

Title: Social Action Theater: English 12 and the Performing Arts

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): 12

Course Overview:

Social Action Theatre is a College Preparatory grade 12 course integrating English with the Arts, Media and Entertainment Performing Arts pathway in a way that emphasizes arts and social action. Students develop and refine their personal and unique mission statement (credo) and aesthetic, which will be reflected through their year long course work including a personal monologue, reflective essay and portfolio development. Additionally students will apply their personal credo to create individual proposals for a social action arts organization. In groups, students will create and present a business plan for one of the proposed social action performing arts organizations, and design and perform a piece that would exemplify work from said organization. This business plan will be added to a digital portfolio created at the beginning of the course and added to throughout the course. This digital portfolio is one element, along with the final performance piece, which is presented to a career readiness jury panel of professionals as a final assessment.

Course Content:

Recurring Assignments:

Throughout the course, students maintain a digital portfolio/personal webpage that they add to and refine throughout the year, and which will include a theatrical resume, a traditional employment resume, and an audition reel (video clips).

Unit 1 - Personal Credo

Through the analysis of literature and media, students will investigate their personal belief systems and perception of self, leading to the formalization of a personal credo expressed in a reflective essay and a performed personal monologue. Through developing their personal credo, students will access their core values which they need to know in order to conceptualize their social action performing arts organization in preparation for later units. Students will analyze examples of personal transformations, such as *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* and creative examples of

change-focused artists in order to create a performance piece reflecting their connection. Students will also begin their digital portfolio which will include professional and theatrical resumes.

Unit 1 - Assignments

A. Students will read, analyze, and discuss two of the three selected items below which reflect personal development and transformation:

- The autobiography, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* and view the video clip of the one man show by Roger Guenveur Smith, *Frederick Douglass NOW*
- Luis Valdez's *Zoot Suit (play)* and view the movie
- Tracey Letts' *August Osage County (play)* and view the movie (or suggested clips)

Through discussion and reflective writing, students analyze the similarities and differences between the narrative and video text of the selected items, focusing on themes that relate to personal change and social impact. Students will then examine how these personal transformations and social issues might be relevant in their personal lives. Students will demonstrate their personal connection with one of the selected stories through the creation of an individual performance piece (e.g spoken word, dance, song, poem, monologue). This investigation of personal transformation and social action will help students refine their personal credo.

B. After considering how narratives can communicate personal change in the prior assignment, students will now view and discuss related *KQED SPARK* artist interviews such as *headRush*, which focus on how an artist bridges personal revelation to develop a larger personal societal mission, and using the credo worksheet create a revised personal credo (mission statement), building on what they investigated in assignment one. Students will then write a reflective essay or narrative articulating their personal set of values, beliefs, and purpose. Student essays should include analysis of the foundations of their personal beliefs.

C. Students will then transform their essay into a personal monologue to be performed with the option of using multimedia components (e.g video, voice over). This demonstrates the student's ability to transfer self reflection into performance and to make connections between self and larger social issues which will ultimately become the focus of their social actions arts organization.

Unit 2 - Social Justice:

In unit one students analyzed themselves in relation to a variety of texts and developed performance pieces in order to revise and refine their personal credo. In this unit, students take that understanding and use it to identify problems or issues in their communities that resonate with them. Students will analyze social justice applications through classical literature and modern applied theatre programs and create a graphic representation which interpretes classical text in a relevant way. Students will survey their community and themselves for current social justice issues and their importance and create a report of their findings.

Unit 2 - Assignments

A. Students will read and analyze a piece of classical theatre, such as *Taming of the Shrew* or *Lysistrata*, that examine social issues. Students will identify a theme in the text that is still currently relevant in order to explore how classical texts can serve as a foundation for current social action and how performance can be a call to action. To inform this understanding, students investigate a theater company like Cornerstone Theater Company who produces classical plays and adapts them to be relevant to local community issues. In small groups, students will create a graphic representation (i.e. storyboard) of a modern retelling of a classical text incorporating current community issues a la Cornerstone Theater Company, Shakespeare in Detroit, or a similar model.

