

Department of Theatre General Education Assessment Report
THE 112: Appreciation of Music
Academic year 2008-2009

I. Relationship to University's Mission

In *THE 112: Theatre Appreciation* students explore the collaborative aspects of theatre art in order to successfully understand, critique, and appreciate the art form. Through live performance, film, lecture, and focused discussion, students learn how various theatre artists employ individual insight and specific technical skills to collectively communicate a unified artistic vision in theatrical performance. In addition, students respond to each performance with written critiques that evaluate the quality of performance and the extent to which a particular performance or production reflects its social context. Thus the course supports the mission of Marshall University in three important areas by giving students the opportunity: 1) "to appreciate and to cultivate diversity, and to value differences"; 2) "to participate in activities such as artistic and cultural programs"; and 3) to develop critical thinking skills through the process of critiquing the performances they attend.

II. General Education Component Area's Student Learning Outcomes

The learning outcomes for *THE 112: Theatre Appreciation* were designed to meet the *College of Fine Arts General Education Mission and Learner Outcomes*, stated as follows:

The College of Fine Arts, through general education courses in the appreciation of the arts, is dedicated to the transmission, application and advancement of knowledge in the arts. We seek, through arts appreciation courses, to stimulate understanding and individual response to the arts. Learning outcomes for arts appreciation classes are: 1) converse about various art forms using the language of the fine arts to convey ideas; 2) demonstrate that students know basic arts elements and that they are able to recognize them in works of art regardless of the cultural context they come from; and 3) articulately and critically respond to works of art to reflect observation and critical thinking. A fourth expectation (4) is that students be provided direct experiences with works of fine art in exhibition and performance venues so that they can interpret and evaluate the value and significance of the works.

Specifically, the learner outcomes for *THE 112: Theatre Appreciation* are as follows:

Students completing *THE 112: Theatre Appreciation* will be able to

1. Understand and discuss the cultural and social role of the performing arts;
2. Understand and identify the contributions of individual creative artists in theatrical production;

3. Demonstrate an understanding of style and structure in theatrical production;
4. Demonstrate the ability to evaluate quality and content of a theatrical event.

III. Assessment Activities

A. Assessment Measures (Tools)

Beginning in Spring 2004, the Department of Theatre began using an assessment strategy modeled on the assessment strategies of English composition classes. Since 2004 faculty have assigned a written paper on the second main stage theatre event presented by the Department of Theatre. Instructors in each section using the last production in the semester as the focus determined a set of specific questions to be answered by students in a short theatre review covering one or more of the outcomes 1-4 above. For example, the review might take the form of a review suggested by course text which included these questions: What was attempted? Was it successful? Was it worthwhile? Within these broad questions students were expected to use critical thinking skills to defend their answers. Generally speaking, a theatre review of a live performance can reflect one or more of the learning goals in one assignment and assess the student's critical thinking skills. It was up to the individual instructor to decide what form and structure the review would take for their specific sections as well as the learning goals to be assessed.

Working with the Office of Institutional Research, we randomly identify six students from each section of Theatre Appreciation. The students' reviews are collected by the teacher and turned over to the Associate Dean of the College of Fine Arts. Two readers are hired to read and evaluate all the papers. Initially, readers were selected from the theatre faculty as well as from knowledgeable community members. At present the readers' situation is very satisfactory with reader in English and Communications, both are knowledgeable in writing skills and in theatre. Further, because they are not directly associated with the Department their evaluations provide a higher level of external review.

The readers are given an evaluation matrix and asked to score individual papers. The matrices consist of learner outcomes 1-4. Each paper is scored for all four goals. Scoring on the papers is 1-4 with 4 being the highest. The syllabi for all sections taught include the learner goals and course outlines are structured to address these goals.

The readers' results are turned into the Associate Dean of the College of Fine Arts who is responsible for collecting and quantifying the data. The AD sends the results to the Theatre Department Chair who shares the aggregate data with faculty teaching the course. Discussions among the faculty teaching the course, including meetings with the Chair are held at regular intervals to make sure learning goals are appropriate and to address any programmatic weaknesses that are identified by the assessment process.

