

Theatre Arts Major and Minor Curriculum Revision Proposal January 2008

During the month of January 2008, the Theatre Arts faculty engaged in a series of meetings and conversations related to the revision of the curriculum. During these meetings, we isolated the following goals:

Goal #1

To create and implement an updated theatre arts curriculum for Fall 2008 that accurately reflects the emerging trajectory of the department's goals for our students, as well as the most effective distribution of resources for our current faculty.

Goal #2

To examine both our new and existing classes to look for opportunities to fulfill various GE categories within the TA offerings in order to more fully integrate the theatre arts classes with the broader academic program.

Goal #3

To institute a more intentional rotation of lower division classes that fulfill GE requirements, to ensure that the TA dept. consistently offers an option for interested students.

Goal #4

To update the catalog to reflect actual classes offered and current rotations of the theatre arts department.

Looking at our five-year plan, we have targeted the following departmental goals for the upcoming academic year. These goals have driven some of the proposed changes, especially within the Theatre Arts Major.

As we focus on next year, the department goal of our present plan is as follows:

1. Westmont College Theatre Arts students will display a deep and broad understanding of the history, literature, and theory of the European theatre tradition, and contemporary American theatre practice that has derived from it.
(Implemented 2008-2009)

The college-wide goal of our present plan is as follows:

1. Westmont College Theatre Arts students will cultivate tools for effective written communication, and will display abilities to describe, evaluate, differentiate, synthesize, analyze, and interpret, toward a deep understanding of the received historical, theoretical, and practical development of theatre and drama.
(Implemented 2008-2009)

Following each subsection, the rationale of each change is briefly described. Proposed changes are italicized while proposed cuts have a strike-thru. Courses that remain unchanged are in regular font.

ELIMINATION OF THEATRE ARTS DANCE TRACK MAJOR (See end narrative for full explanation)

The following is a complete narrative regarding the changes within the Dance emphasis:

Theatre Arts and Dance Emphasis Track—A Program Review Rationale

The Theatre Arts Department, after a year of discussion on refocusing our efforts in the Dance Emphasis Track, is offering the following rationale for changing the Emphasis from a Theatre Arts and Dance Major to a Theatre Arts and Dance Minor Emphasis. **We suggest the best use of our faculty and program goals would be to place greater emphasis on a solid Dance Minor in Theatre in order to better serve our current students, the Theatre Arts Department and the College as a whole.** We strongly feel that dance as an art form should be part of the performing arts curriculum of a Christian Liberal Arts Institution based on Biblical tradition and more recent developments in the contemporary world. It is a bridge that reaches across cultures and brings students to a greater understanding of their bodies as a temple of the Holy Spirit and their place in the communal Body of Christ and the wider world.

This rationale is based on a number of issues: 1) The Dance Position that was created in January 2000 was originally a 2/3 position in Theatre Arts and 1/3 in Kinesiology. The 2/3 position allowed the department to hire an adjunct position of less than 1/3 in order to serve the Dance Emphasis Major and Minor with two faculty—one teaching most of the academic and beginning level technique classes, and the other teaching the Intermediate/Advanced classes, with both professors supporting the student company and dance productions. (One oversees the program administration and the other is a former professional dancer from a major Modern Dance Company in New York City). 2) We have found that two professors in less than a full-time capacity cannot serve the larger Dance Major Emphasis, even though we did graduate three such majors in 2002, one major in 2003 (a triple major with two other disciplines), one minor in 2004, five minors in 2005, no minors in 2006, and two minors in 2007. There are not enough dance courses or faculty to support a major emphasis in Theatre and Dance at this point.

3) In the fall of '06, we surveyed the incoming first-year students and the results were both written and shared with the department. The major concern of the students is that the department is not currently offering enough Intermediate/Advanced technique courses every semester to support their interests and to support the student company. The second concern was that most of the students expressed an interest in pursuing dance as either a minor or just having the opportunity to dance in a company with technique classes to enhance their skills. Most of the students were interested in other disciplines for their majors outside of the theatre.

4) Since 2000, the 2/3 load for the fulltime associate professor has shifted, historically back and forth between 2/3 and 3/4 time according to the needs of TA and KNS. More specifically, KNS offered Dance Theory and Technique (2 units) every other year. This course is no longer offered in KNS due to changes in the teaching track (waiver) program related to the State of California's new waiver program.

As a result of these issues and concerns, we recommend the following changes to our Dance Emphasis Track: 1) Keep the 24 unit Dance Emphasis Minor; 2) Eliminate the Dance Emphasis Major, which was actually split between Theatre and Dance courses; 3) Substitute the TA 1 Word and Action (which was to be taught by a professor no longer with the department), with Acting II (which is a movement-based course—taught by the current Acting professor). These changes do not reflect any additional **total** unit load for the position held by 2 professors, but may reflect a better use of their time and creative abilities by giving the adjunct (professional) 2 more units in the Fall of '08 with the 2/3-3/4 time associate professor giving 1&1/2-2 units back to the Department of Kinesiology with permission from both departments.

In conclusion, we believe that this model better serves Westmont College, the Theatre Arts Department and the interests and gifts of the current theatre and dance faculty and ultimately, the students. We believe that much more innovative and creative work by faculty and students will occur as a result of these changes. We are, therefore, recommending these changes to our program and to the Program Review Committee of the Academic Senate.

Respectfully submitted the Theatre Arts Department (Mitchell Thomas, Chair)