

2023 Theatre Arts and Dance Department
Hendrix College

Overview

On May 1, 2023 from 10:00-12:00, the Theatre Arts and Dance Department met for the annual assessment meeting. Present were Antonio Horne, Lauren Lusk, Ann Muse, chair, and Brigitte Rogers. Our evaluation included direct and indirect assessment for AY 22-23.

1. Contextualize Theatre and Dance in the history of the human condition

- The learning goal assesses the students' knowledge in the area of theater history.
- Direct Assessment Course DANC 250 Dance Making Fundamentals; TART 310 Theater History; TART 375 American Musical Theatre History; TART 393: Topics: African American Theatre History— individual student achievement by professor.
- Indirect Assessment Senior Exit interview questions concerning the students' confidence in their ability to contextualize theatre in the history of the human condition. Data from 2020/2021/2022 graduates is also included as requested by the committee.

Learning Goal: Students will learn to Contextualize Theatre and Dance in the history of the human condition.

Direct Assessment: Dance Making Fundamentals DANC 250

Learning Goal: Contextualize Theatre and Dance in the history of the human condition.

Basic	Competent	Exemplary
Demonstrates an understanding of the development of Theatre and Dance history through context of dramatic literature.	Demonstrates an Understanding of the development of Theatre and Dance history and the ability to examine modern issues from a historical perspective	Demonstrates, through analytical writing and discussion, 1) an understanding of the development of Theatre and 2) the ability to examine modern issues relating to the context of culture, literature, and the craft of Theatre and Dance.
5	5	4

- To introduce dance and focus on the interpretive processes of viewing-- “reading” dance
- To introduce creating/revising processes of choreographing-- “writing” dance
- **To understand and demonstrate the use of historical and contemporary research in creating dance.**
- To understand and analyze artists and styles as the foundational “grammar” for creating dance and how historical and current issues impact humanity through dance making
- To build and demonstrate skills of collaboration and verbal feedback/response

Direct Assessment: Theatre History TART 310

Learning Goal: Contextualize Theatre and Dance in the history of the human condition.

Basic	Competent	Exemplary
Demonstrates an understanding of the development of Theatre and Dance history through context of dramatic literature.	Demonstrates an Understanding of the development of Theatre and Dance history and the ability to examine modern issues from a historical perspective	Demonstrates, through analytical writing and discussion, 1) an understanding of the development of Theatre and 2) the ability to examine modern issues relating to the context of culture, literature, and the craft of Theatre and Dance.
4	4	4

- Develop an understanding of the development of theatre history from the Greek through the 18th century by reviewing the context of dramatic literature
- **Examine modern issues from the historical perspective of theatre**
- Advance analytical writing and discussion skills with the context of culture, literature and the craft of Theatre

Direct Assessment: American Musical Theatre TART 375

Learning Goal: Contextualize Theatre and Dance in the history of the human condition.

Basic	Competent	Exemplary
Demonstrates an understanding of the development of Theatre and Dance history through context of dramatic literature.	Demonstrates an Understanding of the development of Theatre and Dance history and the ability to examine modern issues from a historical perspective	Demonstrates, through analytical writing and discussion, 1) an understanding of the development of Theatre and 2) the ability to examine modern issues relating to the context of culture, literature, and the craft of Theatre and Dance.
1	4	4

- To understand the development and rapid evolution of the American Musical as an art form.
- To be able to identify major trends and movements within the art form.
- **To examine how changes in the social, cultural, political landscape of America influenced the American Musical.**

Direct Assessment:

Topics - African American Theatre History TART 393 E1

Learning Goal: Contextualize Theatre and Dance in the history of the human condition.

Basic	Competent	Exemplary
Demonstrates an understanding of the development of Theatre and Dance history through context of dramatic literature.	Demonstrates an Understanding of the development of Theatre and Dance history and the ability to examine modern issues from a historical perspective	Demonstrates, through analytical writing and discussion, 1) an understanding of the development of Theatre and 2) the ability to examine modern issues relating to the context of culture, literature, and the craft of Theatre and Dance.
0	2	4

- Understand the development and evolution of African American Theatre
- Have the tools be able to discern whether a dramatic text should be viewed as belonging to the Black Arts School of Drama or the Black Experience School of Drama.
- **Be able to examine how changes in the social, cultural, political landscape of America influenced African American life, and therefore African American Theatre.**

The discussion with all faculty present was productive. We were able to reflect on the courses where this learning goal is significant. Four courses Dance Making Fundamentals, Theatre History, American Musical Theatre History, and African American Theatre History are the courses we used as our assessment tool. Each of the courses has a learning goal that address the departmental learning goal. (See above.) Each of the courses requires at least one research paper or project that requires the student to select a topic to deepen their understanding of the topic in a historical perspective while relating it to the contemporary world.

