THR 305 Theatre Experience in Milwaukee
Fall 2017

Course description: Students attend theatre in the Milwaukee area. Students analyze and evaluate the productions they see—making specific connections between theory and practice.

Dates: Wednesday evenings September 6th through December 13th

Who is my instructor? Dr. Robin Mello, Professor, Theatre. Please call me by my first name: Robin. The pronoun I prefer is “she.”
Email: rmello@uwm.edu
Website: www.robinmello.com
Office: TBA (until Theatre 220 is open)
Office hours: Tuesday mornings or by appointment
Cell Phone: (text or call): 414-469-9279

When do we meet?
- 6 class sessions @ KEN 1150 @ 6:00 PM-8:45 PM
- 9 productions @ Milwaukee area theaters @ 7:00 PM-10:30 PM
Check the calendar for details. Generally, we meet on site at 6:45 PM for class check-in. Then, we see the show (most begin at 7:30 PM). Shows run between 70 minutes to 3 hours (depending on the production).

The first (9/6) and last (12/13) classes are mandatory. If you miss the first class you will be dropped from the entire course.

How do we communicate? You must check email regularly. Set D2L settings to allow D2L to send you updates and “news” through your email. This is essential.

How do I get to the theaters? Each student is responsible transportation to and from the theaters. Many students group their resources and travel together via public transportation, Uber, Lyft, or car pool.

Do I need to get my own tickets? The course fee pays for tickets. Your tickets will be given to you when you enter the theater. If, for some reason, you are not able to attend a performance your ticket cost will NOT be refunded. Please note: You may NOT give your ticket to any other person.

How much time should I schedule for this course?
- 6 Class sessions 3 hrs each = 18 hours
- 9 Productions 4 hrs = 36 hours
- Assigned homework 2 hrs x 15 weeks = 30
- Travel time to and from theaters 1 hr x 9 = 9
Total 93 hours
Weekly average (using 15 weeks) = 6.2 hours per week

What are the guidelines?

University Policies: http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/faculty/1895.pdf
**THR 305 Ground Rules:** We are here to learn. THR 305 learning happens through participating, studying, reading and giving thoughtful and respectful feedback. Learning also happens in our discussions about ideas and through creative and written projects/assignments.

Expect to make this a learning experience that works for you. Follow these ground rules:
- Turn off your personal communication devices UNLESS directed otherwise (as part of in class activities)
- Be curious
- Use your common sense and be compassionate to yourself and others
- Empathize with others
- Show up prepared and ready to work
- Disagree respectfully
- Acknowledge diversity
- Dividing your attention is rude. Turn off your cell phones and other devices unless specifically needed for course activities
- Organize your work ahead of deadlines
- Communicate frequently
- Ask questions, (questions are encouraged)
- Mistakes are part of learning
- Work with your group partners collaboratively
- If you need a standing ovation, ask for it

**THR 305 Behavior:** Active participation is considered **requisite** for everything we do in this class.

We are ‘out and about’ the Milwaukee arts scene. We are guests at theaters. You are expected to:
- Dress neatly and respectfully when attending the theater.
- Turn off all cell phones, tablets, computers, and any other personal communication devices (in off/silenced mode) you may not use them under any circumstances 5 minutes prior to, during, and 5 minutes after a performance.
- You may drink non-alcoholic beverages class sessions/performances. You may not drink alcohol during any class sessions or performances. **Failure to follow this rule will result in automatic suspension from the course and an “F” grade. This pertains to all participants under and over the age of 21.**
- Theater companies have given us special discounts and access to their work. Be a gracious guest and pay it forward.
- All university ‘rules’ apply when we are out and about. This includes regulations pertaining to controlled substances.
- Rude, disorderly, or disrespectful behavior, or plagiarism will result in your being administratively dropped from the class or summarily failed.

**What will I learn?**
- To experience a wide variety of theatre in the Milwaukee community.
- To expand ability to analyze and discuss theatre.
- To develop critical thinking skills and personal criteria for evaluating performance.
- To participate in a collaborative process: the audience experience.

