I. Locator Information

I. Course Number and Name: THEA 495  Special Topics in Theatre
Semester _________

Semester credit hours: 1-6

II. Course Description: Seminar to demonstrate the student’s proficiency in an area of theatre research agreed upon by the student and the instructor. Topics may come from any area of theatre studies or be combined with production work, but the project must result in a 10-15 page research paper with supporting bibliography.  Pre-requisite(s) vary depending on the seminar and instructor.

III. Disabled Student Services: In accordance with Section 504 of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ACA) of 1990, if you have a disability or think you have a disability to please contact the Center for Personal Development in the Spaulding Building, Room 155 (1st Floor); 910-672-1203.

IV. Textbook: No textbook is needed.

Special materials needed: Personal journal, MLA Handbook.

V. Student Learning Outcomes: This course is intended to guide students through the process of independent research, writing, and/or production of performance work based on a specialized topic. Students should demonstrate competence in:

A. Intermediate to advanced procedures of scholarly research and methodology.

B. Effective writing
   1. Communication skills
   2. Documentation skills
   3. Critical evaluation of scholarly or creative work, including their own.

Students should leave the course able to design and complete a research project and/or paper, locate and evaluate relevant information (as it applies to theatre design and/or production), and to present findings according to professional standards.

VI. Course Requirements and Evaluation Criteria.

Grading Scale:  A = (92 – 100)  B= (83 – 91)  C= (82-74)  D= (73 – 65)  F = 64-below (Failure)

Course credit is dependent upon location and depth of assignments given. International assignments carry a 6 hour credit while domestic assignments carry 3 hours. 1 hour credit is given for local assignments.

All writing will be evaluated according to these criteria:

1. Content: clear articulation of a thesis that is pursued throughout the paper; use of appropriate methodology for the thesis; identification of specific arguments used to prove or explore your thesis; appropriate application of specific evidence to support your arguments AND your personal commitment to your own ideas.

2. Writing: organization, clarity, correctness of grammar and mechanics, effective style.

3. Research and bibliography: appropriateness and completeness of sources: correctness and consistency of form.

Participation:

1. All written work must meet the standards of basic expository writing and must follow the style outlined in the MLA Handbook. Grammar, clarity, style, and documentation count and will affect your grade.

2. The written assignments for this class will be submitted in a variety of formats. Some assignments will be posted on the class discussion list. Other assignments should be submitted through the assignments section of the class Blackboard site. Students are responsible for submitting each assignment in the location as indicated in the instructions listed on this syllabus and in .doc format.
3. Grades of “incomplete” may not be given except in cases of verified medical or other emergencies.

4. Plagiarism violates the expectation of honesty among scholars without which there can be no intellectual inquiry. The Area of Visual Art does not tolerate plagiarism in this or any class. Any student found guilty of such an offense will be failed for the course and at the discretion of the faculty member may be brought before the University Student Judicial Board for dismissal from the institution.

5. Student must be able to afford the expense of what is necessary in the seminar. This may include travel, accommodations, sustenance, and/or studio supplies.

6. Contracts are drawn up between the students and instructor which relate to the topic being undertaken. (When applicable, a rubric will be used to document progress.)

7. All students are expected to participate in the scheduled class meetings, class activities, trips, and online discussion. You should prepare for these meetings and discussions by following the process outlined in the course schedule.

8. The FSU Policy on Disruptive Behavior in Classroom as it applies classroom, group travel, and travel activities:

There will be group meetings and a forum for online discussion, as well as individual meetings either locally or while on field trips. It is your responsibility to schedule these individual meetings with the instructor. Keep a copy of each assignment for yourself and make an additional copy to submit for credit. The assignments listed below outline the process of your work. Follow MLA style when writing.

All students are expected to participate in the scheduled class meetings, class activities, trips, and online discussion. You should prepare for these meetings and discussions by following the process outlined in the course schedule.

Assignment #1: Thesis topic and preliminary bibliography 5%

Defines your general topic area and shows that you have located initial sources for research. Topic: two or three sentences. Bibliography: at least three sources. This assignment will be submitted to the class for discussion. You are expected to contribute to the online discussion by responding to at least one other person’s topic with a helpful question, comment or suggestion.

Assignment #2: Proposal for the paper 10%

The proposal will be a two-page explanation of your thesis topic, its significance, your proposed methodology, and your anticipated findings PLUS a working bibliography of at least five sources. This assignment should be posted to the discussion list. You should also respond to at least two other proposals. You should schedule a meeting to discuss this proposal after you have submitted it. The proposal should include the following:

1. A working title.
2. A working thesis statement or concise explanation of questions you intend to address.
3. An explanation of the significance of your topic. This should show that you have some general knowledge of the field and should explain why you think your topic is important within the field.
4. An explanation of your proposed methodology. What approach will you take to your research? How will you attempt to answer the questions you have posed for yourself? Will you read or see plays, letters, analyze social conditions, etc? Your methods should correspond to the information you want to discover.
5. Anticipated findings: what do you expect to demonstrate, what are your anticipated conclusions, or at least what questions do you hope to resolve?
6. Bibliography: follow MLA style. It should show that you are familiar with the most current and important works in the field and have located a variety of materials (books, articles, Internet resources) specific to your thesis.

