COURSE PROPOSAL: VAPA

Honors Theatre

Grade Level: 11th and 12th

Pre-requisite: Two Years of Drama With a Minimum Grade of B

Honors Theatre is open to the highly dedicated theatre student who has received a grade of B or higher, in a minimum of two years of theatre/drama study. In addition to completing the Honors Theatre curriculum for the year, students in Honors Theatre are engaged in a pre-approved, in-depth, theatre related Honors project. Examples of these projects might include, but are not limited to, directing or producing a production, teaching theatre workshops to younger students, or writing and producing an original script.

This course will offer the serious theatre student the opportunity to explore more deeply into the study of theatre arts as an overall discipline. It will prepare students for college-level theatre arts courses, enabling students to develop and refine their understanding, appreciation, and application of theatre. This course requires a much higher commitment from the student than the commitment required of beginning or advanced drama, particularly in the areas of research and applied theory. It will examine theatre from a global perspective, examining international traditions and movements that have shaped world theatre. Students will reflect on and apply personal and universal themes expressed in various cultures and traditions in order to refine their appreciation and participation in performing arts..

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is open to the highly dedicated theatre student who has a minimum of two years of high school theatre study or its equivalent. In addition to completing the standard Theatre 4 curriculum for the year, students in Theatre 4 Honors are engaged in a pre-approved, in-depth, theatre related Honors project. Examples of projects include, but are not limited to: directing or producing a play, teaching a drama class to younger students, documenting the actor’s process while performing a role in a show, or writing and producing an original script.

Theatre 4 Honors offers the serious and experienced theatre student the opportunity to delve more deeply into the study of theatre arts as an overall discipline.  Each student thoroughly explores and gains professional-level training and experience in an individual area of interest.  Through these experiences students develop ever-increasing levels of self-awareness, self-confidence, and self-discipline.  Students regularly and actively connect their learning to their ongoing practice of theatre arts, and, in turn, serve as role models, leaders and mentors for theatre arts under-classmen.  The Theatre 4 Honors curriculum is both practically and academically rigorous.  Students study all genres of theatre ranging from classical to contemporary. Production participation and evaluation offer students on-going opportunities to analyze and critique the aesthetics of other people’s work. In turn, they develop their own artistic sensibilities and develop the ability to make and actualize their own creative choices.  The course offers a course of study and practice that prepares students to enter the most highly selective college theatre programs by challenging them as thinkers and theatre practitioners.  Former Theatre 4 Honors students apply their experience and learning in innumerable ways once they reach the college and university level.  Graduates who are currently in college have won national playwriting contests, are performing in major productions at top universities, and regularly earn internships and/or are employed at professional theatre companies.  The curriculum has significant breadth and depth. Instruction is regularly augmented by students’ work alongside practicing professional staff and guest artists. Students often have opportunities to practice their art outside of the classroom in school, community and professional productions.  The Honors project offers students the opportunity to specialize and dive deeply into an area of theatre arts that they have expressed and/or already demonstrated an interest in.  The Honors student manages their individual project from beginning to end and each project includes a major culminating event or production.

**Course Goals and/or Major Student Outcomes**

1. Students will acquire in-depth knowledge about various styles of theatre and other styles of performance through reading, writing, synthesizing information and experience, listening, creating, performance, production, and research.
2. Students will demonstrate the ability to use technology effectively in order to communicate ideas and enhance performance.
3. Students will demonstrate the ability to express themselves creatively, solve problems and think critically by effectively completing challenging group and individual theatre arts projects.
4. Students will experiment with, develop, and effectively express opinions about differing genres and styles of performance and production aesthetics.
5. Students will integrate research, their own creative ideas, various art forms, and aspects of technical theatre in new expressions of performance and production.
6. Students will learn about the art of playwriting and write a one-act play.
7. Students will experience and conduct in-depth written and oral evaluations of live theatre productions.  Students will synthesize their observations and experiences in relation to professional theatre into their ongoing practice of theatre.
8. Students will learn, practice and refine skills needed for participation in a rigorous college or university theatre program and/or other training for a career in theatre arts.

**20.  Course Objectives**

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| OBJECTIVES | STATE STANDARD(S) |
| 1. Students will read, analyze and perform, direct, and/or design dramatic pieces from different countries, various time periods, and various theatrical genres. | 2.0 (Creative Expression); 3.0 (Historical Context); 5.0 Connections, Relationships and Applications |
| 1. Students will identify, propose and create an approved plan to work toward their individual goals in the performance/production arena. | 2.0 (Creative Expression) ; 5.0 Connections, Relations and Applications |
| 1. Students will learn basic playwriting techniques and will write a one-act play. | 1.0 (Artistic Perception); 2.0 (Creative Expression); 4.0 (Aesthetic Valuing) |
| 1. Students will participate in a professional audition preparation and adjudication process. | 1.0 (Artistic Perception); 5.0 (Connections, Relationships, Applications) |
| 1. Students will keep a record of, and will analyze their work and the work of their classmates through journals, videos and portfolios. | 1.0 (Artistic Perception), 4.0 (Aesthetic Valuing); 5.0 (Connections, Relationships, Applications) |
| 1. The student’s imagination, creativity, and general skill base will be expanded through project based learning units such as the art of improvisation, dialect training, musical theatre performance experiences and acting for TV and film | 1.0 (Artistic Perception); 2.0 (Creative Expression); 3.0 (Historical & Cultural Context) |
| 1. Students will attend professional productions and will participate in workshops with professional guest artists such as Equity actors, stage combat artists, professional choreographers and vocal coaches, etc. | 1.0 (Artistic Perception); 5.0 (Connections, Relationships, Applications |

