Course Background

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This class covers the history of Western Civilization from Antiquity through the Renaissance(s), examining issues of performance, including the non-theatrical, in their historical and cultural moments.

“Learning to love learning is central to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, is vital to our ongoing spiritual and personal development and is an absolute necessity in the world in which we do now and will yet live, serve and work.

— Elder Bednar (2008 BYU commencement address)

Heeding Elder Bednar’s recent remarks on the value and necessity of education, this course is designed to encourage students to think about how they think and develop this awareness into a desire for life-long learning. In “Dramatic Performance: Antiquity to Renaissance” (TMA 201), we accomplish this by investigating isolated moments in performance history from the Ancient to the Renaissance, in order not only to understand the story of performance, but to interrogate that story. Through this interrogation, students will

1. Question how, why, and by whom the story has been recorded and been made available for our consideration.
2. Evaluate evidence provided in textbooks to reveal the ways in which even the “facts” themselves are historical documents, subject to the same line of questioning.
3. Examine primary texts from the civilizations we are studying through multiple lenses—society, culture, politics, economics, gender roles, religion—to better understand the ways in which dramatic performance functioned in particular times and places.

CONTEXT: For my Course Development Project, I redesigned TMA 201 – Dramatic Performance: Origins to Renaissance, a course I have taught before and will teach again in Fall 2015. This course satisfies the World Civilization General Education requirement and is required for all Theatre majors (including Theatre Arts Studies, BFA Acting, and Theatre Education). I am one of three professors who trade off teaching this course approximately every three years (though, due to scheduling difficulties, I have taught it for the last two years and will teach it again in Fall 2015).

Learning Outcomes

HISTORICAL CONTEXT: Students will demonstrate a general working knowledge of major historical periods, philosophical trends, and performance movements and will draw connections between society and performance, through writing and class discussion.

Quality & Importance: Because this is a GE course, it is important that students learn about performance within the broader context of the history of Western Civilization. Performance is the lens, but the history of Western Civilization is the
subject matter. This CLO supports our PLO “Core Concepts,” which states, “students will demonstrate a comprehension of the core concepts, processes, history, and theory of performance.”

GREAT WORKS: Students will analyze great works of literature through multiple perspectives—society, culture, politics, economics, gender roles, religion—to better understand the ways in which dramatic performance functioned in particular times and places.

*Quality & Importance:* This CLO emphasizes the importance of analytical and critical thinking skills in interpreting and understanding the past, as well as being able to synthesize and write about that analysis. This class is meant to help students explore and reexamine history through a prism of historiography, inviting them to think critically about how history is written and recorded. This CLO also supports our PLO “Core Concepts,” which states, “students will demonstrate a comprehension of the core concepts, processes, history, and theory of performance.”

SELF-REPRESENTATION: Students will appraise 1) how we represent the world, others, and ourselves and 2) the consequences of these representations for our families, our communities, and ourselves.

*Quality & Importance:* Because so much of how we present ourselves to the world has to do with everyday performance, it is imperative that students analyze how others throughout history have represented themselves, and then consider how we, in turn, represent ourselves and the world around us. It is a question of ethical engagement and of taking upon ourselves the name of Christ and acting as his representatives on earth. This CLO supports the PLO “Character Building,” which states, “Students will demonstrate a commitment to honoring their religious convictions, respecting the ethics of representation, and serving humanity.”

**Course Activities**

TEXTBOOK STUDY GUIDES: The textbook study guides help guide reading to help students focus on the most important facts and people in theatre history (HISTORICAL CONTEXT)

PRIMARY SOURCE PROMPTS: These prompts invite students to think critically about the primary sources they’re reading in class and to make connections across performance, social, and cultural history in Western Civilization (HISTORICAL CONTEXT, GREAT WORKS)

HISTORY IN PERFORMANCE PROJECTS: These projects engage students in the processes of creating performance and recording history, requiring them to think critically about how performance is collaboratively created and how history is written, particularly in light of the social and historical context in which the historian is writing.
All three of these activities, along with essay and short answer exams, prompt students to make connections between the history of theatrical performance and the cultural and social contexts in which performance was made and history was written. All three invite students to engage both with primary source documents and contemporary scholarship about theatrical history as well as think historiographically about such documents are created, disseminated, and preserved. These concerns are at the fore of theatre history teaching and scholarship today.

