

Semester Outline for Aubrey Zurhellen's Theatre 1 Class
18 weeks, 3 class meetings a week

Overall Objective: The students will gain an appreciation for theatre through the lenses of theatre studies, theatre history, design, and performance.

Overall Goal: I want my students to grow themselves, even if they do not see themselves continuing in the field of theatre; I want them to step outside the box and reach just beyond their comfort zone (within safe limits).. I strive to acclimate them to creativity, collaboration, communication, and cooperation. It is my sincere wish that my students do not just leave my classroom as better artists or students but as better people.

Week One: Introductions, Syllabus, Class Rules

Goal: Acclimate the students to my classroom environment. Make sure each student feels welcomed and appreciated in my classroom. Introduce guidelines and deadlines for the semester.

1. **Introductions.** I want to introduce bellwork journals from day one, so the students will write a short journal entry introducing themselves and why they chose to take this class (even if they were “forced”). I will then begin the class by playing the name game so all of the students can learn each others’ names and my name in a fun, creative way which also begins to engage their bodies for performance. We will then play another short theatre game (likely either Knife Game or Zip Zap Zop, but I will feel out the crowd reaction). After this, the students will return to their guests. I will show a short PowerPoint to introduce myself and my experience with theatre, and then I will pass out a Getting to Know You worksheet. After I have gathered the completed worksheets, we will go over the classroom rules, and I will pass out the syllabus for students to look at before next class in order to ask questions.
2. **Syllabus and Class Rules.** Bellwork journal: What has been your favorite part about starting back to school? What is your least favorite part? Today, we will review the class syllabus which the students had time to look over for clarifying questions. We will go through the syllabus as a group. There will be time for questions. We will also review and practice our classroom rules and procedures. I will then split the students into small groups to discuss their previous

experience with and exposure to theatre. We will wrap up by playing the Sound in Motion game.

3. **Where can we see theatre in our lives?** Bellwork journal: What is your previous experience with theatre? How do you think theatre affects your life? We will begin today by discussing these answers together. We will point out where we see performance aspects in our lives and where we can see design in our lives. The students will split into small groups and research where there are theatre or theatre-adjacent (ballet, music, art) opportunities near our school and in our community. The students will complete a short prompt about this research, answering the question, “Where can we see theatre in our lives?” We will wrap up by playing Charades.

Week Two: Theatre History in North America and Europe

Goal: Provide a basic overview of euro-centric theatre history from its origins to present day. Introduce research paper assignment.

1. **Origin to 1800.** Bellwork journal: What plays have you read before in English class or on personal time? Who are the major players in theatre you know? This week focuses mainly on Western theatre history. I will inform the class that the next few weeks are fairly lecture heavy, but we will be combining lecture with research time. The students will end the theatre history unit by completing a research paper on a topic of their choice. I will pass out the list of example topics (it’s ok to repeat). We will do a lecture with many audiovisual aids on theatre history from its origins to 1800. The students will then split into pairs and spend some time working on an internet scavenger hunt related to today’s lesson. I will remind them that by next class they will need to know their research topic for their paper.
2. **1800-1920.** Bellwork journal: What is your research paper topic? Why did you choose this subject? We will begin with a short discussion about what we found interesting from last class’s lecture. We will then move to our lecture for today. I will make sure to highlight the people, shows, and movements that will inform our performance unit. We will close class with research time/work on paper time.
3. **1920-present.** Bellwork journal: What is your favorite play or musical? Why? If you don’t know one, tell me your favorite movie. We will have a brief time to discuss, summarize, and ask questions about our previous lessons. We will then

move into today's lecture. I will make sure to highlight the people, shows, and movements that will inform our performance unit. We will close class with research time/work on paper time. I will remind the students that they can show me a draft and I will read it over the weekend.

Week Three: Theatre History in Africa, Asia, and Latin America

Goal: Provide a basic overview of theatre history in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

Complete research paper project.

