

CHAPMAN UNIVERSITY
University Honors Program
One University Drive
Orange, CA 92866

COURSE SYLLABUS

HON 368
Community and Identity in Musical Theater

Spring 2014

Catalog Description:

Prerequisite: acceptance to the University Honors Program, or consent of instructor. Works of musical theater (Broadway musicals, film musicals, operas), created by the coming together of multiple disciplines, are explored through several interdisciplinary lenses, to uncover their function as community-builders and their role as definers of identity (including race, gender, orientation, class, [dis]ability) in society. (Offered as needed.) 3 credits.

Course Learning Outcomes:

By the end of the semester, students will be able to:

- Discuss and analyze works of music theater through several methodological lenses, finding evidence in the works;
- Place the works of music theater into societal contexts, both contemporaneous and through the study of reception history;
- Develop original, insightful perspectives on the works and their contexts;
- Communicate, both in writing and in speech, their original perspectives as well as their evidence and methodological approaches.

Honors Program Learning Outcomes:

Upon completing a course in the University Honors Program students will have:

- a. Obtained a starting point for integrative exploration of the development of cultures and intellectual achievements through a variety of disciplinary and interdisciplinary perspectives;
- b. Sharpened their ability to critically analyze and synthesize a broad range of knowledge through the study of primary texts and through engagement in active learning with fellow students, faculty, and texts (broadly understood);
- c. Understood how to apply more integrative and interdisciplinary forms of understanding in the advancement of knowledge and in addressing complex challenges shaping the world;
- d. Developed effective communication skills, specifically in the areas of written and oral exposition and analysis.

Honors Program Category: Human Sciences

Proposed GE Categories: Artistic Inquiry (AI), Social Inquiry (SI)

Content:

In this course, we will study several whole works of music theater, including Broadway musicals, film musicals, and opera. Any such work – no matter its time, place, or creative team – not only reflects but shapes its society, often by helping to define what makes that society the way it is. We will analyze the works themselves (the music, lyrics, staging/dance, story) and also place them in their social contexts, uncovering what each has to say about the community depicted on stage and about the community sitting in the audience. We will also apply many of the identity-based methodological tools now coming to bear on this repertoire, just as the field is beginning to boom; we will examine the works from perspectives including race, gender, orientation, feminism, class, and disability. Pieces we may study include Schönberg and Boublil's *Les Misérables*, Sondheim's *Sunday in the Park with George*, Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, and Puccini's *La Bohème*.

Current Required Texts:

You'll read opening night reviews in newspapers and periodicals, as well as work by musicologists and theater scholars. Likely secondary readings include a host of articles from journals such as *Studies in Musical Theatre*, plus selections from these books:

Clum, John M. *Something for the Boys: Musical Theater and Gay Culture*. New York: St Martin's Press, 1999.

Everett, William and Paul Laird. *The Cambridge Companion to the Musical*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

Goodhart, Sandor, ed. *Reading Stephen Sondheim: A Collection of Critical Essays*. New York: Garland, 2000.

Jones, John Bush. *Our Musicals, Ourselves: A Social History of the American Musical Theatre*. New Hampshire: Brandeis University Press, 2003.

Knapp, Raymond. *The American Musical and the Formation of National Identity*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005.

_____. *The American Musical and the Performance of Personal Identity*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006.

Most, Andrea. *Making Americans: Jews and the Broadway Musical*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004.

Stempel, Larry. *Showtime: A History of the Broadway Musical Theater*. New York: Norton, 2010.

Sternfeld, Jessica. *The Megamusical*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006.

Swain, Joseph P. *The Broadway Musical: A Critical and Musical Survey*. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2nd edition, 2002.

Walsh, David and Len Platt. *Musical Theater and American Culture*. Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003.

Wolf, Stacy. *A Problem Like Maria: Gender and Sexuality in the American Musical*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002.

Wollman, Elizabeth. *The Theater Will Rock: A History of the Rock Musical, from Hair to Hedwig*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2009.

Instructional strategies:

As this is a seminar, we mainly work through discussion; in each class, we'll discuss the work and the secondary readings, exploring meanings and issues, so your assignment for every class is to come in prepared to discuss your ideas. You will have viewing, reading, and short-to-medium length written assignments every week. There will be two longer assignments: an essay due in the middle of the semester, and an essay/presentation (on the opera, musical, or film of your choice) at the end. Both longer assignments will grow from a series of preparatory assignments and in-class workshops; thus we'll propose and workshop thesis ideas, coach each other in research strategies, and offer feedback on each other's drafts.

Methods of Evaluation:

Students will be evaluated on their written work (assignments of various lengths including two substantial essays), presentation, and participation in the class discussion. Grades work on a standard A through F scale.

Short homework assignments (4 of them, including Blackboard postings, reaction writings, peer review of essays): 3% each, 12% total

Medium-length homework assignments (4 of them, including journalism-style reviews, close reading essays): 5% each, 20% total

Weekly (in most weeks) close reading/critical thinking in-class writings (think of them as analysis quizzes!): 1% each, 10% total

Preparatory assignments for mid-term essay: thesis proposal 3%, outline 6%

Mid-term essay: 10%

Preparatory assignments for final project: thesis proposal 3%, annotated bibliography 6%

Final essay: 10%

Presentation: 10%

Attendance and participation: 10%

TOTAL: 100%

Chapman University's Academic Integrity Policy

Chapman University is a community of scholars that emphasizes the mutual responsibility of all members to seek knowledge honestly and in good faith. Students are

responsible for doing their own work, and academic dishonesty of any kind will be subject to sanction by the instructor and referral to the university's Academic Integrity Committee, which may impose additional sanctions up to and including expulsion. This document represents the Academic Integrity Policy of Chapman University as it pertains to students and to the responsibility of faculty in handling cases of alleged academic dishonesty.

Chapman University's Students with Disabilities Policy

In compliance with ADA guidelines, students who have any condition, either permanent or temporary, that might affect their ability to perform in this class are encouraged to contact the Office of Disability Services. If you will need to utilize your approved accommodations in this class, please follow the proper notification procedure for informing your professor(s). This notification process must occur more than a week before any accommodation can be utilized. Please contact Disability Services at (714) 516-4520 or (www.chapman.edu/students/student-health-services/disability-services) if you have questions regarding this procedure, or for information and to make an appointment to discuss and/or request potential accommodations based on documentation of your disability. Once formal approval of your need for an accommodation has been granted, you are encouraged to talk with your professor(s) about your accommodation options. The granting of any accommodation will not be retroactive and cannot jeopardize the academic standards or integrity of the course.

Created by: Jessica Sternfeld, spring 2013
Last revised: Jessica Sternfeld, spring 2013