

**Theatre Arts Department**  
**2022 Annual Assessment Report**  
**Appendix A: Faculty Response to Student Work**  
**Updated and Amended August 2025**

**Executive Summary**

**Brief Discussion**

The Westmont Theatre Arts Department is “performance-based” – theatrical performance is the beating heart of its vision, programs, teaching, and projects. What do we mean by this? Every Theatre Arts program in the US, whether they be in major universities or small liberal arts colleges like Westmont, features performances. Live theatrical performance is the feature of any program. However, what distinguishes our program from others (and indeed which makes us unique), is that we don’t merely feature students in faculty-led projects. Rather, we cultivate *theatre-makers*, and teach students how to conceive, develop, and present performances *themselves*. We don’t merely develop actors, directors, or designers in siloed artistic categories. We think of theatre as a holistic, integrated, and unified theatrical experience. The teaching in our program privileges a multi-disciplinary approach to the theatre. Students integrate skills in acting, directing, design, writing, and management, so that they can conceive, create, and develop their own unique artistic visions for the theatre, and develop the techniques to realize what they imagine.

Our program is scaffolded so that students initiate their skills in lower division classes, develop them in upper division ones, and display mastery in Senior Projects, which are required of every senior to graduate. We complement our teaching with a rich season of theatrical performances, in our on-campus performance spaces and also – to increase local engagement and accessibility – the Community Arts Workshop in downtown Santa Barbara, and on occasion other Santa Barbara spaces such as the New Vic Theatre, the Center Stage Theater, and Trinity Episcopal Church, to name a few.

The department assesses its Performance PLO in its [Senior Projects course \(TA 193\)](#), where students – guided by two faculty mentors – create original capstone projects. Though not all students choose a performance project, the vast majority of students do. Students begin planning their projects during their junior years, develop them over the summer, and create and perform them during the theatre season of their senior year.

This project satisfied PLO 1: *Students display appropriate skill in creation, development, and presentation of theatrical performances.*

Students are provided a syllabus and prompt, and meet with faculty mentors who suggest best practices, answer questions, and provide guidance and inspiration. Students submit an Intention Paper, develop and perform their project, and write a final self-reflection essay. Students receive oral and written feedback from faculty mentors in three specific categories: Intention, Process, and Execution. Faculty mentors assess how students conceive and describe their project’s Intention, evaluate how it is carried out through practice and Process, and determine the aesthetic, communal, and interpersonal features of the project’s Execution. Students provide a thorough self-reflection paper regarding their own evaluation of the Intention, Process and Execution of the project.

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Please find the following responses and evaluations relative to Senior Projects for 2022, and end of year student evaluations. Note: in the PRC's responses to the 2022 Annual Assessment Report, the committee suggested that during the years that there are relatively few projects (such as in 2022 when there were one (1), the department should include several years' worth of projects to display the range, scope and success of student projects. The department agrees, and will do so in the future. As of Fall 2025, the department has a range of data relative to student success in PLO 1, which can be provided on request.

**Faculty 1 response for Student A**

**Intention - A**

This project was a wonderful idea, blending Student's love and interest in theatre and film. She set up a great team – collaborating with Student as a writer and locking in some key contributors early on. The story and themes of the work were personal, provocative, and relevant. Further, this project has a potential to provide some reel material for Student as a film actor and director.

**Process - D**

Early on, Student seemed to be doing well. She did extensive storyboarding, set up auditions, was communicating with faculty, developing the script. I was impressed in November how the project seemed to be unfolding.

In the spring semester, most progress seemed to halt. There was one day of shooting, but then I heard nothing. In retrospect, it seems that all internal communication ended, and Student ceased leading the project. There were a series of personal conflicts or relationship difficulties that seemed to add to the spiral. In short, Student stopped communicating with faculty, collaborators, writer, and assistant director. Actors were left in the dark, and further shoots were not accomplished.

**Execution – D+**

The footage that I saw was interesting, rough, somewhat out of focus, and had serious sound issues. The opening was conceptually strong, felt dangerous, and I was drawn into the story. Student had a strong sense of her character, and I wanted to see more. The other actors didn't feel well-directed for the camera, likely due to the rushed shoot day and challenge of actor/director role for Student. The material I saw constitutes about 5% of what was supposed to be an hour-long film, and is far from a finished state.