- 1. Africa.** Bellwork journal: We will watch a short clip of an African village parade and write about what we notice. We will then move into a lecture about African theatre history before doing an exercise comparing and contrasting some Western theatre performances (like *The Lion King*) to African theatre performances. We will end with research paper work time, and I will have individual feedback sessions with each student.
- 2. Asia.** Bellwork journal: We will watch a clip from the Takarazuka Revue and write about what we find interesting. We will lead this into a discussion about how Western theatre has combined with Eastern culture in parts of Asia. We will then have a lecture about Asian theatre. We will end with research paper work time, and I will have individual feedback sessions with the students I didn't make it to yesterday.
- 3. Latin America.** Bellwork journal: We will watch a video from Carnival and write about what performance aspects we see. We will then move into a lecture about Latin American theatre. We will conclude today with a group discussion about our research papers and what we learned. The students will turn in their papers before they leave class today.

Week Four: Design Concepts

Goal: To introduce students to the design concepts as a foundation for our design unit.

To read the text for our design unit

- 1. Color Theory.** Bellwork: What is your favorite color? Why? We will learn about color theory by doing some color mixing worksheets as well as a short lecture about color in different cultures. We will also begin reading *Midsummer Night's Dream*. This play will be the basis for our design unit, and we will have a quiz about it next Monday. The students will read a few scenes for homework.

- 2. Line and Shape.** Bellwork: I will play a song and I want you to close your eyes and just draw what you feel with the music. Now altogether, we will draw a representation of anger, sadness, joy, fear, surprise. What do the lines and shapes tell us? We will have a short lecture about this before progressing into reading more of *Midsummer*. The students will read a few scenes for homework.
- 3. Size and Texture.** Bellwork: Describe the texture of your clothing. I will show some images to the class of various sets, both large and small, and ask for student reactions. Does this feel imposing? Does it make you feel grander? We will stand up and make ourselves as big as possible and walk around and as small as possible and walk around. Now half and half and vice versa. How did you feel being big? Small? Big when others were small? Small when others were big? This is how size affects our work. We will do a short lecture about textures in different styles of design. We will read more of *Midsummer*. If we are not done, the students will finish up over the weekend. I will remind the students of Monday's quiz.

Week Five: Set Design

Goal: Introduce students to set design. Encourage formulation of ideas and creativity. Encourage collaboration in teams. Construct a model set.

- 1. Ideas and Sketching.** Bellwork: What is the most impressive building/statue/piece of architecture you've ever seen? Describe it. We will begin by watching a short video about the role of a set designer. I will split the students into groups. This will be their production team for the next seven weeks of our large design unit. The students will be working on *Midsummer Night's Dream*. I am leaving it open to them to decide time and place. The groups will have time to research, form ideas, and sketch out a set idea. The sketched out set design will need to be turned into me before the end of class.
- 2. Drafting and Working on Model.** Bellwork: How does it feel to collaborate with others? What's difficult? What's easy? Today the students will begin by watching a video about how to properly draft a set. I will pass back the design sketches with feedback. The groups will work on making a draft of the set, which is due to me by the end of class. If they finish this, they will begin work on the model of their set. I will provide written instructions for model building as well as some supplies.

- 3. Model Work.** Bellwork: What excites you about your set? Why? The students will receive their draft with feedback, and the groups will work on their models. I will be walking around to help, and I will assure the students that there is extra work time at the end of the unit if they do not finish the model today.

Week Six: Costume Design

Goal: Introduce students to costume design. Encourage formulation of ideas and creativity. Encourage collaboration in teams. Encourage self-expression. Complete finished costume design sketches with reference images.

