

THTR 2F: HISTORY OF AMERICAN MUSICAL THEATRE

Foothill College Course Outline of Record

Heading	Value
Effective Term:	Summer 2025
Units:	4
Hours:	4 lecture, 1 laboratory per week (60 total per quarter)
Advisory:	Not open to students with credit in MUS 2F.
Degree & Credit Status:	Degree-Applicable Credit Course
Foothill GE:	Area 3: Arts & Humanities
Transferable:	CSU/UC
Grade Type:	Letter Grade (Request for Pass/No Pass)
Repeatability:	Not Repeatable
Cross-Listed:	MUS 2F

Student Learning Outcomes

- Demonstrate an understanding of musical theatre styles beginning in the early twentieth century to present day as a reflection of its societal/historical context.
- Discriminate—via an understanding of between various musical styles (e.g., early twentieth century and the decade of the 1930s, the Golden Age of musicals in mid-century, influence Sondheim, transition to rock musicals and commercial musicals, multi-media influence of the twenty-first century.)
- Discriminate – via an understanding of theatrical elements involved in the production of musicals (score, lyrics, book, directors, staging, actors, dance, and design)

Description

An introductory survey of the history of the American musical theatre genre. Includes roots in British music halls, Viennese operetta, and African American jazz, through the golden age of the musical and up to the contemporary Broadway stage. Emphasis will be placed on genres and styles, as well as the key composers, lyricists, librettists, directors, producers, designers, choreographers, and performers. Examines how the musical mirrors contemporary social and political events.

Course Objectives

The student will be able to:

1. Identify various musical theatre styles; use this knowledge to extend and enrich music comprehension and enjoyment.
2. Apply knowledge of musical theatre style to identify various pieces of musical theatre by historical period, genre, and literary source material.
3. Trace and describe the historical development of American musical theatre style in relation to the political, economic, social, religious developments, and values of the time.
4. Compare and contrast repertoire of musicals through familiarity with a broad sampling of works, composers, styles and genres, and literary roots.

5. Think critically to analyze and critique good performance from bad from the perspectives of artistic quality and appropriate historical performance practice.
6. Use this knowledge to deepen their appreciation of the ways in which music and theatre can be a powerful tool for communicating our common humanity within the diverse cultural, social, and economic content studied.

Course Content

1. Elements of the musical
 - a. Score
 - b. Lyrics
 - c. Book
 - d. Directors
 - e. Staging
 - f. Dance
 - g. Actors
 - h. Design
2. Roots
 - a. Operetta
 - b. Minstrel shows and revues
 - c. Ziegfeld
 - d. Jolson
 - e. Cohan
3. Musicals in the 1920s and '30s
 - a. Broadway and the radio
 - b. Political satire and the Depression
 - c. Showboat
 - d. The Gershwins
 - e. Cole Porter
 - f. Federal Theater Project
 - g. Musical films
4. 1940s and '50s
 - a. WWII and the rise of Rodgers and Hammerstein
 - b. Agnes DeMille
5. 1950s
 - a. Rodgers and Hammerstein
 - b. Gypsy
 - c. Guys and Dolls
 - d. West Side Story
6. 1960s
 - a. Hello Dolly
 - b. My Fair Lady
 - c. Transition to rock and roll on stage
 - i. Hair
 - ii. Pippin
7. 1970s
 - a. Sondheim transforms the genre
8. 1970s and '80s
 - a. Kander and Ebb
 - b. Cabaret
 - c. Chorus Line
 - d. Evita
9. 1980s

- a. The rise of commercial musicals
 - i. Phantom of the Opera
 - ii. Les Miserables
- 10. 1990s
 - a. Rent
 - b. Disney transforms 42nd Street
 - c. Ragtime - multi-cultural casting
- 11. 2000 and beyond
 - a. Juke Box musicals
 - b. Wicked
 - c. Multi-media musicals
 - d. Translating films to the Broadway stage

Lab Content

Laboratory activities include:

1. Observation of assigned excerpts, video and audio, covering stylistic categories, musical characteristics, dramatic genre, and key figures, evaluated in weekly quizzes.
2. Critical analysis of live musical theatre performances.
3. Exploration and group discussion of contemporary musical theatre content via online discussion forums.

Special Facilities and/or Equipment

When taught via Foothill Global Access, on-going access to computer with email software and capabilities; email address; JavaScript-enabled internet browsing software.

Method(s) of Evaluation

Methods of Evaluation may include but are not limited to the following:

Quizzes on each of the topic areas

Online discussion forums

Two 1000-word essays for each part of the course (Roots to WWII and

The Golden Age to the contemporary stage)

Exams (module exams and final)

Method(s) of Instruction

Methods of Instruction may include but are not limited to the following:

Lecture presentations and classroom discussions

In-class review of video or music excerpts followed by guided discussion

Group presentations of major projects followed by in-class discussion and evaluation

Feedback on tests and assignments delivered via course management system; class discussion may be delivered in chat rooms, listservs, and newsgroups

Representative Text(s) and Other Materials

Osatinski, Amy S.. 20 Seasons: Broadway Musicals of the 21st Century. 2024.

When taught via Foothill Global Access: Supplemental lectures, handouts, tests and assignments delivered via course management system.

Types and/or Examples of Required Reading, Writing, and Outside of Class Assignments

Reading and writing assignments will include:

1. Weekly readings from the textbook and other outside sources, such as historical reviews of musical studied
2. Writing musical theatre performance reports, individual research projects, historical/analytical papers
3. Answering synthesis questions based on the readings and lectures

Discipline(s)

Music and Theater Arts