

THTR 384-002 Music Theatre Adaptations

Tuesday/Thursday 1:00pm–2:20pm

Kupfrian Hall, Rm 110

Instructor: Courtney Self

Email: courtney.self@njit.edu

Office Hours: Thursday 2:30-4:30pm or by appointment

Office: Kupfrian Hall, Room 133

Course Description

The content of this course is primarily literary. It examines the original texts that are used for theatrical adaptations in contemporary Broadway and Off-Broadway musicals. The origin stories are drawn from literature, graphic novels, and cultural folk stories. Students will attend selected musicals. This course satisfies the three credit 300 GER in History and Humanities.

Course Objective

This course aims to provide students with a comprehensive understanding of the process and impact of adapting literary and non-literary works into contemporary musical theatre productions. Through in-depth analysis of source materials and critical engagement with live performances, students will develop a nuanced appreciation for the artistic choices involved in transforming novels, short stories, graphic novels, and cultural folk stories into successful stage musicals.

Course Outcomes

By the end of this course:

- Students will be able to identify and analyze the key elements of literary texts that lend themselves to musical adaptation, such as character development, plot structure, themes, and symbolism.
- Students will be able to compare and contrast the original source material with its stage adaptation, identifying key changes, additions, and omissions, and analyzing the impact of these choices on the overall meaning and impact of the work.
- Students will be able to critically evaluate the artistic choices made in the design, choreography, and musical composition of a musical, considering how these elements contribute to the overall theatrical experience.
- Students will be able to articulate and defend their own interpretations of the source material and its stage adaptation, drawing on evidence from the texts and performances.

–Students will be able to effectively communicate their understanding of musical theatre adaptations through written assignments, class discussions, and presentations.

–Students will develop an increased appreciation for the diverse range of literary works that have inspired successful musicals, and an understanding of the cultural and historical contexts in which these works were created and adapted.

Class Policies

Attendance: Attendance is a vital aspect of this course. Theatre is experiential and communal; our work in this course will be no different. Lack of participation will be reflected in your grade—and there is a direct correlation between your presence in class and your ability to engage in in-class discussion. Participation makes up 30% of your grade, so please consider this a direct correlation to whether you are physically and mentally present in class. If you believe you have a reason that qualifies an absence as excused, a note is needed from the Dean of Students. Please note that any work that is due on those days is still due and any in-class quiz or presentation still requires attendance in class in order to fulfill that assignment.

Please make every effort to contact me before any class you have to miss. If you are feeling sick, please do not attend class in-person. Email me at least 2 hours before class and I will give you a zoom link to attend remotely. You cannot attend remotely for any reason other than being sick.

Note: You are required to attend *Amélie* April 10-12. More information will be provided later in this document.

Participation: Related to the importance of attendance, participation is critical to success in this course. We will be reading aloud plays and writings, sharing our viewpoints, and challenging ourselves to think outside the box and use the tools given in the lessons. I promise to foster an environment of curiosity and openness if you promise to approach the class with effort and bravery.

Communication: Reaching out to me as soon as you know of any concerns or problems is very important. I know that extenuating circumstances happen and I am committed to finding a way to best help all of us through this course whenever possible. This means I must get communication from you as soon as you think there may be an issue. Please reach out to me—email is typically best, but I am available to chat briefly after class (typically) and during my office hours and by appointment.

Consent and Respect: I work to create a room welcome to everyone and rooted in tolerance. Disrespect toward anyone in the classroom will not be tolerated. If an event occurs that makes you feel unsafe or disrespected, please let me know so it can be addressed.

Anti-Racism: Racism is systemically a part of our society and I will be working hard to dismantle these practices where I find them. We may be addressing issues of race within this course. I welcome any feedback about ways I can be more effective in this process.

Questions/Concerns: Always feel free to visit me during office hours or email me with any questions/concerns. If there is something you aren't comfortable communicating with me directly, please use the 'Anonymous Question Form' in Canvas and I will respond in a subsequent class for everyone.

Missing or Late Assignments: Missing or late work will not be accepted. If you feel you have legitimate circumstances that prevented you from finishing your work on time, please reach out to both me and the Dean of Students to discuss if there might be appropriate options.

Academic Integrity: *Academic Integrity is the cornerstone of higher education and is central to the ideals of this course and the university. Cheating is strictly prohibited and devalues the degree that you are working on. As a member of the NJIT community, it is your responsibility to protect your educational investment by knowing and following the academic code of integrity policy that is found at: [NJIT Academic Integrity Code](#).*

Please note that it is my professional obligation and responsibility to report any academic misconduct to the Dean of Students Office. Any student found in violation of the code by cheating, plagiarizing or using any online software inappropriately will result in disciplinary action. This may include a failing grade of F, and/or suspension or dismissal from the university. If you have any questions about the code of Academic Integrity, please contact the Dean of Students Office at dos@njit.edu

AI Use: This course expects students to work without artificial intelligence (AI) assistance in order to better develop their skills in this content area. As such, AI usage is not permitted throughout this course under any circumstance. If ever there is an assignment or exercise where use of AI is permissible, I will explicitly let you know. If you ever have a question about AI usage in this course, please feel free to contact me.

