

Theatre Handbook

Welcome to the CSU Chico Department of Music and Theatre. This handbook will provide you with an overview of the department, its various subject areas, and common procedures and policies that will impact your time at CSU Chico. Updated regularly, the handbook reflects any changes in our faculty, degree programs, and performance opportunities.

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Mission Statement and Philosophy

The mission of the Musical Theatre and Theatre programs at California State University, Chico is to provide students with an anti-racist, inclusive and balanced undergraduate education in the practice, theory, and history of theatre. Chico State Theatre is committed to excellence in instruction and artistic example in all arenas of contact with students. Our mission is to be student-centered, to empower students to take charge of their own artistry and advocate for themselves, and to inspire students to embrace the growth-mindset to fall in love with the work and not the result.

The focus of our mission is aimed at three sets of goals: Liberal Arts Education, Professional Training, and Student's Individual Growth.

Liberal Arts Education

Teaching is the central task of the programs. The faculty believes that study and practical involvement in theatre promotes and achieves the goals of a well-rounded liberal arts education, foremost among which are the abilities to reason clearly, imagine creatively, and express oneself effectively. The department seeks to cultivate in all students who pass through its doors a measure of the artistic, intellectual, and interpersonal skills that can broaden their horizons, sharpen their perceptions, and add grace to their interactions.

Professional Training

In addition to offering a strong liberal arts education, the Chico State Theatre is committed to providing students with the tools and resources to pursue the professional career of their choosing. What students choose to do with that training is up to them, as the program does not have one, cookie-cutter measure of success. While professional training includes mentorship, advanced courses to refine skills, and a laboratory to apply learning, it also contains the lesson that artists are only accountable to themselves.

Student's Individual Growth

The faculty recognizes that each student is unique and in possession of individual gifts and aspirations. Thus, the department is committed to help all majors and minors gain a clear perspective of their life and career goals and to focus their energies and time at Chico State toward the most personally productive and fulfilling use of a theatre education.

The Theatre and Musical Theatre faculty believe in a student-centered teaching approach and strive to nurture and unlock each student's individual goals and potential.

Equity & Inclusion

Theatre is a safe place where all are welcome. Chico State Theatre is committed to creating and fostering an environment that is inclusive and equitable, and we welcome all races, gender identities, religions, political affiliations, body types and sexualities. This mission is ongoing and evolving, and that commitment is unwavering. Conduct that is not conducive to this mission will not be tolerated.

Chico State Theatre is committed to diversity, inclusivity, and anti-racism. As such, we pledge to continue to reimagine new approaches to both contemporary and classical works, as well as increase the representation of BIPOC, LGBTQ, and women theatre practitioners, along with members of other marginalized and/or minoritized groups in our main stage season. No less than 50% of our season will have relevant themes and/or creators from these communities.

Theatre Division Class Attendance Policy

Your attendance is crucial to your success in this class. Cell phones must be off, and students must arrive on time.

In accordance with the University Catalog, you are expected to attend classes regularly. You should discuss absences with your instructors, but you may report an absence of more than a week's duration to the Office of Advising and Orientation when it results from circumstances beyond your control, such as illness or accident. The office will then send notification of your absence and the reason for it to your instructors. Instructors can, if they choose, drop you from a course for non-attendance.

You are allowed the equivalent of one week of excused absences without penalty. The student is solely responsible for arranging any make-up arrangements with the instructor prior to the actual absence and, if an assignment requires an accompanist the student *may* be responsible to hire their own.

After one week of equivalent absences, the student is allowed the equivalent of a second week of absences for emergencies, sickness, and extraordinary circumstances. The penalty for these absences, whether excused or unexcused, is half a letter deduction from their final grade. Any absence beyond two weeks, regardless of the circumstances, is considered too excessive for successful completion of the course. Students that exceed the allowable absences will receive a grade of "F," "NC" or "WU," at the discretion of the instructor. In extreme situations, with serious and compelling reasons, a student may arrange with the instructor to receive a grade of "I," but this dispensation by the instructor must be prearranged and must have a completed plan for completion of the course requirements within a reasonable time frame. Students should not assume that an Incomplete is automatic.

You are responsible for all materials, announcements, and information given in lecture and recitation. As class time is valuable, please note that coming late to class will impact your absences. Every two late classes equal one absence.

Auditions, Portfolios and Interviews

General Auditions

Twice yearly general auditions serve two functions for the department: 1) to cast the mainstage productions of the season and 2) to provide a yearly opportunity for the faculty to assess and comment on the growth and development of performance and audition skills of theatre arts and musical theatre students.

