

Theatre 534

American Musical Theatre

Instructor:	Chris Roche	Quarter:	Winter 2008
Phone:	(614) 292-5821	Call Number:	
Email:	roche.41@osu.edu	Meetings:	Monday & Wednesday
Office:	1108 Drake Center		3:30 PM – 5:18 PM
Office Hours:	MW, 2:30 PM – 3:30 PM or by appointment	Location:	DR 2068
		Course Style:	Lecture, Discussion

Course Description:

This course is an examination and exploration in the art form of Musical Theatre with an emphasis on the American Rock Musical. The Rock-Musical is a unique theatrical experience that melds not only acting, singing, and dance together, but unites popular music, spectacle, and current issues within its structure. Through media, discussion, analysis and performance study this class is designed to better understand Rock-Musicals and Rock Opera. Everything from traditional Rock Musicals (*Hair*, *Tommy*, *The Wiz*, *Jesus Christ Superstar*), Juke-Box Musicals (*Jersey Boys*, *Mamma Mia*, *All Shook Up*), Pop-Musicals (*Wicked*, *Godspell*, *Dreamgirls*, *Beauty and the Beast*), Glam-Rock Musicals (*Rocky Horror Show*, *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*), Hip-Hop Opera (MTV's *Carmen*) and perhaps a future movement towards Punk-Rock Opera with pieces such as *American Idiot* by Green Day will be covered in this course.

Required Texts:

Wollman, Elizabeth Lara. *The Theatre Will Rock: A History of the Rock Musical, from Hair to Hedwig*. University of Michigan Press, 2006.

Course Objectives:

After successful completion of the course, the students will:

- be able to understand these musicals within historical and aesthetic frameworks;
- interpret and evaluate these works of art with significant understanding of their importance on society;
- develop abilities to critically evaluate and see musicals in order to write and discuss their perceptions;
- experience live musicals and reflect through papers, discussions and presentations on that experience

Supplemental Materials and Guest Lecturers:

Handouts and multimedia selections will be provided from various sources. Additionally, practitioners within the field of Musical Theatre will be invited to lead workshops. Potential artists include:

- Peter Kozma; OSU School of Music, Resident Opera Director
- Mandy Fox; OSU Dept of Theatre, Director of *The Rocky Horror Show*
- Steven C. Anderson; Artistic Director, Phoenix Children's Theatre
- Theo Jackson; Musical Director for *Rocky Horror Show & Hair*

Attendance:

After 2 excused/unexcused absences your grade will be lowered by one letter grade. Two lates equal one absence. Talk to me if you have any questions

Course Requirements and Assignments:

Daily Class Participation: You must be a part of the class everyday. This is an ensemble. You will be asked to constructively critique and comment on not only the material, but also your classmate's opinions and comments. A positive attitude, proper support, and safety of everyone's ideas are crucial to a collaborative environment. This being said, please speak-up and be heard. Try not to censor yourselves!

Midterm: A written exam on the material covered in class will occur at the five-week point in the quarter.

Paper: By the last day of class you will submit a 2-3 page paper. The paper will be on one Musical you will see this quarter. That show will be up to you. IT MUST BE A LIVE EVENT!! This will be a point-of-view paper on the event, and how it correlates to what you are learning about Musical Theatre. **Some Guidelines:**

- *Statement:* Based on your understanding of Musical Theatre and its many genres, within what category does the piece exist, and is the show successful in terms of material and performance.
- *Opening:* A brief explanation of theme.
- *Body:* How was the production executed in terms of design, casting, aesthetic, content. Cite specific examples from the production, and compare them to what you have learned in the course. Be specific.
- *Conclusion:* Restate your response to the event in a summation form tying up all loose ends.

Final: An interactive final will occur at the end of the quarter. The choices for this final will be presented before the class. There are three options, **PLEASE CHOOSE ONE OF THE FOLLOWING:**

- 1.) **Musical Theatre Exercise:** "Telling a Story in Three Songs" - Choosing any three rock/pop songs from contemporary culture, and forming them into a short Musical. If I were devising a piece about the witches in *Wicked*, what type of songs would I want to use? Would Glinda sing two arias from an opera, while Elphaba would reply with a song by Avril Lavigne or Alanis Morissette?? Choose songs that tell the story you want to tell, and inform the audience about the characters.
- 2.) **Production Presentation:** Finding a production of a Rock Musical/Rock Opera that has been produced in the last ten years and discussing all of its elements. (Cast, Production Team, Location, Reviews, etc.) For example: *Wicked* has two female leads, how did the casting directors choose Kristin Chenoweth and Idina Menzel?? How has the Broadway production differed from tour?? Why was Robert Morse recast before the Broadway opening with Joel Gray? What did the critics in *The New York Press* have to say?? What was the overall cost of putting *Wicked* on Broadway? What is Stephen Schwartz's background in Musical Theatre?