B. In order to provide students a broader lens for applied performance, students investigate styles of applied theater (e.g: Theatre of the Oppressed (TO), Theatre In Education (TIE), Theatre in Health Education (THE), Theatre for Development (TfD), Prison Theatre, Community-based Theatre, Museum Theatre, and Reminiscence Theatre) as described in *Theatre for Change* or *Applied Theatre*. Students will analyze and consider how one of these styles of applied theatre can impact their local community. Then, in small groups students conduct further research on the specified style and create a multimedia presentation in which they highlight the mission, outreach, and historical development of the style, while focusing on the impact within their local community.

C. As a class, students will brainstorm topics for community needs. After a topic list has been generated, students will choose topics in line with their personal credo. Students will hypothesize about the specific needs of their local community on their chosen topic as well as define the parameters of their research population. They will create survey items which aim to test their hypothesis as well as narrow the focus of their topic and inspire relevance to community needs. Students may use online platforms to gather survey information and will follow standard research procedures to analyze the results of their survey and then write a report and create a quantitative (chart) visual of the data which will inform their objectives and approach to impacting a relevant social issue(s).

Unit Three - Creation of an Arts Organization

Using personal credos and knowledge gathered regarding relevant issues researched through community surveys (Units 1 and 2), students develop a prospectus which describes a non-profit performing arts organization which addresses their chosen social issue that addresses local community issues. Students present persuasive speeches on their prospectus, “pitching” their vision to the group. The class forms groups around their top prospectuses and using a provided format worksheet as a guide, create a business plan for the chosen organization. Students take specific roles in creating the business plan and present formally to “prospective donors” as a scaffolding activity to the capstone project in Unit Four.

Unit 3 - Assignments

A. To set the tone of the unit, students will first read *The Promise of a Pencil: How an Ordinary Person Can Create Extraordinary Change* by Adam Braun (or selected sections), complete journal responses, and participate in book talk style discussions using

the prompts in the text.

B. Students will research non-profit arts organizations (or review existing research from the 11th grade Arts in Civic Action course) and their strategies for impacting social change (i.e drama therapy or guerilla theater). Students will create a matrix of strategies used by these organizations that they will then use to inform their own arts organization prospectus in the next assignment.

C. Using their matrix, survey data and research from Unit Two, and their personal credos, students will create their own prospectus for an arts organization. Students will read *Three Ways to Persuade* by John Edlund and then write a persuasive speech supporting their business idea as expressed in the prospectus, which they will present to the class. After all speeches are delivered, students vote on and form groups around the top prospectuses/plans in preparation for assignment three.

D. Small groups will review components of model nonprofit business plans to determine the required elements/components for their own business plan. Then each group will create a non-profit business plan to expand upon their prospectuses from Assignment Two. The plans should include vision and mission statements, and other criteria determined from evaluating sample plans. They will also do a formal presentation for "prospective donors." Students' individual credos should inform their contribution to the group's business plan. Plans will be included in student website/digital portfolios. The business plan will lead into their group performance project in Unit 4.

Unit Four - Capstone Projects and Digital Portfolios

Students will create a capstone group project and finalize their individual digital portfolios. Students will write and produce an original applied theatre performance piece exemplifying work that might be done by their proposed arts organization in Unit 3 and write an expository essay which explains how their performance piece supports their personal credo. Students will also prepare for a career readiness jury assessment.

Unit 4 - Assignments

A. For their capstone project, students will reflect on their personal credo, knowledge of relevant current issues, and their proposed arts organization mission from the previous units. In small groups, students will write an original script for a 15 minute performance piece that will demonstrate the power of theatre to elicit change concerning their specific social issue addressed by their proposed arts organization concept.

B. Students read Chapters 1, 2, and 6 from *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business* and Chapter 8: *What Actors Say* from *Healing Theatre: How Plays Change Lives* to explore and support the process of building a relevant performance piece that is thought provoking and meaningful to the audience as well as the cast, crew, and playwright. Students then write an expository essay that explains how their personal credo is reflected in their performance piece and how the performance piece supports the mission of the social action arts organization while

reflecting on the above readings.

