

THA 3755G, African-American Theatre: Historical and Contemporary

Banner/Catalog Information (Coversheet)

1. ☐ New Course or ☒ Revision of Existing Course
2. **Course prefix and number:** THA 3755G
3. **Short title:** African-American Theatre
4. **Long title:** African-American Theatre: Historical and Contemporary
5. **Hours per week:** 3 Class 0 Lab 3 Credit
6. **Terms:** ☐ Fall ☐ Spring ☐ Summer ☒ On demand
7. **Initial term:** ☐ Fall ☒ Spring ☐ Summer Year: 2016
8. **Catalog course description:** This course will trace the development of African-American theatre from African ritual and slavery to its emergence as a dynamic and influential movement in the 20th century and beyond. Special attention will be given to artists who have had a lasting impact on U.S. and world theatre. No background in or knowledge of theatre is required. WI

9. **Course attributes:**

General education component: Fine Arts

☒ Cultural diversity ☐ Honors ☐ Writing centered ☒ Writing intensive ☐ Writing active

10. **Instructional delivery**

Type of Course:

☒ Lecture ☐ Lab ☐ Lecture/lab combined ☐ Independent study/research

☐ Internship ☐ Performance ☐ Practicum/clinical

☒ Other, specify: Asynchronous/synchronous interaction via online course delivery system

Mode(s) of Delivery:

☒ Face to Face ☒ Online ☐ Study Abroad

☐ Hybrid, specify approximate amount of on-line and face-to-face instruction_____

11. Course(s) to be deleted from the catalog once this course is approved. None.

12. **Equivalent course(s):** None.

a. **Are students allowed to take equivalent course(s) for credit?** ☐ Yes ☐ No

13. **Prerequisite(s):** ENG 1001G and 1002G.

a. **Can prerequisite be taken concurrently?** ☐ Yes ☒ No

b. **Minimum grade required for the prerequisite course(s)?** "C" or better.

c. Use Banner coding to enforce prerequisite course(s)? x Yes ___ No

d. Who may waive prerequisite(s)?

___ No one x Chair x Instructor ___ Advisor ___ Other (specify)

14. Co-requisite(s): None.

15. Enrollment restrictions

a. Degrees, colleges, majors, levels, classes which may take the course: All students eligible to take 3000-level classes.

b. Degrees, colleges, majors, levels, classes which may not take the course: None.

16. Repeat status: x May not be repeated ___ May be repeated once with credit

17. Enter the limit, if any, on hours which may be applied to a major or minor: ___

18. Grading methods: x Standard ___ CR/NC ___ Audit ___ ABC/NC

19. Special grading provisions:

___ Grade for course will not count in a student's grade point average.

___ Grade for course will not count in hours toward graduation.

___ Grade for course will be removed from GPA if student already has credit for or is registered in:

___ Credit hours for course will be removed from student's hours toward graduation if student already has credit for or is registered in: _____

20. Additional costs to students:

Supplemental Materials or Software None.

Course Fee x No ___ Yes, Explain if yes _____

21. Community college transfer:

___ A community college course may be judged equivalent.

x A community college may not be judged equivalent.

Note: Upper division credit (3000+) will not be granted for a community college course, even if the content is judged to be equivalent.

Rationale, Justifications, and Assurances (Part I)

1. ____ Course is required for the major(s) of ____
____ Course is required for the minor(s) of ____
____ Course is required for the certificate program(s) of ____
x Course is used as an elective (for Theatre Arts Major & Minor, AFR, and other programs)
2. **Rationale for proposal:** This is an elective course in both the Theatre Arts and the Africana Studies curricula, and serves the general education population as well. It considers in an accessible survey a mode of theatre that has a profoundly reciprocal relationship with the breadth of United States theatre practice (past and present). Given this influence, the study of African-American theatre as a unique sub-discipline has a long-standing and honored place in theatre curricula throughout the United States. As theatre is by nature interdisciplinary and deeply rooted in the societies from which it emerges, the manifestations of theatre considered by the course will be situated within an examination of the social, political, religious, and artistic phenomena that surround it, inform it, and are informed by it.
3. **Justifications for (answer N/A if not applicable)**

Similarity to other courses: N/A

Prerequisites: The course requires an advanced level of critical analysis and engagement, and the ability to express this engagement through effective writing. The 3000-level and the prerequisites of ENG 1001G and 1002G will help ensure that students are prepared for this course.

Co-requisites: N/A

Enrollment restrictions: The restrictions are based in accordance with the University guidelines.

Writing active, intensive, centered: The advanced level of inquiry as well as the research component of the course demands frequent and substantial written expression. Therefore, at least 35% of the assignments will be written, and at least one of the assignments will require revision and resubmittal following professorial feedback.