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Prerequisites:

| **Prerequisite** | **Required / Recommended** |
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| Theatre3 or Theatre4 and permission of instructor | Required |

Co-requisites:

None

Course content:

***The shaded background of the following field indicates this course was approved by UC for the 2014-15 school year or earlier. Please refer to the current "a-g" course criteria and guidelines when completing your course submission form.***

**Performance Evaluations**

Theatre artists are constantly evaluated.  Students gain experience with this process on an almost daily basis in Theatre 4 Honors.  Class related performance evaluations run the gamut from formal to informal, written and verbal, class-wide to between individuals or in small groups.  The type of evaluation conducted depends on the goal of the instructional unit and the day’s lesson.  In the Audition Showcase unit, for example, students receive feedback from each other in small groups, from the instructor and the entire class, and in written form on a rubric from the professional adjudicators who also give the student verbal feedback.  Performance evaluations for various units have different focal points. Evaluations during the musical theatre unit have an emphasis on vocal expressiveness while performance evaluations of a commedia’dell’arte performance emphasizes on physicality.  Self-assessment is another important tool and is part of every major unit.

**Class participation**

Daily class participation points are given based on a student’s use of class time, focus on the task at hand, and on journal entries or other written reports summarizing the student’s work for the day.

**Guest artist feedback on student performance**

Guest artists complete written rubrics and/or give verbal feedback to students on their progress, strengths and areas needing growth.  Guest artists also consult with me regarding a student’s attitude work ethic, achievements and any concerns they have.

**Filming**

Various student performances are filmed throughout the year so that a student can observe their performance and make adjustments based on what they observe.

**Student Journals**

Reflections, critiques, responses and structured assignments are all part of the journals.

Daily playwriting work is also kept in the student journal during the playwriting unit.  Journals are also used for tasks such as brainstorming,

**Written Work**

Written assignments such as critiques, reports, scene analysis, in-depth dramaturgical research, etc.

**Portfolios**

**See detailed description under Course Outline**

Whether a student is working on a ninety second monologue, or a full play, they are expected to read the entire script, research relevant background information, analyze the text, score the script for presentation and give and receive written and verbal feedback from the instructor and their peers.  International Thespian Society standards as well as national and state standards are used as resources for establishing project expectation guidelines and evaluation rubrics for performance and technical theatre projects.

**Lectures** (**Direct Instruction**) are given most frequently in the beginning of a unit to deliver important information about select topics such as theatrical historical periods or genres.  The instructor delivers most lectures, and Theatre 4 Honors students give some as part of a student taught instructional unit and/or an Honors Project.  For example, a student gave a lecture on Samuel Beckett related to a scene she directed form *Waiting for Godot.* Students

**Discussion** is an integral part of each unit. Students engage in academic verbal discourse, articulating their views and supporting them with evidence anchored in text, observation, personal experience.  Discussion topics range from current social issues which relate to material being studied, to production and performance feedback, to current trends in theatre, changes in entertainment due to multi-media influence, and so on.

**Reading assignments** immerse students in theatrical literary genres, including plays, professional theatre production reviews, selected readings on acting and directing theory and practice, playwright background information, theatre magazine articles (“American Theatre,” “Theatre Bay Area,” etc.), dramaturgical materials, etc.  Readings are examined in terms of historical and contemporary contexts.

**Research** is conducted, on a regular basis, both in the school library and by students on their own outside of class.  The librarian and instructor work together to compile a variety of resources on a topic, including books, online resources and multi-media sources.  LibGuides are created and introduced for individual units.  For example, students completing a Dramaturgy project on *Twelfth Night* work in small groups on an assigned topic.  The Librarian introduces the class to a variety of resources after which the groups research, record and report on their findings.  The material is collected and used for theatre productions.

**A Text and multi-media rich environment** reinforces student learning through the use ofvarious forms of literature: play scripts, theatre history reference material, playwright autobiographies; books on directing, acting, theatre production, technical theatre acting, directing and production for TV and film; current theatre magazines, theatre journals and more. Students have the opportunity to improve their  digital/computer skills through the use of computers, iPods and iPads, available to students in the theatre office and in the Library.

**Small group work** is a regular part of the class.  Examples of small group work include scene analysis, preparation and performance work; dramaturgy and other research projects, original scene work; in-class discussions.

**Verbal and written feedback.** Students give and receive verbal and written feedback based on established goals for each unit as well as high-level performance and production standards.  Students keep a record of the feedback they receive throughout the year and engage in a comprehensive reflection on their growth and challenges at the end of each semester.

**Improvisation activities** are used to build self-confidence, creativity, and class unity.  Examples of improvisation activities include Improv Freeze, games used in ComedySportz, performing a famous movie in two minutes, and the Dating Game.  Improv activities are also used to build character, explore unit topics, and establish mood or environment for the day’s work.

**Sample performance pieces** on film, DVD, or online, are used to engage students in learning new techniques and practicing their observation and critiquing skills.  As an example, in the TV and film unit, scenes are shown which illustrate the technique of focusing on the listener rather than the speaker.  This is followed by a discussion about why a director would make this choice and then the application of this technique to their own TV and Film scenes.

**Guest artists.** Guest artists are hired for areas such as dialect training, stage combat training, musical theatre training, TV and film training and more.  All guest artists are working professionals who engage students not only in learning the technical aspects of their craft, but also in their personal stories of how they grew into their profession. Guest artists bring the real world into the drama classroom.