**How will I know I am learning?** You will recognize that learning is going on when...
1. You are examining ways by which a play is realized.
2. You are applying critical perspectives in response to performances.
3. You are expressing personal perspectives in response to performances.
4. You are examining a variety of cultural viewpoints in response to theatre.
5. You are developing your aesthetic perspectives as a response to theatre.
6. You are engaging in writing and presenting your responses to seeing theatre in Milwaukee.

How do I succeed (get an A grade)? You will succeed if you do all the work in an exemplary fashion, read and follow the directions, study and view all materials, explore, actively participate, and submit your work within the established deadlines.

Do I have to attend every class? Yes. There are 15 regularly scheduled sessions of this class this semester. However, life is complicated. Therefore, you may miss 1 on-campus class and 1 required show and still pass this class. More than two absences will result in an F grade.

But what if I have an emergency and can’t make it? Occasionally, there is a REAL emergency. It is smart to bank your allowable absences. In the rare case of a real emergency there is a plan B.

What is a real emergency? Real and unplanned events that pertain to your personal (or your family’s) safety, death, or acute illness and other “Acts of God” (like blizzards or tornados).

Is a transportation problem an excuse and an emergency? No. Transportation problems are NOT real emergencies. They may feel that way but they are not. If you encounter a transportation-related problem get to class or the theater as soon as you can. Your ticket will be waiting at “will call” ticket window. Being late is better than not showing up at all.

OK, what else should I know about what is and what isn’t an emergency? None of these reasons are real (i.e. excused) emergencies:

- Missing the bus or any similar transportation problem.
- Losing your phone.
- You are/were in a show and the production took up all your time so you couldn’t complete an assignment.
- You forgot or misread the calendar and syllabus and “didn’t realize that the assignment was due.”
- Roommates and friends/family needed to socialize so you did not have enough time to do work or come to class.
- Computers or other technologies broke; and/or you had no access to the Internet; and/or there was no possible way for you to find a computer or Internet connection anywhere; and/or your mobile data plan didn’t work.
- You were on a vacation, took time off, or went on a trip.
- You had a hangover.
- Your dog/cat/pet was ill.
- Your roommate’s dog/cat/pet was ill.
- Your boss scheduled you for lots more hours at work than originally planned.

What do I do if I have an emergency? Email Robin and explain. Then call AND text Robin’s cell: 414-469-9279 ASAP. When you send a text please include your name in the
text. If you have a real emergency let Robin know as soon as is practicable. You will work with her on a sensible alternative (plan B) so that you are not penalized for a problem outside of your control.

How do grades work in this class? Students are expected to complete all the assignments. At the end of the semester if you are missing assignments you will not be graded. You get an INC grade, which will default to an F grade after 10 weeks.

Grades are evaluated using the following rubric/scoring:
A = 100%-93% of points.
B = 85%-92% of points.
C = 84%-78% of points.
D = 77%-76% of points.
F = Below 75% of points.
INC = INC grade is given when any assignments have not been completed. INC defaults to an F at the start of the next semester. If you receive an INC you will be allowed to redo or complete make-up work before the INC defaults to an F—but not after the default occurs.

How do I submit or hand-in assignments? Homework is due in D2 and (often) as a presentation in class. If a class is cancelled, homework for that class will be due in D2L.

If you encounter a problem with completing an assignment discuss this with Robin. You may be able to get an extension ahead of any deadline—not after the deadline. Late submissions are allowed but will result in lower grades but it is best to complete assignments.

