## Theatre, BA, 2017

The B.A. degree in theatre serves as the backbone of the department’s mission, providing students a general overview of theatrical and performance practice and scholarship while also allowing students to pursue specific interests in a multitude of specific areas. The B.A. most strongly reflects the departments mission statement: *Theatre has the potential to foster dialogue, alter perceptions and inspire social change.  The Auburn University Department of Theatre is dedicated to the education and professional training of theatre artists, scholars and audiences within a liberal arts environment.  The Department champions the interaction between theory and practice and produces citizen artists who advocate for the arts through their own work in local, national and international communities.  Auburn University theatre students think critically, creatively and collaboratively and carry their knowledge from rehearsal spaces and classrooms to stages, campuses and communities worldwide.*Students from the other B.F.A. tracks offered through the department complete a significant amount of B.A. courses within their respective curriculum including two introductory courses, three theatre histories, and a senior capstone course.

The B.A. degree, as well as all the departmental degree tracks, adheres to NAST (National Association of Schools of Theatre) accreditation standards. All told our department usually houses nearly 100 majors across the degree tracks with a slight majority of those pursuing the B.A. degree.

## Student Learning Outcomes

### Specificity of Outcomes

I. Students will demonstrate an understanding of how to construct and express a cohesive, effective argument both in written form and orally. These expectations include growing competency in clearly expressing ideas with words, supporting assertions with sufficient evidence, and demonstrating knowledge of appropriate source material. Additionally, students will develop presentation skills that allow them to effectively convey their argument confidently, concisely, and coherently in an oral presentation.

II. Students will demonstrate the ability to analyze a play text – identifying its component parts and how they work together to create a coherent piece. These expectations include growing competency in close reading skills, identifying themes and structures, and reading texts for performance or theatrical possibilities.

III. Students will demonstrate the ability to collaborate and an understanding of the collaborative nature of theatre and performance. These expectations include growing competency of the various collaborators included in a theatrical production process (actor, director, designer, dramaturg etc.), increased knowledge of how those collaborators interact with one another and how to participate themselves in such processes.

IV. Students will demonstrate and understanding of the myriad possible global perspectives that theatre and performance provide. These expectations include growing competency in awareness of global performance forms and traditions, in knowledge of the global nature of contemporary performance, and in the interconnectivity of traditionally Western theatrical traditions to global contexts and traditions.

V. Students will express satisfaction with their chosen academic program and feel prepared to enter the world post-graduation prepared for a variety of potential career and/or further educational options.

### Comprehensive Outcomes

The current list of student learning outcomes listed above does represent a comprehensive representation of the entire scope of the program. These outcomes represent skills we want students to develop over the course of their time in the B.A. program. These skills are introduced in the Introductory sequence, refined and developed in the History sequence and the Junior & Senior Seminars, and further honed and sharpened in the Senior Capstone course. These student learning outcomes represent the basic skills needed to partake in a career in theatre and performance and any number of other related fields. They are specific enough skill sets for students who wish to pursue a career specifically in theatre or performance but also broad enough to allow students to acquire a variety of truly transferable abilities. These outcomes are in alignment with disciplinary standards set by our accreditation agency (National Association of Schools of Theatre) and our chief academic organization ATHE (The Association of Theatre in Higher Education).

### Communicating Student Learning Outcomes

These student outcomes find their way into individual syllabi for courses within the B.A. and serve as guiding principles for the creation of courses and assignments. Copies of these student learning outcomes are circulated to those teaching in the B.A. area. Professors communicate these desired outcomes to B.A. students in courses and communicate the importance of these skills in class room exercises, discussions, and assignments. The B.A. faculty frequently revisit these outcomes in meetings and discuss their continued relevancy and how we might improve their incorporation into major courses and other elements of department life and culture.

