TO ACCOMPANY PROPOSAL FOR ADDITION OF COURSE TO AN EXISTING UNST CLUSTER

Name of proposing faculty member: William Tate
Title of proposed course: Understanding Theater
From which department(s): Theater Arts
For which cluster: Popular Culture
Name of cluster coordinator: Grace Dillon

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COURSE APPROVED FOR CLUSTER INCLUSION BY

Department Chair(s): William Tate DATE: 12/4/00

Cluster Coordinator: Grace Dillon DATE: 12/12/00

Chair, Cluster Coordinator: DATE: 12/18/00

Chair, UNST Committee: DATE: 12/18/00

Copies of completed document are to be filed with appropriate cluster coordinator(s) as well as sent to appropriate department chair(s), UNST Scheduling, and Chair, Cluster Coordinators.

University Student: January, 2000
Course for Popular Culture Cluster

TA 305U Understanding Theater

A. COURSE DESCRIPTION

An investigation of theater designed to develop a heightened awareness of how the theater arts express and communicate ideas and experiences. To expand critical awareness of the process by which theater creates meaning and communicates through performance to contemporary audiences. Course will examine the dynamic relationship between theater and the society it both mirrors and influences.

B. COURSE DEVELOPMENT

Understanding Theater derives from an existing course, TA 101 Theater Appreciation, which has been substantially redesigned to meet cluster and University Studies requirements. Central to this course are three questions: what is the nature of theater, what is the nature of drama, and what is the nature of performance? Another key issue is the cultural value of theater and how it relates to society today. Aspects of theater to be considered will include story, theme, dramatic form and structure, acting, directing, design as well as other aspects that are a part of play production. Live performances will be viewed and evaluated in order to understanding how theater pieces create and communicate meaning.

C. GENERAL EDUCATION GOALS

1. Inquiry and Critical Thinking: Meaning and value are products of the act of interpretation, a process that engages the spirit of inquiry and involves analytical assessment, both of which are at the core of critical thinking. This course will seek to develop the ability to understand and critically evaluate information presented in theater as both a visual and an aural medium. Analysis, applied in the right context, can be a way not only of expanding understanding but also of heightening enjoyment of a work of art. Understanding Theater will acquaint students with the range of modes and styles of theatrical expression at large in the world today and enhance their awareness and appreciation of the interconnections among them.

2. Communication: Students will experience the many ways in which contemporary plays and performances communicate and comment on the issues and experiences that characterize modern life. They will be expected to reflect on the theatrical performances viewed and on their responses to those performances. Their reflections will take on a variety of forms, including writing assignments utilizing several compositional modes, as students are asked to analyze and react to the performances and to the in-class discussions of the issues raised. Oral presentations will insure that students have opportunities to express their newly acquired understanding in a variety of ways.

3. Human Experience: Theater holds a mirror up to nature and reflects the varieties of human experience and identity. This course will seek to reveal both the richness of the human comedy and the diversity of means
utilized in contemporary performances. Furthermore, by never forgetting the ways in which theater has incorporated many other art forms within itself, this course will seek to develop an appreciation of the aesthetic and intellectual components of the human experience as revealed in theatrical works. Students will be asked to explore the aesthetics of theatrical expression and experience the contributions that the dramatic arts make to the quality of life in this or any community.

4. Ethical Issues and Social Responsibility: What is the cultural value of art? Does art merely reflect the society and mores of its times or does it have a responsibility to challenge and even attempt to change society and its attitudes? Viewing a selection of contemporary theater performances will enable students to address questions related to issues of ethics and behavior, gender and race, cultural diversity, and social responsibility. Drama and theater tend to depict people in crisis situations who must come to terms with ethical dilemmas and face the consequences of the choices they make. As Chekhov once said, the responsibility of art is not to provide answers, but to raise questions. An audience must then seek answers utilizing the heightened clarity achieved through the artist’s questions. Theater as a performance art provides a living laboratory in which audiences can vicariously confront a variety of ethical and behavioral challenges and can thereby gain familiarity with the values, foundations and responsibilities of a democratic society.
D. TOPIC OUTLINE for TA 305U Understanding Theater:

The plays that students attend, analyze, discuss, and respond to will vary depending on what productions are available during a given term. The plan would be to arrange the performances so that those in the class will be exposed to as much variety of style and content as possible.

Every element will not be examined in depth for every play. However, over the course of a term, students will have an opportunity to analyze how these various aspects work with and against one another to create a sequence of impressions that leads to a meaningful and complex experience calling for interpretation.