Is this a GER course? Yes. THR 305 addresses Arts GER Criteria because it focuses on responding to, and interacting with, works of art. It addresses UW System Outcomes by focusing on cultural significance of works of theatre in our communities (SLO #1); and exploring and learning to critique, discuss, and developing effective ways to communicate the experience of viewing theatre (SLO #3). The first essay is considered the GER assignment. It is assessed using this rubric:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Requirements</th>
<th>Achievement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1: Mechanics. Heading info included, On time &amp; Originality*</td>
<td>There are no errors in mechanics, spelling, punctuation, and grammar. The student communicates ideas, opinions, and conclusions clearly and in complete sentences. Essay is on time. The student's work is his/her own.</td>
<td>A C F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Respect</td>
<td>The student addresses beliefs and viewpoints clearly and deals with disagreements honestly and respectfully. S/he/they supports ideas and perspectives without resorting to sarcasm, objectification, or stereotypes.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Paragraph 1</td>
<td>Clear, reflective, addresses all points.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Paragraph 2</td>
<td>Clear, reflective, addresses all points.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Paragraph 3</td>
<td>Clear, reflective, addresses all points.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Paragraph 4</td>
<td>Clear, reflective, addresses all points.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Paragraph 5</td>
<td>Clear, reflective, addresses all points.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Paragraph 6</td>
<td>Clear, reflective, addresses all points.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Paragraph 7</td>
<td>Clear, reflective, addresses all points.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Paragraph 8</td>
<td>Clear, reflective, addresses all points.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Paragraph 9</td>
<td>Clear, reflective, addresses all points.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Paragraph 10</td>
<td>Information is included. Questions are answered.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**What concepts do we use in this class?**

Aesthetics: a set of principles concerned with the nature and appreciation of beauty, especially in art, or the branch of philosophy that deals with the principles of beauty and artistic taste.

Catharsis: when a performance or piece of art allows you to release energy thereby providing relief from strong or repressed emotions.

Dramaturgy: a way to look at and research plays. It is the practice of looking at the cultural, personal, ideological, philosophical, and historical content of the play as well as the history of the play’s original production history.

Efficaciousness: successful in producing a desired or intended result; effective.

Methexis: group experience in theatre when an audience participates, creates, and improvises in response to, or as part of, the performance.

On Time: Being at least 10 minutes early.

Intermission: The interval after the first or second act of a play. Most intermissions last 10-15 minutes. Many plays do not have intermissions.

Praxis: change or shift in perspective that often happens as a result of fully experiencing a work of art.

Run Time: The time it takes to perform the play.

Theatre vs. Theater: TheatER is the building and/or stage on which a play is performed and theatre is enacted. Not all plays take place in a theater. TheaRE is the artistic and academic field of study. As in: "I went to the theater to study theatre with my professor."

Tony Awards: The Antoinette Perry Award for Excellence in Theatre (nicknamed the Tony Award) is an annual award that recognizes outstanding achievement in live Broadway theatre.

**What are the assignments and when are they due?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Due</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9/5</td>
<td>SUBMIT YOUR CONTACT INFORMATION assignment in D2L. Print out a copy of the syllabus to bring to class on 9/5. Go to Settings in D2L and allow the system to send you updates, news, and information—on your phone and on your computer. (60 points)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/6</td>
<td>CLASS ON CAMPUS @ KEN 1160. Bring a hard copy print out of this syllabus and the class schedule. You must also post your contact info in our Discussion in D2L (100 points). Come to class already familiar with the D2L online version of our course. Arrive at class on time, and prepared to discuss your ideas and questions. Attendance for 9/6 is mandatory. (100 Points)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/8 &amp; 9/9</td>
<td>ATTEND ONE PERFORMANCE AT COMEDYSPORTZ (100 points). Attend a 10:00 show (dates and information in D2L). Midnight shows</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**will not count toward this assignment.** Tickets will be waiting for you at ComedySportz. Identify yourself as a THR 305 student. They will ask for your name and student ID. **SAVE the wristband.** Write your name on the wristband. Bring the wristband to class on September 13. It is proof that you went to the show. Alternatively, you can submit a photo of the wristband (on your wrist) in the D2L drop box. If you do not submit the wristband you will not get a grade for the Essay Assignment (80 points).

9/12 ESSAY ASSIGNMENT is due in drop-box by 11:30 PM. **All elements of the essay are required** so be sure to follow the template/directions and concentrate on answering and addressing all the points listed. Look at the rubric so you understand the expectations and how to get a good grade (120 points).

