

## History of the American Musical

Course Syllabus

THR 471W

Spring 2008

Sam Houston State University  
Department of Theatre and Dance  
THR 232.01  
MWF 11:00 a.m.-11:50 a.m.  
AB4307

Instructor – Dr. Laura Avery  
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Text: Musical! A Grand Tour by Denny Martin Flinn

### COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course is an examination of the history and development of the structures of the American musical. It is designed to familiarize the student with the genre of musical theatre, highlighting its evolution as an American stage tradition.

### CLASS ASSIGNMENTS:

1. Students will be given a list of topics for each area of study covered in class. Students will be asked to prepare a brief informational sketch about each topic. This information should be kept in a notebook. The information will appear on class quizzes and in performance presentations.
2. Class time will allow for viewing of and listening to recorded footage of historical performances. Students will be expected to record the names of the performers and performances in a notebook. The information will appear on class quizzes.
3. Students will be asked to attend the SHSU production of *Full Monty*, one off campus professional musical theatre production and one additional musical theatre production. Students will be asked to write a 3-5 page response for each production viewed. Late papers will not be accepted. Papers should be typed and double-spaced; Times New Roman or Arial font size 12, with one-inch margins and MLA formatting.
4. Students will be given the opportunity to present a final 15-minute lecture performance on a topic selected from a list of topics prepared by Dr. Avery. Students will be required to write a paper to accompany to the performance. The paper should be 10 pages in length. Late papers will not be accepted. Papers should be typed and double-spaced; Times New Roman or Arial font size 12, with one-inch margins and MLA formatting. The presentation should include moments of lecture and performance. Group presentation is permitted.
5. Students' success in the class is based on daily preparation and participation. If you don't attend, you can't contribute and your grade will suffer.

### ATTENDANCE POLICY:

If you are absent from more than **three (3)** classes, your final grade will be reduced by **two (2)** points for **each** absence. Tardiness is unacceptable. If you are tardy **three (3)** times, that equals **one absence**. Excessive tardiness will result in a reduction of your final grade.

RULES OF CONDUCT:

Students will refrain from behavior in the classroom that intentionally or unintentionally disrupts the learning process and, thus impedes the mission of the university. Please turn off or mute your cellular phone and/or pager before class begins. Students are prohibited from eating in class, using tobacco products, making offensive remarks, talking among each other at inappropriate times, or engaging in any other form of distraction. Inappropriate behavior in the classroom shall result, minimally, in a directive to leave class or being reported to the Dean of Students for disciplinary action in accordance with university policy. Please talk to me prior to class if you would like to bring a visitor to class.

**Student Absences on Religious Holy Days Policy** University policy states that if any student must be absent from class for the observance of a religious holy day, they must notify their instructor by the 12<sup>th</sup> calendar day after the first day of the semester.

**Americans with Disabilities Act** SHSU adheres to all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and guidelines with respect to providing reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. If you have a disability that may adversely affect your work in this class, then I encourage you to register with the SHSU Counseling Center and to talk to me about how I can best help you. All disclosures of disabilities will be kept strictly confidential. NOTE: no accommodation can be made until you register with the Counseling Center by calling (936) 294-1720.

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GRADE BREAKDOWN:

Topic information list - worth 10/each	180
Assignments- worth 15 /each	135
Response papers- worth 20/each	60
Final Project- worth 55 (paper 30/presentation 25)	55
Class Participation	20
	Total 450

**Spring 2008**  
Course Calendar  
History of the American Musical

**January**

- 16 W. Syllabus/Intro. Video
- 18 F. NO CLASS
- 21 M. Martin Luther King Day NO CLASS
- 23 W. Part I: Chapter 1
- 25 F. **DUE:** presentation of Greek collages
- 28 M. Chapter 2 and our own “newspaper” play
- 30 W. Presentation of Newspaper Plays

**February**

- 1 F. Chapter 3  
**DUE:** a 1-2 page paper discussing Queen Elizabeth and musical theatre: What’s the link?
- 4 M. Renaissance Dance
- 6 W. Commedia Dell’arte  
**DUE:** a 1-2 page paper discussing Molière’s impact on musical theatre
- 8 F. Chapter 4/*Beggar’s Opera*
- 11 M. Finish *Beggar’s Opera*
- 13 W. Chapter 5/ *H.M.S. Pinafore*
- 15 F. Finish *H.M.S. Pinafore*
- 18 M. Part 2: Chapters 6 and 7/*Black Crook*  
**DUE:** a 1-2 page paper discussing operettas influence on musical theatre
- 20 W. Chapter 8/ Ziegfeld Video
- 22 F. Irving Berlin and Fanny Brice Video and Berlin Songs  
**DUE:** a 2-3 page paper on Ziegfeld’s impact on musical theatre as it relates to revues
- 25 M. Chapter 9/ Cohan Video and *George M! Songs*
- 27 W. Busby Berkeley/*For Me and My Gal* film  
**DUE:** a 2-3 page paper on Cohan and Vaudeville’s influence on musical theatre
- 29 F. Chapter 11/*Show Boat* Video

**March**

- 3 M. *Show Boat* film
- 5 W. Chapter 10/Jerome Kern Video  
**DUE:** a 1-2 page paper on *Show Boat*’s significance
- 7 F. NO CLASS
- 10 M. Spring Break
- 12 W. Spring Break
- 14 F. Spring Break
- 17 M. Video “Syncopated City” (60-minute video)
- 19 W. Chapter 12/*Porgy and Bess* Video
- 21 F. Good Friday NO CLASS
- 24 M. *Porgy and Bess* film  
**DUE:** a 1-2 page paper on *Porgy and Bess*’ significance
- 26 W. Rodgers & Hart Video and Songs
- 28 F. Cole Porter/*Delovely*
- 31 M. Chapter 13/ “Oh, What a Beautiful Morning” Video (60-minute Video)

**April**

- 2 W. *On the Town*, Rodgers & Hammerstein, *Kiss Me Kate*, *Guys and Dolls*, *My Fair Lady* Video  
**DUE:** Off Campus Performance Papers
- 4 F. Chapter 14/*West Side Story* Video
- 7 M. Chapters 15-18/1960-1980 Video
- 9 W. Chapter 26/Sondheim Video and Performances
- 11 F. Chapters 19 and 20/”Putting it Together” (60-minute video)
- 14 M. Tony Performances

16 W. Chapters 22, 23, and 24/ Partnering exercise  
18 F. **DUE:** Partnering Presentations  
21 M. Chapter 16  
23 W. Chapter 25 and Finale Ultimo  
25 F. Final Presentations Begin  
28 M. Final Presentations Continue  
**DUE:** *Full Monty* Paper  
30 W. Final Presentations Continue

**May**

2 F. Final Presentations Continue  
5 M. Final Presentations Continue  
7 W. Final Presentations Conclude

Final TBA