Title: Literature, the Arts, and Civic Action

Length of Course: Full Year (2 semesters; 3 trimesters; 4 quarters)

Subject Area – Discipline: English ("b")

UC Honors designation: Honors

CTE Sector: Arts, Media and Entertainment

CTE Pathway: Performing Arts

Grade/Level(s): 11

Prerequisite: At least one year of college-preparatory English

Course Overview:
Literature, the Arts, and Civic Action is a college preparatory grade 11 English course integrated with the Arts, Media and Entertainment Performing Arts pathway. Students engage in close reading of complex texts, analysis of historical and existing theatre applications and models, and apply both to a focused social action arts project. Students begin by acquiring performance and storytelling skills with social impact. Once students have a basis for creating theater for social action, they will then begin to mobilize their cause by measuring the potential impact of their performances. The course will culminate in focused research and analysis of the effectiveness of nonprofit arts organizations.

Course Content:

Recurring Assignments:
Throughout the course, students create and add to a digital interactive Performance Writer’s Journal that compares and contrasts the universal themes and sociopolitical issues in the texts and films studied. Entries will focus on textual analysis and author’s craft in developing the elements of story, as well as aspects of performance, including facial expressions, movement, voice, speech, spatial relationships, and technical aspects such as props and costumes. Students complete entries after performing theatrical pieces to reflect upon these themes and their effectiveness.

Unit 1 - The Power of the Storyteller
In this unit, students examine how authors and playwrights create meaningful characters whose perspectives and experiences raise awareness of social issues. After having read and discussed The Bluest Eye by Toni Morrison, students will create a theme-oriented performance based upon their analysis of the story that the novel tells. The students will also be introduced to Anna Deavere Smith through multiple media formats. The
performance that the students create based on *The Bluest Eye* connects Anna Deavere Smith’s character work with the larger art of storytelling. Their analysis of the literature will lead them to explore how texts and performances influence change within the individual or larger community. Students will build upon existing performance vocabulary in terms of voice, movement, gesture, subtext, historical context, artists’ community, and activism. By the end of Unit 1, students will be able to demonstrate how an individual’s story is connected to larger societal, political, and cultural issues.

**Texts:**
- *The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison
- *Fires in the Mirror* by Anna Deavere Smith
- “Four American Characters” by Anna Deavere Smith
- “Anna Deavere Smith: YoungArts MasterClass” HBO Documentary Series

**Unit 1 - Assignments**

A. Students will begin the unit by crafting and performing a character-defining story of a classmate they will create based on oral interviews. They will first study Anna Deavere Smith’s technique of interviewing a subject and portraying the core of their identity and unique point of view by adopting physicality and voice into performance. In addition, they will view “Anna Deavere Smith: A YoungArts MasterClass,” the TED talk “Four American Characters,” and read and/or watch *Fires in the Mirror*. Students will then interview and observe a classmate in order to craft an interpreted solo performance of their partner’s persona applying the observed and studied techniques.

B. Students will read and write a literary analysis of the novel *The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison that examines how the author raises awareness of a particular social issue. The focus of the assignment is to continue exploring how everyone has a story and how the individual’s story reveals larger societal, political and cultural issues.

C. Drawing upon Smith’s character work and students’ literary analysis, students then create and perform a monologue from *The Bluest Eye* that addresses a pivotal moment in the literature---one that advances the message of the story.

**Unit 2: Social Action Applied through Arts**

In this unit, students will explore how the arts can serve as an agent of change. Through their study of classic and modern drama and literature such as *The Crucible* and *The Laramie Project* as key texts, they will seek answers to the following questions: What is civic/social action? What is an activist? What connotations and imagery are associated with the word, “activist”? Students will also explore the use of design elements to convey an identified theme. Additionally students will investigate a local activist or cause, building a foundation for a documentary style performance piece. Students will share their interpretations of how writers and artists can be activists through a multimedia performance. The unit will wrap up with a class discussion on the use of various tools and formats to illustrate a social cause.
Unit 2 - Assignments

A. Students will write an analytical essay about the social issues from the McCarthy era and Arthur Miller’s response to these issues in his play *The Crucible*. In this essay, students will support their textual analysis using an additional historical text and an expository text which addresses the play’s reception and its “witchhunt” theme.