- 3.) **Performing:** Performance of a song/scene from a Rock-Musical. This may be done as a solo, duet or trio. *Defying Gravity* and *Popular* are both great songs from *Wicked*, but are they the best for you? When looking for a piece of music to sing you must take many factors into account. Is the song in my range? Is this a story I can relate to myself? How will this song sound with a piano? In other words, there is more to picking a song than simply because you like it.

Grading:

Classroom Participation	15 pts
Paper	25 pts
Midterm	25 pts
Final Presentation	35 pts
Total	100 pts

Grading Scale:

93 - 100.0	A	87 - 89.9	B+	77 - 79.9	C+	67 - 69.9	D+
90 - 92.9	A-	83 - 86.9	B	73 - 76.9	C	60 - 66.9	D
		80 - 82.9	B-	70 - 72.9	C-	0 - 59.9	E

Safety Considerations:

The phone number for the University Escort Service is 292-3322. Use it or carpool with classmates at night.

Academic Misconduct

It is the responsibility of the Committee on Academic Misconduct to investigate or establish procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of student academic misconduct. The term “academic misconduct” includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed; illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations. Instructors shall report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee (Faculty Rule 3335-5-487). For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct (http://studentaffairs.osu.edu/info_for_students/csc.asp).

Disability Services

Students with disabilities that have been certified by the Office for Disability Services will be appropriately accommodated, and should inform the instructor as soon as possible of their needs. The Office for Disability Services is located in 150 Pomerene Hall, 1760 Neil Avenue; telephone 292-3307, TDD 292-0901; <http://www.ods.ohio-state.edu/>.

Course Outline:

Week 1

Introduction/Syllabus/Rock Musicals & Rock Opera. Defining these two terms and discussion of similarities and differences. Listening and viewing of both genres. Rock Opera (*The Who's Tommy*, *Jesus Christ Superstar*, Meat Loaf's *Bat Out Of Hell*, Frank Zappa's *Joe's Garage*), Rock Musicals (The quintessential *Hair*, Stephen Schwartz's *Godspell*, the Motown driven *The Wiz*, and Jonathon Larson's *Rent*. Examining not only staged pieces of these works, but also albums that have yet to be staged.

In Class, watch excerpts from: *Tommy*, *Jesus Christ Superstar*, and *Hair*.

For next class: Read Chapters 1 & 2.

Week 2

Definition and Discussion of Pop Musicals. Listening and viewing: *Wicked*, *Grease*, *Dreamgirls*, *Beauty and the Beast*. Popular music's influence in animation such as: *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, *The Little Mermaid*, *The Simpsons*, and *Family Guy*. What defines "popular music"? Is it about time-period or commercial success?

In Class: *Grease*, *Dreamgirls*, *The Nightmare Before Christmas*

Discussion: Chapters 1 & 2

For next class: Read Chapters 3 & 4

Week 3

Definition and Discussion of Juke-Box Musicals. Listening and viewing: *Mamma Mia*, *Jersey Boys*, *All Shook Up*, *We Will Rock You*, *Good Vibrations*, and *Movin' Out*. The popular success of taking a recording artist's material and turning their body of work into a live theatre piece.

Discussion: Chapters 3 & 4

For next class: Read Chapters 5 & 6

Week 4

Definition and Discussion of Glam-Rock Musicals. David Bowie's *The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars*, *Hedwig and the Angry Inch* and *The Rocky Horror Show*. Horror inspired musicals such as *Zombie: The Musical*, *Carrie*, *The Witches of Eastwick*, and *Lestat* will also be discussed.

In Class: *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*, *The Rocky Horror Show*

Discuss: Chapters 5 & 6

Week 5

Definition and Discussion of Hip-Hop Opera and Punk/Rock Musicals. Listening and viewing: Hip-Hop Opera (MTV's *Carmen* starring Beyonce Knowles, and the British piece *Cry of Innocence*). Punk-Rock Musicals (Green Day's *American Idiot* and Hole's *Celebrity Skin*).

Discuss: Final Projects

Week 6

Midterm (Cumulative through Week 6) and Final Presentation Discussion. We will discuss all the options and decide which one of the three projects works best for each individual.

Due: One (1) page proposal for final project.

Week 7

In-class work on Final Presentation: Discussion of ideas (what's on your mind, can it be executed in 4 weeks, why this idea, etc.) Beginning of process (How do I start, do I want to work alone, or collaborate), Resources (libraries, internet, databases, interviews, etc.), Improvisation (free writing exercises, physically scoring a story), Workshop One (what are you prepared to show, what are the holes in your research, what feels secure. This is a first chance to share some of your information and work in front of the class).

Due: Individual discussions of proposals – what works?

Week 8

In-class work on Final Presentation: Examination of work to date, one-on-one meeting with me (to see where you are in the process), Next Step (Outlining, Structure, Form) Improvisation, Workshop Two.

Week 9

In-class work on Final Presentation: Examination of work to date, One-on-One meeting with me, Next Step, Run-Thru, and Notes.

Final Exam

TBD by Registrar Final presentations due, feedback and discuss following each presentation
"Paper" Due