

**Acting/Playwriting Workshop
Curriculum
2007**

ACTING/PLAYWRITING WORKSHOP 2007 (SEMESTER COURSE)

Course Description: This one-semester course enables student to study theater, acting, and playwriting in greater depth than Theater Arts I. It is also a prerequisite for taking Theater Arts II. Students sharpen their acting skills as well as their writing skill in a workshop atmosphere in which they become aesthetically and critically aware of the components of drama. The students study great American plays written by renowned playwrights. Additionally, students have an opportunity to write and perform their own plays in developmental stages in accordance with the writing process.

STANDARD 1.1 (AESTHETICS) ALL STUDENTS WILL USE AESTHETIC KNOWLEDGE IN THE CREATION OF AND IN RESPONSE TO THEATER.

Descriptive Statement: The experience of theater, both the performance of it and the observation of it, strengthens our appreciation of the world, as well as our ability to be creative and inventive decision-makers. The acquisition of knowledge and skills that contribute to aesthetic awareness of theater enhances these abilities. Through experience in theater, students develop the capacity to perceive and respond imaginatively to works of drama. These experiences result in knowledge of forms of artistic expression and in the ability to draw personal meaning from works of theater.

Key skills necessary to an understanding of aesthetics include the abilities to identify artistic elements within a theatrical work to articulate informed emotional responses to the work, to engage in cultural reflection, and to communicate through the use of metaphor and critical evaluation. Aesthetics involves the following key understandings: appreciation and interpretation; stimulating imagination; the value and significance of the theater arts; theater as object; the creation of theater; developing a process of valuing; and acquaintance with aesthetic philosophies.

Strands and Cumulative Progress Indicators

Building upon knowledge and skills gained in the Theater Arts class, by the end of the Acting/Playwriting course, students will:

A. Knowledge

1. Observe the art form of theater.
2. Explain that theater can generate personal feelings.
3. Interpret basic elements of style in theater as the foundation for a creative project.

B. Skills

1. Communicate observational and emotional responses to works of theater from a variety of social and historical contexts.

ACTIVITIES: Students will:

1. Analyze full-length American plays, and compare and contrast the styles of the different decades starting with the 1930s.
2. Compare different styles of film acting, with special notice taken of two of the great pioneers of their styles: Charlie Chaplin and Marlon Brando.
3. Observe live performances of various types of theater, analyzing both the writing of the plays and the actors' performances in the plays.

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES: Students will:

1. Compose simple works of theater in response to stylized characteristics and their aesthetics as observed in the theater of various cultures and time periods.
2. Act out original skits, commercials, short plays.
3. Fully produce and direct scenes from major plays of the American theater.

EVALUATION/ASSESSMENT OF STUDENTS: Students will:

1. Be graded on their written analysis of American plays.
2. Be graded on their written comparisons of styles of film acting.
3. Be graded on their written analyses of plays they have observed.
4. Be graded on their composition of simple works of theater.
5. Be graded on their acting of original skits, commercials, and scenes.
6. Be graded both individually and as groups of their final project—the production and direction of scenes from major American plays.

STANDARD 1.2 (CREATION AND PERFORMANCE) ALL STUDENTS WILL UTILIZE THOSE SKILLS, MEDIA, METHODS, AND TECHNOLOGIES APPROPRIATE IN THE CREATION, PERFORMANCE, AND PRESENTATION OF THEATER.

Descriptive Statement: Through developing performances in theater, students enhance their perceptual, physical, and technical skills and learn that pertinent techniques and technologies apply to the successful completion of the tasks. The development of sensory acuity (perceptual skills) enables students to perceive and acknowledge various viewpoints.

Strands and Cumulative Progress Indicators

Building upon knowledge and skills gained in the Theater Arts class, by the end of the Acting/Playwriting course, students will:

1. Demonstrate clarity of intent, character, and logical story sequence through classroom demonstrations.
2. Use movement as a medium for storytelling and as a means of projecting and as a means of projecting creative decisions regarding character.

3. Assume the roles of theater participants (e.g., director, actor, playwright, designer), and collaborate to enact classroom dramatizations using available materials that suggest scenery, properties, sound, costumes, and makeup.
4. Project an understanding of the intent of dialogue by performing from a script.

ACTIVITIES: Students will:

1. Act out scenes from American classics--plays that span the decades beginning with the 1930s.
2. Write original skits, commercials, and short plays.
3. Use movement as a medium for storytelling and as a means of projecting creative decisions regarding.
4. Produce fully both original works and also scenes from American theater (direction, set design, costume design, properties, sound, lighting, and makeup are all parts of these theatrical works).
5. Transfer theatrical works to film, using videotape equipment to capture the difference in acting and directing skills.

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES: Students will:

1. Act out scenes from different styles of plays, using various acting techniques.
2. Use improvisation of situations and relationships to get in touch with their characters' fictional emotional lives.
3. Find ways to use their own personal lives to create additional meaning and relevance in both their writing projects and acting projects.
4. Work individually and in groups to write original skits and short plays.
5. Produce and direct scenes, with set design and cinematography as major parts of the projects.
6. Design sets for final scene projects.
7. Videotape rehearsals and performances.