For each of the fall and spring auditions, please prepare one of the following standard, memorized audition packages:

1. two contrasting monologues, **or**
2. one monologue and one contrasting song

The *maximum* time for any of these options is **2** minutes. You will be timed and stopped if you exceed the two-minute time limit.

An accompaniment is provided. If you plan to sing, bring sheet music in your key, clearly marked. No taped accompaniment and no acapella, please.

Sign-up sheets for specific audition appointments are posted on the MUTA Department webpage approximately one week prior to auditions, which normally begin the Sunday prior to the first day of the semester's classes.

Other Audition Information

The gathering place to receive instructions from the stage managers is in the Green Room. Please show up well in advance of your group's call time so you can complete the audition paperwork. Callbacks for these shows are posted in the mornings for that evening. Cast lists are posted by the end of the first week of class.

Casting Policy

Our main stage productions are a laboratory for students to apply the tools learned in the classroom on a full production. Productions use professional best-practices to ensure that students are fully prepared for the professional world. To this end, Chico State Theatre gives first consideration for roles, and design and crew assignments, to theatre and musical theatre majors followed by other students who audition. On occasion, we will cast guest artists, faculty members and/or community members to provide additional educational experiences to our students.

Chico State Theatre is dedicated to creating opportunities designed to promote a positive model of diversity and inclusion. We are committed to casting characters intended to be of the Global Majority, with actors who identify as members of the Global Majority community. Characters not written to be a particular race or ethnicity will be cast in a fair and equitable manner. The program also recognizes the fluidity of gender identity and is committed to casting actors appropriate to how they identify. Actors will have the opportunity to self-identify on their audition forms to ensure that those casting can cast them appropriately.

Students who audition may express a preference as to which roles they wish to be considered.

To avoid obvious scheduling conflicts, students must bring complete semester calendars of their commitments to auditions or interviews. Once cast in a role or given a design/crew assignment, a student has the option of accepting or rejecting the role or assignment. This is accomplished by notifying the director and/or supervisor before rehearsals or assignments begin. Initialing a cast list and/or attending a rehearsal or production meeting also indicate that a student has accepted a role or assignment. Any student who accepts a role or assignment and later wishes to be released from a production must present serious and compelling reasons to the director and/or supervisor and the Chair of the department to avoid sanctions. Students leaving a show without the permission of both the director/supervisor and Chair may be barred from participating in future departmental productions.

Students cast in CSU Chico productions will be enrolled in a 1-unit section of THEA 301 (Theatre Rehearsal) or 302 (Musical Theatre Rehearsal) accordingly.

The department values participation in mainstage productions and their value to student's educational experience while at CSU Chico. Each semester students are *required* to audition for department productions or present design/tech portfolios. Any student who wishes not to participate in production work in any given semester are required to consult with their advisor or program coordinator prior to auditions.

Students who are not cast or are not on a crew in a given semester and wish to participate in off-campus theatrical productions must meet with their program coordinator prior to accepting the position. If, after meeting with their program coordinator, it is mutually determined that

the production opportunity is beneficial to the student, the student is encouraged to accept the position.

To be eligible for participation in department productions in any capacity, students must maintain a Grade Point Average of 2.0 or higher during any semester in which they participate. If a student is placed on academic probation by the university (which happens whenever the CSU, Chico G.P.A. or the cumulative G.P.A. drops below 2.0) or if the student fails to achieve at least a 2.0 G.P.A. in the preceding semester, the student will be required to drop any role or design/crew assignment that he or she may be presently engaged in and will be ineligible for any subsequent casting or assignment until he or she regains clear academic standing.

Students on academic probation or whose previous semester's G.P.A. has fallen below a 2.0 may continue to participate on a production run crew only if participation is a specific, curricular requirement of a course the student is enrolled in. Students who are on Work Study must maintain a G.P.A. of at least 2.0. Students whose semester G.P.A. falls below a 2.0 must resolve prior to the first day of classes of the following semester any issues concerning incompletes and change-of-grades that might raise their semester G.P.A. above a 2.0.

Portfolio Review Information

Students with a Tech and Design focus who do not wish to audition will participate in a Portfolio Review Interview at the end of each semester. At the Spring Portfolio Review students may also apply to design, assistant design or stage manage the following season's productions.

Students must make an appointment for their portfolio review with the Tech & Design Program Coordinator. **If you have any questions, please contact [Chris Mueller](#).**

For Scholarship Audition/Portfolio information, please go [here](#).

Auditions and Interviews remain the primary avenue of access to employment and educational opportunities in the performing arts. To aid our own production and program and to help our students acquire the poised, presentational skills necessary for job hunting in the profession, we have designed an annual system of auditions, portfolio review/interviews and evaluations.

