

**Raritan Valley Community College**  
**Academic Course Outline**

**THEA-205 AMERICAN MUSICAL THEATRE**

**I. Basic Course Information**

A. Course Number and Title: THEA-205 American Musical Theatre

B. New or Modified Course: Modified

C. Date of Proposal: Semester: Spring Year: 2016

**D. Effective Term: Fall 2016**

E. Sponsoring Department: Visual & Performing Arts

F. Semester Credit Hours: 3

G: Weekly Contact Hours: Lecture: 3

Laboratory: 0

Out of class student work per week: 6

H. Prerequisites: None

I. Laboratory Fees: None

J. VAPA Chair: Dennis Russo, Co-Chair, Performing Arts,  
(908) 526-1200 x8391, drusso@raritanval.edu

**II. Catalog Description**

American Musical Theater is a lecture/discussion course that covers the life of the American musical from its 19th-century beginnings, through the emergence of the musical comedy of Jerome Kern, to the classical works of Rodgers and Hammerstein and Cole Porter, up to Leonard Bernstein, Stephen Sondheim, and the contemporary scene. The works will be presented in their historical and social context, as well as their musical and dramatic development. Students will be required to see and critically analyze at least one musical play during the semester.

**III. Statement of Course Need:**

A. The American musical theatre is one of America's great artistic gifts, and is admired, loved and studied throughout the world. Studying this collaborative form

of the performing arts is invaluable to students who may be planning careers in theatre, music, or dance.

B. This course is offered in most four-year colleges and likely transfers as a program requirement or elective in theatre, music, or dance, or as a General Education course in the Humanities/Appreciation of the Arts.

#### **IV. Place of Course in College Curriculum**

A. Free Elective

B. This course serves as a General Education course in the Humanities/Appreciation of the Arts.

C. This course meets a degree program requirement for the Theatre Arts, A.A. Liberal Arts.

D. To see course transferability: a) for New Jersey schools, go to the NJ Transfer website, [www.njtransfer.org](http://www.njtransfer.org); b) for all other colleges and universities, go to the individual websites.

#### **V. Outline of Course Content**

A. Historical and social development of musical theatre:

1. 19th-century beginnings -- imitations of European forms such as operetta, minstrels, vaudeville, and burlesque.
2. The works of the early masters before and after World War I through the Depression (such as Jerome Kern, Rogers and Hart, George Gershwin, and Cole Porter).
3. The Golden Age of musicals before and after World War II -- Rogers and Hammerstein, later Cole Porter, and Leonard Bernstein, Lerner and Loewe.
4. The contemporary scene of the last quarter of the 20th century - Kander and Ebb, Stephen Sondheim, the British influences, and others.

B. Musical elements:

1. structural and formal elements in opera, operetta, musical comedy
2. musical forms: songs, ensembles, choruses
3. the orchestra
4. dance music

C. Other collaborative elements:

1. Dramatic format, acting, staging, blocking
2. Choreography
3. Set and costume design
4. Lighting and technological applications

D. Students will be required to see and critically analyze at least one musical theatre production during the semester.

## **VI. General Education and Course Learning Outcomes**

### **A. General Education Learning Outcomes:**

**At the completion of the course, students will be able to:**

1. Demonstrate both orally and in writing a comprehensive knowledge and critical aesthetic appreciation of the historical, stylistic and cultural development of the traditions and significance of the American Musical Theatre.  
(GE-NJ 1, 6, 7, \*)
2. Use general and/or discipline specific information sources to better identify, determine and apply research or information need. (GE-NJ IL)

### **B. Course Learning Outcomes:**

**At the completion of the course, students will be able to:**

1. Recognize, classify and describe the characteristics of various musical theatre styles and genres.
2. Evaluate selected works of significant playwrights, composers, lyricists, choreographers, designers.
3. Critique the theatrical elements of contemporary works or performances.

(\* embedded critical thinking)

### **C. Assessment Instruments**

1. Selected readings/written assignments (research and/or evaluations)
2. Discussions/critiques
3. Research project/student oral presentation (required)

The primary formats, modes, and methods for teaching and learning are:

- A. Lecture/discussion
- B. Small-group work
- C. Student oral presentations
- D. Reading and written assignments

## **VII. Grade Determinants**

- A. Examinations
- B. Classroom participation (and attendance) in all projects, discussions and critiques (required)
- C. Completion of all written assignments (required)
- D. Research project/oral presentation (required)

## **VIII. Texts and Materials**

**Text:** (such as) *The Musical*, Richard Kislán, latest edition, Applause Books

(Please Note: The course outline is intended only as a guide to course content and resources. Do not purchase textbooks based on this outline. The RVCC Bookstore is the sole resource for the most up-to-date information about textbooks.)

## **IX. Resources**

- A. Classroom equipped with media/projection systems
- B. Library of video and DVD performances
- C. Library of scores/scripts