9/13 CLASS MEETING ON CAMPUS @ KEN 1160. **Bring a hard copy print out of your essay with your name on it.** Be prepared to discuss what we have seen. Viewpoint Dramaturgy Teams will be assigned in class. Bring a laptop computer so you and your team can work on the in-class research assignment. (100 points).

9/20 FRANKIE AND JOHNNY AT THE CLAIRE DE LUNE @ Chamber Theatre. Class meets @ 6:50, Show starts @ 7:30. Meet with your Viewpoint Team prior to show and after show to discuss.

9/27 THE WHO & THE WHAT @ Milwaukee Rep. Class meets @ 6:50, Show starts @ 7:30. Meet with your Viewpoint Team prior to show and after show to discuss.

10/4 RENT @ The Marcus Center for the Performing Arts. Class meets @ 6:50, Show starts @ 7:30. Meet with your Viewpoint Team prior to show and after show to discuss.

10/10 VIEWPOINT DRAMATURGY TEAM PRESENTATION due in D2L dropbox (100 points)

10/11 CLASS MEETING ON CAMPUS @ KEN 1160. Viewpoint Dramaturgy Teams will present their work in class. New Viewpoint groups assigned.

10/18 SILENT SKY @ Next Act Theatre. Class meets @ 6:50, Show starts @ 7:30. Meet with your Viewpoint Team prior to show and after show to discuss.

10/25 CLASS MEETING ON CAMPUS @ KEN 1160. We will create our own Tony awards based on performances we have seen so far. Because it is near Halloween there will be candy. Viewpoint teams will have time to meet and if there is time we will also focus on Science Dramaturgy.

11/1 SEX WITH STRANGERS @ Renaissance Theaterworks. Class meets @ 6:50, Show starts @ 7:30. Meet with your Viewpoint Team prior to show and after show to discuss.
11/8  26 MILES @ Kenilworth Studio 508. Class meets @ 7:10, Show starts @ 7:30. Meet with your Viewpoint Team prior to show and after show to discuss.

11/14  VIEWPOINT DRAMATURGY TEAM PRESENTATION due in D2L dropbox (100 points)

11/15  CLASS MEETING ON CAMPUS @ KEN 1160. Viewpoint teams present. Class discussion entertainment vs. art/should/can theatre be profitable? Why do theaters focus on Christmas? What is the historical dramaturgy of *A Christmas Carol*? Who was Charles Dickens?

11/22  No class. Holiday break.

11/29  A CHRISTMAS CAROL @ The Pabst. Class meets @ 6:50, Show starts @ 7:30.

12/6   MIRACLE ON SOUTH DIVISION STREET @ Chamber Theatre. Class meets @ 6:50, Show starts @ 7:30.

12/12  2ND ESSAY DUE: Revisiting the major themes and questions we posed at the start of this course (in Essay 1). Follow the directions posted in D2L and submit your final essay in D2L by 11:30 PM. (240 points)

12/13  CLASS MEETING ON CAMPUS @ KEN 1160. We will once again create our own Tony awards based on performances we have seen. We will celebrate a great semester!

**What are the directions for assignments?**

**Contact Information (due 9/5 @ 11:30 PM)**

Before the first class meeting you must post in D2L Discussion the following information:

- Your name and your contact information including a phone number where you can receive texts;
- affirm you have set D2L settings so that you receive news and emails and alerts;
- affirm you have printed out a copy of the syllabus and will bring it to class at the first class-meeting.

**1st Essay Assignment: Responding to ComedySportz (due 9/12 @ 11:30 PM)**

Your name:
Your major:
Your cell phone # where you can be contacted by text:
What pronoun you use in reference to yourself:

Date and time of the ComedySportz show you attended:

How do we define theatre? Most of the definitions include: a stage or performance area, a text or idea to perform, performers, audience. Theatre definitions also take into account the effect on the audience—does it work, does it create emotional response, and does it
include group interaction and/or participation.

