Texas A&M University

Core Curriculum

Initial Request for a Course Addition to the Fall 2014 Core Curriculum

Foundational Component Area: Creative Arts

In the box below, describe how this course meets the Foundational Component Area description for Creative Arts. Courses in this category focus on appreciation and analysis of creative artifacts and works of human imagination. Courses involve the synthesis and interpretation of artistic expression and enable critical, creative, and innovative communication about works of art.

How does the proposed course specifically address the Foundational Component Area definition above?

The Evolution of the American Musical offers the student exposure to an array of musicals varying from operetta to concept musicals, from classics written in the 1940’s and 50’s to newer classics that reflect a much-changed understanding of both the musical theatre form and the world that it reflects. By listening to, watching and reading these musicals (and with exposure in class to selections from many others), students will gain insight into the social forces the musical was created by and, in turn, helped to shape. Additionally, students will group together and share in the process of creating a musical by crafting the synopsis, soundtrack and in-class performance of their own jukebox musical (a plot-driven musical that features already existant music by a popular artist), encouraging both an understanding of the form and engagement in the creative process.

Core Objectives

Describe how the proposed course develops the required core objectives below by indicating how each learning objective will be addressed, what specific strategies will be used for each objective and how student learning of each objective will be evaluated.

Critical Thinking (to include creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation and synthesis of information):

Throughout the semester, the student will continually be engaging new material that will work into the overall narrative of musical theatre’s evolution. We will discuss these works in class, challenging the student to place the work in its chronological and contextual surroundings. We will examine the trends set by musical theatre- the creation of the ‘American songbook’, for example- as well as the trends that musical theatre struggled to keep up with- rock and roll proved to be a particularly difficult sound for the musical to adapt to. In each of these cases, the student will be exposed to information and expected to contribute to the discussion surrounding the work and why it is considered significant within the musical theatre canon.

Communication (to include effective development, interpretation and expression of ideas through written, oral and visual communication):

Students will be expected to take part in the discussions during class, demonstrating that they have read for more than just comprehension. The in-class presentation at the end of the semester will be another opportunity for students to demonstrate their verbal and non-verbal communication skills- verbally by connecting with their audience as they tell the story, non-verbally in their acting out of the story. In addition, students will be required to view and review a live performance during the semester, encouraging them to express themselves in the written word from a critical perspective. There will also be a written exam in essay form, further requiring the students to use both their critical thinking and written communication skills.

Teamwork (to include the ability to consider different points of view and to work effectively with others to support a shared purpose or goal):
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While creating the in-class presentation, students will be grouped into 5 member units. Each unit will work together to create a cohesive project that will be shared with the class at large. All 5 members must be a part of both the creation and the presentation of the material. Students will also work individually, throughout the semester, at considering others points of view as they experience the variety of musical scores and performances. It is my hope that the students will enjoy listening to and watching these works, and implicit in enjoyment is an opening of awareness to other’s perspectives- an awareness that we will then make explicit in class discussion.

Social Responsibility (to include intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to engage effectively in regional, national, and global communities):

The musicals that the students will experience each work into the cultural landscape in different ways and at different times. They will hopefully challenge and/or highlight any number of perspectives across social, political, and generational spectrums, and give students the opportunity to confront previously-held ideas about their own identity as it relates to our shared history as a national community. As students explore these works, they will become aware of the forces at play on the characters and the people that created them, and how those forces impact humanity at large.

Please be aware that instructors should be prepared to submit samples/examples of student work as part of the future course recertification process.