**“You Will Be Found”: Musical Theatre and Identity (NCST 3508)**

The New School/Spring 2019 Prof. Ryan Donovan Tuesday 4:00-5:50pm [donor230@newschool.edu](mailto:donor230@newschool.edu)

66 West 12th St, Room 602 Office hours by appointment

Course Description:

Musicals regularly offer various performances of identity, in moments like*La Cage aux Folles*’s “I Am What I Am” and *Hairspray*’s “Mama, I’m a Big Girl Now.” In this course, we will take an intersectional approach to identity in/and musical theatre. We will consider how the axes of ability, class, ethnicity, gender, race, sexuality, and size converge in musicals, especially through song and dance. Questions of casting relative to identity are central to our inquiries—what does it mean to use “fat suits” or to “play gay” or to “crip up” for certain roles? Musicals studied span from the 1920s to today. In addition to the multiple texts of the musicals, readings will be drawn from various fields: critical race theory, dance studies, disability studies, fat studies, LGBTQ studies, and theatre studies. We will examine how musicals *perform* identity and to what ends. Projects include a personal essay, facilitating class discussion, weekly reading responses, and a final paper. We will visit the Theatre on Film and Tape archive at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

This course invites you to grapple with difficult questions of identity and representation as we undertake the study of how musicals employ and deploy various identities. You are invited to understand identities you may not possess—actively and openly listening to the lived experience of each other is a critical part of the course’s success or failure. Your presence is also vital. Show up. Do the work. Be present. Engage with the material and each other.

Learning Goals:

By the successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

* Analyze various components of musicals (text, score, recording, performance)
* Understand historical contexts of musical theatre from the 1920s to today
* Demonstrate fluency with various theories of identity
* Connect the course material to the material reality of our lives
* Develop a research question, research using primary and secondary sources and evidence to support an argument with a developed thesis
* Analyze and critique live performance and elements of theatrical production
* Practice various forms of writing, from criticism to personal essay to writing for the public

Assignments:

* Read and listen to one musical per week and related critical and theoretical readings.
* Reading responses: 150-200 words posted to Canvas
  + These will variously include script analysis, musical number analysis, performance analysis, and critiques of readings.
* 500-750 word personal essay
* 2000-word final paper
* Facilitate class discussion/Presentation

Requirements:

* Subscription to Spotify for required listening
* Readings are hyperlinked on the syllabus and/or posted in Canvas
* Attendance at the NYPL on 12 March

Final Grade Calculation:

Reading Responses 40%

Final Paper 25%

Personal Essay 20%

Discussion Facilitation/Presentation 15%

Course Outline:

22 January **Course Introduction/Talking about Identity**

Kwame Anthony Appiah, *The Lies that Bind: Rethinking Identity* (excerpts)

29 January **Studying Musical Theatre**

Donatella Galella, “Feeling Yellow: Responding to Yellowface in Contemporary

Performance” from *Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism*

David Savran, “Class and Culture” from *The Oxford Handbook of the American Stage Musical*

Stacy Wolf, “Introduction: ‘Defying Gravity’” from *Changed for Good: A Feminist History of the Broadway Musical*

5 February [***Show Boat* (1927)**](https://www.nypl.org/blog/2014/07/08/musical-month-show-boat)(NB: Please read the libretto marked RM 7787)

Todd Decker, “Colored Chorus Curtains” from *Show Boat: Performing Race in an*

*American Musical*

Raymond Knapp, “Race and Ethnicity” from *The American Musical and the Formation of National Identity*

12 February PERSONAL ESSAY FIRST DRAFT DUE

***Oklahoma!* (1943)**

David Cote, “‘[Oklahoma!,’ Still Okay?”](https://www.americantheatre.org/2018/09/07/oklahoma-still-okay/) from *American Theater*

Raymond Knapp, “American Mythologies” from *The American Musical and the Formation of National Identity*

Andrea Most, “‘We Know We Belong to the Land’” from *Making Americans: Jews*

*and the Broadway Musical*

Emma Perkis, “[Oklahoma! YOU Are Okay!”](https://tapshoesandsmalltalk.wordpress.com/2018/10/16/oklahoma-you-are-okay/) from *Tap Shoes and Small Talk* (blog)

19 February ***West Side Story* (1957)**

Julia Foulkes, “Get cool, boy” from *A Place for Us*

Brian Eugenio Herrera, “How the Sharks Became Puerto Rican,” from *Latin*

*Numbers: Playing Latino in Twentieth-Century U.S. Popular Performance*

26 February PERSONAL ESSAY FINAL DRAFT DUE

[***Fiddler on the Roof* (1964)**](https://www.nypl.org/blog/2014/09/29/musical-month-fiddler-roof)(NB: Please read the Opening Night Libretto)

[*Black Fiddler*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZEt-TVCRdDc)(1969) documentary

