

Editor's Note: The syllabus that follows complements "Shadow *R & J* and *The Girl Who Flew*: Introducing Asia through Theater in an Interdisciplinary Honors Program" by Adam Frank from the online supplements of the *EAA* spring 2016 issue (vol. 21, no. 1). The syllabus is for a course taught for the first time in spring 2016 and doesn't fully reflect how the course ended up being organized. Two 10-15 minute plays, *The Girl Who Flew* and *Call to Arms* were organized. While *Call to Arms* was originally included in the syllabus, *The Girl Who Flew* was added in January 2016. Also, final performance and writing assignments differed somewhat from what is described in the syllabus as the needs and conditions of the course changed.

If you have any questions about the readings and course materials listed in the syllabus, you may contact Adam Frank at afrank@uca.edu.

**Norbert O. Schedler Honors College
University of Central Arkansas**

**Honors Core IV: Theatre and Social Justice
CRN/Course # HONC 2320-22378
Spring 2016**

Instructor: Adam Frank
MWF, Farris Hall Presentation Room
Office Hours: Farris Presentation Room MWF 11-12/MAC 303 Tuesdays 11:15-12:15 and by
appointment
My office location: MAC 301B
Mailbox: Honors College Main Office, McAlister 306
Adam's Phone: 450-3486 (o), 908-9990 (cell)
Adam's e-mail: afrank@uca.edu

Course Description:

Since Aristophanes wrote the first “anti-war” plays for Athenian audiences attending the Dionysian Festivals around 400 B.C., theatre has frequently been created in the name of social justice. Using Aristophanes as its starting place, the first half of this course draws upon dramatic literature and theatre history to provide a broad context for the use (and abuse) of theatre and performance in the name of social change. The second half of the course will be devoted to the creation of our own theatre company, “The Ozark Living Newspaper.” Based on the students’ well-informed reading about current social issues, our company will devise four to five short “playlets” to create a twenty minute “Living Newspaper.” Performed in a shadow puppetry format, our production will tour to at least three middle school social studies classes. Following each performance, Honors students will lead discussion with middle schools students about the themes and issues brought out in the play. In the short term, the purpose of this service project is to inspire kids to think about the issues that affect their lives and to identify ways that they can make positive changes in their schools, communities, and world. In the long term, the goal of the Ozark Living Newspaper is to take a step toward creating a more thoughtful future electorate in Arkansas, an electorate that has the tools to engage in well-informed, civil political discussion and debate. Students who register for this course should plan on at least three weekend, half-day rehearsals during the semester. In the second half of the course, there will also be a one-hour per week lab requirement that students can fulfill around their own schedule.

Core IV, the UCA Core, and the Honors Curriculum:

Honors Core IV meets the UCA requirement for “Diversity in Creative Works (FA).” In terms of the Honors College’s curricular objectives at the Core IV level, our goal is that by the end of the course each student is able to put into practice communication skills (in this case, performance, group discussion, and facilitation of group discussion) and has acquired basic knowledge regarding the relationship between arts and diversity.

Required Textbooks:

Bowles, Norma and Daniel-Raymond Nadon. 2013. *Staging Social Justice: Collaborating to Create Activist Theatre*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.

Carver, Heather M. and Elaine J. Lawless. 2009. *Troubling Violence: A Performance Project*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi.

Prendergast, Monica and Juliana Saxton, Eds. 2010. *Applied Theatre: International Case Studies and Challenge for Practice*. Wilmington, NC: Intellect.

Rohd, Michael. 1998. *Theatre for Community, Conflict, and Dialogue: The Hope is Vital Training Manual*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

(additional readings available through online links or through the e-reader)