## Curriculum Map

### Curriculum Map

The Curriculum Map below for the B.A. Degree in Theatre represents the current map for the degree track. This curriculum map is reconsidered each year as we try to refine it and expand it to best capture our actual BA trajectory.

|  | I - Argument | II – Analyze Play Text | III – Collaboration  | IV –Global Perspectives | V – Future Preparedness  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| THEA 1010 – Intro to Theatre I | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| THEA 1110 – Intro to Theatre II | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| THEA 3700 – Theatre History I | 2 | 2 |  | 2 |  |
| THEA 3710 – Theatre History II | 2 | 3 | 2 | 2 |  |
| THEA 3720 – Theatre History III | 2 | 3 | 2 | 2 |  |
| THEA 4950 –Junior Lit/Theory Seminar | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |  |
| THEA 4950 –Senior Lit/Theory Seminar | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |  |
| THEA 4980 – Senior Capstone | 3 |  | 3 | 3 | 3 |

## Measurement

### Outcome-Measure Alignment

Measure A: Script Analysis Paper (Outcome I, II): The Script Analysis paper is written and completed by every BA student in THEA 3700 (20-30 students) and is designed to evaluate student competencies in analyzing a script and constructing and argument for an interpretation of a performance text. A random sampling of student papers (roughly 7 out of 20/30) are selected and evaluated by at least two BA faculty based upon the assessment rubric (attached as Addendum A).

Measure B: Oral Presentations (Outcome I): All BA students must create and present oral

presentations in two different classes on each end of their coursework. As first year students, BA majors must take Introduction to Theatre for Majors I & II (THEA 1110), Two Literature/Theory Seminars, and as seniors they must take the Senior Capstone (THEA 4980). Each course has at least one required oral presentation. A random sampling (7 out of 30 for Intro I, 5 out of 10 to 15 for Seminar, 5 out of 20 for Capstone) are selected and evaluated by at least three BA faculty using the designated assessment rubric (attached as Addendum B).

Measure C: Group Performance Projects (Outcome I, II, III): All BA students take the Introduction to Theatre I & II (THEA 1010, THEA 1110) as well as Senior Capstone (THEA 4980) and complete a group performance project as the final outcome of the course. While the project may take on a wide variety of forms, a single assessment rubric is used to assess the performance for its demonstration of collaborative techniques. All faculty members in attendance at the final performance fill out an assessment rubric (Attachment C) and the scores are compiled.

Measure D: Exit Surveys/Global Competency Evaluation (Outcomes I, II, III, IV & V): Students in the Senior Capstone course (THEA 4980) complete a Survey/Evaluation (Attachment D) at the end of the semester that both outlines their accomplishments and achievements in the BA during their time as degree candidates, but also evaluates their knowledge of some critical global issues in theatre. Through a short series of questions/identifications that evolves based on contemporary issues, students demonstrate their knowledge of theatre as a global practice.

### Direct Measures

The script analysis paper, the oral presentations, and the group performance projects (measures A, B, and C) are all direct measures of student learning and the rubrics for evaluation are attached to this report. The exit surveys/evaluation is also a form of direct measure although not tied directly to student grades in the course they are facilitated. Thus while a direct measure, the survey/evaluation is not a graded assignment and thus provides a slightly different context for assessment.

### Data Collection

The measures indicated above correspond to actual assignments that correspond to courses within the B.A. As a result, the collection of data occurs in the respective courses. Generally speaking, the Introduction to Theatre for Majors courses (THEA 1010 and 1110) each have between 20 and 30 students, Theatre Histories (THEA 3700, 3710, 3720) between 10 and 30, Lit/Theory Seminars have between 8 and 15, and Senior Capstone (THEA 4980) between 10 and 20. From each of these courses, the instructor of record collects a random sample of the given assignment of between 30 and 50% depending upon the size of the course. The individual student identity is removed and those de-identified student assignments are then put with the respective rubric (copies of those attached) and distributed to the other two B.A. faculty who do not teach that course for evaluation. The random sampling allows for more accurate data and the use of two other B.A. faculty (not the instructor of record for the course) attempts to avoid instructor bias. The rubrics result in a numeric result that corresponds to the vocabulary of advanced, intermediate, basic, or little/none and allows us to clearly see where we need to put our focus and improve.

## Results

### Reporting Results

We will break down our results by student learning outcome/method.

