Since this a major studio class, I will be assessing your progress frequently and rigorously. You should note that I have high expectations and am a hard grader. Your final grade will be based on your commitment to the process, how well you meet the course goals and expectations, your cooperative participation and artistic growth in the rehearsal & performance process, your attitude & professional behavior, your process notebook, and your end-of-semester process paper.

Always feel free to talk with the director about the process, how you are doing, and what you need from the director and other team members. Open communication and trust are keys to a successful AD/director relationship.

Your final grade will be based on the following in consultation with other faculty involved with the production.

|   |                |        |   |
|---|----------------|--------|---|
| 25% - Communication, Initiative, and Attitude | Grading scale: | 90-100 | A |
| 25% - Research & Preparation                  |                | 80-89  | B |
| 25% - Rehearsals & Performances               |                | 70-79  | C |
| 25% - Paperwork & Artistic Growth.            |                | 65-70  | D |
|   |                | 0-64   | F |

**A** = Consistently exceptional work. Student meets requirements of rehearsal task, performance or assignment, understands concepts and applies them to the text; makes constant demands on themselves to risk the unknown. Takes responsibility for his/her process. Rehearses/performs with discipline, spontaneity, nuance, and joy. Faces obstacles and transcends them. Responds immediately to coaching, and is able to self-coach. Easily takes leadership pays conscientious and generous attention to other members of the company; gives detailed & involved feedback to others when asked. Process paper is very well-written—articulate, specific, honest, rigorous. Demonstrates supportive attitude, maintains focus and scrupulous professional behavior at all times.

**B** = Superior work. Student meets requirements of rehearsal task, performance or assignment, understands concepts and applies them to the text. Takes responsibility for his/her process. Rehearses/performs with some discipline, spontaneity and joy. Faces obstacles and has occasional breakthroughs. Responds well to coaching. Pays conscientious and generous attention to the ensemble; gives detailed feedback when asked. Process paper is well-written—articulate, specific, honest. Demonstrates supportive attitude, maintains focus and scrupulous professional behavior at all times.

**C** = Satisfactory work. Student meets requirements of rehearsal task, performance or assignment, understands concepts and applies them to the text. Responds to coaching and gives feedback. Demonstrates supportive attitude, professional behavior. Process paper is articulate & honest.

**D** = Less-than-satisfactory work. Student fails to meet the standards of a “C” grade in one or more aspects. Requires frequent outside help, extra coaching, or disciplinary action.

**F** = Consistent failure to meet requirements of rehearsal tasks, performance or assignment, and/or consistently fails to meet any of the standards of a “C” grade.

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**CRITICAL DATES:**

1<sup>st</sup> Rehearsal: September 6, 2016  
Rehearsal Schedule: M – F 7:00 – 10:30pm  
Extended Hours: October 10, 2016 7:00 – 11:00pm  
Saturday Requirements: October 15, 2016 6:00 – 10:00pm  
October 22, 2016 (10/12) 11:00am – 11:00pm  
Tech Week Begins: October 19, 2016  
Performances (5): October 27 – 30, 2016  
(Matinee Saturday & Sunday 2:00pm)  
Strike: October 31 & November 1, 2016 - Time TBD