Attached are the results from the Spring and Fall of 2009. In addition the average scores from all readers since Spring 2004 are attached. There can be significant discrepancies between readers as noted with the change in readers beginning Fall 2006. To resolve this

discrepancy the policy of selecting a reader from the faculty was dropped in favor of selecting only knowledgeable community members not directly associated with the department. This change resulted in a slight decline of the average score, but we did not actively pursue reasons for the decline. There was some discussion of adding a third reader, but since the overall average scores year to year from each reader are close, so no additional verification was considered necessary.

B. Benchmarks

The evaluation of the students' success with the stated learning goals is based on a written, critical thinking exercise (a theatre review) the success of which, in part, depends on the students' writing skills. In addition the variation in theatre review topics from instructor to instructor, performance date (too early in the semester), and variation in readers' perspective all impact on setting our benchmarks. With these considerations in mind, a benchmark composite score of 2.8 achieved for individual learning goals and a composite score of 2.8 across all learning goals for all papers selected for review has been adopted.

C. Results/Analysis

The following tables report the results for each semester, from Spring 2008 to Fall 2009. The first is a compilation for all sections, indicating average for each learning goal across all sections and the average overall score for learning goals:

Spring 08

Learning Goals	# of Papers submitted 35 read by two readers	Average by Goal
Understand the cultural role Theatre serves in society		2.88
Understand the roles of theatre artists in creating a theatrical production;		2.74
Demonstrate an understanding of the style of theatrical production		2.92
Demonstrate the ability to evaluate a theatrical event		3.12
Composite score across all learning goals		2.92

Fall 08

Learning Goals	# of Papers submitted 59 read by two readers	Average by Goal
Understand the cultural role Theatre serves in society		3.15

Understand the roles of theatre artists in creating a theatrical production;		3.14
Demonstrate an understanding of the style of theatrical production		2.73*two sections were not asked this question.
Demonstrate the ability to evaluate a theatrical event		3.09
Composite score across all learning goals		3.03

Spring 08 Individual Score breakdown

Learning Goals	# of 1's	# of 2's	# of 3's	# of 4's	Total # of answers/goal
1	4/12%	4/12%	20/56%	7/20%	35
2	6/17%	4/11%	19/55%	6/17%	35
3	2/5%	8/22%	14/38%	11/31%	35
4	2/4%	3/8%	20/60%	10/28%	35
Composite Total	14/10%	19/14%	73/52%	34/24%	140 (all Goals)

Fall 08 Individual Score breakdown

Learning Goals	# of 1's	# of 2's	# of 3's	# of 4's	Total # of answers
1	4/7%	1/1%	40/68%	14/24%	59
2	2/3%	5/8%	39/66%	13/22%	59
3	11/19%	5/8%	29/50%	13/22%	58*
4	2/3%	6/10%	38/58%	13/22%	59
Composite Total	19/8%	17/7%	146/63%	55/23%	235

FALL 2008 Learning Goals Assessment by section/reader

Reader Deveny - THE 112

Rating

Avg by Ques.

Instr- Reynolds, see 101-FA 08

#1 #2 #3 #4 #5

Underst.role theat. serves in

4 3 3 3 4

17 3.400

Understroles of artists in

3 3 3 3 4

16 3.200

Underst.style/genre of

x 1 1 1 1

4 0.800

Ability to evaluate a theatrical

1 3 3 3 3

13 2.600

Total

8 10 10 10 12

50 10.000

12.5 2.500

Average

2 2.5 2.5 2.5 3

Average for all six papers

2.5

Reader Laura Deveny THE 112

Rating

Avg by Ques.