I. Argument – We assessed the argument student outcome (I) through a rubric designed to evaluate oral presentations in Intro II (THEA 1110), Lit/Theory Seminar (THEA 4950), and Senior Capstone (THEA 4980) (attached). We opted to select these three courses for data collection to have a starting baseline at the introductory level, intermediate level, and then a more advanced marker toward the end of the B.A. track. For the Intro II course there were 22 students and a random sampling of 10 was included. For Seminar course there were 12 students and a random sampling of 5 was included. For the Capstone Course there were 12 with a random sampling of 5. For these oral presentations, schedules resulted in the instructor of record filling out the rubric for these presentations opening up the possibility of instructor bias. All three courses were taught by the same instructor so one positive was that the same standards were applied to each data set and there was cohesion in the instructor’s knowledge of the desired trajectory for this outcome over the degree track. Future years, we may need to investigate documenting these presentations or figuring out a more conducive schedule that allows other B.A. faculty to attend. For the Introduction to Theatre course, the random sampling of student presentations were basicin terms of the “clarity of ideas” (#1), “recognizing appropriate opportunities for communication” (#2), and “actively listening” (#4), while maintaining an intermediate level in terms of “communicating candidly (open and direct) (#3). For the Seminar course, the random sampling of 5 student presentations were on the whole intermediate in “clarity of ideas” (#1) and “recognizing appropriate opportunities for communication” (#2) while advanced in “actively listening” (#3) and “communicating candidly (open and directly)” (#4). For the Capstone course, the random sampling of 5 student presentations were on the whole advanced in “clarity of ideas” (#1), “recognizing appropriate opportunities for communication” (#2), and “actively listening” (#4) while maintaining only an intermediate level in “communicating candidly (open and directly) (#3).

II. Analyze a Play Text - We assessed the play analysis student outcome (II) through a rubric designed to evaluate a random sampling of script analysis papers turned in to the Theatre History I: Script Analysis Course (THEA 3700) (attached). Out of two classes 8 random papers were chosen. Students continue to score proficient or advanced in the areas of supporting assertions with sufficient evidence, using appropriate source materials, and identifying component parts that come together to create a cohesive play. Students also scored ­proficient in identifying within the text concrete performance or theatrical possibilities.

III. Collaboration – We assessed the collaboration outcome (III) through a rubric designed to evaluate the final performance outcomes of two different B.A. courses on opposite ends of the B.A. curriculum – Introduction to Theatre for Majors II (THEA 1110) and Senior Capstone Course (THEA 4980). There are four different performances in the Intro course and one group project in the Capstone. B.A. faculty attend these final performances and full out the rubric (attached). For the Intro course the performances were deemed on the whole proficient in showing evidence of source material (ii), presenting a clear division of labor (v), and understanding of various participants in the collaborative process (iv) but on the whole marginal in terms of clearly expressing ideas with words (i) and understanding theatrical structure and scripting (iii). The capstone performance rated as advanced in clearly expressing ideas with words (i), evidence of source material (ii), understanding participants in the collaborative process (iv), and presenting a clear division of labor (v) while again remaining proficient in understanding theatrical structure and scripting (iii).

IV. Global Perspectives – we assessed this particular outcome using an exit survey/evaluation form distributed in the Senior Capstone course. The evaluation was completed by all 12 members of the course and all evaluations were included in the assessment process. The instructor of record evaluated this data, following a rubric (attached). On average, and similar to results from the last year, students received a rating of advanced or intermediate on 3 or 4 (of 5) of the terms while receiving intermediate or basic on 1 or 2 (of 5) of the terms. Thus on average, the overall ranking mostly landed in the intermediate range.

V. Preparedness – we assessed this particular outcome using the exit survey/evaluation form distributed in the Senior Capstone course. The evaluation (form attached) was completed by all 12 members of the course and all evaluations were included in the assessment process. Information was collected about the student’s experience in the degree track and about their future plans. They also answered three targeted questions related to the first three student learning outcomes – a form of self assessment of their overall experience. On the whole students related they felt they had advanced ability in constructing and expressing arguments (I) and analyzing a play for its component parts (II) while possessing an intermediate ability in collaboration (III)