Course Structure: What to Expect

- In general, during the first half of the semester, Mondays and Wednesdays will be devoted to reading, lecture, discussion, and building community organizing skills. We'll read 3-4 plays representative of "social justice plays" from different periods in history and try to define the parameters of both "theatre" and "social justice" in preparation for our own creative work. The required texts will be essential components of that discussion, and I'll be choosing readings from all of them, often in the same week, so please make sure to acquire all of the required texts by the second week of classes.
- We'll also have several guest lectures throughout the term. I will try to schedule these on Mondays or Wednesdays, but the timing will be dependent on our guests' schedules. We'll also discuss service projects and undergo "skills training" in community organizing and fundraising on Mondays and Wednesdays.
- Fridays – Most Fridays will be "play" or "technique" days. For the first few weeks, we'll do a lot of improv and practice devising stories in small groups based on current news items. We will also begin learning to create shadow puppets with overhead projectors and experiment with distance and body movement using the projectors in class.
- These skills will come together as we begin work on developing a shadow puppet version of a play written by Carolyn Wright, an actor and playwright in L.A. who has agreed to share her work with us for the class. Carolyn will join us at least a couple of times via Skype. Ultimately, our goal is for each "squad" of 3-4 actors in our company to devise their own shadow play, based on current social issues by about halfway through the semester, then begin "touring" with those plays. Touring will include middle school social studies and GT classes off campus, as well as classes on campus.
- Touring the plays: Each squad will perform a set of 3-4 short shadow "playlets." That means your group creates a play, then teaches the other squads how to perform it. On performance days, you'll perform your plays for a group (15-20 minutes), then lead discussion with that group for about another 20 minutes. This is the real point of Ozark

Mountain Living Newspaper: to get people talking and thinking about issues in a constructive way, especially issues about which they have strong opinions or feelings.

Grading Criteria:

Participation (in-class discussion, rehearsal, performance, lab) – 30%

Service Project – 20%

Three short papers – 30%

Final evaluative paper – 20%

Participation (30%): This course is a mix of academics, service, and performance, but the performance and related activities (lab and rehearsal) will take up much of our time and requires more than the usual commitment to a course. Participation also includes your active contribution to in-class discussion of readings, participation in performance exercises, improvising and devising scripts/scenarios with your team members, and attending labs as needed to complete puppet, props, and scenery construction—and, of course, participation in scheduled, off-campus performances (at least 1 per a “squad” of actors). Lab time: Once we begin our construction process, you’ll need to devote at least two hours per week to lab time. You can generally work around your own schedule to fulfill the requirement, but there will be one or two “all hands on deck” lab times for construction or extra rehearsal.

Finally, while I’m not requiring you to journal before each class this semester, I will use a combination of reading quizzes and in-class writing assignments as “motivators” for completing reading assignments before class. Please come prepared.

Service Project (20%). Each performance squad will also take on a fundraising project for an organization or individual artist engaged in arts and social justice work. One of these will definitely be a fundraiser for a production of Ray Bradbury’s *The Halloween Tree*. This is a co-production between UCA, Conway Symphony, and El Zócalo Immigrant Center in Little Rock. (Details forthcoming.) The other two projects will be up to you. I’ll invite a few guest speakers to make their cases about why we should raise funds for their project, and you’ll decide which organization/individual to support. We’ll discuss various fundraising strategies, but everyone in the class will undergo a mini-training in crowdfunding techniques. Service projects need to be completed by the end of the semester.

Three Short Papers (30%). You’ll have a short paper due about once every 4 weeks (around 1000 words). These papers will ask you to synthesize readings and lectures around a specific prompt. All papers should follow MLA term paper format and include correct references and bibliography. I’ll provide specific instructions for each assignment.

Final, evaluative paper (20%). 1500-2000 words, MLA format. This paper will require you to synthesize what you’ve learned in the class. You’ll be asked to evaluate both the service project and the public performance/guided discussion aspect of the course.

UCA’s Academic Integrity Policy:

The University of Central Arkansas affirms its commitment to academic integrity and expects all members of the university community to accept shared responsibility for maintaining academic integrity. Students in this course are subject to the provisions of the university's Academic Integrity Policy, approved by the Board of Trustees as Board Policy No. 709, and published in the Student Handbook. Penalties for academic misconduct in this course may include a failing grade on an assignment, a failing grade in the course, or any other course-related sanction the instructor determines to be appropriate. Continued enrollment in this course affirms a student's acceptance of this university policy.

On recognizing and avoiding plagiarism, please follow these links:

<http://uca.edu/academicaffairs/files/2012/08/Plagiarism.pdf>

<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/589/01/>

An Emergency Procedures Summary (EPS) for the building in which this class is held will be discussed during the first week of this course. EPS documents for most buildings on campus are available at <http://uca.edu/mysafety/bep/>. Every student should be familiar with emergency procedures for any campus building in which he/she spends time for classes or other purposes.

