

# THR 332 – Stage Directing I

Location: FAC – Lab Theatre      Credits: 3.0

Time: F 10:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

Prerequisites: THR F121, F215, F335

**Instructor**: Dr. Brian Cook

Office: FAC – Theatre 104

Office Hours: Thursdays from 1-3 p.m. or by appointment

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## Required texts

1. *The Director's Craft: A Handbook for the Theatre*, Katie Mitchell.

2. *In the Next Room (or The Vibrator Play)*, Sarah Ruhl

The Mitchell book is available on 2-hour reserve in the Rasmuson Library, and the play is available digitally through the library. However, I recommend that you either rent or purchase a physical copy of the Ruhl so that you have the script with you in class.

3. Additional readings as provided by instructor.

## Course Description

History, theory and basic concepts of stage direction. Interpretive script analysis, creative visualization, conceptualization, use of space, and focus, working with actors and designers and possible direction of short scenes.

## Course Goals and Student Outcomes

This course focuses on how directors prepare, rehearse and present theatrical works.

Throughout this course, students will:

- Gain a more complete knowledge of the skills of directors, including selecting scripts, script analysis, blocking strategies, stage pictures, characterization, working with actors, etc.
- Work with actors to present a scripted scene.
- Learn techniques for researching past productions of a given script in order to inform and enliven their productions.
- Document the entire directing process, from initial concept to performance.

## Instructional methods

1. This is an activity-based course, and students will both learn and demonstrate directing skills in the classroom.
2. Information will be provided by lectures, readings and in-class exercises.
3. Students will complete projects which develop skills in script analysis, communicating ideas to designers, and working with actors.
4. Students will assemble a director's notebook with various elements that document the process of preparing, rehearsing and performing a 10-minute scene.
5. Students will direct a 10-minute scene.
6. Students should be prepared to utilize various online technologies, including Google Apps, Blackboard and (possibly) Facebook for this course.

## Course calendar (subject to change)

**Reading listed on a given day is to be read PRIOR to that class meeting.**

<p><b>F Sept. 5</b> - Syllabus, Introduction What is a director? What is “production process”? Who is on a “production team”? What are you afraid of? “Theatricality” – why do it on stage? In-Class Project: Tableaux</p>
<p><b>F Sept. 12 – Meet in RASM 301</b> – Staging Text: Realism Read: Mitchell, Chapters 1-2 and Ruhl, <i>In the Next Room</i> Discussion of the Play Projecting Problems In-Class Project: Script Analysis (research, etc.) [Library trip]</p>
<p><b>F Sept. 19</b> – Scoring the Scene/Metaphor in Production Read: Mitchell, Chapter 3-4 Discussion of readings In-Class Project: Script Breakdown; staging a couple scenes</p>
<p><b>F Sept. 26</b> – Who are you working with and where? Read: Mitchell, Chapter 8, and Reading Pack on Blackboard (Wainstein, Chapters 2-3 and Baldwin, Part I) Discussion of readings In-Class Projects: Producing/Theatre Management; Stage Management Assign Proposal</p>
<p><b>F Oct. 3</b> - Working with Designers <b>Directing Proposal due</b> Read Mitchell, Chapter 6 and Black, Chapters 2, 7 (Blackboard)</p>
<p><b>F Oct. 10</b> – Production Meetings In-Class Project: production meetings (<i>ITNR</i>) <b>Assignment due: Design presentations (<i>ITNR</i>)</b></p>
<p><b>F Oct. 17</b> – Movement and Pictures on Stage Read: Wainstein, Ch. 12 and Black, Ch. 8 (Blackboard) Discuss Readings Staging basics and Blocking In-Class Project: Groundplan; Augusto Boal work (mirroring/living pictures/image theatre)</p>
<p><b>F Oct. 24</b> - Staging Text: Non-Realism and Other Kinds of Spaces Read: Beckett, <i>Not I</i> and Wainstein, Ch. 13 (Blackboard) Discuss readings Alternative blocking patterns Anticipating Problems In-Class Project: Script Analysis 2</p>
<p><b>F Oct. 31</b> – Work on YOUR scripts – bring your computers, if you have them In-Class Project: breakdowns, character descriptions, analysis, questions and answers (You will show off your work at the end of class.)</p>
<p><b>F Nov. 7</b> – Auditions and Casting Read Black, Chapter 9 and Wainstein, Ch. 9 (Blackboard) Discuss readings In-Class Project: Reading Resumes and Headshots; Casting <i>ITNR</i></p>
<p><b>F Nov. 14</b> - Working with Actors Read Mitchell, Chapter 5, 9 and Wainstein, Chapter 11 (Blackboard) Discuss readings</p>

