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# TH - 5303

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## Conceptualization and Composition

*Fall 2018 - - Tuesday and Thursday 12:30-1:50, TH 209*

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Office Hours: Monday 11-2, Thur 2-3 or by appointment



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Texas State University, Department of Theatre and Dance 2018

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# Introduction

*“to create theatre that is full of terror, beauty, love, and belief in  
the innate human potential for change.”*

-Anne Bogart

**William W. Lewis PhD**, is a scholar, teacher, director, and performance collaborator. Will is passionate and curious about expanding the boundaries of performance through the integration of digital technologies as participatory tools. His research and practice is focused on performance using alternative and devised forms of storytelling that include site specificity, locative media, gaming, projection, and virtual reality. Will received a PhD in Theatre and Performance Studies from the University of Colorado Boulder, a MA in Theatre History and Criticism from CUNY/Hunter College, and a BFA in Performance with an emphasis in directing and performance art from the University of Memphis. He has been a member of the Attic Theatre Company in Los Angeles and First Look Theatre Company housed inside NYU's Department of Dramatic Writing where he worked with MFA playwrights. Will has also worked as an independent film and theatre practitioner in NYC, Los Angeles, and regionally. Selected professional directing credits include *A Doll's House*, *Sight Unseen*, *The Dumbwaiter*, *Runaways*, and *All in the Timing*. His recent directing projects at the University of Colorado that implemented technology, devised performance, and physical theatre include *Woyzeck: The Endless Cycle 1.0*, *Everyman*, *Quantified Self*, and *Media Mediated*. *Woyzeck* was selected as a KCACTF Region 7 finalist in 2016 and *Quantified Self* was funded by a prestigious Knight Foundation Media Innovation Grant. You can find examples of Will's production work and publications at: [www.williamwlewis.net](http://www.williamwlewis.net)

## Philosophy

I believe that the goal of education is not necessarily for me to teach you exactly what I know, but rather to act as a guide allowing you agency to learn in your own way. Each student has different needs and abilities and I attempt to match my knowledge and experiences to fit your expectations. Each student will have varying levels of talent, intelligence, and ability, but it is what you do with your given assets that count. Your curiosity, motivation, and discipline to excel will ultimately determine how successful you will be in coursework and in life. I expect you to come prepared and willing to ask questions about the work as well as how you interact with the world around you. I will do my best to encourage your curiosity and show you how and where to find the answers to your questions. I believe there are few wrong answers as long as you take the time and effort to think critically and consciously. We may not always agree in the class, but out of the disagreement, usually fruitful discussion will result. Most importantly, I believe the necessity of taking responsibility for your actions and being a thoughtful and respectful member of the world.

# Course Guidelines

## Course Description

This course investigates conceiving and developing a production concept and/or production context. It also explores how the concept/context is useful in the formation of a production plan for staging/exhibition. Finally, it examines potential production implications that result from conceptualization and context, as well as composition implications.

## Course Objectives

The goal of this class is to examine the job the theatrical team as a holistic unit involved in the collaborative practice of conceptualizing and staging theatre and performative events. The primary angle of attack for the class will be to deconstruct historical hierarchies placed within the process. Our exploration will focus on four main areas: imagination, analysis, planning, and collaboration. We will approach the class as an incubator for developing ideas and implementing plans for putting those ideas into action on the “stage.”

## Learning Outcomes:

- Develop vocabulary related to “design” principles
- Expand strategies for collaborative pre-production research
- Develop an increased capacity for speaking with clarity and confidence about conceptual elements
- Increase ability to synthesize imagination and analysis
- Develop strategies for implementing conceptual choices during rehearsals and “staging”
- Clearly communicate conceptual choices to actors in a rehearsal setting, and to potential producers

## Expectations

As a graduate level course, there will be extensive readings assigned to help develop a synergy between theory and practice. Because this course operates by blending the two, much of the “learning” will come from discussion in class. In order to succeed, regular attendance, being prepared, and showing a positive willingness to engage, negotiate, and collaborate is a necessity!

Some of the subject matter/exercises in this course may become controversial and emotional. The craft of theatre and performance can be a difficult art to master and requires a lot of dedication, self discipline, self understanding, and willingness to listen and compromise. Often you will be asked to be critiqued by and to critique your fellow classmates. I expect that each student come prepared to speak truthfully and respectfully so as to create a safe and supportive environment.

