

THEATRE ARTS DEPARTMENT

WESTMONT COLLEGE

Theatre Arts Program Goal 1

Goal: In their performances and performance-related courses at Westmont College, Theatre Arts students will:

Cultivate their own unique, individual creative spirits

Display appropriate imaginative faculties and creative methods for theatrical vitality and effectiveness

Develop and display technical proficiency in a range of performance forms and styles

Show responsibility, self-discipline, and self-motivation while working collaboratively and cooperatively

Cultivate and evince virtues, attitudes, and affections that emerge from an understanding and practice of the Christian faith

Observation: At the end of the 2003-2004 school year, Theatre Arts faculty observed that departmental Senior Projects had no formal structure for their process and development, and displayed wild differences in artistic quality and effectiveness.

Benchmark: 100% of departmental majors will take and complete Theatre Arts 193 (Senior Project), conceived as a capstone course for our program. Projects are meant to coalesce the work accomplished by students during their careers at Westmont: students will complete a substantive performance or research project in the student's final semester at the college, documenting the step-by-step process of their project's development, and assessing evidence of its artistic quality and effectiveness.



Assessment Strategy

Assessment Strategy (Abridged)

Students display conceptual understanding, creative faculties, and effective work habits through a final Theatre Arts project of a student's devising. In collaboration with a faculty committee, and headed by a faculty mentor, students choose to perform, direct, choreograph, write a play, or research and write a substantive research paper. Students will be assessed on the following:

Intention:

a clearly organized and articulated statement of purpose, including choice of material, range of theatrical and/or dramatic influences

a clearly organized and articulated personal statement regarding why this project at this time will culminate the student's experience at Westmont.

Process:

a journal that chronicles the evolution of the project's concepts and ideas, and shows the organization of rehearsal and performance schedules with student collaborators.

Execution and Theatrical Effectiveness:

expressive clarity, performative vitality, and aesthetic wholeness, evaluated by faculty and/or outside jurist

clearly organized self-assessment in which the student analyzes how the intentions of the project are made evident through the performance



Results

Sample Project Intention, Results from Faculty and Outside Jurist, and Self-Assessment

Intention: "To act, design, and direct a one woman show; to express something about [Sylvia] Plath's transcendence of her struggles with self; to express in speech and physicality Sylvia Plath and her issues; to challenge myself to see if I am capable of creating outside of others' ideas; to create an intimate relationship with audience."

Faculty Response 1: "...this is an excellent project, and constitutes some (if not *the*) finest student work I have seen from an undergraduate. The piece was complete, compelling, constantly fascinating, and very moving and disturbing. I believe that Erin brought together so much of her theatre education in this piece: performance, directing, and design certainly, but also a conceptual dimension that is striking."

Faculty Response 2: "...epitomized what I envision an ideal senior project to be. Her intention was specific, but open to exploration, and very honest about her own fears and challenges as they related to the material and her own journey as an actor/director. Erin's journals are excellent - searching, questioning, tortured, joyous, full of her own writing, Sylvia Plath's words, images, and ideas; it is fascinating to read about the development of the piece and Erin's process of creating it"

Outside Jurist: "Erin Brehm as Sylvia Plath stole the evening show with her composition 'Sylvia's Path'...uncomfortably intimate...her portrayal was chilling."

Student Self-Assessment: "This project has had a dramatic impact on my self-confidence and my honesty. I have learned far more than I ever thought I would, about things that I wasn't even expecting to learn. I learned that in order for me to trust myself, I must experiment and take risks in order to gain more self confidence; also, that no matter how hard I work on a project, the end result is ultimately out of my hands and all I can do is surrender it as a gift."

Interpretation of Results

These results indicate a significant improvement in the process and outcomes related to Theatre Arts 193. The newly implemented structure for senior projects has led to a clear developmental process for students and faculty, particular criteria for evaluation, and higher quality projects. In addition, it has proven to be an effective strategy in assessing the primary goal of the department, namely the cultivation of students' unique creative spirits, technical proficiencies, and courageous self-discipline.



Next Steps

Goal: 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.

Observation: Theatre Arts majors are having difficulty using and/or maintaining significant language and terminology related to their knowledge of the history, literature, and theory of the Euro-Anglo theatre tradition taught in the Theatre Arts Department.

Assessment Strategies: The Department is presently engaged in the process of determining how students will show the following in their thinking, speaking, and writing:

Demonstrate the appropriate language and terminology for the artistic conventions relative to the art of the stage and its development over a 2000-year period of time

Use appropriate methodological processes for analyzing, interpreting, and enjoying drama from the pre-modern period

Show educated standards of judgment related to artistic quality and value

Cultivate openness to an understanding of the multifaceted nature of aesthetic enjoyment and judgment