### Interpreting Results

We will share our interpretation of results by student learning outcome

I. Argument – Comparing the three different sets of data collected from the three different courses, we determined that on the whole we remain satisfied with the growth that students appeared to demonstrate in going from a majority of basic to a majority of advanced. For the second time in this current assessment plan, the student group in the Capstone course had experienced the same trajectory of courses that the first year students will across their time in the program. We concluded that the developing and honing of the skills of structuring and verbally expressing an argument is well served by our current curriculum, particularly with the addition of the Junior and Senior Level Lit/Theory seminars, and by the variety of assignments offered across our curriculum map. We do however plan to address the “communicating candidly” category and focus more intently on the polish and confidence of the presentation. While the content and structure of the argument showed vast improvement, the delivery mechanism did not advance at the same rate. The addition of information from the seminars also indicated that perhaps this lack of polish and confidence is compounded in the Capstone by the shift in subject from theater and performance history and theory or specific projects that address their time after graduation. Perhaps this has to do with theatre students nervous about what the future might bring or with theatre students taking for granted that they are performers. We plan to focus more directly on techniques across the curriculum (Intro II specifically) to address this concern and help them start to articulate more confidently about themselves as theatre artists from the beginning they enter the program.

II. Analyzing a Play Text – The changes to the THEA 3700 course have thus far yielded strong positive results. The official title and number change will begin next year, but this year the course was also taught as purely script analysis. Students worked collaborative in a flipped classroom environment to scrutinize each play for its component parts and theatrical production possibilities. These results display the level of comprehension that we had hoped to achieve and we will continue with this model.

III. Collaboration – On the whole we as a B.A. faculty were quite pleased with the results from the rubrics in this student learning outcome. Collaboration is a hallmark of what the entire theatre department strives to achieve in all its various programs. Knowledge of collaboration comes through a combination of study and experiential learning and the result indicate that students are learning a great deal about all the elements of collaboration across their time in the program. The results display what we consider to be a rather traditional growth of collaborative skills over time and illustrate an amassing of knowledge over time.

IV. Global – While the faculty was not surprised to see students on the whole reflecting an intermediate understanding of global perspective, we wish students demonstrated a slightly higher retention of that information. We perhaps thought that the national attention of an election year might result in student’s paying extra attention to events both nationally and globally. Yet the results remained much the same. Upon reflection, this may be an instance where our method of evaluation sets us up for failure or at least slightly skewed results as it’s incredibly specific in its method/content. Similar results two years in a row lead us to think that maybe we perhaps need to consider a slightly more open ended method that allows students to express a broader understanding of what is meant by global perspective. We all feel like we are working hard to expand global perspectives across our courses and will continue to refine our methods of assessment to better reflect our intentions.

V. Preparedness – On the whole, we were pleased with the students’ own evaluation of their knowledge of the student learning outcomes. Our theatre students tend to do well in self assessments as that process is common across every element of our training. Obviously we know that students are often overly generous in evaluating themselves so we realize we need to account for possible self-bias there. But the confidence that students exhibited in rating themselves advanced speaks positively. We would like to see that confidence reflected in how they talk about themselves in the oral presentations.

### Communicating Results

The results of this reporting is shared with the entirety of the B.A. faculty as well as the chair of the department. Those portions of the results that benefit the entire faculty, that speak to the experience of every theatre major, are shared during faculty meetings.

## Use of Results

### Purposeful Reflection and Action Plan

Following the collection of the assessment data, the B.A. faculty gather to discuss the broad implications of the assessment data across the five stated student learning outcomes. After a broad discussion of the overall results, we delve into the specifics of the results and target the specific areas for improvement or change. Out of that conversation, we create a plan for the next year that targets the most significant two or three of those concerns, ideally ones that cover that expanse of the outcomes, and a specific map for implementation. This plan may involve changes to course content or may involve a series of meetings for the B.A. faculty to discuss further changes to the assessment process itself. If this plan involves portions of the faculty or curriculum outside our area, or if changes might affect courses that are also included in other programs, we convene faculty meetings to discuss those changes.

Most immediately this year, we revamped THEA 3700 into a script analysis class (THEA 2700) which we believe will help address a number of concerns for our program and for the others within our department. We will also be looking specifically at the global competency outcome to brainstorm new possibilities for assessing those desired outcomes.