**Performance rubrics.** Rubrics are integrated into each major performance/production unit.  In order to help ensure that learning and practice are focused, students are provided with evaluation rubrics at the beginning of each instructional unit.  Rubrics are generated in numerous ways, including those developed by the teacher, ones based on CA State Thespian adjudication forms, and ones that students develop themselves.

**Student leadership tasks.** Theatre 4 Honors students hold numerous leadership positions both in the class and as part of the extra-curricular program.  These opportunities allow students to challenge themselves and explore ever more complex modes of action and communication. Students also serve as role models for underclassmen. Theatre 4 Honors leadership positions include student directors, technical leads, student producers, student warm-up and acting coaches, dance captains, choreographers, vocal directors, and teaching practicum students (akin to student teachers).

SELECTED ASSIGNMENTS ACTIVITIES

A.  Students regularly develop their own production and rehearsal calendars and evaluation rubrics.  For each performance project, they work together in groups, or as a class to create and execute appropriate designs for scenery, lighting, props, publicity, and/or hair and make-up within given budget limitations.  Students interface with Stage Technology students and adult theatre arts staff in the realization of their production ideas.  At the end of each unit, students participate in a self-reflection and a group discussion on strengths and challenges of the project, indicating what aspects worked well and offering thoughts in regards to their own work as well as suggestions to improve future projects.

B.  Cross-curricular projects are an ongoing part of the Theatre 4 Honors class.  An example of this was the Classical Theatre Showcase in which a student put together a half hour show incorporating scenes from classical literature that all freshmen read.  The student directed and produced the entire show and all freshmen English students attended the show and participated in a talk-back in which the student director, actors and technicians spoke about their experience in the show and answered questions from the audience about their work.  As part of the process, the student director set deadlines and worked with the instructor and theatre technicians to solve specific problems.

C.  As detailed above, each student participates in a playwriting instructional unit taught by a professional playwright.  Each student writes monologues, scenes and a one-act play.  Students also have opportunities to and are encouraged submit original scripts to state and national competitions. In the past three years, Theatre 4 Honors students have placed in the top two in several state and national playwriting events.

D. Students engage in other creative writing activities throughout the year as well, such as creating and performing a scene based on character types, developing and performing a stand-up comedy piece, and writing and performing modern slang versions of classical pieces.

E.  Theatre 4 Honors students regularly participate in theatre related internships at local theatres and businesses, and some students are employed in areas such as acting, teaching theatre to children, lighting design, and house management.

F.  Warm-ups that relate to each day’s lesson are routinely part of the opening of class.  Some warm-ups are instructor lead and others are student-lead.  Students choose, justify the warm-up choice, lead, and reflect on the effectiveness of the warm-up process they are in charge of.  Warm-ups may be physical, vocal, intellectual, or a combination of all of these.

G. Improvisation is integrated throughout the year in many ways.  The basics of improv are reviewed at the start of each school year and students practice improv skills through traditional improvisational games such as Improv Freeze Tag, Two Minute Movies, Party Quirks, Rewind, and Bus Stop.  Improvisation, as a learning tool, is also employed for character exploration.  Students improvise a scene from a play that is mentioned in the script but not actually shown (Improvise the scene in “Our Town,” in which Mrs. Gibbs mentions in which an antique dealer calls on her and offers her a huge amount for a piece of furniture.).  Connections are then drawn between the events of the play and the discoveries made through the improvisation, ultimately enriching the production.

H.  Students create videos to advertise upcoming productions on the campus TV station (trailers for the show).  They also create short films explaining the theatre arts program.  Some projects allow the students to write and create a short film as a final project (theatre history report for example).

I.  Theatre 4 Honors students participate in outreach performances at local schools, non-profit events, and/or hospitals.  Past performances include a Theatre 4 Honors directed production of “Alice in Wonderland” for Bring Me a Book foundation and a production of “Snow White” for the Lucile Packard Children’s Hospital.

**Daily Practice**

Students will plan, lead and evaluate performance warm-up activities throughout the year.

**UNIT 1     Professional Audition Showcase**

* The text of two monologues (or one monologue and one song) scored with beats, objective, tactics, moment before, moment after, blocking, invisible listener, and so on).
* Complete a two-page, detailed character analysis complete for each monologue or song based on critical reading and analysis of each play.
* Journal entries articulating personal performance goals, warm-up techniques, and rehearsal reflections.
* Detailed rehearsal journal.
* In-class presentations of audition package for instructor and peer feedback.
* Live performance of polished audition package for professional adjudicators.
* Post-performance reflection synthesizing adjudicator feedback, observations based on the performance recording and the student’s preparation and performance experiences.

**UNIT 2           Shakespeare/Classical Theatre in Performance/Traditions and Current Trends**

* Read the assigned play several times.
* Lecture notes, research and reading assignments that ground the student’s experience of the play in the history, culture and theatrical traditions of the play and playwright.
* Lecture notes, research and reading assignments to view video, pictures and formal reviews of current and recent productions of the same or similar works.
* Write a formal, eight to ten page dramaturgical report that includes:
  + a summary and analysis of key aspects of reading, research and lecture material.
  + a production concept statement and justification for the choice based on student reading, research and lecture and their own creative thoughts, visual concept support in the form of pictures, images, color choices, etc.
  + design sketches.
  + a list of sources (MLA style).

Scored scripts

* List of unfamiliar words and phrases with definitions.
* Word-for-word modern slang translation.
* Scansion/meter analysis.
* Analysis of repeated sounds and images.
* Performance delivery marks including image and action words, use of emphasis and pauses based on above text work.

Provide and synthesize critical feedback

* Students observe other student performances and write detailed feedback on a project-specific rubric.
* Students receive rubrics written by the instructor and other students on their project and complete a one page reflection on strengths and areas of continued work.