Stanislavski Basics In-Class Projects: Actor coaching; Audition prep <b>**Schedule Auditions for this evening or weekend</b>
<b>F Nov. 21</b> – Rehearsal techniques Read: Mitchell, Chapter 10-11 Discuss readings Use exercises from Wainstein, Ch. 18 In-Class Project: Mask work; Collaboration
<b>Sat., Nov. 22</b> – Split Knuckle workshop – <b>required for all</b>
<b>F Nov. 28</b> – <b>No Class, Thanksgiving holiday</b>
<b>F Dec. 5</b> – Tech, tech, tech Read: Mitchell, Chapter 12 Discuss reading In-Class Project: Tech for final showings <b>Split Knuckle feedback due</b>
<b>F Dec. 12</b> – Prepare/organize for final showings Read: Mitchell, Chapter 13 Discuss Readings
<b>Sat., Dec. 13 and Sun., Dec. 14 - Final scene showings, 6-8 p.m.</b> Everyone must attend both showings.
<b>FINAL “EXAM”:</b> <b>M Dec. 15 10:15 a.m.-12:15 p.m.</b> – wrap up and discussion of scenes

### Course policies

**Participation:** Students are expected to read the material assigned for each day’s class and to fully participate in class discussions. The instructor reserves the right to conduct pop quizzes or to assign short written papers if students regularly fail to complete reading assignments.

**Policy on late work:** Any written work turned in after the due date will be accepted for up to three days after the due date (i.e. if due on Friday, it can be turned in through Monday), but late work will be marked down 15% of the original total for each day beyond the due date. (For example, if an assignment is worth 100 points, on the first day after the due date, it will be worth a maximum of 85 points, etc.)

**Policy on missed in-class work:** If a student is not in attendance on a day where an in-class scene performance is due to be completed, he or she will be allowed to make up the performance but will receive only half credit for that presentation. Partners who were in class on the due date will not be penalized, only the student who was absent.

**Attendance:** Mandatory. However, students are allowed a total of *one absence* with no penalty. This absence does not need to be pre-approved and may be used for any reason, including sickness, leaving early for a trip, other needs. But note: for every absence over one, *the student’s final grade will be lowered by 1/3 of a letter grade.* Exceptions to this policy will be made in the case of a legitimate family emergency or medical absence. What qualifies as a legitimate absence will be determined by the instructor on a case-by-case basis, and students will be asked to demonstrate solid proof (i.e. – doctor’s notes). Tardiness is also unacceptable; 3 tardies will equal one absence for attendance-tracking purposes.

**Clothing:** Dress for maximum freedom of movement. You will be stretching, crawling, rolling, jumping, flying, etc., so dress accordingly. Wear clothes that are clean, comfortable, and cover your body.

**Rehearsal Room/Classroom:** Focus and concentration is paramount in any acting class. It is required that you treat our rehearsal room as a creative space and keep it free from distractions. Please keep all conversations outside in the hallway. Please turn off all alarms before entering the classroom. Laptops, tablets and cell phones will merely distract students from participating in class work and their use is not permitted at any time. Participation points will be deducted for students texting or web-surfing during class time.

