



MUSICALS AND “AMERICA”

Radio-Television-Film 345

Theater & Dance 357T / Women’s & Gender Studies 340

Fall 2022 Syllabus

Class meetings: 2-3:15pm Tuesdays and Thursdays, CMA 3.116

Screenings: 5-7:30pm Tuesdays, CMA 3.116

Course Canvas site: <https://utexas.instructure.com/courses/1341259>

Professor: Dr. Mary Beltrán

Office and email: CMA 6.124B, mary.beltran@austin.utexas.edu

Office hours: 3:30-4:30pm Tuesdays and 10-am12pm Thursdays at CMA 6.124B, and by appointment. Please schedule a meeting on the [Signup Sheet](#) or just drop in if no one else is scheduled.

Teaching Assistant: Laura Brown, PhD Candidate, Media Studies

Email: laurabrown@utexas.edu **Office hours:** By appointment

Course Description

The American musical has long been a popular genre through which storytellers, performers and audiences reimagine who we are and how the nation defines itself with respect to norms of race, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, class, and citizenship. It also has been a forum for stories about social issues of the day, with its conventions as popular entertainment allowing boundary-pushing content to be given voice. *Musicals and “America”* surveys the genre’s history and evolution, with an emphasis on musical and dance films and television series since the 1950s, and provides tools for critical analysis of musical narratives, performances involving song and/or dance, and the representation of identities across the decades. We’ll watch a number of ground-breaking films and television series in this history (including *Rent*, *Funny Girl*, *Zoot Suit*, and *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend*), and read and respond to scholarship on Hollywood, Broadway and television musicals, with a focus on the ways in which cinematic renditions of song and dance make meaning.

Course Objectives. *By the end of the semester, students will:*

- Understand the cultural context of many iconic film, theater, and television musicals;
- Gain a deeper understanding of how musicals as a genre have both reflected and challenged hegemonies in American culture and offered or denied a voice to particular social groups across time;
- Recognize how film and media industry shifts have influenced the evolution of the genre;
- Strengthen critical analysis, research, and writing skills, and understanding of how in-depth historical research can enrich our appreciation of artistic works.

Course Materials

Our readings will be compiled in a two-part course reader for sale at Jenn's Copies, 2518 Guadalupe Street. They have an online shopping link at <https://jennscopies.com>.

A few of the readings will be available in PDF form to print from our "Modules" page on Canvas.

The assigned readings are meant to be read before class; please come in prepared to discuss them. A few readings may be substituted or added during the semester, while the amount of reading will stay roughly the same. The weekly screenings also are required course materials.

Assignments and Grade Breakdown

Participation – 26%.

Participation includes active engagement in and regular attendance in class. Regularly showing up for class, speaking up from time to time, and participating actively in activities will earn you a high grade in Participation. I strongly encourage you to share your thoughts on the course material, get actively involved, and get to know your classmates.

Your attendance will affect this grade as well. Everyone has **three** "freebie" unexcused absences that will not affect your grade. Each unexcused absence after that will result in a half letter grade off the Participation grade. Excused absences, such as for illness, will not affect your grade, however! Please keep in touch when you have to miss class. (See Attendance for more information).

Discussion Posts and Responses, 24% (8 x 3% each).

Discussion is an opportunity for you to reflect and comment regarding your own thoughts on the course content and to engage with your classmates. You'll be asked to write discussion posts (a short paragraph or up to a page of writing) in response to prompts on the reading, screenings and course material, and also to briefly respond to **two** classmates' posts. You're expected to take part in the online discussions **8 out of the 11 possible weeks** during the semester (in other words, you can skip three weeks). You'll be graded on a 5-point scale for your posts, including 2 points possible for your responses to classmates.

Two Film (or Television) Critiques (worth 10% and 15%), 25%

Using class readings and lectures, you'll be asked to write two short papers in academic essay format about film or television musicals that we've watched, providing historical, industrial, visual, musical, and/or narrative support for your arguments. More details will be provided soon.