**UNIT 3   Directing and Producing for the Modern Theatre**

* Read significant sections from the seminal writings of the assigned acting theorist.
* Read the assigned play several times with different focal points.  Complete a two-page analysis of the play’s genre, story, structure, theme, and characters.
* Write a two to three page paper summarizing the acting theory and specify how specifics of the theory will be applied in practice during rehearsal of the scene.
* Develop and record work in a director’s prompt script.
* Work with other Theatre 4 Honors students to develop a grading rubric that will be used by the teacher and other students to provide feedback and to grade each student director’s project.

**UNIT 4       Young Playwrights Project**

* Daily class writing activities, including free writes, monologue and scene writing.
* Read one act and full length plays and analyze specific aspects of play structure, dialogue and characterization with a focus on informing and improving the student’s own writing.
* Share original writing for instructor and peer input.  Edit writing applying relevant input.
* Complete a professionally formatted seven to ten page original one act play.

**UNIT 5           Outreach Performance**

* Propose, select, write, coordinate technical elements of performance and touring, rehearse, memorize, refine and/or perform as part of the Outreach Ensemble.  The individual student’s role in the project ranges from Student Director or Producer to performer or technical support.
* Conduct ongoing written and oral evaluations of process and product.
* Participate in outreach performances.
* Write both a one page self-reflection on the preparation and performance project and a one page analysis of the value of the project for the student participants and the outreach audiences, including suggestions for future projects.

**UNIT 6           Dialect Training**

* Work on the dialect an hour a day using materials including class handouts, CD’s and the assigned dialect scene.
* Perform the scene for specific feedback from the dialect coach on dialect strengths and weaknesses.
* Read the play and complete a detailed two to three page script, scene, and character analysis of the assigned play.
* Perform the memorized and fully staged scene.
* Write and offer verbal feedback on other student performances.

**UNIT 7        Groundbreaking Theatre/Social Justice Theatre Project**

* Students research the assigned topic and write a three to five page evaluative essay analyzing factors including why the work is considered groundbreaking or important, historical and societal forces that contributed to the work, artistic merit of the work and the place of the work in current day theatre and society.
* Students present an oral report for other members of the class based on their research and essay.
* Students write a one to two page comparison/contrast reflection based on key works/theatre movements presented within the class.
* Students perform a memorized, fully staged scene or series of scenes from the groundbreaking/social justice theatre artist or group of artists.

**WRITTEN THEATRE CRITIQUES**

* Students read and analyze current theatre criticism of live performances in publications such as the “New York Times,” “San Francisco Chronicle,” etc.
* Students write a five paragraph critical response to a professional play seen as part of a class field trip.  The written response is modeled on professionally written theatre critiques.

**PORTFOLIOS**

* Students submit a one page, letter perfect, professionally formatted theatre arts resume.
* Students submit a professional quality head shot.
* Students articulate personal theatre arts goals and specific strategies for achieving the goals.
* Students produce a professional quality binder with representations of their best work, including production programs, photos, written work, production planning documents, and theatre production critiques.

SELECTED ASSIGNMENT ACTIVITIES

A.  As described in the Course Outline above, students participate in a playwriting instructional unit led by a published, professional playwright.  Each student reads sample one act plays, receives instruction in dramatic structure, and practices specific playwriting techniques (such as writing a monologue or scene on a specific topic).

Students write daily and also complete writing assignments for homework.   Students share their work both through reading aloud and submitting written work.   The playwright evaluates all work and some work is discussed with the class.  The culminating activity of the unit requires each student to write and submit a ten-minute one-act play following professional script formatting requirements.  Select plays are chosen for further development with the playwright, and production by professionals.  All students attend the performance of selected plays.  (Students not selected to have their plays performed receive further instruction and participate in a different instructional unit.)

B.  Major learning units focus on important playwrights from various time periods (for example, Ancient Greece, Shakespeare, Moliere, etc.) etc.)  as well as contemporary playwrights.  Multi-cultural performance history and modern theatre performance and production trends are also studied.  This academic year, for example, students will read *Major Barbara* by George Bernard Shaw, learn about Shaw as a playwright, discuss the relevance of the themes of the play to current events, take the point of view of one of the play’s characters and debate the issues as the character.  The class will then see a professional production of the play and write a critique focusing on how the production choices emphasized or failed to support social themes discussed in class.

C.  Students improvise and create comic scenes, which involve stage combat.  The scenes are presented at the middle schools as part of an annual outreach program.  At a talkback with the younger students after the performance, the actors explain aspects of the devising, rehearsal and performance process and answer questions from the younger students.

ASSIGNMENT ACTIVITIES

Students attend a minimum of two professional productions each semester and one school play each semester. In-depth pre-show and post-show preparation, which includes discussion, written work, and hands-on activities are part of the school field trip and the school play productions. Examples of related instructional activities include: writing a two minute musical scene based on a summary of a scene from the play that the students will attend, creating a scene based on a photo that relates to the production students will attend, written reflection on key themes such as dealing with loss or prejudice.