Inst.Morris-Smith Sec. 102, FA 08

#1 #2 #3 #4 #5 #6

Underst.role theat. serves in society

3 3 4 4 4 3

21 3.500

Underst.roles of artists in creat.prod.	4	3	3	4	4	3	21	3.500
Underst.style/genre of theat.product.	4	2	3	4	4	3	20	3.333
Ability to evaluate a theatrical event	4	3	3	4	4	3	21	3.500
Total	15	11	13	16	16	12	83	13.833
							20.75	3.458
Average	3.75	2.75	3.25	4	4	3		
Average for all six papers	3.458333							

<i>Reader Laura Deveny THE 112</i>	Rating						Avg by Ques.	
<i>Instructor· D.Cook Sec. 103, FA Of</i>	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6		
Underst.role theat. serves in society	3	3	3	3	3	3	18	3.000
Underst.roles of artists in creat.prod.	3	3	3	4	3	3	19	3.167
Underst.style/genre of theat.product.	3	3	3	4	3	3	19	3.167
Ability to evaluate a theatrical event	3	3	3	4	3	3	19	3.167
Total	12	12	12	15	12	12	75	12.500
							18.75	3.125
Average	3	3	3	3.75	3	3		
Average for all six papers	3.125							

<i>Reader Laura Deveny THE 112</i>	Rating						Avg by Ques.	
<i>Instructor· D.Cook Sec. 104, FA Of</i>	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6		
Underst.role theat. serves in society	4	3	3	3	3	3	19	3.167
Understroles of artists in creat.prod.	4	3	3	2	3	3	18	3.000
Underst.style/genre of theat.product.	4	3	3	3	3	2	18	3.000
Ability to evaluate a theatrical event	4	3	3	3	3	3	19	3.167
Total	16	12	12	11	12	11	74	12.333
							18.5	3.083
Average	4	3	3	2.75	3	2.75		
Average for all six papers	3.083333							

<i>Reader Laura,Deveny THE 112</i>	Rating						Avg by Ques.	
<i>Inst. - Reynolds Sec. 105 FA08</i>	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6		
Underst.role theat. serves in society	4	4	3	4	3	4	22	3.667
Underst.roles of artists in creat.prod.	3	3	3	3	3	3	18	3.000
Underst.style/genre of theat.product.	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	1.000
Ability to evaluate a theatrical event	3	3	3	3	3	3	18	3.000
Total	11	11	10	11	10	11	64	10.667
							16	2.667
Average	2.75	2.75	2.5	2.75	2.5	2.75		
Average for all six papers	2.666667							

<i>Reader Clint McElroy THE 112</i>	Rating						Avg by Ques.	
<i>Instr- Reynolds Sec. 101 FA 08</i>	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6		
Underst.role theat. serves in society	1	3	3	3	1	3	14	2.800
Underst.roles of artists in creat.prod.	1	3	3	4	2	3	16	3.200
Underst.style/genre of theat.product.	1	3	3	3	2	4	16	3.200
Ability to evaluate a theatrical event	1	3	3	3	2	4	16	3.200
Total	4	12	12	13	2	14	57	11.400

Average	1	3	3	3.25	0.5	3.5	14.25	2.850
Average for all six papers	2.85							

<i>Reader Clint McElroy THE 112</i>	Rating						Avg's by Ques.	
<i>Inst - Morris-Smith See 102, FA 08</i>	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6		
Underst.role theat. serves in society	3	4	3	3	4	3	20	3.333
Understroles of artists in creat.prod.	3	3	4	3	4	3	20	3.333
Underst.style/genre of theat.product.	3	4	3	3	4	2	19	3.167
Ability to evaluate a theatrical event	3	3	3	3	4	2	18	3.000
Total	12	14	13	12	16	10	77	12.833
Average	3	3.5	3.25	3	4	2.5	19.25	3.208

<i>Reader Clint McElroy THE 112</i>	Rating						Avg's by Ques.	
<i>Instruct - D. Cook Sec. 103, FA 08</i>	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6		
Underst.role theat. serves in society	3	3	3	4	3	4	20	3.333
Underst.roles of artists in creat.prod.	4	3	4	4	3	4	22	3.667
Underst.style/genre of theat.product.	4	3	4	4	3	3	21	3.500
Ability to evaluate a theatrical event	4	3	4	4	3	4	22	3.667
Total	15	12	15	16	12	15	85	14.167
Average	3.75	3	3.75	4	3	3.75	21.25	3.542
Average for all six papers	3.541667							

<i>Reader Clint McElroy THE 112</i>	Rating							
<i>Instruct - D. Cook Sec. 104, FA 08</i>	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6		
Underst.role theat. serves in society	3	3	3	3	3	4	19	3.167
Underst.roles of artists in creat.prod.	3	3	3	3	2	3	17	2.833
Underst.style/genre of theat.product.	3	3	3	3	3	4	19	3.167
Ability to evaluate a theatrical event	3	3	3	3	3	4	19	3.167
Total	12	12	12	12	11	15	74	12.333