EVALUATION/ASSESSMENT OF STUDENTS: Students will:

1. Be graded on their individual playwriting projects.
2. Be graded on their group playwriting projects.
3. Be graded on the quality of their rehearsal work.
4. Be graded on their individual performances in group projects.
5. Be graded on individual contributions to their groups' production work (direction, set design, cinematography).
6. Be graded on their groups' production values.

STANDARD 1.3 (ELEMENTS AND PRINCIPLES) ALL STUDENTS WILL DEMONSTRATE AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE ELEMENTS AND PRINCIPLES OF THEATER.

Descriptive Statement: In order to understand the performing arts, students must discover the elements and principles both unique and common to theater. The elements, such as color, line, shape, form and rhythm, time, space and energy, are the basis for the creation of works of art. An understanding of these elements and practice of the principles ensure the strengthening of interdisciplinary relationships with all content area curricula and their applications in daily life.

Strands and Cumulative Progress Indicators

Building upon knowledge and skills gained in the Theater Arts class, by the end of the Acting/Playwriting course, students will:

1. Recognize basic stage directions in the dramatization of stories/plays.
2. Examine the basic structural characteristics of the well made play.

ACTIVITIES: Students will:

1. Analyze the use of stage directions given by great American playwrights (especially Tennessee Williams and Arthur Miller).
2. Discuss how different playwrights lead up to the climactic moment in their plays in various ways.
3. Examine the elements of premise, character, conflict, and climax; obligatory scene, exposition, dialogue, and point of attack.

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES:

1. Students will form into groups; each group will devise a premise, a cast of characters, and a conflict. They will then act out this premise in improvisation.
2. After a few experimental improvisations, groups will start writing down the most effective dialogue.
3. Groups will decide what will be the climax of their short plays, and then set up exposition and point of attack that will lead to that climax.

EVALUATION/ASSESSMENT: Students will:

1. Be graded on their improvisational acting.
2. Be graded for their imagination in creating premises.
3. Be graded, both individually and group, for creating a complete story that has a logical progression and an exciting climax.

STANDARD 1.4 (CRITIQUE) ALL STUDENTS WILL DEVELOP, APPLY AND REFLECT UPON KNOWLEDGE OF THE PROCESS OF CRITIQUE.

Descriptive Statement: Through the informed criticism of works of theater, students will develop a process by which they will observe, describe, analyze, interpret and evaluate artistic expression and quality in both their own artistic creation and in the work of others. Through this critical process, students will arrive at informed judgment of the relative artistic and aesthetic merits of the work examined.

Strands and Cumulative Progress Indicators

Building upon knowledge and skills gained in the Theater Arts class, by the end of the Acting/Playwriting course, students will:

A. Knowledge

1. Utilize basic theater terminology and elements.
2. Recognize the value of critiquing one's own work as well as the work of others.

B. Skills

1. Observe basic elements in performances.
2. Formulate positive analysis of performances by peers and respond positively to critique.
3. Recognize the main subject or theme in a theatrical work.

ACTIVITIES: Students will:

1. Give constructive criticism to each other's playwriting efforts.
2. Give constructive criticism to performances by their peers.
3. Analyze their own writing and offer self-critique.
4. Critique their own rehearsal and performance acting, focusing especially on inner truth of character, technical skills related to movement and facial expression, and emotional intensity.

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES: Students will:

1. Emphasize the strong points of each other's written skits and short plays.
2. Offer ways that writers could perhaps shore up weak elements.
3. Emphasize the strong points of each other's acting, being very specific about what they like and what moved them as a viewer.
4. Using positive motivation, suggest how performances could be made more real or more passionate.

EVALUATION/ASSESSMENT: Students will:

1. Be graded on written reviews of each other's skits and plays.
2. Be graded for class participation in the analysis of group projects: the ability to give constructive and meaningful criticism and suggestions will be valued.
3. Be graded for written analysis of the theme and structure of great American plays that will be studied and performed in class.

STANDARD 1.5 (HISTORY/CULTURE) ALL STUDENTS WILL UNDERSTAND AND ANALYZE THE ROLE, DEVELOPMENT, AND CONTINUING INFLUENCE OF THEATER IN RELATION TO WORLD CULTURES, HISTORY, AND SOCIETY.

Descriptive Statement: In order to become culturally literate, students need to understand the historical, societal, and multicultural aspects and implications theater. This includes how theater and cultures continue to influence each other.

Strands and Cumulative Progress Indicators

Building upon knowledge and skills gained in the Theater Arts class, by the end of the Acting/Playwriting course, students will:

A. Knowledge

1. Identify plays from various decades of American history.
2. Reflect on these plays and how they represent important ideas, issues, and events in a society.

B. Skills

1. Describe the general characteristics of theatrical works from different decades of Americana and compare it with World theater.
2. Examine plays as a reflection of societal values and beliefs.

ACTIVITIES: Students will:

1. Discuss and debate the differences between American plays from various eras.
2. Analyze how acting styles changed as plays became more "modern."
3. Watch movies from various decades and comment how the writing and acting are different.
4. Write short plays that reflect the social changes of various times in American life.

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES: Students will:

1. Work in groups and devise improvisations to reflect the different historical acting styles.
2. Work in groups to write short plays that mirror the ongoing decades of American drama.

3. Groups will perform their work in front of the class, and the class will offer their feedback about how well the plays reflected the different eras.
4. Individuals will perform improvised monologues that capture how a character from one era will change as times move on.

RESOURCES/BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR ACTING/PLAYWRITING COURSE

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