

COURSE DESCRIPTION
PT525 – The Gospel According to Musical Theatre
Vancouver School of Theology SUMMER 2020
July 6-10, 2020: 2pm – 5pm

Instructors Peter Elliott, pgelliott@me.com, and Nathan LeRud, Nathan@trinity-episcopal.org

PURPOSE: This course provides an opportunity to learn about the structure of musical theatre, to assess critically the assumptions and effects of plots, characters and songs, and to reflect theologically on how gospel themes are conveyed through this ever popular art form.

A note from the instructors:

*We are very much looking forward to offering *The Gospel according to Musical Theatre* this summer online through Vancouver School of Theology. We've both had good experiences with how effective online conversation can be—and can't imagine a better way to explore the theological themes of musical theatre this summer than to meet you all online! Because much of our course entails viewing clips of musicals available online and discussing them, we think this material will translate well to a virtual medium.*

EXPECTATIONS AND COMPETENCE OBJECTIVES:

By the conclusion of this class, students will be able to:

- identify common tropes and structures within musical theatre
- discuss the deep structure of musical theatre
- compare and contrast shows from the early period of musical theatre (1940s-1960s), works of the last third of the 20th century (1970-1999), and more contemporary offerings (2000s)
- apply gospel themes to a selection of musical theatre shows
- apply feminist critical theory to musical theatre shows
- enjoy in depth conversations about the themes, songs, characters and plots of the shows.

FORMAT All courses offered in VST 2020 Summer School will only be available through distance learning, using Zoom for class sessions and Canvas, VST's online course platform, for course resources. All classes will be recorded on Zoom for password protected viewing by class participants only.

Zoom software requires minimum computer system requirements such as an internet connection – broadband wired or wireless, a camera and a microphone. For details please refer to <https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/201362023-System-Requirements-for-PC-Mac-and-Linux>. Students unfamiliar with Zoom will be provided basic support by VST. For reference see <https://vst.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Zoom-Manual-for-Students.pdf>. Students will also be provided with basic support for accessing Canvas.

Work in the course consists of daily 3-hour Zoom classes that may include lectures and various in-class online discussions and small group exercises that will be accomplished through Zoom. All courses also include required readings to be completed before the course starts. As well various assignments may include papers or exercises during the week, and one or more final papers due by August 31 for Certificate and Basic Degree students. All papers will be submitted to the instructor via email or as the instructor specifies.

REQUIRED READINGS:

Vietel, Jack. *The Secret Life of the American Musical: How Broadway Shows are Built*. New York: Sarah Crichton Books, 2016

Wolf, Stacy. *Changed for Good: A Feminist History of the Broadway Musical*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011

Suggested (but not required) Texts:

Raymond Knapp's *The American Musical and the Performance of Personal Identity* (Princeton: 2009) and *The American Musical and the Formation of National Identity* (Princeton: 2016)

Stephen Sondheim *Finishing the Hat* (Knopf, 2010) and *Look, I Made A Hat* (New York: Knopf 2011)

Other articles will be distributed throughout the duration of the class.

ASSIGNMENTS

1. **Attendance:** All students taking the course for Certificate or Degree credit must participate synchronously in all class sessions via Zoom. Auditors are encouraged to participate synchronously, but may request to watch class recordings asynchronously. 100% attendance is required of Certificate and Degree students.
2. **Readings:** All students including auditors are expected to do all the required readings.
3. **Class participation:** All synchronously participating students are expected to participate in all class discussions and activities. These will be set up via the Zoom technology.
4. **Certificate students:** Certificate students are required to hand in 5-6 pages of writing that demonstrates the ability to thoughtfully engage the material and reading for the class and gives a personal reflection on the reading and material covered.
5. **Basic degree students** (Diploma; MA; M.Div): are required to do any required oral assignments during the course itself and submit any combination of written assignments totaling approximately 1500-1875 words/6-8 pages.

Further details about assignments will be provided on the course syllabus.

5. **SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY**

See above, in text section.