- 1. Ideas and Research.** Bellwork: What is the most impressive costume you have seen in a play or in a movie? What made it so impressive? Describe it. We will watch a video about the role of a costume designer. The groups will reconvene to discuss costume ideas. However, each student will be creating their own design this week, but it must be consistent work from the whole group. The groups will decide who is costuming who and which characters they are choosing to costume for this project. The students will have time to research. An idea board with reference images will be turned into me at the end of class. The students will be encouraged to begin sketching their costume.
- 2. Buying and Sketching.** Bellwork: If you had \$75 to spend on a whole outfit, what would you buy and why? The students will get their reference images back with feedback from me. The students will be given a (imaginary) \$75 budget to find their costume pieces for their design. They will need to put these costume pieces into a collage to go with their finished sketch. They will turn this into me at the end of class. If they have extra time, they will begin their final sketch.
- 3. Finished Design Work.** Bellwork: What excites you about your costume design? Why? The students will have time to work on their finished sketch. I will return their buying list with feedback. The finished sketch will be due with their final design packet.

Week Seven: Lighting Design

Goal: Introduce students to lighting design. Encourage formulation of ideas and creativity. Encourage collaboration in teams. Encourage self-expression. Complete finished magic sheet and cue sheet for one scene with reference images.

(This lesson could change slightly based on availability of the ETC system for students. I am operating under the assumption of not using it here.)

- 1. Ideas and Research.** Bellwork: Why do you think lighting is important in theatre? We will discuss the basics of lighting and lighting design before going back to our production groups. The students will be gathering research images for the lighting design of one scene from *Midsummer*. They will get to choose the scene, but they must have at least 15 lighting cues. By the end of class today, I need an idea board with research images from each group.
- 2. Magic Sheets.** Bellwork: We will watch clips from some popular musicals (based on class reactions). Write down your thoughts about the lighting in the scene. We will start out by looking at an example of a magic sheet and learning how to make one. The students will split into their groups to make a magic sheet for their scene, and the research images will be returned to them with feedback. ***Depending on availability, this might include ETC or light board use*** The magic sheet is due to me by the end of class.
- 3. Cue Sheets.** Bellwork: What excites you about your lighting design? Why? We will discuss how to format a cue sheet. The groups will get their magic sheets returned with feedback. The groups will work on the cue sheets for their scene. ***Depending on availability, this might include ETC or light board use. If this is the case, I finalized design on the system is needed for final portfolio*** The cue sheet is due with their final portfolio.

Week Eight: Prop Design

Goal: Introduce students to properties design. Encourage formulation of ideas and creativity. Encourage collaboration in teams. Complete props list and buying list.

- 1. Introduction and Search.** Bellwork: What are some of the most important items in your life? We will learn about props through lecture and audio-visual aids. We will look at some props from our theatre inventory. We will then take a walk around the school, writing down anything we see that could be used as a prop.
- 2. Props List.** Bellwork: What would you say is the most important prop in *Midsummer*? Why? The student will split into their groups and make a props list for *Midsummer*. This list is due to me by the beginning of next class.
- 3. Prop Buying.** Bellwork: If you had \$250 to buy anything you wanted, what would you buy and why? The groups will have a \$250 budget to buy the props for *Midsummer*. They will need to create a list with images, links, and prices for all items. This list will be due with the final portfolio.

Week Nine: Dramaturgy

Goal: Introduce students to dramaturgy. Analyze script through historical lens.

Complete dramaturgical packet.

- 1. Introduction.** Bellwork: What is your favorite period of history? Why? Today we will delve into the field of dramaturgy. We will watch a video about what a dramaturg does as well as some small group research (Jigsaw). We might even have a crossover with our history teacher. The students will go to their production teams to discuss what aspects of their time period/place are going to be most important to research and develop a plan for their research day.
- 2. Research.** Bellwork: Which aspects of history are you focusing on for your dramaturgical packet? The students will reconvene with their production teams and analyze research for their dramaturgical packets. We will go to the school library to help out with this. I will look over everyone's research before the end of class and monitor throughout.
- 3. Finish Packets.** Bellwork: What has been your favorite area of design? Why? The production teams will have time to finish up their dramaturgical packets. These will be turned in with the final packets.