Alisa Solomon, “[A *Fiddler on the Roof* in Yiddish—The Way It Ought to Be](https://forward.com/culture/403854/a-fiddler-on-the-roof-in-yiddish-the-way-it-ought-to-be/)” from

*Forward;* “Balancing Act: *Fiddler*’s Bottle Dance and the Transformation of

‘Tradition’,” *TDR* 55:3 (2011); “[*Fiddler* While Brooklyn Burns](https://catalog.nypl.org/record=b20257271~S1)” from *Wonder of*

*Wonders*

5 March ***Sweet Charity* (1966)**

Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (excerpts)

Liza Gennaro, “’Broken Dolls:’Representations of Dancing Women in the Broadway Musical”

Stacy Wolf, “The 1960s: ‘If My Friends Could See Me Now” from *Changed*

*for Good*

[Theatre History Podcast #42](https://howlround.com/theatre-history-podcast-42): From *West Side Story* to *Wicked*: Dr. Stacy Wolf on Feminism & the Broadway Musical

12 March **Screening at Theatre on Film and Tape Archive/NYPL for the Performing Arts**

**NB: We are meeting at 2:45pm on site at the NYPLat Lincoln Center**

19 March Spring Break

26 March FINAL PAPER PROPOSAL DUE

***Company* (1970)**

Sophie Gilbert, “[A Classic Sondheim Gets a Thrilling Twist](https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2018/10/rosalie-craig-and-patti-lupone-shine-in-a-gender-flipped-company/573262/)”

Alexandra Jacobs, “[Sondheim and the City: In a Rethought ‘Company,’ a Woman Wavers](https://www.nytimes.com/2018/09/26/theater/company-west-end-stephen-sondheim-marianne-elliott.html)”

Elizabeth Wollman, “The Birth of Modern Gay Theater and the Subtext of

*Company*” from *Hard Times: The Adult Musical in 1970s New York City*

2 April ***A Chorus Line* (1975)**

Bruce Kirle, “*A Chorus Line* and the ‘Me’ Generation” from *Unfinished Show Business*

Millie Taylor, “Singing and Dancing Ourselves: The Politics of the Ensemble in *A*

*Chorus Line* (1975)” in *Gestures of Music Theater*

Tom Wolfe, “[The ‘Me’ Decade and the Third Great Awakening](http://nymag.com/news/features/45938/)” from *New York*

9 April FINAL PAPER OUTLINE/BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE

***Dreamgirls* (1981)or *Hairspray* (2002)**

Dan Dinero, “A Big Black Lady Stops the Show: Black Women, Performances of Excess and the Power of Saying No” from *Studies in Musical Theatre*

JuliaGrace Jester, “Placing Fat Girls Center Stage” from *The Fat Studies Reader*

16 April ***La Cage aux Folles*****(1983)**

Norman Hart, “The Selling of *La Cage aux Folles*: How Audiences Were Helped to

Read Broadway’s First Gay Musical” from *Theatre History Studies*

D.A. Miller, “On Broadway” p. 124-136 from *Place for Us: Essay on the Broadway*

*Musical*

23 April FINAL PAPER FIRST DRAFT DUE

***Fun Home* (2013)or *Everybody’s Talking About Jamie* (2017)**

Kalle Oskari Mattila: “[Selling Queerness: The Curious Case of *Fun Home*](https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2016/04/branding-queerness-the-curious-case-of-fun-home/479532/)”

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, “How to Bring Your Kids Up Gay: The War on Effeminate

Boys” from *Tendencies*

Stacy Wolf, “Introduction” to *A Problem Like Maria: Gender and Sexuality in the*

*American Musical*

30 April**Deaf West’s *Spring Awakening* (2006/2015)**

Lennard J. Davis, Preface to *Enforcing Normalcy: Disability, Deafness and the Body*

Rachel Kolb, “[*Spring Awakening* and the Power of Inclusive Art](https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2015/10/spring-awakening-and-the-power-of-inclusive-art/411061/)” from *The Atlantic*

Tobin Siebers, Introduction to *Disability Theory*

7 May FINAL PAPER DUE

***Hamilton* (2015)**

Patricia Herrera, “Reckoning with America’s Racial Past, Present, and Future in *Hamilton*” from *Historians on Hamilton*

Lyra D. Monteiro, “Race-Conscious Casting and the Erasure of the Black Past in *Hamilton*” from *Historians on Hamilton*

Course Wrap-Up

**Resources**

The university provides many resources to help students achieve academic and artistic excellence. These resources include:

* The University (and associated) Libraries: <http://library.newschool.edu>
* The University Learning Center: <http://www.newschool.edu/learning-center>
* University Disabilities Service: [www.newschool.edu/student-disability-services/](http://www.newschool.edu/student-disability-services/)
* Student Support and Crisis Management: [studentsupport@newschool.edu](mailto:studentsupport@newschool.edu)
* Counseling Services: [shs@newschool.edu](mailto:shs@newschool.edu)
* Wellness and Health Promotion: [wellness@newschool.edu](mailto:wellness@newschool.edu)
* Food Pantry: 6 E 16th St. Room 1212 foodpantry@newschool.edu

In keeping with the university’s policy of providing equal access for students with disabilities, any student with a disability who needs academic accommodations is welcome to meet with me privately. All conversations will be kept confidential. Students requesting any accommodations will also need to contact Student Disability Service (SDS). SDS will conduct an intake and, if appropriate, the Director will provide an academic accommodation notification letter for you to bring to me. At that point, I will review the letter with you and discuss these accommodations in relation to this course.