Final Paper or Final Project (If a paper, 6-9 pages): 25%:

Paper or Photo/Video Essay Option: Choose a film musical or television musical episode since 1960. After careful analysis of the musical and of reviews of the musical published when it was exhibited to the public, present your interpretation of how American identities and social norms of the era are constructed in the film or TV episode, providing visual, aural, narrative, cinematic, and historical support for your argument. For example, you might focus on how this musical narrates ideas about assimilation, proscribed gender roles of a certain era, cultural citizenship, sexual identities, the American Dream, or gentrification. Your output can be a paper, or a video essay or photo essay. Draw on **at least two class readings and at least three reviews** of the film or television musical in your work, being sure to quote and properly cite your sources. Feel free to also draw on and cite class lectures. You may find it helpful to look for a source or two on the production of the musical as well. Be sure to cite your sources, and to include a properly formatted Works Cited page.

Project Option: Based on in-depth research on an “inspiration musical,” begin brainstorming a musical narrative of your own. Roughly sketch out the narrative, the primary characters, how musical numbers will be integrated and add to the narrative. Perhaps also write the lyrics for a few songs. Your final output could be in a variety of forms, such as a video, treatment for an original musical, or a photo essay. You should incorporate several (2-3) pages of content that discuss what your research on an inspiration musical or musicals, and how and why it/they inspired your ideas about your musical in progress. Include **at least one class reading, one outside source on the production of the musical(s), and at least three reviews** of the musical(s) in your mentions of your research and the brainstorming of your new musical.

Regardless of whether you complete a paper or a project, part of your grade will include a brief presentation during the last week of class on your work in progress. The final version will be due on a date during Finals Week to be announced later.

Class Policies

Names and Personal Pronoun Preferences. Class rosters are provided to me with your legal name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by a name that is different from what appears on the roster and by the gender pronouns that you use (she/he/they, etc). Please advise me of this preference early in the semester. For instructions on how to add your pronouns and preferred name to your Canvas profile, visit [this site](#). More resources are available on the Gender and Sexuality Center’s website, www.utgsc.org.

Grading scale. Final grades will be based on a standard scale and will include + and – grades: A (93%+), A- (90-92%), B+ (88-89%), B (83-87%), B- (80-82%), C+ (78-79%), C (73-77%), C- (70-72%), D+ (68-69%), D (60-67%), and F (less than 60%).

Attendance. Attendance will be taken during our class times. Everyone is granted three freebie unexcused absences, after which your participation grade will be lowered by a half letter grade for each unexcused absence. Please don’t hesitate to stay home if you’re not feeling well, however! I will always excuse absences for illness and will help you keep up with the course material. Excused absences also include absences discussed in advance for religious holidays, or that happen because of emergencies that arise. *Please let me know via email* if you have to miss a

class, and I'll let you know if I'm able to excuse it. If you miss an assignment due to an excused absence, you'll be given an opportunity to complete it within a reasonable time afterward.

Late assignments. You will be given a reasonable amount of time to complete all assignments. Late assignments are typically subject to a penalty of a half-letter grade per day late; however, the penalty will be waived during some circumstances. If you find yourself struggling with unexpected personal events, please keep let me or your TA know.

Mutual Respect, and Safe Space in our classroom: It is my intent that students from all diverse backgrounds and perspectives be well served by this course, that everyone's learning needs be addressed, and that the diversity that everyone brings to this class can be comfortably expressed and viewed as a resource, strength and benefit to all students.

Everyone's participation is also important to what I consider a successful class. I strongly encourage you to share your reactions throughout the semester. Please keep in mind that everyone comes from a wide variety of backgrounds and histories and help to make this a comfortable place for students who have *no* familiarity with the topics we discuss. Aim to engage with each other with openness, patience, careful listening, and mutual respect. Part of my job is to keep our class a safe space for everyone; please let me know if you have any concerns about interactions that take place.

Content Warning: Linked to this, some content in this course may include topics that some students find uncomfortable. I'll aim to forewarn you about potentially disturbing content and to create an atmosphere of sensitivity in this regard.

I am committed to creating an accessible and inclusive learning environment consistent with university policy and federal and state law. Please let me know if you experience any barriers to learning so I can work with you to ensure you have equal opportunity to participate fully in this course. If you are a student with a disability, or think you may have a disability, and need accommodations please contact **Disability & Access (D&A)**. Please refer to the D&A website at <http://diversity.utexas.edu/disability/> for more information. If you are already registered with D&A, please deliver your Accommodation Letter to me as early as possible in the semester so we can discuss your approved accommodations and needs in this course.

Please also inform me early in the semester if you are dealing with another issue that could affect your performance in class or your work outside of class. I will do my best to work with you.