B. Students develop a design presentation for how they would create the thematic feel for a scene from one of the plays (eg. *The Laramie Project, The Crucible*). Their multimedia presentation will include details regarding lighting, costume, scenic, and property design. The presentation will include a scenic model box, colored costume sketches, a constructed live prop, and sound. This assignment will allow students to visually present the themes of the play into a single moment.

C. Students will use their digital journals to reflect upon issues which they are passionate about and will begin to form the basis their personal credo. Journal prompts may include questions like: What kind of superhero would you like to be and why? What song inspires you and why do you find it inspirational? If you owned a plot of land what would you do with it and why? Think of a person who you admire in your life and why do you admire them?

D. After reading *The Laramie Project*, in groups, students research and analyze multiple sources which describe an activist or a local cause and create their own documentary theatre piece à la *The Laramie Project*. Throughout this assignment, students will explore the value of non-fiction storytelling by creating a performance piece which portrays an activist or cause impacting their community. This assignment concludes with students participating in a class discussion and journal writing to reflect on the effectiveness of social action theatre.

Unit 3: Building Social Movements through Organizing

The texts in this unit offer inspiration for organizing thought into action. As an introduction, students will listen to and discuss a news feature and how drama can be used to promote broader awareness. The core text students investigate, *The Tortilla Curtain*, poses questions about the cultural, social, and class status that permeate the immigration issue. Students will use the text to participate in a debate based on the conflicts presented. Students will then read and analyze “Border Town” from Culture Clash in AmeriCCa and create their own satirical sketch reflecting upon a current event. Students will also read and respond to the nonfiction text *Students Against Sweatshops: The Making of a Movement* in their Digital Journal. The unit will culminate in a “call-to-action” performance piece.

Texts:
- *The Laramie Project* by Moises Kaufman
- *The Crucible* by Arthur Miller
- *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* by Harriet Beecher Stowe (supplemental)
• *The Tortilla Curtain* by T.C. Boyle
• *Culture Clash in AmeriCCa* by Ric Salinas, Herbert Siguenza, and Richard Montoya
• *Students Against Sweatshops: The Making of a Movement* by Liza Featherstone
• *Cootie Shots* edited by Norma Bowles and Mark E. Rosenthal
• NPR interview about street theatre in response to social issue [http://www.npr.org/2015/05/01/403474757/emotional-re-enactment-of-farkhunda-s-killing-brings-afghan-actress-to-tears](http://www.npr.org/2015/05/01/403474757/emotional-re-enactment-of-farkhunda-s-killing-brings-afghan-actress-to-tears) and [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B1IMJHQ3ZhE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B1IMJHQ3ZhE)
• *Theatre for Change* by Robert J. Landy and David T. Montgomery

**Unit 3 - Assignments**

A. Students will read *Tortilla Curtain* then participate in a student-lead discussion and debate about borders and immigration by referring to textual evidence and outside research with the goal of forming a thoughtful, well-reasoned stance. Each student will be evaluated by the instructor using a rubric based on the Common Core Speaking and Listening Standards.

B. Students will read and analyze the vignette “Border Town” from *Culture Clash in AmeriCCa* for the purpose of analyzing the use of metaphor, symbolism, and satire while applying concepts of community and current events. As a class, socratic discussion will focus on the multilayered nature of the term “community.” After exploring the connections between the text and current events, students will then develop a sketch using the satirical structure similar to “Bordertown.”

C. Students will read *Against Sweatshops: The Making of a Movement*. As part of the recurring assignment, Performance Writer’s Journal, students should specifically focus on the following: examining and responding to the issues and social action challenges detailed in the text, how the descriptions of stories, events, and processes from the texts will manifest in and support the organizing of a social movement.

D. Students will review and discuss the role of the audience in creating social action pieces. They will be introduced to *Cootie Shots* (Fringe Benefits), *Theatre for Young Audiences* (TYA), Theatre in Education (TIE) and additional youth focused arts organizations using *Learning Through Theatre* by Anthony Jackson and Chris Vine and *Theatre for Change* by Robert J. Landy and David T. Montgomery. Students will reflect on the following prompts in their Digital Journal: Who decides the age appropriateness of an artistic piece? How does a work like *Brundibar* by Tony Kushner (or other exemplary texts) address adult issues by translating them into a child friendly format? How can a piece be modified to appropriately convey a message to a specific age range?