4. **General education assurances (answer N/A if not applicable)**

General education component: In the General Education curriculum, this course fits the “Humanities and Fine Arts Component; Fine Arts Designation.” In keeping with the goals of Fine Arts Gen-Ed courses, it “provide[s] students with a basis for understanding... theatrical...works in terms of their production and aesthetic reception.” In the course, students “learn to apply historical, philosophical, and critical concepts” to the periods and

genres of theatre history covered. The course will also “provide students with the foundations and methods necessary for a critical appreciation” of these periods and genres.

Curriculum: All of class time and all activities “relate to the skills in the learning goals or sub-goals” cited in the model syllabus below.

Instruction: All of class time and all activities “directly deliver instruction to help students learn the skills of the goals or sub-goals” cited in the model syllabus below.

Assessment: All modes of evaluation “directly assess if students can do the skills” cited, and this assessment wholly factors into a student’s grade for the course in the model syllabus below.

5. Online/Hybrid delivery justification & assurances (answer N/A if not applicable)

Online or hybrid delivery justification: The electronic version of THA 3755G is designed to utilize EIU’s online course delivery system. The Department of Theatre Arts is committed to making our courses as accessible as possible to students for whom online delivery is most appropriate. Recruitment and retention of students can be enhanced by judicious use of this mode of delivery. However, online delivery is not intended to replace on-campus delivery for resident or commuter students.

Instruction: Each week’s goals will align with the student learning objectives for the course. Methods include brief lectures augmented with presentation software, reading assignments, relevant video material through Kaltura, and discussion prompts to facilitate synchronous and/or asynchronous class engagement and response. As required, all instructors of online sections will have passed EIU’s Online Course Development Institute (or other documented and equivalent training method) by time of course offering.

Integrity: There are several ways to assure integrity in the online sections of the course. Since the research is guided, and the writing involves drafts, the writing process will be under the professor’s scrutiny. Online examinations will require critical analysis and synthesis of the materials encountered in the course. Furthermore, the professor will have developed a solid feel for the analytic style of the students via the synchronous and asynchronous discussions preceding the exams. Thus, it would be considerably difficult for students to use unethical means to take the exams.

Interaction: Professor-student and student-student interaction will notably include web-based discussions via the online course delivery system. Discussion prompts will encourage students to read and respond. These responses, with input from the professor, will also help the students comprehend the material and create an effective learning community.

Synchronous (live) sessions will be offered at multiple points to ensure student access and will allow students to discuss readings with professorial input.

Model Syllabus (Part II)

Please include the following information:

1. Course number and title: THA 3755G: African-American Theatre: Historical and Contemporary
2. Catalog description: This course will trace the development of African-American theatre from African ritual and slavery to its emergence as a dynamic and influential movement in the 20th century and beyond. Special attention will be given to artists who have had a lasting impact on U.S. and world theatre. No background in or knowledge of theatre is required. WI
3. Learning objectives.

The course and its objectives address all five of the EIU Learning Goals: Critical Thinking, Writing and Critical Reading, Speaking and Listening, Quantitative Reasoning, and Responsible Citizenship. The following outlines how the course learning objectives align with the University Learning Goals.

- Students will—
- (a) Analyze and evaluate primary and secondary source evidence of African-American theatre (play texts, theoretical tracts, extant and extinct theatre spaces, renderings of sets and costumes, diaries of theatre artists, etc.) from its roots in African ritual and slavery to the present day.
(Goals CT-1 through 5; WR-5 and 6; QR-1 through 3; RC-1 and 2)
 - (b) Analyze and evaluate the relevant social, political, religious, and artistic trends in United States history that inform and are impacted by African-American theatre.
(Goals CT-1 through 5; WR-5 and 6; QR-1 through 3; RC-1 and 2)

- (c) Critically and reflectively compare the major trends in historical African-American theatre and evaluate their impact on succeeding generations of world theatre.
(Goals CT-1 through 5; WR-5 and 6; QR-1 through 3; RC-1 and 2)
- (d) Conduct guided research on relevant topics within the historical periods covered; synthesize and present such research in scholarly-quality written formats.
(Goals CT-1 through 6; WR-1 through 7; QR-1 through 5; RC-1 and 2)
- (e) Formulate, present, and orally defend cogent scholarly arguments regarding (a), (b), and (c); orally defend the research synthesized in (d) in a conference-style setting.
(Goals CT-6; SL-1 through 7; RC-1, 2, and 4)

4. Course materials. Hill and Hatch, *A History of African-American Theatre*, 2010
Hatch and Shine, *Black Theatre U.S.A.*, vols. 1 and 2, 1996
Contemporary African-American plays as selected by professor
Attendance at University Theatre Productions as relevant to course

5. Weekly outline of content.

WEEKS 1 and 2: AFRICAN ORIGINS, SLAVERY AND CONQUEST. Importance of ritual. Use of rhythm, song, dance. Oral/griot traditions. Symbolic dance-drama. Overview of slave trade. What we know of African-American cultural life in the 13 Colonies.