Academic Integrity. Students who violate University rules on academic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and/or dismissal from the University. In particular, please familiarize yourself with how to properly cite online sources in your papers for class so that it does not constitute plagiarism. Since such dishonesty harms the individual, all students, and the integrity of the University, policies on academic dishonesty will be strictly enforced. For further information, please visit the Student Conduct and Academic Integrity website at: <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/conduct>.

Sharing of course materials is also prohibited. No materials, including, but not limited to lecture videos and slides, class hand-outs, and assignment guidelines, may be shared online or with

anyone outside of class without explicit, written permission of the instructor. Unauthorized sharing of materials promotes cheating. The University is well aware of sites used for sharing materials; any suspected unauthorized sharing of materials will be reported to Student Conduct and Academic Integrity in the Office of the Dean of Students. These reports can result in sanctions, including failure of the course.

Title IX Disclosure. Since January 1, 2020, Texas Education Code, Section 51.252 requires all employees of Texas universities, including faculty, to report any information to the Title IX Office regarding sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating violence and stalking that is disclosed to them, whether in writing assignments, class discussions, one-on-one conversations, or third-party reports. The Title IX office has developed supportive ways to respond to a survivor and campus resources to support all impacted by a Title IX incident. If you would like to speak with someone who can provide support or remedies without making a report to the university, please email supportandresources@austin.utexas.edu. For more about reporting options and resources, visit <http://www.titleix.utexas.edu>, or contact the Title IX Office at titleix@austin.utexas.edu or 512-471-0419. Graduate teaching assistants also are mandatory reporters under Federal Title IX laws required to report a wide range of behaviors we refer to as sexual misconduct.

STUDENT RESOURCES

Writing Support. If you have difficulties with writing, I encourage you to seek help from the Moody College Writing Support Program or the University Writing Center. The Moody Writing Support Program offers online assistance and some in-person appointments without charge to students seeking to improve their writing in all fields of communication, including film and television studies. Students may book half-hour appointments at <https://sites.utexas.edu/moodywriting/> during all stages of the writing process. The University Writing Center, in Learning Commons, PCL 2.330, offers individualized online assistance to students who want to improve their writing skills. There is no charge; students can make appointments at 512-471-6222 or at uwc.utexas.edu.

Sanger Learning Center. Did you know that more than one-third of UT undergraduate students use the Sanger Learning Center each year to improve their academic performance? All students are welcome to take advantage of Sanger Center's classes and workshops, private learning specialist appointments, peer academic coaching, and tutoring for more than 70 courses in 15 different subject areas. For more information, please visit <https://ugs.utexas.edu/slc> or call 512-471-3614.

Student Emergency Services in the Office of the Dean of Students helps students and their families during difficult or emergency situations. Assistance includes outreach, advocacy, intervention, support, and referrals to relevant campus and community resources. If you need to be absent from class due to a family emergency, medical or mental health concern, or academic difficulty due to crisis or an emergency situation, you can work with Student Emergency Services. SES will document your situation and notify your professors. Additional information is available at <https://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/emergency/> or by calling 512-471-5017.

Basic Needs. If you face challenges securing food or housing, it is suggested that you contact the Dean of Students Office for support. UT maintains the UT Outpost, which is a free on-campus food pantry and career closet.

Counseling Support: All of us benefit from support during times of struggle. Know you are not alone. If you or anyone you know is experiencing symptoms of stress, anxiety, depression, academic concerns, loneliness, difficulty sleeping, or any other concern impacting your wellbeing –you are strongly encouraged to connect with the Counseling and Mental Health Center (CMHC). The CMHC provides a wide variety of mental health services to all UT students including crisis services, counseling services with immediate support and well-being resources. Additionally, CARE Counselors are located within the academic schools and colleges. These counselors get to know the concerns that are unique to their college's students. For more information on CMHC, visit <https://cmhc.utexas.edu> or call 512-471-3515.

University Health Services (UHS) is an on-campus high-quality medical facility providing care to all UT students. Services offered by UHS include general medicine, urgent care, a 24/7 nurse advice line, gynecology, sports medicine, physical therapy, lab and radiology services, COVID-19 testing and vaccinations and much more. For information, visit <https://healthyhorns.utexas.edu> or call 512-471-4955.

