ADVANCED THEATER ARTS COURSE
2007

Course Description: This course is designed for those students who wish to refine their working knowledge of the theater and strengthen their creative talent. Students study the areas of theater in greater depth and are responsible for projects with an increased degree of sophistication than in Theater Arts I. There will be special focus on works from Classical Theater. All students enrolled in this course are encouraged to participate in theatrical productions.

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 and Acting/Playwriting courses, students will:

A. Knowledge

1. Discern the value of works of theater, based on historical significance, craftsmanship, cultural context, and originality.
2. Determine how historical responses affect the evolution of various theatrical styles, trends, and movements from classicism to post-modernism.
3. Use theater-specific vocabulary relating to symbolism, genre, and performance technique.

B. Skills

1. Compose specific and metaphoric cultural messages in works of theater, using contemporary methodologies.
2. Formulate a personal philosophy or individual statement on the meaning(s) of art in theater.
3. Describe changes in meaning over time in the perception of a well-known work of theater.

ACTIVITIES: Student will:

1. Observe performances of Classical Theater (e.g., works by Sophocles, Shakespeare, Moliere, etc.)
2. Reflect on the difference in acting styles used in Classical Theater compared to modern-day theater.
3. Examine how real-life living conditions of the different eras affected both the creation of Classical works as well as the performing of them.

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES: Students will:

1. Incorporate personal life experiences into an aesthetic response to works of World Theater.
2. Compare and contrast life in ancient and modern times.
3. Learn how to play characters from many different eras.

EVALUATION/ASSESSMENT OF STUDENTS: Students will:

1. Be graded on their reports and analyses of Classical plays (and films) they observe.
2. Be graded on written descriptions of the differences in acting styles from various eras.
3. Be graded on essays about how living conditions in different countries and ages affect the writing of plays.
4. Be graded on their verbal ability to incorporate personal life experiences into an aesthetic response to World Theater.

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 and Acting/Playwriting courses, students will:

1. Discuss and demonstrate the connection between body, movement, and voice in theatrical expression.
2. Create characterizations in context through manipulation of vocal and physical qualities and circumstances.
3. Collaboratively plan and execute group scenes stemming from improvisation.
4. Analyze classroom dramatizations from different perspectives (e.g., playwright, actor, director, designer) and suggest alternatives for creating and interpreting roles, arranging environments, and developing situations.

ACTIVITIES: Students will:

1. Act out scenes from Classical World Theater.
2. Use improvisation to translate the classics to modern-day situations.
3. Produce long scenes or full acts from Classical World Theater (using techniques of direction, set design, lighting, sound, costumes, makeup).
4. Transfer theatrical projects to film, adjusting for changes in acting and directing techniques.

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES: Students will:

1. Separate into performance groups and work out play analysis, scene analysis, set design, and blocking of Classical works from Sophocles to Shakespeare, from Moliere to Chekhov.
2. Improvise the situations from the Classical works and find modern-day parallels that they can easily identify with.
3. Rehearse scenes and full acts with appropriate movement and clear diction.
4. Perform scenes and full acts with complete production values.
5. Translate stage techniques into film acting.
6. Videotape rehearsals and pinpoint trouble spots and areas that need improvement.
7. Re-block theatrical scenes into film set-ups, with carefully designed camera shots and sound recording.
8. Edit and prepare film work for polished finished product.

EVALUATION/ASSESSMENT OF STUDENTS: Students will:

1. Be graded for class participation in the discussions regarding play analysis, scene analysis, set design, and blocking.
2. Be graded for the imagination and stage energy shown in improvisations.
3. Be graded for their rehearsal focus and intensity.

4. Be graded, both individuals and groups, for the quality of final stage performances.
5. Be graded for mastery of film acting techniques.
6. Be graded for production values in the making of their videotapes.
7. Be grades, both individuals and groups, for the quality of final film performances.

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 and Acting/Playwriting courses, students will:

1. Examine the range of roles and characterizations possible in theatrical production and performance.
2. Examine the relationship between physicality and character development.
3. Identify various tactics employed by actors to create believable, motivated action.

ACTIVITIES: Students will:

1. Compare and contrast two actors playing the same role: Laurence Olivier and Mel Gibson playing Hamlet.
2. Experiment using different types of movement, posture, and body language to express various aspects of roles they are assigned.
3. Improvise real-life situations, science fiction situations, and fantasy situations, using different acting styles to make even the most far-out characters believable and honestly motivated.