WEEK 3: AF-AM THEATRE, EARLY 19th C. The African Company. James Hewlett. Ira Aldridge. William Wells Brown. The impact of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Minstrelsy and "Tom Shows." Melodramas with pro-slavery and abolitionist (or both) themes. Role of storytellers and churches.

WEEK 4: AF-AM THEATRE, LATE 19th C. Impact of the Civil War and Emancipation. Victor Séjour. George Bell. Cecelia Williams. The Hyers Sisters. Continuing impact of *Uncle Tom's*

Cabin, melodramas, minstrelsy, vaudeville. John Ladue. John Arneaux. Henrietta Vinton Davis. R. Henri Strange. *The Creole Show*.

WEEKS 5 and 6: THE EARLY 20th CENTURY. Ragtime and revues. Successful companies like Williams and Walker, the Lafayette Players. Early Black Women playwrights like Angelina Grimké, Mary Burrill, and Ruth Gaines-Shelton. Artistic reactions to the lynching phenomenon. Impact of WWI. The Harlem Renaissance. The success of *Shuffle Along*. The Great Depression and the Federal Theatre Project. Relationship with early cinema.

WEEKS 7 and 8: WWII AND POSTWAR “CREEPING TOWARDS INTEGRATION.” Wartime entertainments. 1940s Civil Rights dramas. Af-Am visibility in musicals. Paul Robeson and Shakespeare. Abram Hill and the American Negro Theatre. Late career of Langston Hughes. Impact of HUAC. James Baldwin. Douglas Turner Ward. Lonnie Elder. Lorraine Hansberry: the impact of *A Raisin in the Sun*. Midterm Exam.

WEEKS 9 and 10: RADICALISM AND REDEFINITION, 1960s-early 1970s. Gospel Plays. The rise of small nonprofit Black theatres. Amiri Baraka and the Black Arts Movement. Artistic reactions to MLK and Malcolm X’s work and assassinations. Kennedy and the NEA. Ed Bullins and the New Lafayette Theatre. The Negro Ensemble Company. The Free Southern and New Federal Theatres. Women-founded companies like Hazel Bryant’s Richard Allen Center.

WEEKS 11 and 12: MAINSTREAM CRITICAL ACCLAIM, 1970-1979. Charles Gordone’s *No Place to Be Somebody*. Joseph Walker’s *The River Niger*. Alice Childress’ *Wedding Band*. Ed Bullins’ *The Taking of Miss Janie*. Leslie Lee’s *The First Breeze of Summer*. Ntozake Shange’s *For Colored Girls...*

WEEKS 13 and 14: 1980s-1990s. The runaway success of August Wilson’s “Decade” play project. George C. Wolfe. Impact of NEA’s gutting. Anna Deaveare Smith and Performance Art. Greater visibility of LGBT issues in Af-Am theatre. The AIDS crisis. Reactions to/co-optations of rap/hip-hop. The “National Black Theatre Summit” of 1998.

WEEK 15: 2000-TODAY. Voices from regional and national theatres. Festivals. Superstar Af-Am playwrights like Suzan-Lori Parks and Tyler Perry. Continuing impact of hip-hop and poetry. Artistic reactions to flashpoints like the riots in Ferguson, Missouri, 2014.

WEEK 16: FINAL EXAM.

6. Assignments and evaluation, including weights for final course grade.

Breakout group discussion participation 20%

Midterm (Essay-based) Exam 20%

Final (Essay-based) Exam 20%

Shorter research paper or wiki 15%

Conference-quality research paper* 25%

* This assignment will require revision, as per WI guidelines.

7. Grading scale.

A = 90-100%

B = 80-89%

C = 70-79%

D = 60-69%

F = below 60%

8. Correlation of learning objectives to assignments and evaluation.

	Breakout group discussion 20%	Midterm (Essay- based) Exam 20%	Final (Essay- based) Exam 20%	Shorter research paper or wiki 15%	Conference- quality research paper 25%
(a) Analyze and evaluate primary and secondary source evidence of African-American theatre (play texts, theoretical tracts, extant and extinct theatre spaces, renderings of sets and costumes, diaries of theatre artists, etc.) from its roots in African ritual and slavery to the present day.	X	X	X	X	X

(b) Analyze and evaluate the relevant social, political, religious, and artistic trends in United States history that inform and are impacted by African-American theatre.	X	X	X	X	X
(c) Critically and reflectively compare the major periods in historical African-American theatre and evaluate their impact on succeeding generations of world theatre.	X	X	X	X	X
(d) Conduct guided research on a relevant topic within the historical periods covered; synthesize and present such research in scholarly-quality written formats.				X	X
(e) Formulate, present, and orally defend cogent scholarly arguments regarding (a), (b), and (c); orally defend the research synthesized in (d) in a conference-style setting.	X				X

Date approved by the department or school: Jan. 28, 2015

Date approved by the college curriculum committee: Feb. 18, 2015

Date approved by the Honors Council (*if this is an honors course*):

Date approved by CAA: March 12, 2015 **CGS:** Not Applicable.