

Theatre Explore Syllabus 2015-2016

(Introduction to Theatre: Semester 1 or 2)

Facilitator: Seth H. Olson

Office: Black Box Office

Email Address: Seth.Olson@vansd.org

Office Phone: (360) 313-4600

Office Hours: Mon & Thurs 8:30 – 9:30AM; Tues & Wed 4:05 – 5:00PM; Enrichment A

Course Description:

By the end of Theatre Explore, students will appreciate and understand theatre as an art form. They will examine theatre's historical development, study the roles of a variety of theatre artists, and explore the building blocks of dramatic performance. Students demonstrate appropriate audience skills, proper theatre etiquette, a focused and attentive classroom manner, and will improve their ability to collaborate on artistic projects.

Educational Goals:

Theatre Explore is an introductory level survey class designed to acquaint students with various aspects of theatre as an art form. The areas of emphasis for the course are:

- ◆ To train students to focus their attention and energy using a “Focus Circle” format
- ◆ To instruct students in appropriate audience, rehearsal, and performance etiquette
- ◆ To present highlights of theatre history from 600BC to modern times from a Western Civilization perspective
- ◆ To identify and describe the various occupations employed by the Theatre

While Explore is not intended to be an acting class, the students will do warm-up exercises, engage in improvisation and ensemble activities, learn preliminary acting concepts, physical/vocal skills, improvisation techniques, identify dramatic structure, and present both individual and group performances.

Course Outline: A Tentative Map

Unit I: It's All Greek to Me – Greek Theatre (5 weeks)

- What is Theatre?
- Who are other theatre artists? What does a costume designer do?
- How did theatre begin? How did the Greeks develop theatre as an art form?
- How do I demonstrate focus? How do I support the ensemble?

Unit II: The Reckoning of Everyman – Medieval Theatre (4 weeks)

- How did the English church and government remove and revive theatre?
- How did theatre spaces change over time?
- What does a set designer do?
- How did medieval playwrights contribute to the development of theatre?

Unit III: My Kingdom for a Horse – Shakespearean Theatre (5 weeks)

- How did Elizabethan playwrights contribute to the development of theatre?
- How do I present a piece of text by myself?

Unit IV: Let's All Just Get Real – American Realism (4 weeks)

- How has the United State developed theatre as an art form?
- How are stories/plots organized to tell a story?
- What jobs are available in the theatre and how are they organized?
- What is the story of theatrical history and how do I connect to it?

Attendance & Attire:

Every student needs to be in class on time every day. If a student has a parent-excused absence, it is the student's responsibility to find out what was missed and complete any make-up work in a timely manner. Unexcused absences hurt the whole class. Consistent attendance is vital because your classmates and I truly value your presence and creativity. Students are expected to be appropriately dressed (able to move easily) for class. Short skirts, flip flops, heels, tight clothing, and any other clothing or accessories that limit movement are discouraged.

Participation:

We are a community of learners, helping each other, but also striving to be independent thinkers. Students must involve themselves fully in every activity so they will learn (and have a little fun). Participation includes asking questions, discussing, creating, listening, reflecting, and making connections. As theatre is a collaborative art form, students will study, plan, and learn together in various groups and with various grade levels.

Respect:

In order to do our best work, the classroom environment needs to be one of respect. This means:

- Students respect each other through active listening, supportive attention during performances, and positive comments.
- Students respect the teacher through active listening, positive engagement in all activities, and completing work in a timely manner with best effort.
- Students respect the space by leaving all food, drink and gum outside the room, refraining from touching set pieces and props used by productions and other theatre classes, picking-up after themselves.
- And most importantly, students respect themselves by giving their best effort, maintaining a positive and receptive attitude, and engaging in their learning with curiosity and creativity.

Evaluation of Student Achievement:

I grade to let you know: (1) how well students are performing on specific assignments; and (2) how well students have performed on course goals/standards throughout the semester/year. Any grade given to a student is a teacher judgment based on a variety of different sorts of evidence.