Assessments of Student Learning
Tests and projects offer a clear method for assessing both students’ grasp of facts and abilities to think critically about and deploy those facts. Tests require students to both define terms and put them into a social/historical context, demonstrating their ability to make connections across fields of study and understand the interplay of performance with the culture from which it emerges. Projects give students the chance to demonstrate their ability to utilize facts and information to inform and create performance. The “Recording History” HIP allows students to demonstrate their ability to take historical facts and information and shape them to fit into new modes of communication (social media, specifically) in order to show that they understand how the form of historical writing affects the content and thus the narratives of history.

Student Achievement of Learning Outcomes
Upon completion of this course, students will have demonstrated, through written responses and creative projects that they can think across performance, social, and cultural history and make connections between the three. They will have demonstrated, particularly through their “History in Performance” projects, an ability to understand how performance and history are created and preserved, how prevailing social conditions determine what is kept and privileged, and how the medium of historical preservation affects the content of what is preserved and how we then understand the past.

Assessments demonstrate these achievements through the use of clear, precise rubrics that detail everything students need to have demonstrated in order to excel at the learning activities.

Steps Planned or Taken to Improve Teaching and Student Learning
I always use mid-course evaluations to track student perceptions of the class and their success in it; I will continue to use these moving forward. When I have implemented the suggestions made in the mid-course evaluations, student scores on assessments tend to rise. Additionally, I will use SCOT, colleague reviews, and end-of-semester reviews to continue improving.

One common complaint about this class is that there is too much material covered in a brief amount of time. I have taken that particular complaint and made adjustments, giving students clearer guidance for how to read and process the material for the class in order to best understand and organize the most necessary information.
I have struggled somewhat this year to complete many of my scholarly goals. I have been overwhelmed by my teaching and strategizing the future, sometimes to the detriment of actually getting scholarly work done. That has been frustrating. That said, I have accomplished many scholarly goals and continue to work on the rest.

- My most significant scholarly contributions/accomplishments for 2014 include:
  - I received funding for two research projects: one to Colonial Williamsburg, sponsored by a Research and Creative Activities Grant from the College of Fine Arts; and one to Tombstone, Arizona, sponsored by a John Topham and Susan Redd Butler BYU Faculty Award from the Charles Redd Center for Western Studies. I will have completed and submitted article manuscripts resulting from each research project for publication by the end of 2014.
  - I presented material from my next project, a book about race, violence, and performance in the United States at the annual convention of the Association for Theatre in Higher Education.
  - A book review that I wrote of Scott Magelssen’s book Simming: Participatory Performance and the Making of Meaning has been accepted for publication in TDR.

I continue to have many goals in this area, including:
- Find a publication outlet for my Colonial Williamsburg and Tombstone article manuscripts.
- Complete and submit a book proposal based on my work on race, violence, and performance in the United States.
- Direct The Winter’s Tale.
- Present material at the following annual conventions: ATHE, ASTR, and ASA.

I was not as successful as I would have liked in implementing my strategies to enhance my scholarly productivity. Over the next year, I plan to implement the following strategies with greater enthusiasm:

I. Strategies for Increasing Scholarly Productivity
   1. Write for at least 30 minutes every day, following the “Publish and Flourish” program.
   2. Set aside one evening each week to read a research-related book.
   3. Set aside one hour every week to read journals in order to stay current in the field.
   4. Share drafts of articles and book chapters with mentor.
   5. Use time at conferences to network with colleagues and publishers.