SELECTED ASSIGNMENT ACTIVITIES

A.  Students critically analyze a wide range of historical and contemporary scripts and productions.  In preparation for attendance at the professional plays, as well as for the study of major playwrights and genres, such as Shakespeare or a unit on Absurdist Drama, students are introduced to key vocabulary and concepts, complete research, reading and in-class preparation work in order to understand the style, genre, and traditional approaches to production.   More complex and integrative discussions and assignments then require the student to draw comparisons and contrasts between characters, themes, and production choices. The student responds, either in a formal written critique or a guided group discussion, to the overall effectiveness of a production, as well as more specific choices, such as the color for a character’s costume or the use of repetitive sound effects in a show.  The frame of reference for analysis and thinking about the show is given wider scope through comparing and contrasting scripts, characters, and themes in relation to other plays the student has read/and or seen.  Last year, for example, students attended a professional production of *Big River* and *The Mountaintop.* Both plays deal with aspects of the African American experience.  Discussions and writing assignments required students to reflect on how things have changed, and how they have stayed the same over the past century for African Americans in the United States.  Students gave specific examples from both productions demonstrating how the plays, the production elements, and the theatrical experience brought focus to important historical and cultural experiences and how the experience of the show impacted their thinking about complex subjects such as race, prejudice and social class.  What difference did the choice of genre (a musical vs. a two person ninety minute contemporary play) make in terms of the production choices and the impact of the message? The process throughout the year is similar, based on the specific productions that students see and the material being studied in class.  How does the impact of seeing a fully realized production differ from working on a scene or a play in class?  Do the different experiences inform one another, and if so, how?

B.  Through formal and informal writing assignments and discussions, students analyze, justify and theorize about the unique role of theatre in society, throughout history and in today’s quickly changing world.  Students develop their own definition of theatre and are then introduced to Aristotle’s “Poetics.”   The student then completes additional scholarly reading and research on why people create theatre, synthesize information to report on how the role of theatre has stayed the same and how it has changed over the years, and predict the role of theatre in the future.   Students then re-craft their original definition in light of their learning.

The Outline below reflects a typical year of study in Theatre 4 Honors.  Specific Units change from year to year, but the rigor; breadth of material covered, and basic framework stays the same.

**SEMESTER 1**

**Daily Practice**

Students participate in a regular daily warm-up related to current topic of study.

Students reflect either verbally or in writing (generally in their journal) on the day’s work.

**Goal Setting**

The student set personal goals for each day’s class, as well as for the year and tactics for achieving them.

The student set personal goals for summer, outside of school and after high school performance/production work and tactics for achieving them.

**UNIT 1     Professional Audition Showcase**

The student selects and prepares contrasting monologues, one monologue and one song, and/or production portfolio for auditions and interviews.  The audition pieces must be age appropriate, and show the student’s range and their strengths as a performer.

The student performs monologues, songs and/or presents their portfolio for in-class and feedback.

The student continues rehearsing monologues, songs and/or perfecting portfolio material to incorporate feedback.  Instruction is given regarding professional dress, behavior, and audition skills.

The student submits an updated professional quality theatre resume.

The student participates in the Audition Showcase given for professional adjudicator.

The student receives and reflects on adjudicator feedback.

The student watches a recorded performance of Audition Showcase and writes a self-reflection based on the professional feedback and the recording.

**UNIT 2           Shakespeare/Classical Theatre in Performance/Traditions and Current Trends**

Students read the assigned Shakespeare play or other classical material being studied (Ancient Greece, Moliere, Oscar Wilde, etc.).

Students receive instruction in understanding and performing Shakespeare/Classics, including how to read, understand and analyze the text, working with image and action words, meter and scansion, the importance of translations, staging techniques and voice and diction work.  Each concept is explained and then students put it into practice as they work on a scene or monologue.

Students write and perform a modern slang translation of the scene or monologue they are working with.

Information which focuses on the historical background of the time period and the specific play being studied is delivered and discovered through lecture, research and reading of selected books and articles.  Discussions about related plays, which the group or individuals have seen, augment this process.

Dramaturgical research regarding the development and/or support of a production concept is conducted, reported on and incorporated into performances.

Students perform assigned scenes or monologues.  Performances may include technical design work such as original costumes, which reflect the production concept.

The student’s performance is evaluated both verbally and in writing based on a set of standards, which is communicated ahead of time.

**UNIT 3   Directing and producing for the Contemporary Theatre**

Students read, discuss, analyze, produce and/or direct less experienced students in scenes from modern  plays.  Examples include:

* Multi-cultural works by playwrights including August Wilson (*Fence, Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom*), Josefina Lopez (*Real Women Have Curves*), Lorraine Hansberry (*Raisin in the Sun*) and Lynne Nottage (*Ruined, Intimate Apparel*)
* Solo performance pieces such as *Twilight* by Anna Deveare Smith
* Contemporary musicals (Scenes and songs from musicals such as *title of show*, *Thirteen, Grease*)
* Twentieth Century dramatic literature such as *No Exit* by Jean Paul Sartre and *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf* by Edward Albee
* Early realistic drama (*A Doll’s House* and *Hedda Gabler* by Henrik Ibsen, *The Seagull* and *The Three Sisters* by Anton Chekhov)
* Emmy Award winning plays such as *August Osage County* by Tracy Letts

Students are assigned a specific acting theorist (Stanislavsky, Uta Hagen, Stella Adler, Sanford Meisner).  They read the seminal work or works by the theorist and direct a scene using techniques based on the approach.

Students conduct research on the historical period and theatrical conventions of the time, develop and articulate a concept for their approach to the scene, and keep a director’s prompt script.

Students conduct a warm-up for the class based on their acting theorist’s approach.

Scenes are performed and students are evaluated on aspects of direction and production.

**CURRICULAR ENRICHMENT**

The student participates in professional pre-show classroom workshops for field trip shows.

The student attends a minimum of one professional production as a field trip.

The student attends a minimum of one professional production of their choosing.

The student critiques the professional production verbally and/or in writing.

The student attends or participates in Palo Alto High School’s Fall Play and writes a critique of performance and/or process.

