

Course Syllabus

MUA-040 Musical Theatre: From Past to Present

Mayterm 2026, Online, M-F

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Course Description: No prerequisite required

Who doesn't love a musical? Musicals are famous for big casts, spectacular effects, gorgeous songs, awesome dance numbers, and intense costumes, sets, and props. But not all musicals are a Saturday walk in the park with George. The artistic genre of musical theatre has an incredibly checkered past. Throughout this course, students will study the history of musical theatre. They will look at specific examples of historic controversies in song and dance. They will also gain a working knowledge of the various complexities of producing a musical and demonstrate that knowledge through a thoughtful, written critique of a performance. Students will engage with the art form by creating their own piece of musical theatre.

General Education

Common Inquiries: Working Artistically

Description of this category as found in the Westmont College Catalogue: Students will expand their understanding of the fine arts and performing arts, including music, visual arts, or theatre. Students will develop and expand perceptual faculties, develop physical practices integral to the art form, and explore the critical principles which guide artists in the area.

Students will have various creative in-class labs throughout the term, allowing them to work on their final musical theatre presentation. For this presentation, each student will choose one aspect of musical theatre that interests him or her. For example, if he or she enjoys writing, he or she may write different lyrics to a Broadway tune. The presentation will be accompanied by a 2-3 page essay describing their project and their process of working artistically.

Required Text

Kenrick, John. *Musical Theatre: A History*, 2nd ed. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2017.

Course Goals

In accordance with Westmont's Institutional Goals, students who take this course should:

Develop Christian Understanding, Practices, and Affections

By studying the art form of expressive storytelling and how it relates to God's redemptive story

By learning to appreciate the creative process by engaging artistically with the art form

Appreciate Diversity

By seeing the various types of stories and perspectives told by musicals

Develop Critical Thinking

By critically examining the major components of musicals

By tracing the historic development of the art form

Course Learning Outcomes

In accordance with Westmont's Institutional Learning Outcomes, upon completion of this course, students will:

Student Learning Outcome	Assessment
Create an artistic component of musical theatre	Musical Theatre Presentation
Analyze the creative aspects of musical theatre	Readings, online homework, and quizzes
Diagram a musical theatre production	Essay

Accessibility and Accommodations

Westmont is committed to ensuring equal access to academic courses and college programs. In keeping with this commitment under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Americans with Disabilities Amendments Act (ADAAA) of 2008, individuals with diagnoses that impact major life activities are protected from discrimination and are entitled to reasonable accommodations. Students who choose to disclose a disability are encouraged to contact the Accessibility Resource Office (ARO) as early as possible in the semester to discuss potential accommodations for this course. Accommodations are designed to ensure equal access to programs for all students who have a disability that impacts their participation in college activities. Email aro@westmont.edu or see westmont.edu/accessibility-resources for more information.

Class Attendance and Participation

Class attendance and participation are mandatory and worth 15% of your final grade. The course outline provided in the syllabus details the chapters students are expected to read prior to each class discussion.

Quizzes

There are four quizzes throughout the course. The quizzes will be comprised of multiple-choice questions, true/false questions, and short answer questions. You will have an opportunity to retake one quiz for a higher grade, should you choose.

Essay/Musical Theatre's Relevance Today

The genre of musical theatre is continuing to expand and change. Old stories told new ways, new works, technological advances, and a growing audience are just a few of the ways in which musical theatre is relevant today. Students will attend a live production of a musical during the course. They will then write a 2-3 page essay critiquing their experience. The essay will include a brief synopsis of the play, where it fits in the historical continuum of the musical theatre art form, what they like about this play, and why it is relevant today. The essay is due 6/5!

