

## Breaking the Frame:

### Innovative Musicals in Their Cultural Moments and Beyond



This spring Michael R. Jackson's *A Strange Loop* became the tenth musical to win the Pulitzer Prize for Drama, **the first by an African American and the only one never to have appeared on Broadway**. The Pulitzer Prize website describes it as "A metafictional musical that tracks the creative process of an artist transforming issues of identity, race, and sexuality that once pushed him to the margins of the cultural mainstream into a meditation on universal human fears and insecurities." Jackson has answered the call he issued in a 2015 *HowlRound* post for new musicals that will "upend our expectations of default whiteness in musical theatre."

**As tectonic plates shift in this country, we'll challenge established narratives about the history of the American musical and the limited binaries and systemic whiteness it has traditionally embodied.**

We'll focus on musicals that were seen as innovative, even revolutionary, in their original productions and explore the ways in which they've evolved over time through adaptation and revival. They include: *Shuffle Along*, *Oklahoma!*, *West Side Story*, *Cabaret*, *Hair*, *The Lion King*, *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*, *The Color Purple*, *Passing Strange*, *Fun Home*, and *Hamilton*.

#### **Key questions we'll consider:**

- How are these musicals products of their own cultural moments?
- Can they be re-framed and re-imagined so that they speak to ours?
- Which issues of identity, race, and sexuality do they examine?
- What new models and new narratives do we need?
- Whose voices still are marginalized and silenced?

This course is a new graduate seminar, but interested undergraduates are welcome to enroll. If you have questions or concerns, please email [barbara.grossman@tufts.edu](mailto:barbara.grossman@tufts.edu).

**TPS 291, Tuesday, 1:30-4:30pm on Zoom, Professor Barbara Wallace Grossman**