



EAST TEXAS BAPTIST
UNIVERSITY

Theatre Arts and Our Christian Worldview

Faculty, students, and administrators at Christian institutions such as ours consistently face questions regarding the choice of plays produced by their Departments of Theatre Arts. In our mission statement at East Texas Baptist University, we claim the following: “As a Christ-centered institution, East Texas Baptist University educates students by integrating biblical faith and learning to develop mind, body, and soul through community engagement to prepare graduates to be Christian servant leaders in their calling to God and humanity.” Theatre is an academic discipline that serves this purpose and mission in ways that are directly applicable to students, faculty, audience members, and the community-at-large.

It is our desire to help our students develop skills needed to succeed in the world of professional and academic theatre. Through the study and production of a variety of theatrical works, we can struggle with and try to understand the issues, relationships, and conflicts identified by the playwrights. Further, we delight in the opportunities provided by our discipline to share these challenges with all those who attend the productions.

Productions of certain stage plays allow us to deal with specific behaviors that may challenge our understanding of Christian behavior. Each time a play includes the use of mature subject matter incongruent with our Christian walk (profanity, violence, bigotry, inappropriate use of alcohol and drugs, sexual immorality, etc.), each of us faces questions affecting our Christian values and standards. Then, we must determine how to respond. The performances often provide no direct explanation of an appropriate Christian response or moral answer. However, it always demands a thoughtful response by those who experience it. This is part of what makes theatre such an effective communicative and educational art form.

Dr. Stan Denman, Professor of Theatre at Baylor University, explains it this way: “Sometimes searching for deeper and more difficult answers involving mature themes requires that we journey into morally ‘murky waters’ that can be troubling for Christians seeking to transcend a carnal nature and model their behaviors on Jesus’ teachings. It is important for us to be honest and aware of our attempts to achieve our ultimate goal of glorifying Christ with our artistry without rationalizing away actions which could harm our own spiritual well-being, that of our audience, or the students who have been entrusted to our guidance.”

Through our classes, workshops, production work, and rehearsals, we have many opportunities to share with our students the depth of our Christian commitment and how that commitment affects all aspects of our academic discipline. However, we realize that our patrons only experience specific productions which become “snapshots” of our work. We want to express to you that our Christian commitment is mature, deep, intellectually rigorous, and that it is in no way compromised by our artistic integrity. At East Texas Baptist University, we speak frequently, openly, and honestly about the integration of our faith and our academic work. Theatre provides an endless stream of conversation and discussion on such matters, and our Christian maturity is greatly enhanced by such discussion.