

Course Syllabus

The Great White Way: Race and the American Musical

TUT 100-33

Class Meeting Time: Tue. And Thur. 8:00am-9:50am Location: BCA 269

Professor: Justin Thomas
BCA: 267A
(641)269-3126
thomasjm@grinnell.edu
Office Hours: T/TH. 10:00am-11:00am, and by appointment

Course Website: <http://web.grinnell.edu/individuals/thomasjm/tut100/>

Required Texts:

Available at the Bookstore

Backwards and Forwards, David Ball

The Great White Way, Warren Hoffman

Plays via Electronic Course Reserve

Show Boat,

Hamilton,

In The Heights,

Flower Drum Song,

Carmen Jones,

The Color Purple,

West Side Story,

South Pacific,

The Wiz,

Passing Strange,

Additional critical readings and selections supplied by professor via electronic course reserve and photocopy.

Course Description:

Broadway's nickname, the Great White Way, originally referenced the addition of Edison's electric bulb, but over the last century "white" also served as an accurate descriptor of playwrights, producers, actors, and audiences in seats. Recently, Lin Manuel Miranda's smash hit *Hamilton* has so strongly captured audience's imagination that the production and its creators are now mainstays in our mass media, and the production has been heralded as turning point in creating opportunity for artists of color. Has *Hamilton*'s success truly spawned a transformation of an

American art form that has traditionally been produced by, for, and about white people? In this course, students will examine the history of the American musical, how artists and producers have engaged with issues of race and ethnicity, and who has had and who will have access to the "room where it happens."

First-year tutorial is a discussion-based seminar that functions as an introduction to academic life at Grinnell College. To that end, students will examine the subject matter of the course while engaging in scholarly acts of inquiry and production that are meant to prepare students for methods of inquiry and communication used in many other courses across the college.

Course Objectives:

1. To help the student plan his/her academic program in the liberal arts through an individualized mentor/student advising relationship.
2. To give special attention to critical thinking and analysis by focusing on writing, close reading of texts and analysis of materials, and speaking and discussion skills.
3. Begin to build students' information literacy and provide the tools for students to continue to develop that literacy throughout the his/her/their four years.
4. To explore a particular topic which illuminates methods of inquiry and not necessarily the mastery of a particular discipline.

Attendance:

As an introduction to higher education, tutorial serves as the foundation for the rest of your coursework at Grinnell College. To that end, it is important to formulate habits that will help you succeed throughout your tenure here at Grinnell. To that end, **DO NOT MISS CLASS** and come prepared to be *active* and *attentive* participants during each class period. Students will receive two *excused* absences regardless of cause, but you must notify me in advance of absence. These days are built in relief for short-term illness and/or mental health days. With each additional absence (or unexcused absence) your course grade will be lowered one half-letter grade (5%). If you are more than twice late to class your participation grade will be lowered one full letter grade (10%).

I also make accommodations for documented *emergency* illness and/or personal injury. Should a student incur an injury or illness, documentation must be submitted to me upon the student's return to class. Students will also make every effort to inform the instructor of illness or injury prior to missing class. Please note that an email acknowledging a visit to the Campus Health Center does not automatically qualify a student for an excused absence.

It is also the policy of the professor that students who wish to observe religious holidays should do so. Students seeking accommodations for special religious observances should notify me within the first few days of classes in an effort to create a reasonable schedule for the student to make-up missed class time and assignments. Accommodations for religious observance will not be granted if notification occurs after the first two weeks of classes.

Assignments:

- **ADVISING CONFERENCES:**

This tutorial course requires three advising conferences (including one on your own time at the beginning of the semester). These appointments serve many purposes beginning with getting to know each other so I may offer the best advising for each student based upon individual needs and interests. These meetings generally fall outside of class time, although I have tried to build some time into the schedule to meet with each of you. Each student will schedule advising appointments individually. PLEASE BE ON TIME to these appointments. With thirteen of you (in addition to upper-class advisees) the schedule can be very tight at pre-registration and end of semester meetings.

- **THIS I BELIEVE Op-Ed:**

This assignment will be your first assignment at Grinnell College. Please write a brief essay modeled on NPR's series entitled "This I Believe." The subject of your paper will be to present your thoughts on your place as a world citizen with regards to human rights. Your paper will be no longer than two-and-one-half, double-spaced pages and no shorter than two, double-spaced pages using 12-point Times New Roman font. While this paper will present your own view, I have provided you with a few links on our course home-page that may provide you with useful commentary as you begin this project. This is a step-by-step process that includes an outline, a rough draft, and a final paper submission. Please notate the due dates as they appear on the course calendar.

- **PAPERS:**

There are three additional papers to be completed throughout the semester. Each paper should be between 1200-1500 words upon initial submission. You will have the opportunity to revise one of your papers during the semester, and if you choose to, you may vary the length of the paper at that point. Specific assignment sheets will be provided throughout the semester, which will detail each paper assignment. You are encouraged to support your arguments with secondary, scholarly sources. In addition, one of the paper assignments will have a required

research component, which we will discuss in more detail after our class session at the library.