Assignments will fall into one of four categories, each contributing to a percentage of the student's overall grade:

1. 10% - Class Work (i.e. practice and homework assignments)
2. 30% - Traditional Assessment (i.e. tests, quizzes, etc.)
3. 30% - Performance Assessment (larger, long-term, collaborative projects)
4. 30% - Portfolio (reflections at the end of projects and the semester)

All assignments, regardless of the category, will be assessed using a four-point assessment tool called a rubric. The baseline for the rubric is a **3**, where a student has **achieved** the expectations of the assignment. Students who **surpass** expectations will receive a "grade" of **4**. Students who are **developing** the skills or knowledge assessed on an assignment will receive a **2**. Finally, students who **attempt** to use the skills or knowledge but are not as successful will receive a **1**. Assignments **not turned in** will be scored as **0**.

Consequently, I use a four-point grading scale to determine the overall letter grade (i.e. A, B, C, etc.) for each semester. The breakdown of grades and percentages is as follows:

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Percent Range</u>
A	100.0 - 92.51%
A -	92.50 - 85.91%
B +	85.90 - 77.51%
B	77.50 - 70.01%
B -	70.00 - 62.51%

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Percent Range</u>
C +	62.50 - 55.01%
C	55.00 - 47.51%
C -	47.50 - 40.01%
D +	40.00 - 32.51%
D	32.50 - 25.00%
F	24.99 - 0.00%

This grading scale is the standard for the building and is used by many of the high school and middle school teachers at VSAA.

- **Extra credit is not an option**, BUT students are encouraged to reattempt a project for a new grade. Unacceptable or potentially failing work may be resubmitted through the end of the particular quarter in which it was assigned.
 - **First Quarter:** September 2 through November 5, 2015
 - **Second Quarter:** November 6, 2015 through January 28, 2016
 - **Third Quarter:** February 1 through April 1, 2016
 - **Fourth Quarter:** April 11 through June 15, 2016
- **Late work:** Late work will not be given full credit; however, it will be accepted only through the end of the particular quarter in which it was assigned. (See above)
- **If you know you will not be able to complete an assignment on time, speak with me in advance, not the day it is due! Together we will work out a plan.** Homework is due promptly at the beginning of class unless otherwise stated.

My Educational Philosophy:

My philosophy of teaching is based on the premise that I am a teacher first and everything else (actor, vocalist, director, etc.) second. Further, I believe successful teaching occurs when students become self-empowered learners, capable of extending their learning far beyond where my own education has thus far taken me. I view all my roles—artist, scholar, citizen—as contributing to my effectiveness as a teacher. I have added significantly to my pedagogy since my arrival at VSAA, and my interests have deepened as I see rich connections between collaborative and interdisciplinary learning, the twin tenets of our school.

I look for students to participate as knowledgeable, collaborative, reflective, creative, and critical members of our community. Fortunately, theatre classes are the perfect setting for meeting these expectations. I encourage classroom discussion, fostering a respect for other viewpoints. I believe teaching must involve purposeful activities, moving away from memorization and recitation towards knowledge that goes beyond superficial understanding. I believe students learn best through integration, collaboration, and inquiry. I believe in order for theatre classrooms to be meaningful and purposeful, instruction must incorporate a wide range of instructional tools: books, magazines, newspapers, timelines, internet sites, and other media. Theatre teachers have so much information to convey and need many options for teaching it.

Theatre class should be a place where students make contact with live theatre. As all cultures have developed some form of theatrical express, the study of theatre offers fertile ground for exploring other times, ethnic groups, and cultural perspectives. Skills and concepts taught in theatre classes have power and application across the curriculum and throughout our lives. Even if you're never on stage, the opportunities to learn through theatre are immeasurable.

Learning is not as a passive process in which students receive information and grades. I believe in mutual responsibility and learning as a two-way street. I must come prepared to offer them the tools of learning; they must come prepared to use them. I believe I bring excitement and a positive attitude about teaching and learning to each class. I enter the room prepared to work my best to stimulate interest in and thinking about my subject matter. I expect my students to enter each class prepared and willing to be actively engaged with me, other students, and the material. Together we can achieve more than working separately.