Special Theatre Major Requirements

All musical theatre majors are required to audition at the beginning of each semester.

All theatre arts majors are required either to a) audition at the beginning of each semester, or b) present a portfolio of technical, design, or stage management experience every spring.

Any student with an interest in technical production, design, or stage management as well as performance may choose to participate in both portfolio reviews and auditions.

Any major who wishes not to participate in a department production during any given semester, must notify their program coordinator ahead of auditions or interviews, however, she or he must still participate in the audition or interview process.

Any *theatre scholarship* student, in addition to the basic audition/portfolio requirements, *must* participate as cast or crew in at least *one* department production each semester they receive an award from the Theatre Department.

Please refer to the Casting/Crewing policy for more information.

Students who are not participating in a department production and wish to perform in, design or crew an off-campus production must meet with their program coordinator before auditioning and/or accepting the position.

Professionalism

Professionalism is one of those things that everyone agrees is absolutely indispensable in the theatre; yet, we don't teach a specific class in it, nor does it appear as such in the topic calendar of many, if any, course syllabi.

Everyone knows it when they see it, though. It has nothing to do with whether or not one is an actual *professional*, as in one who is paid for a service. It has nothing to do with unions, contracts, paychecks, academic degrees, age or experience. It has everything to do with conduct.

Professionalism implies reliability and responsibility. It means good will and genuine effort to give one's best to any project one commits to. To behave professionally in the theatre is to care more about the overall good of the show than about one's own comfort, convenience or applause. Professionalism does not imply a refusal or inability to question or criticize; but, it *does* mean that one refrains from insult, innuendo, back-stabbing or any other negative behavior or talk that serves to trash any individual in a company and, therefore, undermine the hard work of all and, ultimately, the quality of the theatrical experience for the audience.

It is said that it is impossible to legislate morality. Certainly, it is futile to try to create a Theatre Department policy regulating *professionalism*.

We all know it when we see it, though. And we all know it when we don't.

The professionalism of this department, then, depends on the commitment of each individual in it -- faculty, staff and student -- to behave according to a personal code of conduct that helps to enhance the experience of everyone else here and to uphold the ideals that brought us all together in the first place.

The Following was published on onstageblog.com on May 13, 2019

A Professor's Guide to a Better (Theatre) World

Ten keys to becoming a strong member of and contributor to the theatre community

By Matthew Teague Miller

1) If you're not growing, you're dying.

Theatre is a living, breathing thing and history has proven that the need to evolve drives our ability to survive. Commitment to personal growth and improvement is an obligation to our craft and our industry. The minute that one thinks that they know all that there is to know, they have fallen behind. The moment that one thinks they have gotten as strong as they are going to get, they have grown a bit weaker. As artists it is our responsibility to be fueled by the growth-mindset, so that we are constantly looking for ways to improve, ways to innovate and ways to grow.

2) Never get the same note twice.

Every time a Director stops to write down a note, they are missing a section of the play or focusing their energy on your performance or design rather than the rest of the company's. Thus, when a Director gives you note multiple times other collaborators are missing their opportunity to receive valuable feedback. Directors will understandably get frustrated when they have to give the same note multiple times and sometimes it is even interpreted as a sign of disrespect. Want to be seen as a strong member of the theatre community? Take a note the first time is given.

3) Leave the drama on the stage and allow other people to define their own character.

There are some people who are more comfortable when things are uncomfortable and seek out drama, gossip and negativity. Sometimes people are so drawn to drama they will create it and even pour gasoline on other people's fires. Sometimes it is created by criticizing other people's choices. Focus on your own character and strive to be the best version of yourself that you can be.

4) Know your job and do it without telling others how to do theirs.

Leave the "giving notes" to the Directors and Stage Managers. Directors, inspire your team with concepts, ideas and conversations... let them do the actual designing.

5) We are on the same team and you are not the umpire.

It seems that we are living in one of the most divided times in our cultural history. But in theatre we are all on the same team, working tirelessly on an art that we love and are desperate to share with others. Theatre companies in the same area are not in competition with one another but rather working with one another to cultivate an active theatre-going community. Theatre students in the same school should not think of the other students as competition but rather as other people who they can learn from. In the theatre community we are all on the same team and in each mini-theatre community it is especially important to prop each other up rather than trying to tear each other down. There are enough competing factors trying to destroy the theatre (competing "free" entertainment, cuts in our donor bases and a general decrease in interest in our craft), we don't need to add to our uphill battle by compounding the negativity ourselves. Let's let other people judge as opposed to judging each other.

6) Always say "thank you" and when people ask for help...show up.