<i>Reader Clint McElroy THE 112</i>	Rating							
<i>Instruct -Reynolds Sec. 105, FA 08</i>	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6		
Underst.role theat. serves in society	1	3	3	3	1	2	13	2.167
Understroles of artists in creat.prod.	3	3	4	2	2	3	17	2.833
Underst.style/genre of theat.product.	3	3	4	3	2	3	18	3.000
Ability to evaluate a theatrical event	2	3	4	2	2	2	15	2.500
Total	9	12	15	10	7	10	63	10.500
Average	2.25	3	3.75	2.5	1.75	2.5		
Average for all six papers	2.625							

D. Analysis/Planned Action

Generally speaking, the Theatre Appreciation course is meeting its benchmark goals. Despite a change in one of the readers there has been steady advancement in the

evaluation numbers indicating some success at meeting our individual learning outcomes benchmarks. Despite this success the benchmarks need to be revisited and clarified.

One suggestion to be drawn from numbers collected since 2004 is that selecting external reviewers who are not actively involved with the Theatre program provides better consistency in the scoring.

It should be noted that the composite scores have advanced steadily in the last year. However, variations in the section evaluations reflected a lack of continuity in the critical thinking assignments with respect to specific learning goals. Because the theatre review generally measures all four goals, if an instructor creates a question that specifically eliminates one goal, the numbers can be skewed (Fall of 2008).

In 2004 students were assigned two major reviews to write on a live theatrical performance. Instructors could use any critical thinking assignment of their choice for the assessment paper. As a result, questions on those assignments varied considerably from section to section. Again, the lack of consistency in assignment and in the questions may have skewed assessment results.

Beginning in 2007 as a response to the issue of consistency in the assessment process, additional response/review assignments were added in all sections. Instructors continued to utilizing the second Department production for the theatre review, but added assignments such as a written response to a special performance event or a film discussed in class. The goal was to increase student experience in the areas of critical thinking and writing.

In Fall 2009, in response to the learning goals assessment 2008 an effort was made by the instructors in each section to provide all students with the same theatre review assignment. Further, the event response forms will be the same across sections. While not entirely successful due primarily to the late implementation in the fall, beginning with Spring 2010 the implementation will be complete. This strategy will insure a more viable and consistent assessment tool.

Planned actions:

Both the reviewers appreciated the copy of a handout provided to students in some sections along with the questions for the theatre review. Instructors will be discussing the adoption of this form for the fall of

Future course outlines for all sections will be more closely coordinated to insure that all necessary material for the project to be assessed is covered by the performance/assignment date. This strategy will insure a more viable and consistent assessment tool.

Our benchmarks need to be revisited and clarified.

A significant advantage of the present theatre review is that, with the right questions, the assignment allows a comprehensive assessment of all our learning goals combined in a critical thinking exercise on a live theatre event. Instructors should determine the best way to insure that consistency is maintained in this assignment across all sections. Instructors need to determine what, if any, the impact the variety of live productions has from semester to semester on the assessment tool.

While the assessment numbers seem fairly even across the learning goals, instructors share some concerns about the present text, which was adopted about four years ago may not be adequate for engaging the students. Faculty have initiated a project to replace this text with a workbook that students would use to respond to every class in some way with a written assignment. The goal is to engage the 20% or so of students receiving 1, 2's as well as to raise the 3's to 4's.

A discussion of the class size of our sections relative to our teaching and assessment strategy is essential as the pressure increases to enroll additional students in our sections. How will this affect the academic experience of our students and how will that impact our teaching and assessment strategies?

IV. Overview of changes implemented since last report

The Theatre Appreciation has continued to evolve from semester to semester, partly as a reflection of assessment and partly in response to challenges instructors face in individual sections from semester to semester. Instructors have regular informal discussions throughout any given semester to coordinate and discuss various aspects of this course from attendance to specific films.

V. Assistance Needed with Assessment

None at this time