

THE 3234 – Diversity and Multiculturalism in American Theatre  
3 Credit Hours – 1:55 p.m.–2:45 p.m. MWF  
Spring 2026

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**Instructor:** Ryan Hope Travis

**Office Hours:** 3:00pm-5:00pm Fri. + By Appt. @ SoTD, McGuire Pavillion Room 226

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**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.
5. Influential Playwrights and Works: Study of key playwrights and their contributions to the development of diverse images in American theatre.

**Student Learning Outcomes:**

- A) Examine the portrayal of marginalized communities in American theatre from the Colonial period to the present.
- B) Analyze how race, gender, sexuality, and other identities are depicted and the impact of these portrayals.
- C) Identify key playwrights and their contributions to the development of diverse images in American theatre.
- D) 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:**

Rivera, José. *References to Salvador Dalí Make Me Hot and Other Plays*. New York: Theatre Communications Group, 2002.

Published plays and reference materials, which may be obtained from the campus libraries, will also be utilized by the student in class. Essays and selected readings will be posted on Canvas. Handouts may be distributed as well.

**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.

**Assignments:**Creative Composition: A Reaction

For *F. Punk Junkies*, our fourth SoTD production of the season, you will submit a 1-page (250-500 word) creative reflection/composition (see Canvas Assignments tab for due dates and detailed expectations). Your composition *should not* be a synopsis of the play. Rather, attention should be paid to the themes, story, conflict, etc. Draw parallels between what you observe and what we discuss in class. Be prepared to share your rendering in class. (10pts)

Mini-Seminar

You will prepare and lead a 15–20 minute mini-seminar on a topic connected to that week's theme. This is *not* a lecture; *it is* your opportunity to be the captain of your own philosophical/pedagogical ship. You may use PowerPoint or Canva to help frame your time, but your primary goal is to engage the class in deep, critical thinking. Choose a weekly theme, then identify an aspect—such as a key playwright, movement, or historical moment—that examines how diverse people and marginalized voices are represented in and/or shape American theatre. Your mini-seminar should demonstrate thoughtful analysis, meaningful examples, and active class engagement. Upload your bibliography and/or slideshow to Canvas by 11:59 PM on the day of your presentation. This assignment is designed to deepen your understanding of the course material while strengthening your research and presentation skills (see the Canvas Assignments tab for due dates and detailed expectations). (10 pts)

Weekly Discussion Posts

You will submit a total of 10 posts throughout the semester, choosing the weeks to which you respond. *At least three posts* must be 1–2 minute videos (shared as unpublished YouTube links), and the remaining posts may be a 150–250 word commentary. Each post will respond to a prompt provided by the instructor. Some prompts will engage with peer-reviewed essays written about a play, person, genre, or period in American performance history, while others may examine media trends relevant to our class topics. In this course, “theatre” and “performance” are considered broadly, giving you space to explore a wide range of materials. The purpose of this assignment is to help you practice reading and synthesizing arguments, connecting coursework to your everyday life, and more. See the Canvas Discussions tab for due dates, parameters, and prompts. (5 points each, 50 pts total.)

### 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 have not studied. Projects may explore or celebrate the rich history, culture, and contributions of marginalized communities in American theatre. The project should reflect your understanding of the themes, styles and/or significant figures as they pertain to the subject of this course. Work may be a performance piece, visual art, multimedia project, documentary, and more. The possibilities are infinite. This is a two-part project: presentation and reflection. Presentations will occur during the last weeks of class, approximately 7-10 minutes in length. Reflections will consist of a 500-700 word commentary. Instructions and rubrics will be discussed in class and shared on Canvas. (20pts)

Creative Reaction: <i>F. Punk Junkies</i>	10pts
Mini-Seminar	10pts
Weekly Discussion Posts	50pts
Final Research Project	20pts
Participation	10pts
<b>Total</b>	<b>100pts</b>

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.

### **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
E	< 60pts to 0pts

**Grading Policy:**

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 is 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.

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

**Attendance Policy:**

We learn from each other. Your presence is important to the collective learning process. Therefore:

- 1 tardy is permitted
- Per 2 tardies = 1 unexcused absence
- Per 1 unexcused absence = 5 points from final grade

You are encouraged to access the current UF attendance policy [here](#).

**Attendance at UF 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.

**Policy on Responding to Students:**

A 24 to 48 hour reply to emails/Canvas message is typical. Submitted documents are typically returned within 2 weeks after the due date.

**Late Assignment Policy:**

Assignments submitted 24hrs beyond the due date will receive a 1-point 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.

Make-up assignments may include a 1-page (500 word minimum) reflection essay, applying topics discussed in class to an assigned SoTD mainstage (or approved) production.

**Our Honor Code on AI (Artificial Intelligence) 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.

**Academic Policies & Resources:**

You may find UF Academic Policies, Academic Resources, and Campus Health and Wellness Resources, [here](#).

**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.ua.ufl.edu/students/](http://gatorevals.ua.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.bluer.com/ufl/](http://ufl.bluer.com/ufl/). Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at [gatorevals.ua.ufl.edu/public-results/](http://gatorevals.ua.ufl.edu/public-results/).

## 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

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

Key Figures/Plays: Tony Kushner, Harvey Fierstein

### WEEK 8: Spring Break

### 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 time for certain sections based on how the work progresses this semester.*

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