## Required Purchases/Materials

### Textbooks:

*The Director's Craft: A Handbook for the Theatre* by Katie Mitchell

*The Visual Laboratory of Robert Lepage* by Ludovic Fouquet

*Design Fundamentals: Notes on Visual Elements and Principles of Composition* by Rose Gonnella, Christopher J. Navetta, and Max Friedman \*\*\* (Recommended)

Readings via TRACS

### **Inspiration/Texts:**

*A Doll's House* - adapted by Frank McGuinness

*What Happened After Nora Left her Husband or The Pillars of Society* by Elfriede Jelinek (TRACS)

*The Blue Dragon* (Graphic Novel Edition) by Robert Lepage and Michelle Michaud

*Woyzeck* adapted by Neil LaBute

Group Inspiration Material

### **Play Tickets:**

Mr. Burns: A Post Electric Play, October 2 - 7

Imagine That, October 11-14

The Crucible, October 30 - November 4

How I Learned to Drive, November 8-11

Cabaret November, 13 -18

## **Team Assignments**

You will work in teams of two to five to conceptualize and plan your production projects. Team assignments will be rotated throughout the semester. The majority of your team assignments will involve collaborative meetings outside of class. Please exchange phone numbers and arrange rehearsal times as soon as you receive an assignment. Theatre is a collaborative art – one in which we all depend on the commitment of others. Your conscientious participation in all teamwork is expected and will have an impact on your final grade.

## **Attendance Policy**

Each student is allowed 1 absence, it does not matter whether it is “excused,” you only get 1. After that your grade will drop 10% per absence. Any absences beyond 3 and you cannot pass the course. Absences on your scheduled presentation days are not allowed and will result in a 0 for your assignment. Arriving more than 5 minutes late for class will count as an absence.

\* As graduate students, I promote your participation in professional development opportunities. If you need to miss class for a conference, interview, or other career advancement meeting please discuss with me suitable ways of making up the time missed in class.

# Course Assignments

## Readings/Viewings

You are expected to come to each class prepared to discuss any reading assignments or videos detailed on your syllabus or assigned during class. Readings will come from material on the course TRACS webpage and from required books.

## Material Selection/Practical Projects

While this class does not emphasize the rehearsal process of performance creation, we will have hands on and practical implementation of our conceptualization and composition projects through concept presentations. The three primary projects that make up the majority of your grade include: a two-part assignment (Two Doll Houses) on theatrical conceptualization and staging, employing aesthetics from Realism, Epic Theatre, and Postdramatic Theatre; a project focusing on the adaptation of material from another genre (film, novel, comic book, poem, song, visual art, etc), and an experiential project (Immersive, Participatory, Game Play, etc.) that must include an aspect of digital collaboration/participation. We will also have multiple mini-projects where you will demo aspects of conceptualization and composition.

## Assignments

Director's/Designer's Statement and Presentations - 50

Architect's Statement - 50

Abstract Composition Workshop - 50

Midsummer Concept - 50

Project #1 Two Doll Houses - 250

Project #2 Adaptation - 250

Project #3 Experiential Performance - 200

Written Journal/Performance Assignments - 100

**Total Points = 1000**

<b>940 - Higher A</b>	<b>730-759 C</b>
<b>900-939 A-</b>	<b>700-729 C-</b>
<b>860-899 B+</b>	<b>660-699 D+</b>
<b>830-859 B</b>	<b>630-659 D</b>
<b>800-829 B-</b>	<b>600-629 D-</b>
<b>760-799 C+</b>	<b>599-Below F</b>

# Schedule

Date	Assignment/Reading Due	In Class Activity
T - Aug 28	Read Syllabus	Introductions and Class Breakdown Hone Syllabus with Student Suggested Readings
Th- Aug 30	Come Prepared with Additional Readings/ Inspiration for Course  Read Lewis - <i>Designing Interaction</i>	What is a Collaboration and Conceptualization?
T - Sept 4	Read Mitchell - Chapter 6  Read - Bickerstaff <i>Creative Process</i>	The Creative Process
TH - Sept 6	Artist Statement's Due	<b>Present Artist Profiles - Discuss</b>
T - Sept 11	Read - <i>Blue Dragon</i>  Read- <i>Ex Machina</i> Excerpts	Discuss Visualization and Creating Stories with Pictures
Th - Sept 13	Read <i>Midsummer Night's Dream</i>  <b>(Bring Inspirational Material)</b>	Brainstorm Concepts for Midsummer
T - Sept 18	Read - Bly <i>Rapid Eye Movement</i>  Read - Fouquet Part 1 (1-55)  <b>Midsummer Concept Due</b>	Juxtaposition - Lepage and Your Vision
TH - Sept 20	Read Fuchs - <i>Visit to a Small Planet</i>  Read Mitchell - Chapter 3	Discuss The World of the "Play" and Big Ideas
T - Sept 25	Read <i>Doll's House</i> and <i>What Happened...</i>  Watch Mabou Mines Clips/ Toneelgroep Ibsen Clips	Discuss and Brainstorm (Designer's Perspective)
Th - Sept 27	Read <i>Doll's House</i> and <i>What Happened...</i> Continued  Research Ostermeier Ibsen Productions	Discuss and Brainstorm (Director's Perspective)
T - Oct 2	Read Rush - Chapters 11, 15  Read - Lehman 1-66	Discuss: Action/Plot/Characters in Realism, Epic, and Postdramatic
TH- Oct 4	Doll House Continued	<b>In-Class Staging and Composition</b>