Title IX. If a student discloses an act of **sexual harassment, discrimination, assault, or other sexual misconduct** to a faculty member (as it relates to “student-on-student” or “employee-on-student”), the faculty member cannot maintain complete confidentiality and is required to report the act and may be required to reveal the names of the parties involved. Any allegations made by a student may or may not trigger an investigation. Each situation differs and the obligation to conduct an investigation will depend on those specific set of circumstances. The determination to conduct an investigation will be made by the Title IX Coordinator. For further information, please visit: <https://uca.edu/titleix>. *Disclosure of sexual misconduct by a third party who is not a student and/or employee is also required if the misconduct occurs when the third party is a participant in a university-sponsored program, event, or activity.*

UCA and Disability Support Services:

The University of Central Arkansas adheres to the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act. If you need an accommodation under this Act due to a disability, please contact the UCA Office of Disability Support Services, 450-3613. Please let me know if you need further information in this regard.

Weekly Assignments

Monday, 1/11

Read the following:

<http://www.britannica.com/biography/Aristophanes>

<http://www.theatrehistory.com/ancient/aristophanes001.html>

<http://www.britannica.com/event/Peloponnesian-War>

Points will be based on in-class quiz or writing exercise

Wednesday, 1/13

Please read Aristophanes *Lysistrata*, available at

<http://drama.eserver.org/plays/classical/aristophanes/lysistrata.txt>

Points based on in-class quiz.

Friday, 1/15

Guest lecture: Kelsey Reville, Director of El Zócalo Immigrant Center

Monday, 1/19 – MLK Day – No class

Wednesday, 1/21

Preparing for February 6th puppet slam. Volunteers?

Reading: In Pendegrast and Saxton, read “Letter from Augusto Boal” (ch. 5.1); Rohd, Intro and pp. 1-11; Carver and Lawless, 1-15

In-class write: Name two things you like and two things you dislike/question/don't understand about each of the three readings. Be prepared to discuss them in class.

Friday, 1/22 Play Day – The Cup Game and Shadow puppet manual handouts and familiarization

Read: Rohd, 10-27 (we will choose several of these exercises to play in class)

Monday, 1/25 Read Boal selection from *Theatre of the Oppressed* and selection from “Games for Actors and Non-Actors: Introduction” (handout and on e-reader)

Wednesday, 1/27 Read Odets *Waiting for Lefty* and “Someone to Be Reckoned With” (handout and on e-reader)

Friday, 1/29 Play Day –

Paper #1 due: Your task is to analyze either *Lysistrata* or *Waiting for Lefty* in terms of Boal's idea of "Theatre of the Oppressed." Your paper should be 1000 words, in MLA term paper format (won't accept it otherwise), and should reference, at minimum, the Odets and Boal readings we've covered in class. An "A" paper will go beyond those references, going more in depth on both authors. While you are not required to do so, feel free to reference any of other texts as well (Carver and Lawless, Rohd, Pendegrast and Saxton, Bowles and Nadon). Some ideas about structure: Start with something about Odets, a quote from the play or something the playwright might of said, then connect that to the idea of Theatre of the Oppressed. Next, go into some detailed discussion about Boal and Theatre of the Oppressed. Then answer the question, "How might we read *Waiting for Lefty* in terms of Theatre of the Oppressed?"

Monday 2/1 – 2/6 – All classes devoted to devising and rehearsing "The Girl Who Flew" for the Devised Theatre/Puppet Slam on Saturday, February 6th at UCA Downtown, 5:00 p.m.

Monday, 2/8 – Post-mortem discussion of "The Girl Who Flew"

Wednesday, 2/10 Lecture: The Federal Theatre Project and The Living Newspaper

Friday, 2/12 – Applied Theatre

Before class, read pp. 3-13 from Prendergrast and Saxton's *Applied Theatre*,

THEN

Read ONE of the real-world examples from Chapters 3-5. Share a few main points on BlackBoard and come prepared to talk about your selection in class tomorrow. One question that will come up: How could the social issue you identified for your Monday journal entry be performed in the style/format/structure of the piece you just read about?

Monday, 2/15 – Activist Theatre in the 1960s: El Teatro Campesino, Part I

Read "El Teatro Campesino – Our History" here: <http://elteatrocampesino.com/our-history/>

We'll view several video clips of ETC's work in class.