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In the end, my biggest concern was how Student ghosted the project, her peers, and the faculty. Having a project fail is one thing, but to have many of the relationships also fail and to have to be tracked down by faculty to get a question answered in order for Student to graduate just feels disrespectful to the process and program. Student's self-assessment did not seem sufficiently aware of this, and does not take ownership of her role in how things happened and how the project ended.

I care for Student, and think she is talented, and sincerely hope that she is able to learn from this process for her future work.

Final Grade: C-

**Faculty 2 response for Student A**

Intention: A

Student put together an ambitious project not only in scale but with concepts and methods of visual storytelling. The film's themes and messages showed that Student wanted to not only challenge herself, cast and crew but the audience with an artistic journey. Although advised by a few people to scale back, she showed extreme passion for the project and made most people feel like she would have no problem executing this production.

Process: D

Student's initial approach was great with consistent communication with her cast and crew, scheduling regular pre-production meetings and rehearsals. From the start this film was going to present so many difficulties due to its length and intimate scenes. It was going to require Student and her team's full attention and time and would be challenging with school schedules. I believe once she signed up for other projects during this period, it made this film impossible to finish. On set production alone would have taken about 60 hours if everything went smoothly. To juggle classes and plays and fringe pieces, I don't see how a 45+ page script could properly be filmed without rushing coverage.

Execution: D

From the footage that I saw, the visual quality varied from scene to scene. The footage of the woman walking through the grass and her hands looks very cinematic. The rest of the footage looks a bit flat. The basement footage key lighting is too bright for the scene, casting highlights and shadows that are distracting. I would recommend doing camera and lighting tests in advance for each location to make sure quality and look is consistent throughout your films.

Student is very talented and passionate. Under other circumstances, I don't doubt she could have completed this film. I believe this is a valuable learning opportunity about focus, planning and expectations.

Final Grade: C

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**Faculty 3 response for Student A**

Note: I concur with most of my colleagues remarks about the quality and success of Student's work. Instead of repeating them, though, I would like to lean in to some other dimensions of her work, and her response and reflection on it.

Intention: A

Student's Intention is focused, clear, and well written. It is clear that she developed an ambitious project, and assembled an excellent team of collaborators. Both are evidenced clearly in the Intention. In writing and in conversation, Student indicated that working with an Intimacy Director was a principal purpose of her Intention. The work necessitated it, and it is clear that Student was cognizant of this fact, and wanted to develop a piece where sexual safety was prioritized and maintained in the imagining and working processes of the film.

Process: C-

The various issues with process and production have been chronicled by my colleagues and in conversation with Student. I want to discuss something else briefly. Many projects go sideways. The history of artistic production (well, life!) is full of them. It's how the individual responds to those crises that matters. It is not clear that Student was aware of these crises, or if she was, why she didn't seek out the help of her mentors to help find solutions to the problems that were unfolding. The self-reflection paper, and the in-person interview, were good opportunities to reflect on the intentions, processes, and ambitions of the project, and how those were derailed, interrupted, or otherwise transformed due to a myriad of issues that befell the project. Stuff Happens. How we deal with that Stuff, in conversation and in our relationships, which truly matter the most. It would have been good for Student to reach out to mentors, and to reflect on the issues, in writing or in oral description.

Execution: C

There's a lot of work in this project. As a matter of fact, there is a tremendous amount of work and life expended in this project. Student produced things – a collaborative team, a cast, partners, storyboards, plans, schedules, organization, dreams. There's all sorts of stuff here, good stuff, medium stuff, incomplete stuff. There's also suffering and despair. And things that went Bump in the Night. There's obviously a gap between the desires Student had for the project and what was produced. At some point, the Recognition, Awareness, and Insight of what happened and why will be important to come to grips with. In other words, this project is still in process. It is, by definition, Incomplete. Student will complete it, accept it, and learn from it. That is the Hope. It's my Hope for her.

C for Final Grade