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES: Students will:

1. Imitate different actors playing various (and uncharacteristic) roles (e.g., Jim Carrey playing Othello; Robin Williams playing Uncle Vanya).
2. Participate in “animal” exercises. They will imagine that their characters are animals, and then try to move the way the animal would (if he or she were human).

3. Separate into groups and devise playable short stories using either a science fiction or fantasy theme.

EVALUATION/ASSESSMENT: Students will:

1. Be graded on their written comparisons of Laurence Olivier and Mel Gibson playing Hamlet.
2. Be graded on how well they learn to use their bodies in the preparation of characterizations.
3. Be graded for their group work in creating imaginative scenarios of science fiction and fantasy.
4. Be graded, both individually and groups, for their acting and improvising of the science fiction and fantasy stories.
5. Be graded on their willingness and ability to create animal movement and gestures.

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 and Acting/Playwriting courses, students will:

A. Knowledge

1. Explain the process of critique using the progression of description, analysis, interpretation, and evaluation.
2. Examine theater from a variety of historical periods in both western and non-western culture.
3. Consider the impact of traditions in the critique of theatrical works.

B. Skills

1. Evaluate the judgment of others based on the process of critique.
2. Compare and contrast the technical proficiency of actors, directors, set designers, and cinematographers.
3. Develop criteria for evaluating theater and use the criteria to evaluate one's personal work and that of their peers, using positive commentary for critique.

ACTIVITIES: Students will:

1. Write a movie review of a film of their choice; they will especially focus on the acting, directing, and cinematography.
2. Read a movie review of a film of their choice by a well-known movie critic.
3. Compare the movie review by the critic with the review they have written.
4. Critique their own critiques.
5. Offer constructive criticism to each other on the acting of their scenes from World Theater.
6. Provide useful critiques of the production values of the scenes: direction, set design, costumes, special effects.

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES: Students will:

1. Rehearse in front of the entire class. Class will give the rehearsal group all the positives that they witnessed.
2. Reinforce the strengths of the rehearsal, and then begin to enumerate ways that could possible improve the scene.
3. Actors critique their own rehearsal work.
4. Perform completed projects for their classmates. Class repeats the reinforcement of strengths of the performance and also suggestions on how the work could have been even better. Class talks about acting and also all the production values of the scene.
5. Actors, directors, and set designers critique their own work.
6. Present film versions of their theatrical work. Class gives feedback on the changes for better or worse that the film version offered.

EVALUATION/ASSESSMENT: Students will:

1. Be graded for their written movie reviews.
2. Be graded for their class participation in critique sessions.
3. Be graded for written critiques of each other's work.
4. Be graded for written self-critiques.

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 and Acting/Playwriting courses, students will:

A. Knowledge

1. Parallel historical events and artistic development found in theater.
2. Summarize and reflect upon how theatrical forms and cultural resources preserve cultural heritage and influence contemporary theater.
3. Examine how the social and political environment influences theatrical artists in various social/historical/political contexts.

B. Skills

1. Discuss how cultural influences add to the understanding of theatrical works.
2. Hypothesize how theater has impacted world culture.
3. Identify the common theatrical elements that help define a given historical period.

ACTIVITIES: Students will:

1. Improvise historical events (e.g., bury one's own brother even though it has been forbidden by the King [Sophocles' "Antigone"]).
2. Watch the movie "Shakespeare in Love" and discuss the political background of Shakespeare's world.
3. Research the cultural background in Russia at the time of the emergence of Chekhov and Stanislavski in their theatrical works.
4. Discuss today's world events and how it is reflected in stage and film works.

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES: Students will:

1. Write and act out short scenes about life in ancient times and various eras.
2. Improvise scenes from "Shakespeare in Love."
3. Write scenes depicting Chekhov and Stanislavski drinking tea and discussing what's going on in Russia and how will they artistically express their feelings about "current" events.
4. Improvise and write out scenes concerning the current Iraqi War.

EVALUATION/ASSESSMENT OF STUDENTS: Students will:

1. Be graded for their improvisational work playing historical events.
2. Be graded for research papers about how historical events affected World Theater.
3. Be graded for their written scenes about life in ancient times.
4. Be graded for their acting out of original written scenes.

RESOURCES/BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR ADVANCED THEATER ARTS COURSE

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