C. Students will work to complete items for presentation to a juried panel of arts professionals and educators including a presentation of their digital portfolio, an individual 3-5 minute performance piece which could be an adaptation of their work developed in Assignment Two or a new piece which reflects their personal credo, and a professional interview. Digital portfolio includes resumes, video clips, performance scripts, personal credos, and arts organization business plan.

Course Materials:

Title: Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass * Harriet Jacobs

Edition: Unabridged Edition

Publication Date: April 13, 1988

Publisher: Dover

Author(s): Frederick Douglass

Title: Zoot Suit and other Plays

Edition: First Edition

Publication Date: April 30, 1992

Publisher: Arte Publico Pr

Author(s): Luis Valdez

Title: August: Osage County

Edition: 2009 Edition

Publication Date: 2009

Publisher: Dramatist Play Services Inc.

Author(s): Tracey Letts

Title: Taming of the Shrew

Edition: Third Edition

Publication Date: June 8, 2010

Publisher: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare

Author(s): William Shakespeare (Author), Barbara Hodgdon (Editor)

Title: Applied Theatre: International Case Studies and Challenges for Practice

Edition: First Edition

Publication Date: March 15, 2010

Publisher: Intellect Ltd

Author(s): Monica Prendergast (Editor), Juliana Saxton (Editor)

Title: Theatre for Change

Edition: First Edition

Publication Date: 2012

Publisher: Palgrave MacMillan

Author(s) Robert J. Landy and David T. Montgomery

Title: The Greek Plays

Edition: 2004 Edition
Publication Date: July 1, 2004
Publisher: Theatre Communication Group, Inc.
Author(s): Ellen McLaughlin and Tony Kushner

Title: Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business

Edition: 2006 edition
Publication Date: 1985
Publisher: Penguin Group
Author(s): Neil Postman

Title: The Art and Craft of Playwriting

Edition: New Edition (2000 Edition)
Publication Date: March 1, 2001
Publisher: Story Press
Author(s): Jeffrey Hatcher

Title: How to Change the World: Social Entrepreneurs and the Power of New Ideas

Edition: 2007
Publication Date: 2007
Publisher: Oxford University Press
Author: David Bornstein

Title: The Promise of a Pencil: How an Ordinary Person Can Create Extraordinary Change

Edition: 2015
Publication Date: 2015
Publisher: Scribner
Author: Adam Braun

Additional Resources

Fredrick Douglass NOW (YouTube video of monologue and other links)
<http://bit.ly/FrederickDouglasNOW>

American Experience: The Abolitionists
http://www.amazon.com/Part-One-1820s-1838/dp/B00H9Z6OEK/ref=sr_1_sc_1?s=inst ant-video&ie=UTF8&qid=1433451331&sr=1-1-spell&keywords=fredrick+douglass

KQED SPARK: Challenge capitalism and break down barriers between audience and performers with headRush.
<https://shar.es/1sXyva>

Do Schools Kill Creativity? by Ken Robinson
https://www.ted.com/talks/ken_robinson_says_schools_kill_creativity

Shakespeare in Detroit
<http://paceco.imirus.com/Mpowered/book/vpco15/i2/p58>

Traveling Jewish Theatre

<http://www.kqed.org/arts/programs/spark/profile.jsp?essid=4939>

"Scheherazade in Baabda"- scenes from the play performed by the women inmates of Baabda Prison- 2012

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3fRpJE34ScA>

TED Speaker- Mallika Sarabhai (Dancer, actor, activist)

http://www.ted.com/speakers/mallika_sarabhai

How to Start a Non-Profit Organization By Caron_Beesley

<https://www.sba.gov/blogs/how-start-non-profit-organization-0>

How do I Write a Business Plan for a Nonprofit Corporation?

by Kristie Lorette, Demand Media

<http://smallbusiness.chron.com/write-business-plan-nonprofit-corporation-3061.html>

Non-profit business plan outline

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0nJUch2rqCU>

Three Ways to Persuade by John Edlund

<http://web.calstatela.edu/faculty/jgarret/3waypers.htm>