Land Acknowledgement: We acknowledge that NJIT is located on stolen land which has long served as a site of meeting and exchange amongst Indigenous peoples, including the Lenni-Lenape people. Lenni-Lenape literally translates to “Men of Men” but is taken as “Original People.” (<https://nanticoke-lenape.info/history.htm>) To learn more about the Lenni-Lenape people, visit <https://nanticoke-lenape.info/>.

Texts:

Excerpts from:

***Theatre and Adaptation: Return, Rewrite, Repeat*, edited by Margherita Laera**

This is available at the bookstore and will be used in class.

Excerpts from the following texts/source material will be used in class and will be made available on Canvas:

Amélie, the libretto and soundtrack of the musical

Amélie, the film

Fun Home, the libretto and soundtrack of the musical

Fun Home, the graphic novel by Alison Bechdel

Hamilton, the libretto and soundtrack of the musical

Alexander Hamilton, the biography by Ron Chernow

The Wild Party, the libretto and soundtrack of the musical

The Wild Party, narrative poem by Joseph Moncure March

Additional Costs: \$15 for a ticket to see *Amélie* April 10-12. You can purchase tickets at the door or online. Once a ticket link is active, I will add it to this syllabus (buying in advance online is the preferred way to make sure you secure a ticket).

Grading Breakdown:

Participation: 22%

In Class Exercises: 8%

Quizzes: 15%

Short Answer Papers: 15%

Open Adaptation Pitches: 15%

Amélie Response Paper 5%

Final Presentation: 20%

Final Grades:

A = 90 – 100 B+ = 87 – 90 B = 80 – 87 C+ = 77 – 80 C = 70 – 77 D = 60 – 70 F = 0 – 60

Schedule (*syllabus subject to change*):

WEEK ONE:

1/21: Introductions, Going over syllabus

1/23: **DUE: Introduction/Laera (pgs 1-4)**

WEEK TWO:

1/28: **DUE: Introduction/Laera (pgs 4-14)**

1/30: **DUE: Laera Chapter 10 (pgs 151-162) 'Shakespeare/Two Gents Productions'**

WEEK THREE:

2/4: **DUE: Excerpt from *The Wild Party* libretto, Lippa**

In Class: **QUIZ #1**

Discuss, listen to music

2/6: **DUE: Excerpt from *The Wild Party* poem, March**

Compare poem to musical

WEEK FOUR:

2/11: Discuss *The Wild Party*: musical vs. poem

DUE: Short Answer Paper #1

2/13: **DUE: Laera Chapter 13 (pgs 199-211) 'The Novel as *Obstacle*'**

DUE: Open Adaptation Pitch #1

WEEK FIVE:

2/18: **DUE: Excerpt from Chernow's *Alexander Hamilton***

In Class: Discuss how to adapt

2/20: **DUE: Excerpt from Miranda's *Hamilton***

In Class: **Quiz #2**

Compare biography to musical

WEEK SIX:

2/25: Continue *Hamilton* discussion

DUE: Short Answer Paper #2

2/27: **DUE: Laera Chapter 5 (pgs 77-88) 'Conservative Adaptation in Japanese Noh Theatre'**

WEEK SEVEN:

3/4: **DUE: Open Adaptation Pitch #2**

Assign: Final Project Prompt

3/6: **DUE: Excerpt from Bechdel's *Fun Home***

Discuss how we might adapt

WEEK EIGHT:

3/11: **DUE: Excerpt from Kron's *Fun Home***

In Class: **Quiz #3**

Compare Graphic Novel to Musical

3/13: Continue *Fun Home* discussion

DUE: Short Answer Paper #3

March 16-22: SPRING BREAK

WEEK NINE:

3/25: Start watching *Amélie*

3/27: Finish watching *Amélie*

Discuss how it might be adapted

WEEK TEN:

4/1: **DUE: Act One of *Amélie* libretto**

In Class: **Quiz #4**

Discuss and compare to movie

4/3: Wellness Day: NO CLASS

WEEK ELEVEN:

4/8: **DUE: Act Two of *Amélie* libretto**

In Class: **Quiz #4.5**

Discuss and compare to movie

4/10: Final Project Check-In

DUE: Open Adaptation Pitch #3

Reminder: Go see *Amélie* April 10-12!!

WEEK TWELVE:

4/15: **DUE: *Amélie* Response Paper**

Discuss/compare movie to libretto to production

4/17: **DUE: Laera Chapter 1 (pgs 21-33) 'It's Very Tied to the Content of the Play'**

WEEK THIRTEEN:

4/22: Work on Final Projects

4/24: Work on Final Projects

WEEK FOURTEEN:

4/29: Work on Final Projects

5/1: Work on Final Projects

WEEK FIFTEEN:

5/6: **DUE: Final Presentations**