The student participates in guest artist workshops presented by working theatre professionals, focusing on topics such as stage combat, auditioning for TV and film, dialect training, dance and movement workshops, etc.

**PORTFOLIO**

At the end of the semester, the student submits a comprehensive portfolio for evaluation that includes: a professional resume; head shot; extensive written material on production work such as dramaturgical research, rehearsal journals, scene and play analysis materials; director’s prompt scripts; samples of evaluation rubrics; feedback notes and critique sheets on individual performances; play programs and reviews of shows attended or participated in; analysis of goals set at beginning of semester.

**FINAL EXAM PROJECT**

The student completes a First Semester Final Exam project such as:

* Career Research project on selected field of interest in theatre, television, film or media arts.  The project includes an in-depth interview with someone in the field of interest, research on the career itself, and statistical information on the training and career.  The project includes a five to seven page written report with a list of all sources (MLA format). An oral presentation is also presented to the class.
* Student directed, produced, and performed challenge scenes from theatrical genres such as classical tragedy, Absurdist Drama, Restoration comedy, etc.  As part of the exam, students submit a notebook (approximately 10- 20 pages) containing dramaturgical research, play analysis notes, design illustrations, and a prompt script.
* Performance showcase of Social Justice Theatre pieces (*Laramie Project, Angels in America*, “Good Body”), a student organized and moderated audience talkback, and written reflection on the relationship between theatre performance and social justice.

**SEMESTER 2**

**Daily Practice**

The student participates in and/or leads regular daily warm-ups related to current topic of study.

**UNIT 4**

**Young Playwrights Project**

Students receive playwriting instruction from a published, professional playwright (hired by TheatreWorks).

Students write daily, and complete homework playwriting assignments including writing a monologue and writing scenes.

Students share their work with the playwright and one another and receive feedback (both verbal and in writing from the playwright).

The student writes a ten-minute one-act play to be considered for production.

Select plays are chosen for production by professional actors and directors.  These students continue to work with the playwright instructor for another month.

**UNIT 5           Outreach Performance**

Students propose, direct and produce a half hour show that tours to the middle schools in the district.  Performances may include but are not limited to stage combat scenes, musical theatre medleys, comic one act plays.

Students are responsible for technical aspects of the show including costumes, scenery, make-up and props.  They work with adult theatre staff and other students in the theatre program to design, collect and/or create items needed for the performance.

At the end of the performance students introduce themselves, share a little bit the benefits of theatre in their lives, and answer questions from students about performance, technical theatre, and the preparation process.

**UNIT 6           Dialect Training**

Students receive training in the selected dialect (past years have included British, Southern, Irish and Scottish dialect training).

Students are assigned a scene that requires the use of the dialect.

Students read the play, and research the time period, performance style and playwright.

Students rehearse the scene while continuing to receive instruction in the dialect including individual feedback on their progress.

Students perform the staged and memorized scenes.

Feedback focuses on all aspects of performance, including their delivery of the text with

A specific dialect.

**UNIT 7**

**Groundbreaking Theatre/Social Justice Theatre Project**

Working in small groups, students are assigned a groundbreaking and/ or social justice  theatre artist, or performance group.  Examples include Eve Ensler, Tony Kushner, August Wilson, and San Francisco Mime Troupe.

Students research the assigned topic and write an evaluative essay analyzing factors such as why the work is considered groundbreaking, societal forces that contributed to the work, artistic merit of the work and the place of the work in current day theatre and society.

Students do an oral report for other members of the class based on their research and essay.

Students perform a scene or series of scenes from the groundbreaking artist or group of artists.

**CURRICULAR ENRICHMENT**

Students participate in professional pre-show workshops for field trip shows.

Students attend a professional production as a class field trip.

The student attends a minimum of one professional production of their choosing outside of the school day.

The student critiques the professional productions verbally and/or in writing.

The student attends or participates in Palo Alto High school’s Spring Play and writes a critique of performance and/or process.

**PORTFOLIO**

Students submit a comprehensive portfolio with a professional resume, head shot, extensive written material on production work such as dramaturgical research; rehearsal journals; scene and play analysis materials; director’s prompt scripts; feedback notes and critique sheets and grading rubrics on individual performances; play programs and written reviews of for shows attended or participated in.  The second semester portfolio includes a thorough analysis of goals set at beginning of semester.

The student submits an updated professional quality theatre resume.

**FINAL EXAM**

The Final Exam includes a written and performance component.

WRITTEN FINAL EXAM

Students take a comprehensive written exam to demonstrate content mastery based on theatre history, theatre genres, theatre terminology, and key artistic and production concepts covered throughout the year.   The exam includes objective as well as analytical essay responses.

PERFORMANCE FINAL EXAM

Examples of final exam performance projects include:

* Performance showcase of Social Justice Theatre pieces (*Laramie Project, Angels in America*, “Good Body”), a student organized and monitored audience talkback, and research and experience based written reflection on the relationship between theatre performance and social justice.
* Performances of a scene from a more classical version of Greek dramatic literature and from Mary Zimmerman’s plays (*Metamorphoses, Jason and the Argonauts, Medea, Odyssey).* Student must also submit a written report, which compares and contrasts the different versions of similar myths and analyzes similarities and differences in effectiveness and production potential for different versions of the same myths.

**THEATRE 4 HONORS PROJECT**

Theatre 4 Honors projects are proposed by the student and agreed upon by the instructor in the spring semester prior to the start of the Theatre 4 Honors class the following fall.  The Honors Project is a yearlong endeavor.  The project is specifically tailored to the student’s demonstrated area of interest and/or expertise.  Projects may include directing and/or producing a show; training and running a comedy improv troupe; running an after school drama program for children; performing a role in an outside of school play during which time the actor keeps a daily rehearsal journal, conducts research on the role, etc.; turning poetry or other literature into performance; writing and filming scripts, etc.