Covid-19 Support:

You have a choice regarding whether to wear a mask in class, and regarding where you sit in the classroom. Please take care of yourself and also be respectful of others. And please stay home if you don't feel well and/or test positive for Covid; absences for illness will always be excused.

- The university will continue to provide [rapid antigen self-test kits](#) at distribution sites throughout campus. You can receive up to four tests at a time.
- The university will provide [symptomatic COVID-19 testing](#) for all students, faculty and staff.
- UHS maintains up-to-date resources on COVID, which can be found here: <https://healthyhorns.utexas.edu/coronavirus.html>

Semester Schedule

Week 1: Introductions, and What is a Musical? (T 8/23 & Th 8/25)

Reading (T 8/23): Course syllabus

8/23 Screening: *In the Heights* (John M. Chu, 2021; sc. Quiara Alegría Hughes. Adapted from 2008 Broadway version: concept, music and lyrics by Lin-Manuel Miranda; book by Hughes).

Reading (Th 8/25): Desiree Garcia, "Introduction," *The Movie Musical*; Steven Cohan, "Analyzing Musicals" (67-81)

Week 2: Musicals, "America," and *Rent* (T 8/30 & Th 9/1)

Reading (T 8/30): Cohan, "Analyzing Musicals" (100-107)

8/30 Screening: *Rent* (Chris Columbus 2005. 2hr, 15min. Adapted from 1996 Broadway

version: book, lyrics and music by Jonathan Larson)

Reading (Th 9/1): Mark Shields, "'Bohemia is Dead': *Rent* Celebrating Life in the Face of Death;" Trish Bendix, "Sarah Schulman Explains..."

Weekend: Discussion 1

Week 3: The Musical and Whiteness (T 9/6 & Th 9/8)

Reading (T 9/6): Warren Hoffman, "All Singin'! All Dancin'! All White People?"

9/6 Screening: *Singin' in the Rain* (Stanley Donen and Gene Kelly, 1952), 103 min.

Reading (Th 9/8): Carol Clover, "Dancin' in the Rain"

Weekend: Discussion 2

Week 4: Mythologies of Gender and Heterosexuality (T 9/13 & Th 9/15)

Reading (T 9/13): Stacy Wolf, "Gender and Sexuality"

9/13 Screening: *Swing Time* (George Stevens, 1936), 103 min.

Reading (Th 9/15): Margaret T. McFadden, "'Shall We Dance?' Gender and Class Conflict in Astaire-Rogers Dance Musicals" (pp. 678-691)

Weekend: Discussion 3

Week 5: Performing & Disavowing Blackness (T 9/20 & Th 9/22)

Watch before Tuesday: excerpts from *Show Boat* (James Whale, 1936. Adapted from 1927 Broadway version: music by Jerome Kern, lyrics by Oscar Hammerstein II and P.G. Wodehouse, book by Hammerstein II)

Reading (T 9/20): Lauren Berlant, "Pax Americana: The Case of *Show Boat*"

9/20 Screening: *Stormy Weather* (1943, Andrew L. Stone)

Reading (Th 9/22): Susie Trenka, "Appreciation, Appropriation, Assimilation: *Stormy Weather* and the Hollywood History of Black Dance" (pp. 123-158)

Weekend: Discussion 4

Week 6: Constructions of Latinidad & Whiteness (T 9/27 & Th 9/29)

Reading (T 9/27): Alberto Sandoval-Sánchez, "Carmen Miranda and Desi Arnaz"

9/27 Screening: *West Side Story* (Robert Wise and Jerome Robbins, 1961; adapted from 1957 Broadway version: book by Arthur Laurents, lyrics by Stephen Sondheim, music by Leonard Bernstein)

Reading (Th 9/29): Brian Eugenio Herrera, "How the Sharks Became Puerto Rican"

Paper 1 Due

Week 7: 1960s Musicals and the Single Woman (T 10/4 & Th 10/6)

Reading (T 10/4): Stacy Wolf, "The 1960s: 'If My Friends Could See Me Now'"

10/4 Screening: *Funny Girl* (1968, William Wyler; adapted from 1964 Broadway version: book by Isobel Lennart, lyrics by Bob Stennart, music by Julez Styne)

Reading (Th 10/6): Pamela Robertson Wojcik, "The Streisand Musical"

