

Interdisciplinary Course: The Living Newspaper for the 21st Century

Course Overview

- Conduct historical research into The Living Newspaper.
- Analyze and draw parallels between the techniques/strategies used in The Living Newspaper that are still present in print and broadcast journalism today.
- Apply this new knowledge to the development of performances designed to communicate current, relevant news content.
- Produce and present weekly skit:
 - Identification and research of meaningful news content and selection of topic (whole group)
 - Task groups rotating through every aspect of production:
 - Group 1: Scriptwriting and directing
 - Group 2: Staging—set and costume design and production
 - Group 3: Tech—sound, lighting, multimedia
 - Group 4: Performance—acting
 - Given three class periods per week, this will be sequenced:
 - Day 1: Selection of topic (whole group); initial brainstorming by Task Groups
 - Day 2: Creative Process—Task Groups work to refine ideas for how to present the week's topic; whole group comes together for rehearsal
 - Day 3: Performance of skit, followed by critique and debriefing—what worked, what didn't
- Course culminates in a public performance of 4 One-Act Plays, reprising the best skit performances that took place throughout the course, with revisions and refinements implemented by the students following the initial in-class performance.

Objectives

- Expand students' knowledge of the human condition through the combination of journalism and theatre.
- Enhance students' creative and communicative capacities through production and performance of live theatrical experiences.
- Empower students in their ability to construct, present, and defend critical and aesthetic judgments of journalistic and theatrical texts/performances.

Outcomes

- Through lecture, readings, and first-hand experience, students will understand and analyze the basic types and components of plays and journalistic texts and their role in shaping society.
- Students will actively participate in theatrical production: acting, directing, writing, tech, staging...
- Students will engage in critical and self-reflective analysis of course experiences

Course Text: Course Pack, including readings, links to web-based resources, detailed assignment descriptions, lesson plans, and grading rubrics.

Course Map

Week 1	<p>Historical overview of The Living Newspaper and the WPA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lecture/readings Students will attend a performance of a historical Living Newspaper, presented by students from the Theatre Department Readers' Theatre—students will participate in performing a historical script in class, reading assigned parts aloud, but not using any staging, costumes, etc...[Ex: "Power" by Arthur Arent, http://newdeal.feri.org/power/index.htm]
Week 2	
Week 3	<p>Contemporary practices in broadcast news production and newspaper journalism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lecture/readings Students will visit a local newspaper and a local television station to see first-hand the techniques and methods utilized in each genre. Students will identify a single news topic, read a print journalism source and view a broadcast source, writing a one-page comparison/contrast evaluation.
Week 4	
Week 5	<p>Theatre Practice 101—introduction to the tasks and techniques of live theatre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lecture/readings Students will attend a local or on-campus theatre production and submit a one-page written review
Week 6	
Week 7	<p>Begin Weekly News Skits—Skit 1</p> <p>Synthesis—students will work as a large group in order to combine what they have learned during the initial weeks of the course, formulating a strategy for how they will combine the techniques of journalism and theatre in order to move forward with the requisite performances. Faculty members will monitor these discussions and will be available to advise and mentor, but the students themselves will drive the creative process during this phase.</p> <p>Students will be divided in 4 heterogeneous groups, and each group will rotate through each of the 4 Group during this phase of the course, so that all will have at least one opportunity to experience the different aspects of theatre production. (See Task Group Schedule below)</p> <p>The topic of each week's skit will be chosen by the entire group. Afterwards, students will break up into Task Groups to produce the skit, coming together for rehearsal, performance, and critique.</p> <p>Skit performances will be open to the general university public, advertised via university website, bulletin board, or other typical outlets.</p>
Week 8	Skit 2 (see Task Group Schedule, below)
Week 9	Skit 3 (see Task Group Schedule, below)
Week 10	Skit 4 (see Task Group Schedule, below)

Week 11	Skit 5—Students may select their Task Group
Week 12	Skit 6—Students may select their Task Group, but it must be different than the previous week.
Week 13	<p>A) Group debriefing: what have we learned as a result of our participation in these performances?</p> <p>B) Students will choose their four best skits, preparing them for public performance.</p> <p>C) Students will begin writing an individual reflective analysis of their learning in this course and prepare a brief creative way of sharing this with their peers.</p>
Week 14	Work Week: students refine and revise skits in order to prepare for public performance
Week 15	Rehearsals; Public performance of One-Act Plays
Week 16	Individual student presentations of their reflective analysis of their course experience (5 min/each)

Task Group Rotation Schedule

	Group 1 Script/Dir	Group 2 Staging	Group 3 Tech	Group 4 Acting
Skit 1	A	B	C	D
Skit 2	D	A	B	C
Skit 3	C	D	A	B
Skit 4	B	C	D	A

Assessment (rubrics included in Course Pack)

- 60% Student participation and engagement
- 40% Written assignments
 - 5% news analysis (Week 4)
 - 5% play evaluation (Week 6)
 - 10% play scripts (Week 7 – 12 rotation)
 - 10% self-reflective analysis (Week 16)