



Appreciate Theatre: A New, Open-source Textbook for SUNY Oneonta's Introductory Theatre Course

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Theatre Appreciation at SUNY Oneonta:

THTR 1111 Course Description: Course to develop audience appreciation of theatre as a cultural, social, and artistic force. Consideration of forms and styles of theatrical expression with emphasis on the contemporary theater. Not a performance course. Pass/Fail option. LA, A3.

For incoming theatre majors, this class is one of the foundational courses to introduce students to the degree program, as it surveys theatre history from its origins to modern day. The content also includes learning about the people involved in all areas of theatre, and how it differs between cultures and evolves over different time periods. Theatre Appreciation tends to be a popular course for students outside of the theatre department, as it fills both liberal arts, and arts credits.

Why Create a New Textbook?

Kiara Pipino, a theatre professor at SUNY Oneonta often teaches Theatre Appreciation. What she and other professors have discovered about teaching this class is how challenging it is to find a text that is useful to both professors and students. Since this class covers such a broad range of topics, time periods, and cultures, it is nearly impossible to have all topics in the curriculum available in a single resource. *Appreciate Theatre* is being designed in such a way that each chapter in the textbook correlates to one week of the semester.

The writing, editing, and publishing process of this textbook is underway and will continue into the Summer of 2022. We anticipate it to be ready for use in Theatre Appreciation for the Fall 2022 semester.



Romeo and Juliet, dir. Andrew Kahl at SUNY Oneonta



The Wolves, dir. Kiara Pipino at SUNY Oneonta



The Bald Soprano, dir. John McCaslin-Doyle at SUNY Oneonta



The Taming of the Shrew, dir. John McCaslin-Doyle at SUNY Oneonta

Pressbooks and Open-source Publishing:

This textbook is to be published through Pressbooks, an online publishing platform founded by Hugh McGuire that focuses on making educational resources accessible for as many students and academics as possible. According to the Pressbooks website, their goals are as follows: "we want to drive the open publishing movement by partnering with institutions of higher education around the world. We help our partners compete with large commercial publishers, while supporting their immediate need to get accessible educational content into the hands of students" (<https://pressbooks.com/>).

The goals of this textbook are similar to those of Pressbooks, which makes that platform ideal to carry out this project. In addition to developing this resource for use at SUNY Oneonta, this text is intended to be used by other higher education institutions as well. The cost of educational textbooks can be extremely high for some courses, and with an open-source textbook, it will be free to read and use in various academic settings (with attribution given when necessary).

The student editor on this project will also be searching for open-source images to include in the textbook using a platform called Openverse, affiliated with Wordpress, another online open-source publishing platform (<https://wordpress.org/openverse/>). This website is a search engine for openly licensed images that can be used and cited in the textbook to give students visual examples to connect and better understand the material.

Table of Contents and Authors:

1: Why Theatre? (TBA)

- Theatre as form of art, its historical and social relevance and philosophical origin.

2: Theatrical Spaces (TBA)

- How to read a play. Differences and similarities with other fiction.

3: Genres and Styles (TBA)

4: Who does what? The Actor (Andrew Kahl)

5: Who does what? The Director (Kiara Pipino)

6: Who does what? The Producer (Kiara Pipino)

7: Who does what? The Playwright (Ingrid De Sanctis)

8: Who does what? The Set Designer (John Bagby)

9: Who does what? The Costume Designer (Bethany Marx)

10: Who does what? Light Designers (Michael Riha)

11: Everyone Else! (Kiara Pipino)

12: Theatre History Abridged (Barbara Kahl)

- 12a: Shakespeare

13: Musical Theatre (Emily Jones)

14: Applied Theatre—Theatre for Social Change—Theatre of the Underrepresented (Krista Dennis)

15: World Theatre (Missy Maramara)

Appendix: A Student's Perspective (Gillian Canavan)

Within these chapters, there are going to be at least two interviews with established theatre professionals, one being Hal Luftig, a SUNY Oneonta alumni. Luftig is a Broadway producer, with one of his most notable projects being the Tony Award-winning musical, *Kinky Boots*. The theatre department is very grateful for its close relationship with alumni who are willing to share advice to our students. Reading an interview with an alumni who has been successful in this area of study after college can be inspiring for students who are just beginning to learn about theatre.

Since this textbook is being created with several people in the SUNY Oneonta community on board, the understanding of the theatre department and the theatre major will ensure that it is constructed to efficiently guide the students through the course content and prepare them for their future courses by building essential foundational knowledge. The importance of a student's perspective both throughout the editing process and in the textbook's conclusion is to assist in making sure the course's design is functional from a learning standpoint rather than solely a teaching one.