**Grading Standards**

A student’s final grades and GPA are calculated using a 4.0 scale. Please note that while both are listed here, the 4.0 scale does not align mathematically with the numeric scale based on percentages of 100 points.

A [4.0; 95 – 100%] Work of exceptional quality

A- [3.7; 90 – <95%] Work of very high quality

B+ [3.3; 87 – <90%] Work of high quality that indicates higher than average abilities

B [3.0; 83 – <87%] Very good work that satisfies the goals of the course

B- [2.7; 80 – <83% Good work

C+ [2.3; 77 – <80%] Above-average work

C [2.0; 73 – <77%] Average work; passable

*Satisfactory completion of a course is considered to be a grade of C or higher.*

C- [1.7; 70 – <73%] Passing work but below good academic standing

D [1.0; 60 – <70%] Below-average work

F [0.0; 0 – <60%] Failure, no credit

**Divisional, Program and Class Policies**

● Responsibility

Students are responsible for all assignments, even if they are absent. Late assignments, failure to complete the assignments for class discussion and/or critique, and lack of preparedness for in-class discussions, presentations and/or critiques will jeopardize your successful completion of this course.

● Participation

Class participation is an essential part of class and includes: keeping up with reading, assignments, projects, contributing meaningfully to class discussions, active participation in group work, and coming to class regularly and on time.

● Attendance

Attendance will be taken at the start of each class session. Repeated lateness and/or absence will negatively impact your success in the course.

Attendance guidelines were developed to encourage students’ success in all aspects of their academic programs. Full participation is essential to the successful completion of coursework and enhances the quality of the educational experience for all, particularly in courses where group work is integral; thus, The New School promotes high levels of attendance. Students are expected to attend classes regularly and promptly and in compliance with the standards stated in this course syllabus.

While attendance is just one aspect of active participation, absence from a significant portion of class time may prevent the successful attainment of course objectives. A significant portion of class time is generally defined as the equivalent of three weeks, or 20%, of class time. Lateness or early departure from class may be recorded as one full absence. Students may be asked to withdraw from a course if habitual absenteeism or tardiness has a negative impact on the class environment.

● Canvas

Use of Canvas will be an important resource for this class. Students should check it for announcements before coming to class each week.

● Electronic Devices

The use of electronic devices (phones, tablets, laptops, cameras, etc.) is permitted when the device is being used in relation to the course's work. All other uses are negotiable in the classroom and devices should be turned off before class starts.

● Academic Honesty and Integrity

Compromising your academic integrity may lead to serious consequences, including (but not limited to) one or more of the following: failure of the assignment, failure of the course, academic warning, disciplinary probation, suspension from the university, or dismissal from the university.

Students are responsible for understanding the University’s policy on academic honesty and integrity and must make use of proper citations of sources for writing papers, creating, presenting, and performing their work, taking examinations, and doing research. It is the responsibility of students to learn the procedures specific to their discipline for correctly and appropriately differentiating their own work from that of others. The full text of the policy, including adjudication procedures, is found at

[http://www.newschool.edu/policies/#](http://www.newschool.edu/policies/) Resources regarding what plagiarism is and how to avoid it can be found on the Learning Center’s website: <http://www.newschool.edu/university-learning-center/student-resources/>

The New School views “academic honesty and integrity” as the duty of every member of an academic community to claim authorship for his or her own work and only for that work, and to recognize the contributions of others accurately and completely. This obligation is fundamental to the integrity of intellectual debate, and creative and academic pursuits. Academic honesty and integrity includes accurate use of quotations, as well as appropriate and explicit citation of sources in instances of paraphrasing and describing ideas, or reporting on research findings or any aspect of the work of others (including that of faculty members and other students). Academic dishonesty results from infractions of this “accurate use”. The standards of academic honesty and integrity, and citation of sources, apply to all forms of academic work, including submissions of drafts of final papers or projects. All members of the University community are expected to conduct themselves in accord with the standards of academic honesty and integrity. Please see the complete policy in the University Catalog.

● Intellectual Property Rights: [http://www.newschool.edu/policies/#](http://www.newschool.edu/policies/)

Current as of January 17, 2019