We like to evaluate and develop ways of describing excellence in theatre by looking at the aesthetic that the production or event maintains. In this essay assignment you apply these ideas by writing about your experience at ComedySportz. Include ALL of these in an essay consisting of 10 paragraphs:

**Paragraph 1 (Efficaciousness):** How did the show affect/impact you? Why do you think you responded in the way you did? Do you think that the performers/director wanted you to respond in the way you did? Did you experience catharsis? Did you experience praxis? Give examples.

**Paragraph 2 (Methexis):** What did the performers do to engage the audience as a group? Identify one or two things that you observed happening to the audience as a whole group. What things did the performers to do to create group responses? How did the performers use humor to get the audiences' attention? Did the audience participate in shaping/inspiring the performance? Give examples.

**Paragraph 3 (Social-Cultural context):** What did you see or hear that made you laugh? Why were these things funny to you? Did the humor build community or divide the audience? What made you laugh and why? Comedy Improv—as an art form—originated in the Midwest. What regional forces or dynamics contributed to this?

**Paragraph 4 (Aesthetics):** What parts of the show did you like? What didn't you like? Was any part of the show satisfying? In what ways? If not, what factors went into making it dissatisfying? Were their things that confused or upset you? Does ComedySportz have value? What were your thoughts, feelings, and experiences at the ComedySportz show?

**Paragraph 5 (The playing space & design elements):** At ComedySportz the stage, audience set up, lights, lobby, and even the parking lot influence how the audience perceives their experience. What design elements did you observe that were intentional? Do you think they added to the experience or distracted from it? Give examples.

**Paragraph 6 (Performers and performance skills):** Who were the performers? Choose two and specifically discuss their skills, choices, and effectiveness.

**Paragraph 7 (Text/script):** If a script is different all the time is it a script? Do performers need pre-written scripts in order to create theatre? Is Improvisation theatre or is it something else? How does improvisation fit into our definition of theatre?

**Paragraph 8 (Intent):** What was the intent of the performance? What was the point that the artists were trying to make? Did they succeed? How and in what ways? Be specific.

**Paragraph 9 (Coordinating elements):** Discuss the flow of the production. Where did it start and where did it end? How did this impact your experience? What threads, flow, and/or structures did you observe that added to (or subtracted from) the experience as a whole?

**Paragraph 10 (Checking in):** How are things going in this course, so far, for you? What questions do you have?
**Viewpoint Challenges (due 10/10 & 11/14 @ 11:30 PM and in class)**

Teams are assigned as groups and listed in D2L.
Team topics are assigned and listed in D2L.

All students will be part of three Viewpoint Teams over the course of the semester. Each time you see a show meet with your Viewpoint team and focus on the topic you have been assigned. Topics include: Dragamaturgy (history of the play), Directing, Set/Costume Design, and the Playwright, Acting, How music and sound tell the story, choreography, lighting, information about the theatre company doing the show.

Viewpoint teams take notes and discuss their ideas and impressions after the shows. Each Viewpoint team will create a PowerPoint document that describes and explores the topic. PowerPoints will be submitted to the drop-box in D2L the day before classes meet. Viewpoint teams will present their Ppts in class. Each Viewpoint team should be prepared to present their ideas in class actively.

Your PowerPoint (6-8 slides) should include information on the following. It is strongly advised that you include extra information in notes or that you provide a voice over that extends the visual information:
- An overview of the topic you are covering (1 slides);
- Information on decisions that the director, designer, author, actor, choreographer made in response to the topic you are covering (1 slides);
- How did these decisions impact methexis, catharsis, and the audience responses in general? (1 slide);
- What advice do you have for the artists? Is there anything you would have done differently? (1 slides);
- What did you think was most effective? (1 slide);
- What questions or ideas did these productions and the artistic decisions bring up for you? (1 slide).

**305 Tony Awards (will be done in classs)**

The class, as a whole, will vote on their Tony Awards. Votes will be tallied and the results will be discussed in our class sessions.