At the beginning of the academic year, the student completes a formal Theatre 4 Honors Project Proposal form, which is carefully evaluated by the instructor.  Details and objectives of the project are agreed upon and a project calendar is established.  Students meet with the instructor individually as required by the nature of the project.  All projects require extensive planning, research, organization, communication and commitment on the part of the student.

At the end of First Semester, the student completes a project progress report.  The instructor reviews the student’s progress toward completion of the project.  Each project demands individual guidance and support and project updates are given both to the instructor and to the class as a whole since other students are a good support network.  All projects contribute positively, either directly or indirectly, to the overall Theatre Arts program.

As a final step, the student completes both a written and oral report on the Theatre 4 Honors project.  The reports include all pertinent project material (scripts, calendars, photos, and so on), and summarize the successes and challenges of the project.  Each Theatre 4 Honors students also writes a letter of advice to future Theatre 4 Honors students who may want to take on the same or a similar project.

As mentioned in the course outline above, instructional units focus on diverse theatrical styles such as modern realism, groundbreaking theatre, tragedy, commedia dell’ Arte, etc. As part of a unit on commedia, for example, students brainstorm a list of character “types.”  Traditional commedia characters are then introduced.  Parallels are drawn between modern character types and commedia characters using examples from TV and film as well as from plays.

SELECTED ASSIGNMENT ACTIVITIES

A.  Students perform a minimum of one contemporary monologue and one classical monologue each year.  Differences in acting approaches generally required for contemporary vs. classical material is explained. Students participate in activities which allow them to experience the difference between the “outside in (external technique) and the “inside out” (Stanislavsky based) approaches to material.  Students gain experience preparing and performing material in which language is the primary means of communication and cultural styles may predominate (Shakespeare, Wilde, Coward, Greek Chorus).  They also gain experience working with material in which subtext and the creation of a character backstory are key factors in the character preparation work (Pinter, Miller, Hansberry).

B.  Sample activities include designing costumes on a budget for period pieces, directing a scene from a period piece (including putting together a production

Notebook with scene analysis and blocking notes), and developing justifying, and realizing a production concept for a classical piece.  Students worked in groups of four or five, for example, and completed all of the tasks for a scene from *Hamlet* for a Final Exam Project.  A student’s work with Shakespeare and contemporary pieces (as described in Units 2 and 3 above) allow students to experience first-hand differences in theatrical style in all aspects of the project (page to stage).   Class discussions as well as written reflections on similarities and differences in theatrical style, production values, social values as reflected in the plays, and the universality of human emotions and experiences are an ongoing part of the class.

C.  Written and oral performance reviews, dramaturgical work, directing work, and performance feedback are examples of the ways in which students regularly apply and expand on their knowledge of theatre terminology.  Films, select scenes from films and relevant online examples (such as YouTube videos) are also integrated into the curriculum.  In a unit focusing on farce, students identified the range of and various types of comedy, traditional comic terms such as “slapstick” and “running gags” were identified and explained, then students drew parallels between the vocabulary and concepts after watching several short Marx Brother video examples.  The concepts were then applied in practice by incorporating them into short, original scenes.

Students read, analyze, direct and perform scenes and monologues from a diverse assortment of dramatic materials including such genres as comedy of manners, Greek tragedy, modern documentary style scripts and early realism.  The dramatic literature studied is from various historical periods, ethnicities, and cultures. Students ground their production and performance work in an understanding of the original artistic values and norms of the material as well as current trends and sensibilities.  Reading and research, experiences attending and critiquing theatre performances and creative exploration are constants at the heart of the student’s production and performance work.  Students draw on a complex base of knowledge about theatre history and practice in order to make informed and bold artistic choices in their work.

SELECTED ASSIGNMENT ACTIVITIES

A.  Students are introduced to a play and participate in instructional activities related to a professional production the class will attend.  The director’s concept, literary themes, social relevance and other key features of the production are discussed and explored.  After seeing the play, students analyze the production in terms of the concept, themes, and relevance as the experienced them.  Was the director’s concept clear in the technical elements of the production?  Did the concept serve and enhance the themes and character relationships?  Did it make the play more relevant?  Why or why not?

B.  Students serve as dramaturges for the scenes and/or plays they direct for the class.  The dramaturgy work includes reading and analyzing important elements of the play, researching the time period, playwright, past productions of the play and recent performance trends.  Students communicate their understanding of the genre, style, and themes (in writing and/or verbally) and articulate a production concept, which informs their approach to the production.  In directing a scene from *Hedda Gabler,* for instance, a student chose to set the scene in the 1950s and provided support for the concept and guided the actors within the framework of the choice.  The director provides visual samples of colors, objects and architecture, which reflect their concept of the play. Costume, scenery and prop choices are made in keeping with the concept.

C.  The concept of subtext is introduced, identified and discussed.  Students engage in an acting exercise in which they improvise aloud the subtext of a character in between the actual lines of dialogue.  Student then repeat the scene without articulating the subtext aloud.  Performers and audience members discuss differences in the impact of the scene, believability of character portrayal and the value of subtext in performance.