E. Students create a call-to-action performance piece based on a current policy issue, controversial subject, or event. In this group project, students will plan the course of events, participant roles, whether or not it is performed live or recorded, and how they will measure the impact at the end. They will design the scene, costumes, setting, audience, and whether it is staged or improvised.
Students will defend their call-to-action piece and the choices they made during the creative process in a 3 to 5 page expository essay. The essay will include a summary and justification of the issue or controversial event, description of connections drawn between the topic and their production choices, the relevance to their community, and impact expectations.

**Unit 4: The Business of Art**

Under the social action umbrella, students will discuss the social value an arts organization may potentially provide a community, referred to in social entrepreneurial research as its “Social Value Proposition (SVP).” As potential future social entrepreneurs in the arts, or as employees of organizations claiming social missions, students will analyze globally-known as well as local organizations. In order to recognize the role and function of professional art organizations, students will analyze the SVP of various art organizations as well as the organizational structures including concepts such as board development, funding, leadership structures, mission and vision. They become familiar with the organizational knowledge and structure necessary to bring arts, media, and entertainment to the public. Focusing on expository resources and research skills, students will come to an in-depth understanding of the various aspects of arts organizations and contemplate their future career roles.

**Texts:**
- *Philanthropy in America* by Olivier Zunz
- “Arts Organizations Structure and Social Goals” Slideshow by Marcie Grill
- *Theatre for Change* by Robert J. Landy and David T. Montgomery

**Key Assignments:**

- As a precursor for the 12th grade course project, students will begin an understanding of arts organizational structures. Using the presentation tool “Arts Organizations: Structure and Social Goals,” as a discussion guide, the class will discuss social entrepreneurship, nonprofit status, and the difficulty in measuring the social value proposition of an organization. The main components of Social Mission (SVP), Capital, People, Opportunity, and Context are presented in a graphic organizer which students will use to analyze an exemplary (global) social action organizations in a small group project. Students will read and discuss “Introduction: The Praxis of Theatre for Change” by Landy and Montgomery. Student groups will research from a potential list of organizations including Theater for Young Audiences (TYA), Cornerstone Theater, El Teatro Campesino, Tectonic Theater Project, Mo'olelo Performing Arts Company, and Children’s Theater of Minneapolis. Students will summarize their findings applying the same graphic organizer in the presentation as a framework and give an oral presentation to the class presenting each of the summary components.

- Using *Philanthropy in America* by Olivier Zunz and additional research sources, students will research and participate in socratic discussion on the role of philanthropy in America historically and contemplate its role in advancement of the arts in the modern era. Students will write a 2-3 page analytical essay.
including a developed thesis regarding the role philanthropy to the arts and potential implications of donors to an arts organization.

- Students will focus on local organizations for more detailed research and analysis. The class will begin by creating a listing of potential performing arts organizations in the teacher identified area or region and identify each by descriptors such as community, regional, unionized, tax status (nonprofit), etc. To deepen students’ understanding of the sustainability of an art organization, students will conduct in-depth research on one of the organizations, including revenue streams and donor roles. At the discretion and oversight of the teacher for student safety, students might formulate interview questions or write formal letters requesting information not available online. Visits to organizations might be arranged or guest representatives from organizations might be invited to a be interviewed on panel of experts if possible. Students will also evaluate sources of information online including primary organizational sites, directly-related foundations, and evaluative programs such as GuideStar.org. Students will present their findings and analysis in an essay drawing upon multiple sources.

- Students will orally and visually present the results of their investigation of art organizations in a multi-media format such as Powerpoint, Prezi, Animoto, Google Slides, Slideshare, etc. The presentation will include information on: how the organization is fulfilling its mission / vision, what aspect(s) of the organization make it successful/sustainable, the role of the organization in addressing social issues in the community, and how the organization has responded to challenge.