**Academic Honesty** (from page 52 of the UAF 2013 -14 Course Catalog):

Honesty is a primary responsibility of you and every other UAF student. The following are common guidelines regarding academic integrity:

1. Students will not collaborate on any quizzes, in-class exams, or take-home exams that contribute to their grade in a course, unless the course instructor grants permission. Only those materials permitted by the instructor may be used to assist in quizzes and examinations.
2. Students will not represent the work of others as their own. A student will attribute the source of information not original with himself or herself (direct quotes or paraphrases) in compositions, theses, and other reports.
3. No work submitted for one course may be submitted for credit in another course without the explicit approval of both instructors.

Alleged violations of the Code of Conduct will be reviewed in accordance with procedures specified in regents' policy, university regulations and UAF rules and procedures. For additional information and details about the Student Code of Conduct, contact the dean of students or visit [www.alaska.edu/bor](http://www.alaska.edu/bor).

## **Evaluation**

Students will be evaluated on the following assignments:

- Participation (18 days @ 10 points each) - 170 points (34%)
- Split Knuckle Observation – 30 points (6%)
- Concept presentation – *In the Next Room* – 50 points (10%)
- Directing proposal – 50 points (10%)
- Director's notebook – 100 points (20%)
- Final Scene Showing – 100 points (20%)
- **Total: 500 points**

**Final grades will be based on the number of points acquired and the following scale:**

## **Explanation of Graded Items**

*Grades for all assignments are absolute, and are not subject to a curve.*

### **Participation (17 days @ 10 points per day = 170 points)**

1. Students will be assessed daily in their participation in class. Points will be deducted for not engaging in discussions, using technology inappropriately (i.e. – sending text messages, checking Facebook), tardiness, etc.

### **Split Knuckle Workshop (30 points)**

1. Each student must attend the Split Knuckle workshop and write a 400-word summation of things they are taking away from the workshop and/or the production of *Endurance*.
2. **Due: Dec. 5** in class time. A separate assignment sheet will be provided.

### **In-Class Concept Presentation (50 points)**

1. Each student will do an in-class presentation on his/her concept for Sarah Ruhl's *In the Next Room*. A detailed assignment sheet will be provided.

### **Directing Proposal (50 points)**

1. Each student must write a complete proposal for the short play or scene they wish to direct for their final presentation. A separate assignment sheet will detail the required elements.

### **Director's Book (100 points)**

1. Students will, simultaneous to directing their scene, assemble a binder with the following elements:
  - a. Approved directing proposal
  - b. Inspirational Photographs demonstrating concept
  - c. Research on the play and/or its playwright (premiere, past productions, playwright bio, other works)
  - d. Rehearsal schedule
  - e. Director's Log (with entries for each rehearsal)
  - f. Character descriptions of all the MAIN characters
  - g. A script breakdown by scene/character
  - h. Director's program notes
  - i. Final assessment of the performance
2. A detailed assignment sheet will be provided to students during the second week of classes.

### **Final Scene Showing (100 points)**

1. Each student will present a MINIMUM 10, MAXIMUM 15-minute play (or scene from a larger play) at a public performance in the final week of classes. This performance must be rehearsed. Part of this grade will be for evaluating other students' performances.

### **Support Services/Writing Center**

UAF Student Support Services office is located in 514 Gruening Building, phone number 474-6844, website: <http://www.uaf.edu/sss> and e-mail: [trio.sss@uaf.edu](mailto:trio.sss@uaf.edu)

The UAF Writing Center is in 801 Gruening Building, phone number 474-5314, website: <http://www.uaf.edu/english/writingcenter>. It offers one-on-one writing tutorials for any piece of writing that a student brings in. Even if you are in the brainstorming phase of the writing process, tutors will work with you to begin developing ideas to turn into a fully-formed text. They also offer easy computer use and free printing.

### **Disability Services**

The Office of Disability Services is located in Room 208 Whitaker Building, phone number 474-5655. Disability services implements the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and ensures that UAF students have equal access to the campus and course materials. I will work with Disabilities Services to provide reasonable accommodation to students with disabilities, though students should make arrangements early in the semester for any accommodations they require