**Course Materials**

**Textbooks**

| **Title** | **Author** | **Publisher** | **Edition** | **Website** | **Primary** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Stages of Drama: Classical to Contemporary Theatre | Carl H. Klaus, Miriam Gilbert, Brandford S. Field, Jr., Editors | Bedford/St. Martin's (Boston, New York) | Fourth Edition | [ empty ] | Yes |
| A Challenge for the Actor | Uta Hagen | Scribner | 1991 | [ empty ] | Yes |

**Supplemental Materials**

| **Title** | **Content** |
| --- | --- |
| Supplemental Materials | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | Title:  *Theatre/Theory/Theatre: The Major Critical Texts from Aristotle and Zeami to Soyinka and Havel*  Edition:  2000  Publication Date:  2000  Publisher:  Applause Theatre & Cinema Books  Editor:  Daniel Gerould  Title:  *Improvisation for the Theatre*  Edition:  Eleven  Publication Date:  1977  Publisher:  Northwestern University Press  Author:  Viola Spolin  Title:  *Acting with Style*  Edition:  1982  Publication Date:  1982  Publisher:  Prentice Hall  Authors:  John Harrop and Sabin R. Epstein  Title:  *Respect for Acting*  Edition:  1973  Publication Date:  1973  Publisher:  MacMillan Publishing Co., Inc.  Author:  Uta Hagen  Title:  *Theatrical Design and Production:  An Introduction to Scenic Design and Construction, Lighting, Sound, Costume and Makeup*  Edition:  Fifth  Publication Date:  2005  Publisher:  McGraw-Hill  Author:  J. Michael Gilette  THEATRE MAGAZINES and JOURNALS  “Dramatics Magazine” published by the International Thespian Society  “American Theatre Magazine,”  “Theatre Bay Area,”  “Stage Directions Magazine,”  “Youth Theatre Journal” published by the American Association of Theatre Educators.  Students have access to hundreds of book resources in the theatre office as well as online sources.  **Supplemental Books and Materials**  UNIT 1          Professional Audition Showcase  Title:  *Audtion*  Edition:  First  Publishing Date:  1978  Publisher:  Bantam Books  Author:  Michael Shurtleff  Individual scripts, monologue and scene books.  These materials are updated and augmented each year based on current best practices, the instructional units, and upcoming field trips to professional plays which students will be participating in.  UNIT 2         Shakespeare in Performance/Traditions and Current  Trends  Full script of the Shakespeare play or plays being studied.  Folger or Arden editions.  Title:  *Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare*  Edition:  First Edition  Publication Date:  2004  Publisher:   W. W. Norton & Company  Author:  Stephen Greenblatt  Title:  *Shakespeare:* *The World as a Stage*  Edition:  First  Publication Date:  2007  Publisher:  Atlas Books  Author:  Bill Bryson  Title*:  Reduced Shakespeare:  The Complete Guide for the Attention-Impaired* *(abridged)*  Edition:  First  Publication Date:  2006  Publisher:  Hyperion Books  Authors:  Reed Martin and Austin Tichenor  Title:  *Shakespeare After All*  Edition:  First  Publication Date:  2004  Publisher:  Anchor Books  Author:  Marjorie Garber  UNIT 3   Directing and Producing for the Contemporary Theatre  Title*:  The Director’s Vision*  Edition:  1989  Publication Date:  1989  Publisher:  Mayfield Publishing Company  Author:  Louis E. Catron  Title:  *Fundamentals of Play Directing*  Edition:  Third  Publication Date:  1974  Publisher:  Holt, Rhinehart and Winston, Inc.  Authors:  Alexander Dean and Laurence Carra  Title:  T*he Director at Work*  Edition:  1985  Publication Date:  1985  Publisher:  Prentice-Hall, Inc.  Author:  Robert Benedetti  Title:  *Notes on Directing*  Edition:  First  Publication Date:  2003  Publisher:  Atlantic Books  Authors:  Frank Hauser & Russell Reich  Title:  *A Sense of Direction:  Some Observations on the Art of Directing*  Edition:  1984  Publication Date:  1984  Publisher:  Drama Publishers  Author:  William Ball  UNIT 4        Young Playwrights Project  Various contemporary plays are read by all students based on material recommended and provided by the playwright guest artist.  UNIT 5          Outreach Performance  Materials are specifically selected and tailored to the purpose of the outreach project.  EXAMPLES:  Classical Theatre Outreach Project  *Romeo and Juliet* by William Shakespeare  *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck  *Metamorphoses* by Mary Zimmerman,  *The Birds* by Aristophanes  *The Importance of Being Earnest* by Oscar Wilde  *Tartuffe* by Moliere  Musical Theatre Outreach:  *A Chorus Line*  *Thirteen*  *title of show*  *Footloose*  *All Shook Up*  *Grease*  UNIT 6          Dialect Training  Title:  Accents:  *A Manual for Actors*  Edition:  Second  Publishing Date:  2002  Publisher:  Limelight Books  Author:  Robert Bloomfield  Sample Scripts  Southern Dialect  *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* by Tennessee Williams  *A Streetcar Named Desire* by Tennessee Williams  *Crimes of the Heart* by Beth Henley  Irish Dialect  “Riders to the Sea” by John Millinton Synge  *Playboy of the Western World* by John Millington Synge  *The Cripple of Inishmaan* by Martin McDonagh  UNIT 7     Groundbreaking Theatre/Social Justice  Sample scripts   * *The Laramie Project* by Moises Kaufman and the Tectonic Theatre Project * *Angels in America* by Tony Kushner * *Emotional Creature* by Eve Ensler * *Waiting for Godot* by Samuel Beckett * The Exonerated by Jessica Blank and Eric Jensen * *Zoot Suit* by Luis Valdez * *Uncommon Women and Others* by Wendy Wasserstein | |  | | |

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