Date	Assignment/Reading Due	In Class Activity
T - Oct 9	<b>Mr. Burns Response Due</b>	Discuss: <i>Mr Burns</i>
TH - Oct 11		<b>Project 1 - Two Doll Houses Presentations</b>
T - Oct 16	Read - Radosavljevic 1-80 <b>Imagine That Response Due</b>	Discuss Adaptation - Text/Non-Text/ Idea to Stage
TH - Oct 18	<b>Bring research on a director/designer working with Adaptation*</b>	<b>Presentations on Professional Inspiration</b>
T - Oct 23	Read - Lewis/Johnson <i>21st Century Perception</i> Read <i>Woyzeck</i> / Watch <i>Woyzeck</i> clips	Discuss <i>Woyzeck</i> Adaptations
TH - Oct 25	Adaptation Project <b>Choose Adaptation Projects</b>	<b>Present Inspiration Materials</b>
T - Oct 30	Adaptation Project Cont.	In Class Workshop
TH - Nov 1	Adaptation Project Cont.	In Class Workshop
T - Nov 6	<b>Crucible Response Due</b> Adaptation Project Cont.	In Class Workshop
TH - Nov 8	Adaptation Project Cont.	<b>Project 2 (Adaptation) Presentations</b>
T - Nov 13	<b>How I Learned to Drive Response Due</b>	Discuss <i>How I Learned to Drive</i>
TH - Nov 15	Read - Pearson - <i>Site Specific Theatre</i> Read - Gilmore and Pine - <i>Experience Economy Revisited</i> Read	Discuss Experiential Projects
T - Nov 20	Read - Benford and Giannachi - <i>Mixed Reality Performance</i> Read - Machon <i>Immersive Theatre</i> <b>Cabaret Response Due</b>	Discuss Trajectories
TH - Nov 22	Thanksgiving Break	No Class



Date	Assignment/Reading Due	In Class Activity
T - Nov 27	Read - Salen and Zimmerman - <i>Games Design Fundamentals</i> Read - Fouquet - Part 65-195	
TH - Nov 29		In Class Workshop (Trajectory Planning)
T - Dec 4		In Class Workshop (Execution Planning)
TH - Dec 6	<b>Architect's Statement Due</b>	In Class Workshop (Putting it all Together)
TBD	<b>Final Exam</b>	<b>Project 3 - Presentations (With Invited Guests)</b>

This schedule is subject to change.

It is against department and university policy to discuss grade electronically. If you wish to discuss your grades please set up a time to talk with the instructor during office hours.

# University/Course Policies

## ACADEMIC DISHONESTY AND HONOR CODE

Academic dishonesty (which includes plagiarism, copying someone else's work, falsifying data, or unauthorized collaboration) is a serious offense and will result in disciplinary action. Don't do it. The Honor Code - <http://www.txstate.edu/honorcodecouncil/Academic-Integrity.html>. Purposefully engaging in acts that go against the honor code policy can cause an immediate zero in the course.

## CELLPHONE AND LAPTOP USAGE

Always be respectful of the abilities, opinions, focus and comfort of your fellow students. Please keep cell phones silenced all times while in the classroom. You may use them to take notes or to record material but if you are using the technology in a distracting manner you will be requested turn it off. I encourage the use of laptops or tablets but ask that you do so only to engage in activities directly related to what is happening in the class at the moment, such as taking notes.

## POLICY ON DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT

Texas State forbids discrimination in any university activity or program. Faculty members, staff employees, and students who discriminate against others in connection with a university activity or

program will be considered to have violated this policy and are subject to disciplinary sanctions. This policy is carried over to individuals in the class. Any discriminatory conduct expressed in the class will be subject to proper disciplinary actions as prescribed by University policy. Discrimination = conduct directed at a specific individual or a group of identifiable individuals that subjects the individual or group to treatment that adversely affects their employment or education because of their race, color, national origin, age, sex, religion, disability, veterans' status, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.

## **ACCOMMODATIONS FOR A DISABILITY**

If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit to your professor a letter from Disability Services in a timely manner (for exam accommodations provide your letter at least one week prior to the exam) so that your needs can be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities.

## **ACCOMMODATIONS BECAUSE OF RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE**

It is the responsibility of every instructor to clearly explain his or her procedures about absences due to religious observances in the course syllabus so that all students are fully informed, in writing, near the beginning of each semester's classes. Campus policy regarding religious observances states that faculty must make reasonable accommodation for them and in so doing, be careful not to inhibit or penalize those students who are exercising their rights to religious observance. Faculty should be aware that a given religious holiday may be observed with very different levels of attentiveness by different members of the same religious group and thus may require careful consideration to the particulars of each individual case.

## **CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR**

Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Those who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, color, culture, religion, creed, politics, veteran's status, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity and gender expression, age, disability, and nationalities. Inappropriate behavior in the classroom may result in a request for the offending student to leave class. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records. Useful Links:

Code of Student Conduct -<http://www.dos.txstate.edu/handbook/rules/cosc.html>