Weekend: Discussion 5

Week 8: Dance as a Narrative Agent, and New Hollywood Danceploitation Films (T 10/11 & Th 10/13)

Reading (T 10/11): Angela McRobbie, "Dance Narratives and Fantasies of Achievement"

10/11 Screening: *Saturday Night Fever* (John Badham, 1977)

Reading (Th 10/13): Jenny Oyallon-Koloski, "Danceploitation, Musical Disruption, and Synergy in *Saturday Night Fever*, *Flashdance*, and *Breakin'*"

Weekend: Discussion 6

Week 9: The Folk Musical and Jewish, Chicana/o, & Black Identity (T 10/18 & Th 10/20)

Reading (T 10/18): Desirée Garcia, "'Ease on Down the Road': Folk Musicals and the Ethnic Revival: *The Wiz* and *Zoot Suit*"

10/18 Screening: *Zoot Suit* (Luis Valdez, 1981. 1hr 43 min. Adapted from 1979 Broadway version: music by Daniel Valdez and Lalo Guerrero, lyrics by Lalo Guerrero, book by Luis Valdez)

Reading (Th 10/20): Rosa Linda Fregoso, "Intertextuality and Cultural Identity in *Zoot Suit* (1981) and *La Bamba* (1987)"

Weekend: Discussion 7

Week 10: Mixed Ideologies of Ensemble-cast Musicals (T 10/25 & Th 10/27)

Reading (T 10/25): Warren Hoffman, "*A Chorus Line: The Benneton of Broadway Musicals*"

10/25 Screening: *A Chorus Line* (Richard Attenborough, 1985. 118 min. Adapted from 1975 Broadway version: music by Marvin Hamlisch, lyrics by Edward Kleban, book by James Kirkwood Jr. and Nicholas Dante)

Reading (Th 10/27): Mary Beltrán, "Hip Hop Hearts Ballet: Utopic Multiculturalism and the *Step Up* Dance Films"

Weekend: Discussion 8

Week 11: Gendered Music(al) Revolutions: Rock, Punk, and MTV (T 11/1 & Th 11/3)

Reading (T 11/1): Barry Keith Grant, "The Classical Hollywood Musical and the 'Problem' of Rock'n'Roll"

11/1 Screening: *Ladies and Gentlemen, The Fabulous Stains* (Lou Adler, 1982)

Reading (Th 11/3): Rob Tannenbaum and Craig Marks, "'The Two M's': Madonna Touches MTV for the Very First Time;" Sam McBean, "'I'm a Waste of Time': Riot Grrrl and *Ladies and Gentlemen, the Fabulous Stains*"

Weekend: Discussion 9

Week 12: LGBTQ and Non-Binary Gender Identities (T 11/8 & Th 11/10)

Reading (T 11/8): Rose Gelfand, "Broadgay? An Examination of Queer Representation in Musicals;" John M. Clum, "'A Little More Mascara: Drag and the Broadway Musical from *La Cage aux Folles* to *Kinky Boots*"

11/8 Screening: *Hedwig and the Angry Inch* (John Cameron Mitchell, 2001) 92 min

Reading (Th 11/10): Matthew Henry, "One Inch Mound of Flesh: Troubling Queer Identity in *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*"

Paper 2 due

Weekend: Discussion 10

Week 13: Television Musicals (T 11/15 & Th 11/17)

Reading (T 11/15): Mary Jo Lodge, "'Beyond Jumping the Shark': The New Television Musical"

11/15 Screening: *Buffy, the Vampire Slayer*, "Once More, With Feeling" (S6, Ep7, 2001);
Crazy Ex-Girlfriend, "Josh Just Happens to Live Here!" (S1, Ep 1. Rachel Bloom, 2015)

Reading (Th 11/17): Jessica Ford and Phoebe Macrossan, "The Musical Number as Feminist Intervention in *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend*"

Weekend: Discussion 11

Week of November 21-25: Fall Break! Enjoy

Week 14: Post-Millennial Musicals / Presentations (T 11/29 & Th 12/1)

Reading (T 11/30): "'The Past Isn't Done with Us,' says 'Hamilton' Creator Lin-Manuel Miranda" (Terry Gross NPR interview with Lin-Manuel Miranda).

Presentations

11/30 Screening time: **Presentations**

(Th 12/1): **Presentations / Class wrap-up**

Final Papers & Projects: Deadline TBD, During Finals Week
--