Course Materials:

**Title:** The Bluest Eye  
Edition: Reprint Edition  
Publication Date: May 8, 2009  
Publisher: Vintage  
Author(s): Morrison, Toni

**Title:** Fires in the Mirror: Crown Heights, Brooklyn, and Other Identities  
Publication Date: January 1998  
Publisher: Dramatists Play Service, Inc.  
Author(s): Smith, Anna Deavere

**Title:** Four American Characters  
Publication Date: February 2005  
Publisher: TED  
Author(s): Smith, Anna Deavere  
URL Resource: [https://www.ted.com/talks/anna_deavere_smith_s_american_character](https://www.ted.com/talks/anna_deavere_smith_s_american_character)

**Title:** Anna Deavere Smith: A YoungArts Masterclass  
Publication Date: February 17, 2014  
Publisher: HBO
Directors: Karen Goodman, Kirk Simon
Starring: Anna Deavere Smith
URL Resource: 
http://www.hbo.com/documentaries/anna-deavere-smith-a-youngarts-masterclass

**Title:** The Laramie Project
Publication Date: 2001
Publisher: Dramatists Play Service Inc.
Author(s): Moises Kaufman and the Members of the Tectonic Theater Project

**Title:** The Crucible
Edition: Later Edition
Publication Date: 1998
Publisher: Dramatists Play Service Inc.
Author(s): Miller, Arthur

**Title:** Theatre for Change: Education, Social Action and Therapy
Publication Date: 2012
Publisher: Palgrave Macmillan
Author(s): Landy, Robert

**Title:** Uncle Tom's Cabin
Publication Date: August 1, 2005
Publisher: Dover Publishing
Author(s): Stowe, Harriet Beecher

**Title:** Re-Enactment Of Afghan Woman's Mob Killing Brings Actress To Tears
Publication Date: May 01, 2015
Publisher: National Public Radio
Author(s)/Interviewer: Renee Montagne
URL Resource(s): 
http://www.npr.org/2015/05/01/403474757/emotional-re-enactment-of-farkhunda-s-killing-brings-afghan-actress-to-tears
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B1IMJHQ3ZhE

**Title:** Tortilla Curtain
Publication Date: September 1, 1996
Publisher: Penguin Books
Author(s): Boyle, T. Coraghessan

**Title:** Culture Clash in AmeriCCa
Publication Date: January 1, 2003
Publisher: Theatre Communications Group
Author(s): Culture Clash

**Title:** Students Against Sweatshops: The Making of a Movement
Publication Date: June 17, 2002
Publisher: Verso
Author(s): United Students Against Sweatshops and Liza Featherstone

**Title:** Learning Through Theatre: The Changing Face of Theatre in Education  
Edition: 3rd Edition  
Publication Date: September 21st, 2013  
Publisher: Routledge  
Author(s): Anthony Jackson and Chris Vine

**Title:** Applied Theatre: International Case Studies and Challenges for Practice  
Publication Date: 2010  
Publisher: Intellect Ltd  
Author(s): Prendergast, Monica

**Title:** Applied Drama: A Facilitator’s Handbook for Working in Community  
Publication Date: 2015  
Publisher: Intellect Ltd  
Author(s): Prendergast, Monica

**Title:** Arts Organizations: Structure and Social Goals  
Publisher: Slideshow  
Author(s): Grill, Marcie  
URL Resource: Available on the CTE Website at [cteonline.org/resources/view/60128](cteonline.org/resources/view/60128)

**Title:** Social and Commercial Entrepreneurship, Same, Different, or Both?  
Edition: Article  
Publication Date: 2006  
Publisher: Baylor University  
Author(s): Austin, J., Stevenson, H., & Wei-Skillern, J.  

**Title:** Philanthropy in America: A History (Politics and Society in Twentieth-Century America)  
Publication Date: March 10, 2014  
Publisher: Princeton University Press  
Author(s): Zunz, Olivier

**Title:** Cootie Shots: Theatrical Inoculations Against Bigotry for Kids, Parents, and Teachers (A Fringe Benefits Project)  
Edition: First Edition  
Publication Date: August 1, 2000  
Publisher: Theatre Communications Group  
Author(s): Bowles, Norma

**Title:** Brundibar  
Edition: First Edition  
Publication Date: October 14, 2003