Aspects and topics to be considered when responding to the different theatrical performances will include:

Text: Story, Plot, Narrative Structure, and Language

Acting (including styles of presentation and performance)

Character and characterization

Direction: stage direction, musical direction, and choreography

Scene Design (including props and special effects)

Costume Design (including makeup)

Lighting Design

Music and Sound (rhythm, tone, tempo, and mood)

Theater Architecture

Meaning in the Theater: Idea, Theme and Subtext

Theater, society, and culture

Theater, its audience, and its role in the community
Brecht, B. Brecht on Theatre, 1965.
Brook, P. The Empty Space, 1968.
______. Theatre, 1981.
Hayman, R. How To Read a Play, 1977.
Oenslager, D. Stage Design: Four Centuries of Scenic Invention, 1975.
Southern, R. The Seven Ages of Theatre, 1961.
Styan, J. L. Drama, Stage, and Audience, 1975.
INSTRUCTIONS: This master form is to be used as a guide in preparing departmental requests for new courses, either undergraduate or graduate.

The originating department must prepare the request in the form outlined below, observing these requirements: Each numbered item must be included and numbered as shown. The language underlined on the form must be used as indicated but not the language included in brackets, except as specified. All information called for by underlined language and the language in brackets must be supplied.

Twenty (20) copies of graduate or undergraduate proposals and thirty-five (35) copies of 400/500 course proposals must be forwarded to the Office of Academic Affairs. Departments, Colleges, or Schools generating new course proposals should prepare enough additional copies to satisfy their own internal procedures.

1. School of Fine and Performing Arts

2. Theater Arts 305 Understanding Theater

   An investigation of theater designed to develop a heightened awareness of how the theater arts express and communicate ideas and experiences. To expand critical awareness of the process by which theater creates meaning and communicates through performance to contemporary audiences. Course will examine the dynamic relationship between theater and the society it both mirrors and influences.

3. Course intended for UNDERGRADUATES

4. Normally to be offered: [annually_X__ , fall_X__,
   winter_X__ , spring_X__ , summer_X__ ; alternate years___, fall___,
   winter___, spring___, summer___]

5. Hours of credit: 4___ Clock hours per week: ___4

6. P/NP only: ___Yes ___X__ No

7. General rationale of proposal:

   a. Reason for request at this time:

      Theater Arts wants to make available as part of the Popular Culture cluster a course that explores the nature of theater as an artistic form and also as a means of understanding the society which the individual works reflect. Will also serve a need for upper division electives that specifically explore theater as a form.

   b. Place in development of department's total program:

      This class will function as an elective in Theater Arts available to majors as well to students who have chosen the University Studies Popular Culture cluster.

   c. Briefly describe the educational purposes to be served by this course.

      Department seeks to provide students with opportunities to examine not only the expressive and communicative art of theater but that also allow them to consider the society and culture which are reflected in and molded by theater works.

8. Rationale of this proposal in terms of present courses:
a. **Overlap with other courses:**

While some topics are the same as those covered in TA 101, this course will focus on issues and ideas related to a theater work’s connection to its social/cultural context.

b. **Duplication of other courses:**

None

c. **Alternate courses:**

The educational purposes of this course could not be achieved by modification of a current course or courses.

9. **Anticipated enrollment:**

a. **Enrollment anticipated each term course is offered for first two years:** 25-35
b. **Recommended optimum enrollment:** 35

c. **Students would take this course as:**

1. an elective for their major in Theater Arts
2. an elective contributing to general or liberal education
3. a University Studies class for the Popular Culture cluster

d. **Expected distribution of registration:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Division</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lower Division</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Division</td>
<td>100%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10. **Instruction:**

a. **This course will be taught by:**

Current faculty and, occasionally, adjuncts.

b. **The teaching methods most likely to be used in this course:**

Lecture and discussion with attendance at performance events as well as film and television support.

11. **Methods of evaluation to be used in this course:**

Written essays and exams as well as oral presentations.

12. **Adequacy of library resources:**

In relation to the requirements of this course, library resources are deemed sufficient.

13. **Budgetary considerations in proposed course:**

a. **Summary**

| Added faculty (percentage of annual FTE) | None |
| Added specialized space (in sq. ft.)    | None |
| Additional equipment and supplies       | None |
| Other (student assistants, audio-visual, clerical, etc.) | None |
b. **Explanation and necessary details of each estimate (including "none"):**

1. **Faculty**
   No new faculty are necessary because of redistribution of faculty loads.

2. **Space**
   Existing spaces are sufficient for offering this class.

3. **Equipment and supplies**
   Nothing more in the way of equipment and supplies is necessary other than what is presently available for the teaching of theater classes.

4. **Other**
   No other needs, no other costs

c. **Provision for meeting new requirements (including budget additions) if not already stated:**

   NA

14. **Remarks:**

   This course will have no prerequisites. It is intended as a University Studies class serving the Popular Culture cluster.

15. **Topical outline of course:**

   See attached topic outline.

16. **Sequence of action:**

   Request prepared by: [Signature] Date 12/14/00

   Approved by Department Curriculum Committee: [Signature] Date 12/14/00

   Approved by Department Chair: [Signature] Date 12/14/00

   Approved by School Curriculum Committee: [Signature] Date 12/15/00

   Approved by College/School Dean: [Signature] Date 12/20/00
D. TOPIC OUTLINE for TA 305U Understanding Theater:

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