

Writing/Speaking/and Visual intensive Program for the Department of Theatre Arts

The new college initiative plays to the strengths of the Department of Theatre Arts in that the skills it seeks to encourage are already primary objectives for majors in this department. Also, the department philosophy towards theatre, that all of the students should study all of the areas of theatre, is useful in addressing the demands of the mandate.

Goals

Each student will be able to write about the theatre as a whole discipline

Each student will be able to write about dramatic literature in terms of genre, historical context, and production

Each student will be able to speak clearly, with diction and volume

Each student will have had the experience of performing a role in front of an audience

Each student will be able to articulate ideas in front of a group

Each student will have a grasp of basic design principles and the ability to render those designs in drawings and models

Each student will have developed an online portfolio demonstrating his or her area of expertise in the theatre

Writing

We will keep TA 2114, Script Analysis, as the writing component of the requirement. Script Analysis was one of the writing intensive courses in the department. All of the majors are required to take it. The majors will have had one course prior to this one in which writing skills are assessed. In Fundamentals of Theatre Production TA 2125) the students perform several writing exercises that are used to determine where they stand in terms of their writing abilities. Also, in sequence, after Script Analysis they will encounter extensive writing assignments in The History of Drama and Theatre courses (TA 3105 and TA 3106). Currently The History of Drama and Theatre Courses are writing intensive, however the large class size (usually between 40 and 60) makes some of the requirements in the previous writing intensive courses difficult, particular in terms of revision. We intend to offer more courses of Script Analysis (every semester as opposed to the current every other semester) in order to give the students the time and attention required for a writing intensive course. A problem we encountered in the past was an over-enrollment in this class due to students attempting to meet the writing

intensive requirement in other majors. Indeed, on occasion the class was filled and our own majors were unable to take it. The new construct will eliminate that problem.

Speaking

Obviously a theatre department has an advantage in this area. All of our incoming students are required to take a semester of performance (Performance Lab, TA 2125), in which they perform scenes from plays. As a result, students will be given assignments where they speak text from plays, as well as text in monologue form. Attention is paid to diction, emotional intensity, and the rhythmic demands of language. The students perform their scenes in front of their fellow classmates, and at the end of the semester they present one of the scenes they work on to all the performance faculty and students in a “performance sharing” event. The class also addresses issues of stage fright and poise when speaking in front of people, and utilizes AN ACTOR PREPARES by Konstatin Stanislavski, the seminal theorist of modern acting technique.

Visual presentation

All of the students who are majors are required to take a two semester, 6 hour lecture 2 hour lab, design course called Design Lab (TA 2135,2136). This course is traditionally taken in the student’s sophomore year. In that class, students are required to design both costumes and a set for plays, to articulate the concept of their designs, and to present the design to the class. The presentation usually involves drawings of costumes, models and/or floor plans and elevations of sets; they are asked to pay attention to neatness and precision, perspective issues, application of stage and lighting value in the renderings, detail, clarity, creativity, and particular design styles. Again, we emphasize that all of the theatre majors, regardless of inclination, take the course; and that the course requires multiple renderings in multiple media of multiple projects. The class culminates in an end of the semester fair where all of the students work is on display and all students and faculty in the department are invited to view them. The students are also in charge of the display and presentation of their work that is in the fair.

Required Courses in the Theatre major, and their relationship to ViEWS

TA 2104 Fundamentals of Theatre and Production, required entry-level course for all majors

Students complete a writing sample that is archived

Students conceive, design, and perform a collaborative piece as a semester capstone experience of the course, consequently experiencing speaking in performing and in collaboration, writing in conception, and design in execution

TA 2114 Script Analysis - writing

(See above)

TA 2125 Performance Lab - speaking

(See above)

TA 2126 Performance Lab - speaking

(See above)

TA 2135 Design Lab - visual

(See above)

TA 2136 Design Lab – visual

(See above)

TA 2414 Stage and Lighting Technology - visual

Students learn how use lighting and scenery for visual effect

Students learn various software computer programs useful in the modern, technological theatre

TA 3105 History of Drama and Theatre – writing and speaking (a former writing intensive course, unchanged in its writing requirements)

Students write papers and essays on the drama and theatre history

Students discuss relevant topics in class discussion

TA 3105 History of Drama and Theatre (Continuation of above course with same requirements.)

TA 4315 Directing I Writing, speaking, and visual

Students write out their conceptual ideas

Students express those conceptual ideas in front of the class

Students utilize the visual elements of theatre to bring a text to life for an audience

Student directed scenes are presented to an audience at the end of the semester

TA 3014 Production Lab – Writing, speaking, and visual

Students must take one credit in each of the following areas, working on an actual production

Design/Tech - Students work on a visual technical element of theatre in a real production (lighting, scenery) visual

Costume – Students work on a costume element (design, wardrobe) during a real production. Visual

Management- Students work on publicity materials (writing) and/or with the public in the front of house as ushers, box office personnel, or house managers (speaking)

All of the above courses are mandatory for all theatre majors

Assessment

Our method of evaluation is simple, but I believe effective. In order to pass the writing/speaking/visual requirement of the university the student would have to pass each of the courses so signified (TA, 2114, Script Analysis; TA 2125 Performance Lab, TA 2136, 2135, Design Lab) with the grade of “C.” Should the student get a “D” in any of those courses, the student would be presented with the following options.

1. Retake the course
2. Receive a “C” or better in the following courses corresponding to the disciplines, and which are more advanced in those disciplines under the mandate
 - a. For Script Analysis, a “C” or better in either of the Theatre History courses, (TA 3105, TA 3106)
 - b. For Performance Lab, a “C” or better in any of the Acting Topics, (TA 3154)
 - c. For Design Lab, a “C” or better in any of the Design topics (TA 3144)

All students will be required to post an online resume; which will list their achievements, abilities, skills, and experiences. This will be available for examination and assessment, and will be a valuable addition to the department’s current outside assessment program

There are no outside resources necessary to meet these requirements