Musical Theatre Presentation

Each student will choose one aspect of musical theatre with which to engage artistically. For example, if a student likes to write, he or she could write new lyrics for a Broadway song; or if a student enjoys drawing, he or she could draw an original design for a Broadway show; or if a student wants to dance, he or she could create their own dance number to a familiar Broadway tune. The presentation will be accompanied by a 2-3 page essay describing the artistic details of their presentation, how it relates to the continuum of Musical Theatre History, and how the process of making art has enlightened the student. Students will present their creative projects in class (6/10-6/12). They may choose to present their piece or, where appropriate, perform them.

Grading

15% Attendance (Attendance and in-class participation are mandatory)

20% Reading & Online Homework (Weekly prompts and activities provided by professor and emailed to class; i.e. Watch 3 different scenes from provided famous musicals and explain which one you like best, why, and why you think it is important historically)

20% Quizzes (Students may request to retake one of their quizzes for a higher grade)

20% Musical Theatre Critique Essay (2-3 page essay critiquing a musical theatre production; DUE 6/5)

25% Musical Theatre Presentation (6/10-6/12)

Grading Scale

100-97 A +	96-93 A	92-90 A-
89-87 B+	86-83 B	82-80 B-
79-77 C+	76-73 C	72-70 C-
69-67 D+	66-63 D	62-60 D-

Statement of Academic Integrity

According to Westmont's statement of academic integrity: "Since Westmont is a Christian community, the integrity of our scholarship is rooted in the integrity of our faith. We seek to be followers of Christ in the classroom, in the library, and on our screens. Violations of academic integrity are a serious breach of trust within the Westmont community because they violate the regard for truth essential to genuine learning and Christian consistency. Such deception also hurts those students who do their work with integrity. Violations of academic integrity may consist of falsification (misrepresenting facts, sources, or methods in any academic project or obligation), cheating (using unauthorized sources of information on an examination or other assignment), or plagiarism (using another's content or ideas without giving proper credit). Violations of academic integrity may also consist of making a quiz, test, essay, or assignment available to others in person, in digital form, or other means—thereby inviting others to cheat, falsify, or plagiarize."

Dishonesty of any kind may result in loss of credit for the work involved and the filing of a report with the Provost's Office. Major or repeated infractions may result in dismissal from the course with a grade of F. Be familiar with the College's academic integrity policy, found at:

<https://www.westmont.edu/officprovost/academic-program/academic-integrity-policy>.

Course Outline:

Week 1 (5/11-5/15): Beginning of Melodrama: Ancient Cultures – Late 1800s

Mon: Syllabus, Introduction

Chapter 1

Tues:

Chapter 2

Wed:

Chapter 3

Thurs:

Chapter 4

Fri: Script Study of popular musicals and Script Composition Lab

Sat: Quiz #1 Due

Week 2 (5/18-5/22): The Rise of Operetta and Vaudeville

Chapter 5

Mon:

Chapter 6

Tues:

Chapter 7

Wed: Costumes, Sets, and Prop Study of popular musicals and Design Lab

Chapter 8

Thurs:

Chapter 9

Fri:

Sat: Quiz #2 Due

Week 3 (5/25-5/29): Early American Broadway

Chapter 10

Mon:

Chapter 11

Tues:

Chapter 12

Wed:

Chapter 13

Thurs: Music Study of popular musicals and Music Composition Lab

Chapter 14

Fri:

Sat: Quiz #3 Due

Week 4 (6/1-6/5): The Golden Age

Mon: Theatre Spaces Study and Lab

Chapters 15 & 16

Tues:

Chapters 17 & 18

Wed:

Chapters 19 & 20

Thurs:

Chapter 21

Fri: Musical Theatre Critique Essay due!

Sat: Quiz #4 Due

Week 5 (6/8-6/12): 1970s – Present & Presentation Week

Chapter 22

Mon:

Chapters 23 & 24

Tues:

Chapters 25 & 26

Wed: Musical Theatre Presentation Day

Chapter 27

Thurs: Musical Theatre Presentation Day

Chapter 28

Fri: Musical Theatre Presentation Day