Our Tony Awards are a simulation. All class members will be asked to take part.

One or two students will be asked to take on the role of Master of Ceremonies for our awards. MCs should be ready to address some of the worst and best experiences, crisis we dealt with, kudos to those of us who went above and beyond, any humorous experiences we had, and jokes about getting to the theaters.

All class members will be asked to give one (or more) of the acceptance speeches for the following awards:

1) **Best Actor Award:** Goes to the best actor (male or female or trans-person).
2) **Best Supporting Actor Award:** goes to the best actor (male, female, or trans-person) seen in a supporting role.
3) **Best Animal or Puppet Award**: goes to the puppet or animal (or other being) who/that did outstanding work.
4) **Best Director Award**: Goes to outstanding direction for a show.
5) **Best Design Award**: Goes to the best set design.
6) **Best Costume Award**: Goes to the actual costume—the best one.
7) **Best Lighting Design Award**: Goes to the best lighting design.
8) **Best Use of a Prop Award**: Goes to the actor who did an outstanding job using a prop in support of the play.
9) **Best Sound Design Award**: Goes to the best sound design.
10) **The Rosencrantz & Guildenstern Award**: goes to one or two actors who had almost no lines, and/or a peripheral role in the play, but who, in executing their role, did an outstanding acting job and made the play better.
11) **Best Voice or Dialect Award**: Goes to the actor who did an outstanding job performing with their voice.
12) **Best Play Award**: Goes to our favorite play (the text).

**2nd Essay Assignment: Responding to All the performances we saw this semester (a.k.a. wrapping it up)** Due 12/12 @ 11:30 PM

Your name:
Your major:

Reflect on the shows you have seen this semester. As a group I am sure that some stand out as exemplary while others do not. Wrap up the entire experience by writing an essay about the shows that includes:

**Paragraph 1 (Efficaciousness):** How did the entire experience of seeing 9 shows in 15 weeks affect/impact you? Why do you think you responded in the way you did? Do you think that the performers/directors wanted you to respond in the way you did? Did you experience catharsis at any point? Did you experience praxis at any point? Give examples.

**Paragraph 2 (Methexis):** What did successful performers do to engage you as their audience and as a member of a group? Identify one or two things that you observed happening to the audience as a whole group—select an example from a specific performance. What things did the performers, in general do, to do to create group responses? How did the performers, in general, use humor to get the audiences’ attention? In any of the shows you saw, did the audience participate in shaping/inspiring the performance? Give examples.

**Paragraph 3 (Social-Cultural context):** What did you see or hear that made you laugh? What did you see or hear that made you cry or experience sadness? What other emotional reactions did you have to the various shows. What personal, cultural, or universal factors go into your perspective? What regional forces or dynamics contributed to the things that impacted you?

**Paragraph 4 (Aesthetics):** Choose one or two examples from shows that you liked and one or two examples of things that you did not like. Which show(s) were most satisfying? In what ways? Which show(s) were dissatisfying? What factors went into making it dissatisfying?
Paragraph 5 (The playing space & design elements): What design elements did you observe that stand out for you? Give examples.

Paragraph 6 (Performers and performance skills): Choose one performer and specifically discuss their skills, choices, and effectiveness.

Paragraph 7 (Text/script): Which play/script did you think was strongest and which was weakest. Back your argument up with clear examples of text and written skill.

Paragraph 8 (Intent): Choose one production that stands out as having created an impact and that sent a message. What was the intent of the performance? What tactics were used to succeed at intention? Be specific.

Paragraph 9 (Coordinating elements): Discuss the flow of at least one production that stands out for you. Where did it start and where did it end? How did this impact your experience? What threads, flow, and/or structures did you observe that added to (or subtracted from) the experience as a whole?

Paragraph 10 (Checking in): How did things go in this course for you? What compliments do you have? What would you change? What suggestions do you have for the instructor the next time she teaches this? Is there anything else you would like to add?