- **RESPONSES:**

These are short, written papers that respond directly to course readings. The purpose of these assignments is to reflect upon course readings and provide material for in-class discussions. In the past students have been confused by these papers because they lack the formal structure of an essay format. These papers do not need to follow one theme/argument with an introduction and conclusion and can include gut responses to the work, speculations, questions, etc. However, you must support each point in your response with textual evidence from our course readings using proper [MLA citations](#). Include specific quotes, page numbers, etc. Responses are a first attempt to make sense of the course material, and you will post them onto our course [blackboard website](#) for your classmates to read before class discussion the following day. As I grade your responses I will place primary emphasis upon specific presentation of textual evidence and intellectual risk taking. Each response will be written in formal prose and posted to the blackboard website by 6:00pm the evening before the class period for which they are assigned. The success of this course depends upon timely presentation of responses so your classmates and I have a chance to read the material before class the next morning. Due to this fact, late responses will automatically lose twenty-five percent making the highest possible grade for a late response a 75% C.

- **ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY PAPER ASSIGNMENT**

The final paper assignment, labeled PAPER 5 in the course calendar, is an assignment geared towards building solid research habits for a longer research paper. For this assignment, students will work throughout the semester to identify a specific research interest related to the course material, engage in ongoing and organized research through an annotated bibliography, and lastly create a thesis and outline just as he/she had on each prior paper project. Each student's will annotated bibliography must demonstrate the ways the research material supports arguments and paper thesis. The outline will detail the student's thesis argument and additional sub-arguments (with citations and supporting evidence) to successfully write a ten-page paper in support of your thesis statement. Students will submit both the bibliography and outline as the final outcome of this assignment.

- **INTRO PRESENTATIONS:**

Each student will create a five-minute presentation through which he/she/they will introduce themselves to the class. The presentation must

involve live, spoken text, but the style of the presentation is flexible. The purpose of the presentation is to introduce who you are now and to begin to build a foundation for creating oral presentations in the future. An assignment sheet will detail the necessary specifics for completing this assignment.

- **GROUP RESEARCH PRESENTATIONS:**

For this project, students will be divided into three groups. Each group will choose and research a musical production which comments upon race or ethnicity. Each group will create a 15-20 minute, analytical presentation about the play, its production history, and other dramaturgical context and demonstrate how the play connects to our course material.

- **WORKSHOPS:**

There are three workshop classes built into the calendar during the semester. Each student will have the opportunity to receive critique from their classmates on at least one paper. Each student will also have the opportunity to be the primary respondent and lead the critique session for one of your classmates. During the semester we will establish guidelines for the workshop periods.

- **PAPER REVISION:**

You will be required to revise one of your papers during the course. Each student will select a paper to revise in consultation with me, and you will be allowed two weeks for the revision. Please look closely at the calendar when making the decision to revise. Do not leave this requirement to the last minute!

- **PARTICIPATION:**

As mentioned above in the attendance section, active participation and engagement in class is essential to the success of this course. Please be on time, awake, and ready to discuss course material each and every class period.

Grade Breakdown:

Advising Conferences:	25 pts
This I Believe:	100 pts
Responses:	300pts
Intro Presentation:	25 pts
Group Presentation:	50pts

Papers:	400 pts
Participation:	100 pts
TOTAL:	1000 pts

Grading Scale:

921-1000	= A
900-920	= A-
880-899	= B+
821-879	= B
800-820	= B-
780-799	= C+
700-779	= C
600-699	= D
599- 0	= F

Additional Course Policies:

Late Work: Late coursework will be accepted for a 10%-per-day penalty on the project grade. Please note the exception to this rule for Reading Responses and group work. Late responses will be docked an immediate 25% with an additional 10% per day penalty. Late submission of group work/presentations will not be accepted.

Extensions: Each student may have one, forty-eight hour extension for an assignment deadline under the following conditions:

- 1) The class is not relying on your work as the foundation for the class session.
 - 2) You request the extension a minimum of twenty-four hours in advance
 - 3) No Extensions will be granted on group projects (see item #1)
- If you choose to utilize your extension then all other deadlines will be locked into place for the remainder of the semester.

Attendance: Students will receive two excused absences regardless of cause, but you must notify me in advance of absence. With each additional absence (or unexcused absence) your course grade will be lowered one half-letter grade (5%). If you are more than twice late to class your participation grade will be lowered one full letter grade (10%).

Grinnell College makes reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities. Students need to provide documentation to the Assistant Dean for Disability Resources, Autumn Wilke, located on the 3rd floor of the Rosenfield Center (x3089) identifying any special needs. Students should then notify the instructor within the first few days of classes.

It is also the policy of the instructor that students who wish to observe religious holidays should do so. Students seeking accommodations for special religious observances should notify the instructor within the first few days of classes in an effort to create a reasonable schedule for the student to make-up missed class time and assignments. Accommodations for religious observance will not be granted if notification occurs after the first two weeks of classes.

The instructor also makes accommodations for documented illness and/or personal injury. Should a student incur an injury or illness, documentation must be submitted to the professor upon the student's return to class. Students will also make every effort to inform the instructor of illness or injury prior to missing class.

MOST IMPORTANTLY:

Come and see the instructor!!!! - especially if you are concerned with a specific project, grade, or the course on the whole. The door is always open, for extra help, thoughts, ideas, and support.