II. Evaluation Methods
   1. I will use charts to keep track of my reading and writing goals. (See attached.)
   2. I will complete and submit article manuscripts and conference papers according to deadlines outlined below.
Winter Spring Summer Fall
2015 • Direct & perform The Winter’s Tale
• Complete and submit Colonial Williamsburg article
• Complete and submit Tombstone article • Work on book proposal
  • Complete and submit book proposal
• Present paper at ATHE
  • Work on book
• Present paper at ASA
• Present paper at ASTR
2016 • Work on book
• Submit panel proposal to ASA
• Complete and submit Nauvoo article
  • Revise and resubmit Nauvoo article
• Draft first manuscript of weapons and public space book
  • Revise book
• Draft and submit gun article
• Present paper at ATHE • Revise and resubmit gun article
  • Revise book
• Present paper at ASTR
• Present paper at ASA
Over the 2014-2015 year, I continued many of my previous citizenship activities and implemented several others as outlined in the goals I articulated in my Citizenship Project proposal. First, I continued as the Treasurer for the Performamce Studies Focus Group. I stood for reelection in August 2014, and was reelected. I will serve in this capacity until August 2016. Since my reelection, I have continued to guide the financial merging of our focus group with the Performing Arts Department at Washington University in St. Louis. This move will be completed in time for this year’s ATHE conference in August 2015, and will make the focus group more financially secure and will forge important philosophical and ideological bonds between the PSFG and the PAD at Wash. U. I have also continued in my role as a trained KCACTF respondent and have responded to two performances during that time. Additionally, I have served as the convener of the Performance and Public Memory working group, which meets yearly at ATHE. While my national citizenship profile has continued to grow, I have also expanded my activities at the university, serving on committees at the university, college, and departmental levels.

I have learned to always do what I say I will, and to do it in a timely manner. Though I have not yet completed all the goals I laid out in my project proposal, I have worked to be a good, generous colleague in all my interactions with committee members. I plan to continue to extend my network of colleagues both on and off campus. I plan to continue to use conferences and other national conventions as an opportunity to serve, get to know scholars and practitioners from other universities, and contribute to the growth in my field. I also, however, have learned that by taking on too many citizenship responsibilities, I may limit the good that I can do in each. So, I also have the goal not to say yes to every opportunity, but rather to choose those that will help me grow and allow me to dedicate myself fully to them.

Citizenship Project
May 2014

I. Current Citizenship
I will continue to serve as the Treasurer for the Performance Studies Focus Group at ATHE this summer. In July, I will stand for re-election; I plan to run for another two-year term to help continue PSFG’s transition from a stand-alone Focus Group to one sponsored by a participating institution. This will help bring us inline with current tax and sponsorship policies.

I will also continue to serve in the following positions:

a. Professional
   i. Trained Respondent, Region VIII, Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival, 2012-present.
iii. Founder and convener, Performance and Public Memory Group, Performance Studies Focus Group, 2011-present.
b. Brigham Young University
c. College of Fine Arts and Communication
i. College of Fine Arts and Communication Alumni Board (50th Anniversary of the HFAC), 2014-2015.
d. Department of Theatre and Media Arts
i. Department Subcommittee on Study Abroad and Field Studies, Co-Chair, 2014-present.
ii. Theatre and Media Arts Honors Representative, 2013-present.
iii. Theatre Production Committee, 2013-present.

II. Goals
1. I will continue to serve on the above-mentioned committees, along with regular attendance at Department and Area Studies faculty meetings.
2. I will work with the Department Subcommittee on Study Abroad and Field Studies to put in place new domestic Field Study programs for Spring 2015.
3. I will make a concerted effort to attend every performance sponsored by the Department of Theatre and Media Arts, including the Final Cut film screenings.
4. I will become more involved in my three primary associations in the following ways:
   a. ATHE: expand my activity beyond PSFG by joining and attending panels sponsored by and Focus Group meetings of the Black Theatre Association and the American Theatre and Drama Society.
   b. ASTR: Volunteer for leadership positions within ASTR.
   c. ASA: Organize and propose a panel for ASA’s 2015 meeting.
5. I will work to make more contacts and to more effectively network at conferences.