In-class write: After viewing the clips and reading about the history of ETC, note three specific ways ETC uses techniques from Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed or other techniques we discussed last Friday from "Applied Theatre."

Wednesday, 2/17 – Activist Theatre in the 1960s, El Teatro Campesino, Part II

Read Fielder, "On Strike and On Stage."

Journal entry (due before class): In this essay, Fielder “argues for a more integrated analysis of the relationship between activism and art.” Drawing upon at least one quote from Fielder’s essay, spell out her argument. How was/is El Teatro Campesino representative of integration between activism and art? Provide one example either from the essay or from the interview with Luiz Valdez you watched in Monday’s class. Specifically link your example to the quote you selected. (Connect the dots for me here.)

Friday, 2/19 – Work Day

Warm-up – the Cup game. Bring appropriate cups!

Handouts for future reference: Puppeteering handbook from ShadowLight and other sources.

Table reading of Carolyn Wright’s “Call to Arms” and distribution of production tasks. We will need researchers, writers (for creating storyboard), puppet designers (including continuing work on mastering head pieces), and puppeteers. We will also need someone to do sound design (music selection) and someone to design and lead our discussion process. Think about which of these jobs you’d like to take on!

Monday, 2/22 – Activist Theatre – The Black Theatre Movement, Part I

In-class: DVD and discussion - “Black Theatre: The Making of a Movement”

Read:

Wednesday, 2/24 – Activist Theatre – The Black Theatre Movement, Part II

Read: Bowles and Nadon, *Staging Social Justice*, pp. 1-15, and Ellison, “Do Not Try This at Home” from the same book, pp. 84-92.

Journal prompt (due by class time on 2/24): Given the goals of TSJ (Theatre for Social Justice) as outlined in the introduction to this book and the “case study” of Ellison’s *Changing Channels* described in “Do Not Try This at Home” outline how you would facilitate a discussion of our production of “Call to Arms.” What questions are important to ask? How do we, as artists, deal with anger/pain the play might evoke in an audience? What do we hope to achieve by reminding our audiences of this event (very close to the one-year anniversary of the shooting)?

Work Day: Rather than discuss the reading in class, we’ll jump directly to application. Thus, today’s class will be devoted to A) the research group sharing materials in a short PowerPoint presentation (15 minutes), followed by B) an intense storyboarding and design session. I will follow up with each group separately (research, storyboarding, and puppet construction/design group) to figure next steps.

Research Group: I'm not looking for a super-polished PowerPoint here. The goal is to share 5-10 images that you think help us understand what led up to this massacre and responses to it. Useful items to collect images of: Info about the individuals who were killed and about the sort of positive community work this congregation was/is involved with; newspaper headlines about the shooting (the specific papers referred to in the play are fine); images of the aftermath. One living newspaper technique applicable here would be to tell the whole story in 10 images, perhaps with a chorus singing the spiritual very softly under the images (just an idea), so think in terms of how the images you're collecting can work together with music/song to tell us the story before we actually get into the play itself. Remember the Greek chorus from *Lysistrata*? Any images, music, and song we use at the beginning of the play function in a very similar way. **Send me your images, links, and PowerPoints so I can print out background slides for Friday's rehearsal.**

Research Team/Storyboard team: Your task is to take images from the research team and find your own to storyboard the introduction to the play. What images lead into the beginning of the story? Is this a story about hate? Or is it a story about compassion? Those first few backgrounds that bring us into the lives of these people whose memories we are respecting and remembering are crucial.

Storyboard/Design Team: What puppets will you need, and how many repetitions of puppets (remember that backgrounds, objects, etc. are all "puppets")? Right now, we just need to think through the first few minutes of the play. When do you use real bodies? Are the bodies interacting with transparency backgrounds or objects? Do we need both front projection and rear projection?

Research Group: Given responses to your initial work and noting how the storyboard team and the designers are beginning to incorporate your work, what is your next step? Based on our discussions, what images can you find for the next scenes?

Friday, 2/26 – Work Day

First full rehearsal. I will bring transparencies of all the images and backgrounds we have shared so far, as well as additional materials for puppet construction. We'll work through the first 2-3 minutes of the play.