

Assessment Plan for restructured GEC course, TH 280

Assessment Goals and Objectives

Both the GEC and course-specific learning objectives for Theatre 280 might be summarized as follows:

1. *Students will learn to describe and interpret dramatic texts, and to recognize those works as significant cultural achievements.*
2. *Students will learn general principles and strategies of character analysis through which they can appreciate and begin to understand performative art, including works from historical and cultural contexts other than the ones covered by the course itself.*
3. *Students will develop an ability to engage in cross-cultural comparison, not only among those cultures covered by the course, but also (ideally) between them and our contemporary context.*
4. *Students will acquire a basic understanding of acting, primarily through an exploration of the technique, analysis, and relevance of specific actions and events within their "imaginary" context.*
5. *Students will develop their critical and analytic abilities, as well as work on the clarity and precision of their writing.*

We intend to insure that proposed course adequately articulates these goals, teaches toward them, tests for them, and help students realize their individual potential to meet them.

II. Methods

An assessment of whether these objectives are in fact being met is most easily and effectively carried out, we believe, by an examination of the work students are actually required to do for the course. For example, their ability to think dramatically and to engage in cross-cultural comparison (objectives #3 and 4) can be gauged by their responses to specific analysis questions—typically comparisons of scripts from different cultures and/or historical periods. Thus, each analysis assignment will have at least one question requiring students to situate works in their social and historical contexts. Similarly, the play reaction paper will center on a prompt that demands an extended interpretation of a particular performance or script; in some cases, students will even be asked to reflect on conflicting interpretations. In this way, we hope to measure the

course's (and the students') progress toward objective #1. The students' grasp of "general principles and strategies of character analysis" (objective 2) will be measured by asking students to discuss a character or characters that they will not have seen previously in class. In this way we should be able to ascertain whether they are acquiring the desired skills and not simply learning by imitation. Objective #5, concerning the students' critical and analytic abilities, is explicitly tested through the two analysis papers each student is expected to write for the course. (That paper should also provide an additional measure for objectives 1 and 2.) Here, as with the play reaction paper listed above, we believe that sampling should provide us with an adequate assessment of whether the course is in fact living up to its goals. We will be randomly sampling (and photocopying) specific writing prompts and papers from 5% of the class. An advanced graduate student, supervised by the Director of Undergraduate Studies, will be asked to evaluate the sampled questions and papers, and to gauge how well the goals of the course seem reflected in them. We will also be interested to assess improvement over time, so that we will compare each of the selected student's responses from the first analysis paper to those on the play reaction paper to see if any has in fact occurred. A brief summary report will be written by the grad student and the Director of Undergraduate Studies, and that, as well as the sampled questions themselves, will be made available to the instructor.

We are also interested in getting the students' self-assessment of the course and of their performance in it. To that end, we will survey them at the beginning of the quarter regarding their expectations. Their answers will be collected, read (by the faculty member teaching the course), and then saved (in a designated file cabinet in the department office). Students will get these surveys back at the end of the course, along with an evaluation that asks them to gauge how well the course met their expectations, and whether or not they have any suggestions for improvement. (It will also ask them what grade they anticipate receiving in the course.) Their responses will be made available to the instructor, but also summarized by the grad student—again, under supervision of the Director of Undergraduate Studies, who will advise on any appropriate changes to the syllabus, assignments, or other aspects of the course.

Note on the assessment criteria for sampled exams and papers

The criteria that we will be using in the assessment will be similar to those the instructor will have used in grading the exams and papers in the first place. We will, however, pay somewhat less attention to the factual specifics of the students' work than to what it reveals about whether they understood the nature of the question (or assignment) and the kind of response it required. As much as possible, we will also try to determine whether shortcomings in this area are correlated to the individual student's poor attendance in class, or whether they result from miscommunication on the part of the instructor. It's obviously the latter case that we're most concerned with (though we will also work on various strategies for increasing attendance if that seems to be a particular problem); the Director of Undergraduate Studies will work with the instructor to improve communication of the course expectations and content.

Timeline for assessment

Each quarter, every time the course is taught, we will follow the same schedule:

Week 1	Survey of students regarding their expectations for the course
Week 3	First analysis paper; sampling of answers to specific questions
Week 4	Results of first sampling made available to course instructor
Week 6	Second analysis paper; sampling of answers
Week 7	Results of second sampling made available to course instructor
Week 9	Student reaction papers due; samples read and evaluated
Week 10	Student assessment of course and their performance in it
Week 11	Final exam; sampling of answers; report compiled and given to instructor; meeting (or at least email exchange) between the Director of Undergraduate Studies and instructor concerning any necessary changes to the course. NB: Changes effecting the course as a whole will be brought before the department Chair, Undergraduate Studies committee, the group of faculty who teach the course, and, if appropriate, the entire department faculty.

Every three years we will also compile a report on the course as a whole, using all of the data from every offering of 280 in that time. In particular, we will be looking to see if the students' and our overall evaluations of the course have at least remained steady or, better, improved; if that proves not to be the case, we will attempt to use the data to make what seem the appropriate adjustments to the course content and structure.