The amount of content in TART 310—Greek to 18th Century—requires the course to serve as a survey more so than the other courses. The students do not have a general understanding of Greek, Roman, or medieval history, etc., for example. The Theatre History textbook provides foundational information for each century. Specific questions in quizzes require the students to compare literature tropes, stock characters, or plot devices from the historical play texts to contemporary models or patterns as well as imagine the contemporary audience responses to historical pieces. The technique allows the students to process the information freely from their point of view as well as understand the content within a structure of historical culture or society.

The challenge in the class most recently has been the students' struggle when researching topics and writing the research papers. A more intentional and basic introduction to these skills will be utilized in the next iteration of the class. At a 300 level, we expected the students to have a better understanding of the process. Of the students in Theatre History for example, only three of twelve had completed a research paper of any kind prior to the class.

Overall, we identified a need for foundational understanding of the historical periods as a basis to engage the material. For example, a lack of knowledge regarding American history proved to be an impediment for American Musical and African American Theatre. The students were asked to respond to the older plays in context of the written period as well as the contemporary world. The students did not have a moderate command of U.S. history that would enable them to engage the material with understanding. We discussed ways to resolve the issue in the meeting. One is to incorporate history that is outside of theatre history with each era, and another is to provide some foundational knowledge at the beginning of the class. We will address the issue deliberately in the coming year. Neither course will be taught for a full year. However, TART 365 Women Writing for the Stage will be offered next year. The need for the foundational material will be assumed while developing the curriculum.

Throughout Dance Making Fundamentals, the students study dance techniques from specific choreographers. The students must understand the techniques before developing their own choreography. Understanding the historical context in order to develop pieces influenced by the history. The students' research contemporary companies that have been influenced by the choreographers from modern and classical dance. An example is Les Ballets Trockadero de Monte Carlo an all-male troupe

presenting traditional, classical ballet in parody. The student must first understand the history of ballet in order to understand that the troupe has meaning in the contemporary world as it challenges the underpinning of classical ballet techniques.

The conversation allowed the faculty to share methods of teaching history for these specific courses. We agree that the classes must remain independent; however understanding expectations and student knowledge in each class will aid building on the experience. With a new faculty member and another who is relatively new, we see the great need to spend time discussing our classes. Creating a culture where it is accepted not as an oversight necessarily but as a way to develop our curriculum more fully, deeply for students.

We also discovered that there are mitigating factors challenging our assessment. The first is having moved the curriculum in our department from a sequence to one with more flexibility. For example, not all students will take each course in the same order. A fact that challenges our assumption of each student's knowledge. Secondly, the fact that classes are taken by students from other areas who may or may not have had any theatre classes prior to the current course causes some spontaneous need to cover certain terms or concepts. The challenge is welcome because the diversity of disciplines in the classroom allows peers to engage from different perspectives. The circumstances provide leadership opportunities for our majors.

INDIRECT ASSESSMENT

Below is a table with results from the Senior Exit Survey. Four years are included as requested by the committee due to our small number of majors. In the first two years, the response was 100%. In the last two years, the response has been weak—about half. In AY 22-23, the response is very negative. We are aware that the students in the class had challenges in their career at Hendrix. Two were online for the full year in 2020. It was evident that they had not participated in the curriculum, which includes significant production work, fully. The Senior Seminar, during which they produce a play, challenged them a great deal. It required an enormous amount of “filling in” on the part of faculty in order to support them through completion. We prepared for this circumstance.

The student response does not accurately represent either of the students' performance in the history course. As ranked one is Exemplary and the other Basic. The response is unfortunate.

A few solutions to the issue. The first survey is administered at the end of the semester. The students are asked to fill out the survey and send it to Robin Hartwick who will then send to me, as chair. The response is anonymous. We can administer the survey to the

students earlier in the semester. Question for the committee: Is it necessary that the survey remain anonymous?

In the rising sophomore and junior interviews with majors and minors, we can use the language from the survey as a way to introduce the concept to the students. It may provide an opportunity to discuss the learning goals with the students. Question: Should the language be altered for the questions?

In a similar vein, we can more intentionally address the questions in classroom. The learning goals are addressed in the course, but how can we do so more intentionally? Question for the faculty.

Administering the survey itself to the students as juniors could provide valuable information to faculty regarding the student perception of their status. With the information, as mentioned above, we can measure our own success presenting learning goals in course work and production work for that matter.

INDIRECT ASSESSMENT

Skills: My experience in Theatre Arts and Dance courses contributed toward the development of the following kinds of skills

	2020	2021	2022	2023
Contextualizing Theatre and Dance performance in the history of the human condition.	Strongly Agree (2) Agree (1)	Strongly Agree (3)	Strongly Agree (1) Agree (1)	Neither Agree or Disagree (1)
Development of Drama in the western world from Greeks to Modern.	Strongly Agree (2) Agree (1)	Strongly Agree (3)	Strongly Agree (1) Agree (1)	Disagree (1)