Week Ten: Design Packet Work

Goal: Complete design packets. Present in front of the class. This unit has helped develop collaboration, creativity, and communication, and these final presentations should showcase that.

- 1. Work Day.** No bellwork. The groups will complete any work they did not finish during the design unit and/or fine tune their final portfolio. I will be walking around to assist.
- 2. Portfolio Showcases.** No bellwork. The groups will begin portfolio showcases. Each group will show off each aspect of design they have worked on, and once they are finished they will turn the portfolio in to me for final grading.
- 3. Portfolio Showcases.** No bellwork. The groups will continue portfolio showcases. Each group will show off each aspect of design they have worked on, and once they are finished they will turn the portfolio in to me for final grading.

Week Eleven: Improv

Goal: To begin our acting unit, we will be looking at improvisational performance as this will serve to best acclimate the students to performance because there is no rigidity or structure. I am outlining this week to be fairly open so I can feel out what my students would most like to do. In a way, I'm gonna improvise it. Additionally, from here on, we will not have bellwork to allow the most time for performance activities.

1. **Improv.** Introduction to our performance unit, review these deadlines and what each week will hold. We will do some open scenes with improvised scenarios, some "replace in" acting scenes, and a lot of theatre games (based on student interest).
2. **Improv continued**
3. **Improv continued**

Week Twelve: Acting!

Goal: This week, we will be looking at realistic styles of acting and examining the great acting teachers and their methods. We will also pick out scenes for performance next week.

1. **Realism and Great Teachers.** We will learn about the characteristics of realism in theatre as well as the important players. We will not delve too deeply into the avant-garde and how it affects realism, as we are studying that in a few weeks. We will split into home groups and expert groups to complete a Jigsaw about the great acting teachers, specifically Stanislavski, Meisner, Adler, and Meyerhold. We will then teach back to our home groups by demonstrating the acting technique. We will complete an exit ticket reflecting on what we learned and which method we think is best for our personal process.
2. **Find Acting Partners and Search for Scenes.** The students will break into pairs which I will graciously allow them to choose. The pairs will search for a realistic, contemporary (1970-present) scene to perform for the class. I will encourage the groups to find multiple options in case someone else picks the same scene. The students will bring the scenes to me, and I will approve them. I will encourage them to start looking over lines before next class.
3. **Blocking.** We will have a group discussion in which the students will share how they picked their scenes and what they are excited for in performing the scenes. The students will split off into their acting pairs to block their scene. They will

need to notate this blocking (doesn't have to be formally) as they will need to give me a copy before the end of class today.

Week Thirteen: Acting! Still!

Goal: Rehearse acting scenes in preparation for performance. Self-critique, focusing on positive choices and improvements.

1. **Rehearse.** The students will rehearse their scenes. I will walk around and watch scenes, providing feedback. We will treat this as a workshop day. Midway through class, I will tell the students to group up with another pair and watch each others' performances, constructively critiquing the other pair.
2. **Performance Day.** We will watch all the scene performances today! I will go over the rubric for performance and note the importance of audience etiquette. I will also tell them I am filming the scenes for their own viewing. After all the scenes are over, I will give the students a few minutes of downtime, and then I will call them up group by group to tell them their grade and some notes.
3. **Self-critiques.** The students will receive their acting videos from the last class's performances. They will watch the video and write a self-critique about their performance. They need to point out three positives and three improvements from their performance. After they turn these in, we will have a de-briefing as a whole group. We will share about what we learned, how we prepared, and how we felt about performing.

Week Fourteen: Dada, Futurism, Expressionism

Goal: We will begin to learn about avant-garde theatre. This unit will culminate in a final showcase of one acts and short scenes from these theatre movements. I hope that the students will find interest in these "weird" -isms and be intrigued by the thought of the final showcase.

