Course for American Studies Cluster:

Twentieth Century American Theatre and Drama
TA 471 U

A. COURSE DESCRIPTION
This course will investigate the development of Twentieth-Century American theatre and drama. The intent of the class is to introduce the student to the diversity of forms and concerns that pervade American theatre and drama of this century. We will explore the ways in which this diverse theatre and drama reflect and mold the social and cultural realities of American life.

B. COURSE DEVELOPMENT
I have taught this class as Seminar: American Theatre and Drama (TA 407) and as Modern Drama III (TA 469/569). With the 4-credit conversion, this class has been moved into the new TA 471/571, Periods/Topics in Theater History. I intend to make changes in the class as it now stands, and I think these changes should enhance the value of this class as a junior/senior general education class. In this regard, I intend to integrate some of the techniques and exercises I have utilized in Writing Intensive Courses.

C. GENERAL EDUCATION GOALS
The course should fulfill the four general education goals:

1. Inquiry and Critical Thinking: This course will investigate the nature of American forms of theater production/performance and dramatic literature. In this regard, a primary concern will be how the American theater and drama mirror and/or mold prevalent social and cultural assumptions. Consequently, this class will encourage students to think critically about the relationship of theater/drama to social and cultural contexts. Additionally, this class will combine theater history and dramatic literary analysis, and thus will increase the student's awareness of different forms of inquiry.

2. Communication: This class will incorporate a number of writing exercises and oral presentations. With regard to the latter, it may be possible to include in-class reading of significant scenes from the plays discussed. This kind of activity will not only provide the students with the occasion to explore the aural dimensions of texts but will provide them with the opportunity to experience performance communication in a "hands-on" fashion.

3. Human Experience: This course will focus on the human experience as seen through the theater and drama. In this regard, these classes will certainly foster "an appreciation of the aesthetic and intellectual components of the human
experience in literature and the arts" (strategy #4) and "explore and appreciate the aesthetics of artistic expression and the contributions of the fine and performing arts...to the quality of life" (strategy #6). In exploring the nature of American drama and theatre a primary concern of this class will be the impact of ethnicity, gender, and class on American theatre. Not only will we study dramas representing the diversity of American life, but we will explore the degree to which mythic notions like "the melting pot" or the more recent variation, "the salad bowl," figure in American drama.

4. Ethical Issues and Social Responsibility: Certainly, American playwrights and theatre practitioners have explored "the impact of life choices on personal, social, and environmental health" (strategy #1), and, consequently, the study of American theatre and drama will help students "gain an understanding of ethical dilemmas confronted by individuals, groups, and communities and the foundations upon which resolution might be possible" (strategy #2). The examination of American theater and drama should enable students to probe the values and foundations of our society and to consider the ways in which our society has interpreted and debated ethical and social responsibility.

D. COURSE OUTLINE

Included is a syllabus of the course as it has been offered in the past. It will be revised to meet the needs of the general education clusters in which it is taught.