Assignment #3: Outline 5%

A detailed outline of at least three levels (I.A.1, etc). This is a sketch of the paper itself, and is extremely important. It should begin with your working thesis statement. Identify anticipated arguments in your paper. How will you take your reader from thesis through argument to conclusion? This assignment should be attached to a new thread on the class discussion board. You should also respond to one other outline with a helpful question or suggestion.

Assignment #4: First full draft of paper 15%

This should be a finished, complete version of approximately 20 pages. This assignment should be posted to the class discussion board. The file should be saved in rich text format (rtf). The idea is to submit your best work, and then to improve upon that with guidance. When this draft has been posted, you should make an appointment with the instructor to discuss it. This is a full version of your paper, not a ROUGH draft. This should be a finished, complete version of approximately 20
The idea is to submit your best work, and then to improve upon that with guidance from your peers and the professor. Your ever-expanding bibliography should be included.

Assignment #5: Final (revised) version 50%

While half of the grade depends on the final version, it represents everything that has come before. The rest of your grade will be determined by the written work and your participation in our process. Regardless of the quality of the first version, you must go through the process of rewriting and improving.

Additional Research and Writing Resources: For further assistance with any writing issues, check out the FSU Writing Lab. Dates, times and further information available at:

FSU Policy on Disruptive Behavior in the Classroom (Optional)

The Code of the University of North Carolina (of which FSU is a constituent institution) and the FSU Code of Student Conduct affirm that all students have the right to receive instruction without interference from other students who disrupt classes. FSU Core Curriculum Learning Outcome under Ethics and Civic Engagement (6.03): All students will “prepare themselves for responsible citizenship by fulfilling roles and responsibilities associated with membership in various organizations.” Each classroom is a mini-community. Students learn and demonstrate responsible citizenship by abiding by the rules of classroom behavior and respecting the rights all members of the class.

The FSU Policy on Disruptive Behavior (see FSU website for complete policy) identifies the following behaviors as disruptive:

1. Failure to respect the rights of other students to express their viewpoints by behaviors such as repeatedly interrupting others while they speak, using profanity and/or disrespectful names or labels for others, ridiculing others for their viewpoints, and other similar behaviors;
2. Excessive talking to other students while the faculty member or other students are presenting information or expressing their viewpoints.
3. Use of cell phones and other electronic devices
4. Overt inattentiveness (sleeping, reading newspapers)
5. Eating in class (except as permitted by the faculty member)
6. Threats or statements that jeopardize the safety of the student and others
7. Failure to follow reasonable requests of faculty members
8. Entering class late or leaving class early on regular basis
9. Others as specified by the instructor.

The instructor may take the following actions in response to disruptive behavior. Students should recognize that refusing to comply with reasonable requests from the faculty member is another incidence of disruptive behavior.

1. Direct student to cease disruptive behavior.
2. Direct student to change seating locations.
3. Require student to have individual conference with faculty member. At his meeting the faculty member will explain the consequences of continued disruptive behavior.
4. Dismiss class for the remainder of the period. (Must be reported to department chair.)
5. Lower the student’s final exam by a maximum of one-letter grade.
6. File a complaint with the Dean of Students for more severe disciplinary action.

Students who believe the faculty member has unfairly applied the policy to them may appeal with the faculty member’s department chair.

VII. Academic Support Resources: There is no academic support resource available for this class other than the Chesnutt Library stacks and media inventory.

VIII. Course Outline  TBA

Procedure: Make appointments with your instructor to discuss assignments. Remember: Even though there are scheduled activities to help you through the process of writing your thesis, this course relies on your own motivation and discipline. The instructor will guide you, but will not seek you out, remind you about deadlines or do your research for you. The key to a successful process and product is communication: keep your supervisor informed of your progress, difficulties and plans.

IX. Teaching Strategies
Teaching strategies include online and real time discussions, reading, writing presentations, performances, and a major research paper.
X. Bibliography

Quick Research and Writing Guides

The Quick Guide to CookWeb:  * a selection of the most helpful online Cook Library databases for theatre studies as well as some tips on how to conduct your searches.

The Quick Guide to Research Sources for Theatre Students:  * a comprehensive list of the theatre sources available in Towson University's Cook Library

The Quick Guide to Dramaturgical Research  * list of suggested categories and sources for dramaturgical resources

The Quick Guide to Visual Research  * links to sources for locating visual images that may be of use in production research

Research Paper Checklist  * a guide for turning that rough draft into a polished finished product

MLA Edition 7 Updates  * a helpful update to the new MLA form from Research and Documentation Online by Diana Hacker

Aunt Robyn's Quick Guide to Preparing for College  * something to share with people ready to start their college search

We are suggesting here a way of looking at the actor’s function; we are not developing a system in the way that Stanislavski spoke of his “system.” Techniques of analysis and systems of criticism are useful only insofar as they help to explore, extend, and clarify our aesthetic responses; they can never be a substitute for aesthetic response. When they begin to determine or predispose aesthetic response, they must be destroyed. The same thing applies to an educational situation. The moment you let any teacher’s system or way of seeing things begin to replace your own, that’s not education in any sense of the word whatsoever. Anything that can be taught on that basis is really not worth learning. When thinking about your work and the work of your teachers remember that the real effect of your training will never be immediately apparent, nor will you be able to recognize or evaluate those deepest effects for some time. This is why a firm trust in your teachers is indispensable. (Anonymous Author)