1. **Dada.** I will begin class by introducing the final showcase. I will tell the students to keep any works they enjoy over the next two weeks in mind for the final showcase. I will assure them that not everyone has to perform; we are also looking for directors and designers. We will then move into a lecture/discussion about Dada. Because these two weeks will be largely lecture-based, we will be ending each class with a short quiz/exit ticket.
2. **Futurism.** We will have a lecture/discussion about Futurism. We will end with a quiz/exit ticket.

3. **Expressionism.** We will have a lecture/discussion about Expressionism. We will check in about what works we're enjoying so far, and what we're thinking of for the final showcase. We will end with a quiz/exit ticket.

Week Fifteen: Brecht, Theatre of the Absurd, and Experimental Theatre in the USA

Goal: We will continue our exploration of avant-garde theatre, continuing to check in about the final showcase.

1. **Brecht and Epic Theatre.** We will have a lecture/discussion about Brecht and Epic Theatre. We will end with a quiz/exit ticket.
2. **Theatre of the Absurd.** We will have a lecture/discussion about Theatre of the Absurd. We will end with a quiz/exit ticket.
3. **Experimental Theatre in the USA.** We will have a lecture/discussion about Experimental Theatre in the USA. We will end the lecture with a quiz/exit ticket. We will check in about the final showcase. We will vote on which pieces to include in the final showcase. I will introduce the guidelines for director pitches and explain the interest questionnaires.

Week Sixteen: Final Showcase Work

Goal: We will decide on our actors, designers, and directors for the final showcase and assign the pieces. We will complete interest questionnaires and director pitches before making these decisions. We will end the week by beginning rehearsals in groups.

1. **Read Through Pieces.** Today we will read through our pieces for the final showcase that we voted on last class. We will rotate through actors to make sure everyone decides their thoughts on the pieces. I will review the guidelines for director pitches and remind everyone how the interest questionnaire is going to work. I will encourage the students to think through their opinions before the next class meeting.
2. **Interest Questionnaires/Pitches.** The students will rank their top three pieces and mark if they wish to be an actor, director, designer, or crew. We will then hear pitches from our intended directors on which piece they want to direct and why. If time allows, I will also allow designer prospects to speak on their skills and ideas. I will look over the interest questionnaires and my pitch notes before next class and assign everyone to a specific piece or to crew.
3. **Assignments and Read Throughs.** The students will find out their final showcase assignments. Each piece will break into groups and discuss their

ideas, almost like a first production meeting but less formal. The students will also read through their pieces for the first time. We will allow the directors to begin table work on the pieces today. I will inform the students of the upcoming assignments with the pieces. They will need to complete a WHIP worksheet and either a blocking notation (director, actor, crew/stage managers) or a design presentation (designers).

Week Seventeen: Final Showcase Work

Goal: The students will continue to work on the final showcase, exercising their creativity, collaboration, communication, and cooperation.

1. **Blocking/Design Work.** The students will begin the day with another read through and brief table work before moving on to blocking the scene. The designers will work on their designs and research. The WHIP worksheet is due by the end of class today as well.
2. **Blocking/Design Work.** The actors and directors will continue blocking and running the scene. The designers will continue work on their designs. The blocking notation or design presentation is due by the end of class.
3. **Rehearse.** The actors will perform the scenes for me, and I will give feedback to the director and/or the actors. The designers will show their design presentations to everyone.

Week Eighteen: Final Showcase!!!

Goal: The semester's work culminates in a final showcase. Aside from the night of avant-garde theatre, the student's previous design portfolios will be on display in the auditorium lobby for parents and other faculty, staff, and students to see. This is a true product of the students' creativity, drive, collaboration, and artistry.

1. **Rehearse.** We will run through the whole final showcase, stopping as needed.
2. **Final Showcase!** During the school day, we will run through the whole final showcase without stopping. Tonight, the students will perform the final showcase!
3. **Reflection.** We will have a celebration of all our hard work this semester. The students will individually reflect on their performance/work in the final showcase in a short paper. We will then discuss and debrief our favorite parts of the semester and how we feel we learned and grew. Maybe we'll have snacks, who knows.