Actors, when a wardrobe person helps you with a quick change say "thank you." When a crew member pages a curtain, thank them too. Directors, when a designer brings in a great idea, a "thanks" is in order. Yes, we all have jobs and expectations in the theatre but that doesn't mean that a good old-fashioned

“thank you” doesn’t feel good when you are busting your hump. Also, union rules notwithstanding, if your collaborator and teammate puts out a desperate call for a last-minute paint session because they have fallen behind, be there to help. If someone needs help with a scene change, be the first person to volunteer. People who say “thank you” and help when others are in need, are the bedrock of the theatre community.

7) *Being early is actually “on time.”*

This is not an expression I can take credit for, but I don’t know how to site my source on this one. If a production meeting is scheduled to start at 1pm, that is when it starts. Not when you have finished filling up your coffee, gotten out your script or finished updating the app on your phone. If choreography rehearsal starts at 10am, that is not when the “warm up” begins. Do not waste other people’s time by asking them to wait for you to get ready.

8) *Be the most positive energy in the room and have the courage to stand-up to toxicity.*

The world is steeped in toxicity. Do you want to be a strong contributor to the theatre community? Walk in to every conversation with the goal of being positive. Be kind to the people with whom you interact. Be the person who learns other people’s names and say “hi” and wave when you see them. Contribute to the theatre community by having an open heart. Even more difficult, when you are faced with someone who is being negative or talking-trash about people not in the room, have the strength to speak up. Tell them, “I’m not comfortable with what you are saying.” Or at the very least, walk away. The time to stand-up to bullies and stop the bad-mouthing is now.

9) *Run towards the fear, not away from it.*

If a creative project scares you, it is exactly the creative project you should accept. One way to have the growth-mindset and be committed to constant improvement is by taking on the creative project that frightens you the most.

10) *The theatre is a safe place where all are welcome.*

This is it, I am throwing down the gauntlet. The Theatre is, and always has been, a place where everyone is welcome. It does not matter your race, sexuality, religion, gender-identity, gender-expression, age, education, disability or any other matter... you are welcome in our community. The only people who are not welcome, are those who make others feel unwelcome. We are one family/one tribe, and anyone who makes others feel unsafe in our house will be asked to leave. To do good work, we need a safe non-judgmental space. Regardless of bad breakups or missteps. Regardless of who you plan on voting for in the next election. Theaters are a place of love. Sometimes we fight. Sometimes we disagree. But we are allowed to apologize and move forward as one. We may challenge our audiences and, God forbid, even do bad work from time to time. But we give each other the benefit of the doubt and heal. We embrace the things that make us different because it is those differences that provide us with the perspectives to tell incredible stories and touch our audience’s hearts.

Code of Conduct for Performers

College of Humanities and Fine Arts

California State University Chico

August 2003

There are three basic agreements that guide our behavior as performers. These agreements are as old as art itself, and as important to understand as any other part of performance.

The agreement between performer and producer: The producer shall enthusiastically advertise and promote the work of the performer to investors, potential audience members, and the community as a whole. The producer will work diligently to provide the best resources possible for the performance. This promotion shall be based on the quality of past performances and the belief that the artist will present the very best performance possible every time. The trust of this agreement is worth preserving to assure proper investment in artistic work.

The agreement between performer and audience member: the audience member purchases a ticket for a performance sight unseen, sound unheard, quality unknown. The purchase is an act of faith that each performer will give his or her very best at every performance to ensure the audience member receives his/her money's worth. The audience member rewards good performances by giving praise to the artist, speaking well of the artist to others, and buying tickets for future productions. The trust of this agreement is worth preserving to assure that audiences continue to attend artistic events.

The agreement between performer and performer: artists share a performance together based in the belief that every performer will give the very best they can at every instant of every performance to support the other performers on the stage and to elevate the level of the performance above entertainment to art. The trust of this agreement is worth preserving because creating art is what all artists wish to achieve.

There are many ways to betray the trust these agreements represent, but one of the surest ways is to come to a performance unprepared. The lack of preparation can be as obvious as not learning the music or lines, or as egregious as appearing on stage in an inebriated or drugged state. It is impossible to perform at your peak if you are unprepared, unfocused or physically impaired. It should be a part of your artistic discipline, and a matter of your pride as a performing artist to honor these agreements. You will be held to these standards throughout your artistic career.

I understand that coming to a rehearsal or performance after drinking or taking drugs is a direct violation of the Student Conduct Code and the University Alcohol Policy of California State University, Chico. Violations will result in immediate expulsion from all performance ensembles in the College of Humanities and Fine Arts for a minimum of one semester, and may result in

further sanctions by the department, College of Humanities and Fine Arts, or Office of Student Judicial Affairs.